



Office of the City Manager

CONSENT CALENDAR
July 28, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: David Sprague, Fire Chief

Subject: Grant Application: Authorizing application for and acceptance of FEMA Port Security Grant Program funds for fire & rescue boat replacement

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution authorizing the City Manager to apply for and accept a grant, and any amendments, from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for up to \$1,200,000 including a \$300,000 (25%) local match to replace the City's Fire & Rescue Boat.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

If awarded, the grant will require a 25% non-federal cost share. Presuming the total project cost is \$1,200,000 the local match would be \$300,000, payable over three years. The Fire Department proposes to meet up to \$25,000 of this match through eligible in-kind personnel costs associated with project management, training, planning, and grant implementation. Any remaining local match requirement will be funded through the City's existing vehicle replacement fund.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The Fire Department is responsible for search and rescue, marine firefighting and hazardous materials response, mitigation and recovery operations.

The existing Berkeley Fire Department marine asset was acquired used in 2019. It served the community well until it partially sank during inclement weather on February 2025. The cost for repairs is approximately \$100,000. Staff believe leveraging available funds to acquire a new boat is a better strategy than repairing the existing vessel.

With the boat out of service the Department has no means to combat fires from the water should they occur in any of the Marina's bayside structures, boats or houseboats. Firefighting operations are restricted to land-based tactics. This limited approach of fighting fires from one direction can be ineffective and unsafe. The deployment of the Department's rescue swimmers is also limited to shore based or from personal water craft, which have limits based on weather conditions.

Replacement of this asset will ensure the City maintains interoperable maritime response capability within the broader Bay Area mutual aid system.

This project advances the City's strategic goal to create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city.

BACKGROUND

Berkeley's western city limits extend into the Bay by almost two miles. The Marina's fifty-two acres of water accommodate 1,100 crafts that range in length from 16' - 110'. Full-time residents (on vessels) occupy 100 of the berths, and thirteen additional slips hold permanently moored houseboats. The marina hosts a variety of commercial fishing vessels, charter boats, and a fleet of Hornblower boats that carry one hundred and fifty passengers each. In addition, as part of the broader Bay-wide strategy to expand water transit capacity and reduce roadway congestion, ferry service is expected to come to Berkeley, which that process in the planning, environmental review, and funding alignment phase.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Port Security Grant Program (PSGP), administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, provides funding to enhance maritime domain awareness, security, and all-hazards response capabilities for port regions and adjacent jurisdictions.

The Berkeley waterfront is integrated into the broader San Francisco Bay maritime security framework under the Area Maritime Security Committee (AMSC) and associated Area Maritime Security Plan (AMSP). The City of Berkeley Fire Department is a recognized mutual aid responder within this regional system.

Regional analysis and prior grant investments (including neighboring jurisdictions such as Oakland and San Francisco) consistently identify the need for:

- Rapid-response marine firefighting assets in the East Bay
- Redundant fireboat coverage to offset travel delays from neighboring jurisdictions
- Increased capacity for ferry and passenger vessel incident response
- Water-based evacuation capability for mass casualty incidents

The Berkeley project builds upon the existing regional model while addressing a critical geographic gap north of the Oakland Estuary within USGC's Sector San Francisco

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

The proposed vessel will improve environmental response capability in the Bay by enhancing the City's ability to:

- Rapidly contain marine fuel spills and hazardous material releases
- Reduce regional reliance on long-distance mutual aid marine response resources

Modern fireboat platforms also provide improved fuel efficiency and reduced emissions compared to older marine engines, supporting the City's climate action objectives.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

This investment is necessary to replace an aging and out-of-service marine response asset, ensure adequate fire suppression capability along Berkeley's waterfront and marina, support regional ferry expansion and increased passenger vessel activity, and improve response times for maritime incidents in the central and North Bay region, and to fit within USCG's network of fire response vessels for all risk hazards.

Comparable jurisdictions in the Bay Area (including Oakland, San Francisco, Richmond, and others) maintain dedicated fireboat assets. Without replacement, Berkeley risks having to rely on Mutual Aid.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

Do not apply for grant funding and repair the existing boat. This would result in spending approximately \$120,000 to bring an already-aged vessel back into service that will have a limited life expectancy and will likely continue to expose the City to increasing maintenance costs due to age.

CONTACT PERSON

David Sprague, Fire Chief, (510) 981-3473

Attachments:

1: Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

AUTHORIZING APPLICATION FOR AND ACCEPTANCE OF FEMA PORT SECURITY
GRANT PROGRAM FUNDS FOR FIRE & RESCUE BOAT REPLACEMENT

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley seeks to maintain a safe, resilient, and prepared waterfront and maritime environment; and

WHEREAS, the Berkeley shoreline is part of the San Francisco Bay maritime operating environment and supports recreational boating, commercial activity, and future passenger ferry expansion; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Emergency Management Agency Port Security Grant Program provides funding to enhance maritime safety, security, and emergency response capabilities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley Fire Department provides primary fire protection and emergency response services to the Berkeley Marina and surrounding Bay waters; and

WHEREAS, existing marine response capabilities require modernization to meet current operational demands including fire suppression, rescue, evacuation, and hazardous materials response; and

WHEREAS, regional maritime risk and ferry-related passenger traffic is expected to increase with planned expansion of the San Francisco Bay Ferry system to the Berkeley waterfront; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project will improve interoperability, mutual aid effectiveness, and emergency response times across the East Bay maritime region; and

WHEREAS, grant funding requires a 25 percent local match, which the City will provide through eligible in-kind services and existing capital funds.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Berkeley authorizes the City Manager to apply for, accept, and execute agreements associated with FEMA Port Security Grant Program funding in an amount not to exceed \$1,200,000, including any amendments thereto.