

**Igor Tregub****Berkeley City Councilmember
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CONSENT CALENDAR

September 29th, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Igor Tregub (Author), Mayor Ishii (Co-Sponsor),
Councilmember Terry Taplin (Co-Sponsor), and Councilmember Ben
Bartlett (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Relinquishment of Council Office Budget Funds from General Funds and
Grant of Such Funds to Support the Restoration of “Sinbad Voyage”

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution approving an expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$1,000 per Councilmember from the D13 Discretionary Accounts of members of the Berkeley City Council, including contributions of \$500 from Councilmember Igor Tregub, \$250 from Councilmember Terry Taplin, \$100 from Mayor Ishii, and \$100 from Councilmember Ben Bartlett, and inviting all Councilmembers to contribute to support the restoration of Mokhtar Paki’s “Sinbad Voyage” mural.

BACKGROUND

“Sinbad Voyage” is a large-scale public mural created by Berkeley-based Iranian immigrant artist Mokhtar Paki in 2023. Located at the corner of Dwight Way and Sacramento Street, the 28-by-14-foot mural depicts the experiences, journeys, and resilience of immigrants, refugees, and displaced people from around the world.

The mural’s creation was supported through Berkeley Art Works Projects, a Civic Arts grant program developed to fund visual and performing artists implementing temporary

projects in Berkeley's public realm and to contribute to the community's resilience and recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Projects were intended to address public health and well-being, economic recovery and resilience, or community connection and belonging.

In April 2021, a grant review panel recommended awarding Mr. Paki \$10,000 for a project addressing the theme of community connection and belonging. On April 28, 2021, the Civic Arts Commission approved the recommended slate of Berkeley Art Works Projects grants, including Mr. Paki's award.

The mural was inspired in part by the story of Sinbad's voyage, which follows a traveler journeying with others in search of a better life, and by the real-world refugee and migration crises that have affected millions of people across Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and elsewhere. Mr. Paki began developing the concept years before the mural was painted, drawing inspiration from the stories of people who risked their lives seeking safety and a better future for themselves and their families.

Mokhtar has described "Sinbad Voyage" as his "love letter to Berkeley." The mural reflects Berkeley's history as a community shaped by immigrants and people from diverse backgrounds, faiths, cultures, and countries of origin. It also reflects the deeply personal nature of migration: the mural includes more than 450 figures, including approximately 90 whose faces are clearly visible, many of whom represent actual people and real immigrant stories.

Among the figures depicted are individuals whose stories illustrate the profound human cost of displacement and migration, including Mokhtar's own young niece, Sanaz, who died at five years old while attempting to flee Iran by boat with her father. The mural also depicts refugees and migrants from Central America, the Middle East, Africa, and other parts of the world, as well as members of Berkeley's own diverse communities.

In this way, "Sinbad Voyage" is more than a mural. It is a public expression of memory, migration, loss, resilience, and belonging, and a reflection of the many stories that make Berkeley the community it is today.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On the night of August 19, 2026, "Sinbad Voyage" was vandalized with white paint, causing significant damage to the mural.

The vandalism has deeply affected the artist and members of the Berkeley community who see their own experiences, histories, and identities reflected in the work. In the days following the incident, community members gathered around the mural, left messages of solidarity, and expressed their desire to help with its restoration.

The Berkeley Police Department is actively investigating this vandalism case. Investigators have released video showing a person of interest walking through the neighborhood carrying what appears to be a can of paint and have pursued additional investigative leads. Police have also reported a related same-day incident in which white paint was poured onto a vehicle parked approximately one block from the mural. The investigation remains ongoing.

At this time, the motive for the vandalism has not been established. Nevertheless, the damage to “Sinbad Voyage” has understandably generated significant concern in a community that values immigrant stories, cultural diversity, and public art as essential parts of Berkeley’s identity.

Councilmember Tregub and his staff have met with Mr. Paki and City staff at the mural to hear directly from the artist and discuss potential avenues for City support for the restoration efforts. In addition, Councilmember Tregub’s office has been in communication with the Mayor’s Office, the Civic Arts Commission, and community members regarding ways to restore the mural and assist the artist.

Many local artists and community members have expressed strong interest in helping with the restoration process, including through potential volunteer events and other forms of in-kind assistance. Consistent with the Berkeley Municipal Code’s public art funding framework—70 percent for projects, 10 percent for conservation, and 20 percent for administration—the Civic Arts Division provided Mr. Paki a one-time \$1,000 emergency conservation grant to restore the mural to its condition as originally approved by the Civic Arts Commission. The Civic Arts Commission and City staff continue to explore additional opportunities to support the restoration.

Mr. Paki has also established a community fundraising campaign to help cover the cost of restoring “Sinbad Voyage.” The campaign emphasizes that restoration will require financial resources as well as community support and calls upon people who value public art, immigrant stories, and community healing to participate in the effort.

The City Council’s support through D13 discretionary funds would provide an immediate contribution toward restoration while also demonstrating the City’s commitment to protecting and preserving public art that reflects the experiences and contributions of Berkeley’s diverse communities.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no impact to the General Fund. Contributions of up to \$1000 per participating members of the Berkeley City Council will come from existing Council Office Budget discretionary accounts.

CONTACT PERSON

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Shamaila Ahmed | Legislative Aide | sahmed@berkeleyca.gov

ATTACHMENTS

Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. _____ - N.S.

APPROVING THE RELINQUISHMENT OF COUNCIL OFFICE BUDGET FUNDS FROM COUNCILMEMBERS' D13 DISCRETIONARY ACCOUNTS TO SUPPORT THE RESTORATION OF MOKHTAR PAKI'S "SINBAD VOYAGE" MURAL

WHEREAS, "Sinbad Voyage" is a large-scale public mural created by Berkeley-based Iranian immigrant artist Mokhtar Paki in 2023 and located at the corner of Dwight Way and Sacramento Street in Berkeley; and

WHEREAS, The 28-by-14-foot mural depicts the experiences, journeys, and resilience of immigrants, refugees, and displaced people from around the world and was inspired in part by the story of Sinbad's voyage and by the real-world experiences of people seeking safety and a better life; and

WHEREAS, The mural contains more than 450 figures, including approximately 90 clearly visible faces, many of whom represent actual people and real immigrant stories; and

WHEREAS, "Sinbad Voyage" includes deeply personal stories of migration and loss, including the story of Paki's young niece Sanaz, who died at five years old while attempting to flee Iran by boat with her father; and

WHEREAS, Paki has described "Sinbad Voyage" as his "love letter to Berkeley," reflecting the City's history as a diverse community shaped by immigrants and people from many countries, cultures, faiths, and backgrounds; and

WHEREAS, The mural has become an important piece of Berkeley's public art landscape and a meaningful expression of immigration, resilience, community, memory, and belonging; and

WHEREAS, On August 19, 2026, "Sinbad Voyage" was vandalized with white paint, causing significant damage to the mural; and

WHEREAS, The motive for the vandalism has not been established, and the City recognizes the importance of allowing the ongoing law enforcement investigation to proceed while supporting the restoration of the damaged artwork; and

WHEREAS, The vandalism has generated significant concern and sadness among Berkeley residents and community members who value the mural and the stories it represents; and

WHEREAS, Community members, local artists, City representatives, and the Civic Arts Commission have expressed interest in supporting efforts to restore the mural and have begun exploring opportunities for volunteer participation, fundraising, and other forms of assistance; and

WHEREAS, Supporting the restoration of “Sinbad Voyage” would help preserve a significant work of public art and reaffirm Berkeley’s commitment to welcoming and celebrating immigrant stories, cultural diversity, artistic expression, and community resilience; and

WHEREAS, The City Council recognizes that public art can serve as a powerful means of preserving community history, honoring lived experiences, strengthening neighborhood identity, and bringing people together in response to acts of vandalism and harm; and

WHEREAS, The relinquishment of Council Office Budget funds by participating Councilmembers would provide additional resources to support the restoration of “Sinbad Voyage” and help return this important work of public art to the Berkeley community;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council approves the expenditure of an amount not to exceed 1,000 per participating Councilmember from each participating Councilmember’s D13 Discretionary Account to support the restoration of Mokhtar Paki’s “Sinbad Voyage” mural.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Manager is directed to distribute the approved discretionary funds to Mokhtar Paki for the restoration of “Sinbad Voyage” mural.