



**BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING**

**Thursday, October 16, 2025
2:00 PM**

Redwood Room – 2180 Milvia Street, 6th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704

Committee Members:

Councilmembers Rashi Kesarwani, Shoshana O’Keefe, and Brent Blackaby
Alternate: Mayor Adena Ishii

This meeting will be conducted in a hybrid model with both in-person and virtual attendance. Attend this meeting remotely using [Zoom](#). To request to speak, use the “raise hand” function in Zoom. To join by phone: Dial **1-669-254-5252** or **1-833-568-8864 (Toll Free)** and enter **Meeting ID: 160 649 5058**. To provide public comment, Press *9 and wait to be recognized by the Chair. To submit a written communication for the Committee’s consideration and inclusion in the public record, email policycommittee@berkeleyca.gov. All Committee meetings are recorded.

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953. Any member of the public may attend this meeting, however, if you are feeling sick, please do not attend the meeting in person.

Pursuant to the City Council Rules of Procedure and State Law, the presiding officer may remove, or cause the removal of, an individual for disrupting the meeting. Prior to removing an individual, the presiding officer shall warn the individual that their behavior is disrupting the meeting and that their failure to cease their behavior may result in their removal. The presiding officer may then remove the individual if they do not promptly cease their disruptive behavior. “Disrupting” means engaging in behavior during a meeting of a legislative body that actually disrupts, disturbs, impedes, or renders infeasible the orderly conduct of the meeting and includes, but is not limited to, a failure to comply with reasonable and lawful regulations adopted by a legislative body, or engaging in behavior that constitutes use of force or a true threat of force.

California Government Code Section 84308 (Levine Act) Parties to a proceeding involving a license, permit, or other entitlement for use are required to disclose if they made contributions over \$500 within the prior 12 months to any City employee or officer. Parties and participants with a financial interest are prohibited from making more than \$500 in contributions to a decisionmaker for the 12 months after the final decision is rendered on the proceeding. The above contribution disclosures and restrictions do not apply when the proceeding is competitively bid, or involves a personnel or labor contract. For more information, see Government Code Section 84308.

AGENDA

Roll Call

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters

Minutes for Approval

Draft minutes for the Committee's consideration and approval.

1. Minutes - September 18, 2025

Committee Action Items

The public may comment on each item listed on the agenda for action as the item is taken up. The Chair will determine the number of persons interested in speaking on each item. Up to ten (10) speakers may speak for two minutes. If there are more than ten persons interested in speaking, the Chair may limit the public comment for all speakers to one minute per speaker. Speakers are permitted to yield their time to one other speaker, however no one speaker shall have more than four minutes.

Following review and discussion of the items listed below, the Committee may continue an item to a future committee meeting, or refer the item to the City Council.

2. Unmanned Aerial Systems and Drones as First Responders

From: Councilmember Taplin (Author), Councilmember Kesarwani (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Humbert (Co-Sponsor)

Referred: September 15, 2025

Due: March 9, 2026

Recommendation: Refer to the City Manager the initiation of the process outlined by BMC 2.99: Surveillance Technology Ordinance (STO) for the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) to acquire and use Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), including Drones as First Responders (DFR), consistent with all auditing, transparency, data and privacy protections required for all use policies and acquisition reports under the STO. Submitting a UAS acquisition report and use policy will support informed, collaborative, and accountable exploration of this technology across departments, and ensure that any deployment aligns with Berkeley's commitment to public trust, environmental stewardship, and racial and social equity. As outlined in the STO, the use policy, and acquisition report shall include:

An interdepartmental assessment of potential operational uses by public safety and non-public safety departments; Consideration of technical requirements, legal and regulatory frameworks, civil liberties and privacy protections, and equity implications; Community engagement and best practices for transparency and accountability; A requirement for annual public reports detailing; Instances of drone deployment; Departmental uses and impacts on operations; Community outcomes; Compliance audits; And updates on training, and data handling procedures.

Financial Implications: See report

Contact: Terry Taplin, Councilmember, District 2, (510) 981-7120

Unscheduled Items

These items are not scheduled for discussion or action at this meeting. The Committee may schedule these items to the Action Calendar of a future Committee meeting.

- None

Items for Future Agendas

- Requests by Committee Members to add items to the next agenda

Adjournment

Written communications addressed to the Public Safety Committee and submitted to the City Clerk Department will be distributed to the Committee in advance of the meeting and retained as part of the official record.

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953 and applicable Executive Orders as issued by the Governor that are currently in effect. Members of the City Council who are not members of the standing committee may attend a standing committee meeting even if it results in a quorum being present, provided that the non-members only act as observers and do not participate in the meeting. If only one member of the Council who is not a member of the committee is present for the meeting, the member may participate in the meeting because less than a quorum of the full Council is present. Any member of the public may attend this meeting. Questions regarding public participation may be addressed to the City Clerk Department (510) 981-6900.



COMMUNICATION ACCESS INFORMATION:

This meeting is being held in a wheelchair accessible location. To request a disability-related accommodation(s) to participate in the meeting, including auxiliary aids or services, please contact the Disability Services specialist at ada@berkeleyca.gov, (510) 981-6418 (V), or (510) 981-6347 (TDD) at least three business days before the meeting date. Attendees at public meetings are reminded that other attendees may be sensitive to various scents, whether natural or manufactured, in products and materials. Please help the City respect these needs.

I hereby certify that the agenda for this meeting of the Standing Committee of the Berkeley City Council was posted at the display case located near the walkway in front of the Maudelle Shirek Building, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, as well as on the City's website, on October 9, 2025.



Mark Numainville, City Clerk

Communications

Communications submitted to City Council Policy Committees are on file in the City Clerk Department at 2180 Milvia Street, 1st Floor, Berkeley, CA, and are available upon request by contacting the City Clerk Department at (510) 981-6908 or policycommittee@berkeleyca.gov.



**BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES**

**Thursday, September 18, 2025
2:00 PM**

Redwood Room – 2180 Milvia Street, 6th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94704

Committee Members:

Councilmembers Rashi Kesarwani, Shoshana O’Keefe, and Brent Blackaby
Alternate: Mayor Adena Ishii

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MINUTES

Roll Call 2:04 p.m.

Present: Kesarwani, O'Keefe, Blackaby

Minutes for Approval

Draft minutes for the Committee's consideration and approval.

1. Minutes - July 21, 2025

Action: M/S/C (Kesarwani/O'Keefe) to approve the July 21, 2025 minutes.

Vote: All Ayes.

Committee Action Items

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Following review and discussion of the items listed below, the Committee may continue an item to a future committee meeting, or refer the item to the City Council.

2. Residents Oppose Broadcasting Obnoxious Cacophony Out in Public (ROBOCOP)

From: Councilmember O'Keefe (Author)

Referred Date: June 9, 2025

Due Date: November 17, 2025

Recommendation: Refer to the City Manager a request that the City Attorney draft amendments to Berkeley Municipal Code Chapter 13.40, Community Noise, to prohibit in certain circumstances the installation and use of motion-activated surveillance devices that emit artificial or pre-recorded sound—including alarms, sirens, or voice recordings—in response to the presence or motion of persons in the public right-of-way or on private property that is open to the public. This prohibition shall apply to such devices when installed in the public right-of-way or on private property when triggered by motion in the public right-of-way, and when the sound emitted is audible in public areas. The prohibition shall not apply to conventional burglar alarms that activate only in response to unauthorized entry or tampering.

Financial Implications: See report

Contact: Shoshana O'Keefe, Councilmember, District 5, (510) 981-7150

Action: 0 speakers. M/S/C (Blackaby/Kesarwani) to send the item with a qualified positive recommendation to Council, requesting that the City Attorney draft ordinance language as outlined in the recommendation, with additional clarification regarding location parameters and permissible volume levels.

Vote: All Ayes.

Committee Action Items

- 3. Proposed Public Safety Meeting Schedule Change to 3rd Thursday of the month, 2:00 p.m.**
From: Councilmember Blackaby
Contact: Brent Blackaby, Councilmember, District 6, (510) 981-7160
Action: 0 speakers. M/S/C (Blackaby/O'Keefe) to change the Public Safety Committee Regular Schedule to the 3rd Thursday of the month, 2:00 p.m.
Vote: All Ayes.

Unscheduled Items

These items are not scheduled for discussion or action at this meeting. The Committee may schedule these items to the Action Calendar of a future Committee meeting.

Items for Future Agendas

- None

Adjournment

Action: M/S/C (O'Keefe/Blackaby) to adjourn the meeting.
Vote: All Ayes.

Adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct record of the Public Safety Committee meeting held on September 18, 2025.

Wendy Sorensen, Assistant City Clerk

Communications

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DRAFT

ACTION CALENDAR
September 30, 2025

Public Safety Policy Committee

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Taplin, Councilmember Kesarwani (Co-Sponsor), Councilmember Humbert (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Unmanned Aerial Systems and Drones as First Responders

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the City Manager the initiation of the process outlined by BMC 2.99: Surveillance Technology Ordinance (STO) for the Berkeley Police Department (BPD) to acquire and use Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS), including Drones as First Responders (DFR), consistent with all auditing, transparency, data and privacy protections required for all use policies and acquisition reports under the STO.

Submitting a UAS acquisition report and use policy will support informed, collaborative, and accountable exploration of this technology across departments, and ensure that any deployment aligns with Berkeley’s commitment to public trust, environmental stewardship, and racial and social equity.

As outlined in the STO, the use policy, and acquisition report shall include:

- An interdepartmental assessment of potential operational uses by public safety and non-public safety departments;
- Consideration of technical requirements, legal and regulatory frameworks, civil liberties and privacy protections, and equity implications;
- Community engagement and best practices for transparency and accountability;
- A requirement for annual public reports detailing:
 - Instances of drone deployment;

- Departmental uses and impacts on operations;
- Community outcomes;
- compliance audits;
- And updates on training, and data handling procedures.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

The City of Berkeley, like many municipalities, is navigating the dual challenge of increasing public safety demands and constrained departmental resources. At the same time, the public expects rapid, transparent, and equitable responses to emergencies, complex incidents, and quality-of-life issues.

In this context, Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and Drones as First Responders (DFR) are emerging as tools with the potential to significantly enhance public safety operations, emergency response capabilities, and resource efficiency. Many jurisdictions—including San Francisco, Richmond, Santa Monica, and Alameda County—have implemented such programs to reduce response times, improve situational awareness, and increase officer and community safety.

In 2023, BPD completed an STO process, allowing requests for drone mutual aid from other agencies. Those deployments have successfully protected the lives of community members, suspects, and officers. However, reliance on outside agencies restricts availability, creates unpredictable costs, and prevents the development of a DPR program. To realize the full benefits of drone technology, Berkeley should move toward acquiring its own systems.

As interest in UAS and DFR capabilities grows—particularly for applications such as search and rescue, disaster response, and crime scene documentation—it is critical that Berkeley move proactively, ensuring any exploration or potential implementation is rooted in community values, transparency, and civil liberties.

BACKGROUND

Across California and the United States, local governments and public safety agencies are adopting Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) and Drones as First Responders (DFR) to address evolving operational challenges. These technologies are increasingly viewed as critical tools for supporting effective, timely, and equitable emergency response, especially in cities facing staff shortages, high service demands, and climate-related emergencies.

UAS are remotely piloted aircraft systems typically operated by trained personnel during active incidents to support operations such as search and rescue, missing persons cases, traffic collision investigations, and crime scene documentation. More advanced models of deployment—such as DFR—enable drones to be autonomously dispatched from pre-positioned locations in response to 911 calls, often arriving before human responders and streaming live video to dispatch and field units. This real-time aerial intelligence can help prevent unnecessary use of force, support de-escalation, and reduce officer risk.

Peer jurisdictions—including San Francisco, Richmond, Santa Monica, and Alameda County—have implemented drone programs to enhance operational capacity while maintaining strong public accountability. This referral authorizes the City Manager to evaluate the feasibility of a drone program to assess its technical, legal, and financial dimensions, as well as its potential benefits and risks in Berkeley. Early conversations have identified applications for multiple City departments, including disaster response, infrastructure inspection, and environmental monitoring.

Establishing a citywide UAS program is a proactive step that allows Berkeley to thoughtfully assess whether, how, and under what conditions such technology may be used.

RATIONALE

The development of a citywide Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Use Policy is both a timely and necessary step for ensuring that emerging public safety technologies are evaluated through the lens of transparency, equity, and community oversight.

As the capabilities of drones continue to evolve and their adoption by peer cities increases, Berkeley has the opportunity to proactively shape policy rather than react to technological change. Establishing a thoughtful, community-informed framework ensures that any future deployment of drones—whether by the Police Department, Fire Department, or other City divisions—aligns with Berkeley’s values of racial justice, civil liberties, and environmental responsibility.

Drone technologies can provide clear benefits: faster and safer emergency response, improved situational awareness, enhanced de-escalation, and more efficient allocation of limited personnel. They can also support climate resiliency and disaster preparedness by enabling real-time damage assessments and safe inspections of inaccessible infrastructure.

However, these tools are not without risk. Improper or unregulated use could lead to violations of privacy, disproportionate surveillance of marginalized communities, disruption to wildlife, or erosion of public trust. A UAS Use Policy must therefore include robust safeguards consistent with the STO: clear delineation of use, accountability mechanisms, transparency in flight activity, and annual reporting on impacts and outcomes.

In authorizing the City Manager to lead this policy development process, the City Council ensures that the exploration of drone programs proceeds deliberatively, inclusively, and under public oversight. Guided by the STO, this referral lays the groundwork for a policy that is not only operationally effective but also democratically legitimate and reflective of the needs and rights of Berkeley residents.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Staff time will be required for the coordination and completion of the policy development and reporting framework. Any future proposals for equipment procurement, pilot programs, or department-level deployment would be subject to separate City Council review and approval, including full fiscal analysis at that stage.

The current referral does not refer refer funding for the procurement or implementation of any UAS or DFR system. It initiates a policy development process, which may be supported by existing department resources and informed by peer city frameworks.

Staff may also explore the availability of state, to support policy infrastructure development related to drone oversight, civil liberties protections, or emergency preparedness

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The City could defer engagement with drone policy or allow departments to act independently without a unifying framework. However, this risks uncoordinated use, inconsistent standards, and diminished public trust. Proactively developing a citywide policy ensures consistent standards, transparency, and safeguards before any implementation occurs.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Taplin Council District 2 510-981-7120

Attachments:

City of Richmond Code of Ordinances....