

DISASTER AND FIRE SAFETY COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

June 24, 2026

7:00 PM

Fire Department Division of Training Classroom – 997 Cedar Street

Mayor's Appointee- Andy Katz

District 1 – Michael Wilson
District 2 – Weldon Bradstreet
District 3 – Todd Darling
District 4 – Robert Kinosian

District 5 – Jacob Dadmun
District 6 – Greg Murphy*
District 7 – Taj Herzer-Baptiste
District 8 – Theo Gordon**

AGENDA

Preliminary Matters

Call to Order

Public Present

Approval of the Agenda

*Discussion –
Agenda approved as amended by Acclamation or Vote?*

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters

Public speakers:

1. Chairperson's Report
2. Fire Department Staff Report

REGULAR AGENDA MATTERS *All Regular Agenda Matters are for discussion and possible action.*

3. **Action/Discussion:** Minutes of May 20, 2026 (Murphy)
- Recommendation:** Approve the Draft Minutes of April 22, 2026, Regular Meeting.
- Written Material:** DFSC May 20, 2026 Draft Minutes
4. **Discussion/Action:** Work Plan FY 26/27 (Murphy)
- Recommendation:** Finalize Work Plan
- Written Material:** 2026-2027 DFSC Work Plan
5. **Discussion/Action:** Evaluation of the Berkeley Emergency Alternative Response (BEAR) Program: DFSC Ad-Hoc Committee and Request for Council Support (Herzer-Baptiste)
- Recommendation:** Request Approval for Continuation of the BEAR Ad Hoc Sub-Committee
- Written Material:** Draft Recommendation To Council
6. **Work Group Reports**
Receive reporting on recent activities by the following work groups:
- Plan & Budget Oversight
 - Neighborhood Fire Resiliency
 - Safe Passages
 - Community Outreach
 - Street Trauma Prevention Program

Future Agenda Items and Next Steps

-

Adjournment

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953. Any member of the public may attend this meeting. Questions regarding this matter may be addressed

to Keith May, kmay@berkeleyca.gov 510-981-5508.

Communications to Berkeley boards, commissions or committees are public record and will become part of the City's electronic records, which are accessible through the City's website. Please note: E-mail addresses, names, addresses, and other contact information are not required but, if included in any communication to a City board, commission, or committee, will become part of the public record. If you do not want your e-mail address or any other contact information to be made public, you may deliver communications via U.S. Postal Service or in person to the secretary of the relevant board, commission, or committee. If you do not want your contact information included in the public record, please do not include that information in your communication. Please contact the secretary to the relevant board, commission, or committee for further information.

Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the commission regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at Berkeley Fire Department located at 2100 Martin Luther King Jr. Way Berkeley, CA.

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 981-6418 (V) or 981-6347 (TDD) at least three business days before the meeting date. Please refrain from wearing scented products to this meeting.

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I hereby certify that the agenda for this regular/special meeting of the Berkeley City's Disaster and Fire Safety Commission was posted at the front of the Division of Training, 997 Cedar Street, as well as on the City's website, three days prior to the scheduled Commission meeting.

SECRETARY SIGNATURE

*Keith May* 6/18/2026

DFSC Chair Report  
6/24/26

Based on recent submissions for Workgroups and Referrals to Council, it seems to me that many of the commissioners do not fully understand the role of the commission along with the rules and regulations regarding the commission's authority. I have included specific excerpts for the Commissioner's manual and the mission statement of the DFSC for reference. Highlighted text is what I consider to be the most salient:

Disaster and Fire Safety Commission Mission

Advises the City Council on all matters affecting fire safety and/or disaster resilience within Berkeley.

The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission serves as the public oversight body for Berkeley's Measure GG and Measure FF funds, charged with reviewing the budget on a regular basis to ensure that the funds are spent in accordance with the intent of the voter approved measures, recommending the appropriate annual increase to the tax rate, and recommending new programs and policy positions requiring Measure GG and Measure FF funding. The ultimate goal of the Commission is to increase community safety, resilience, and education for community disaster preparedness. The Commission also reviews and makes recommendations on items referred by the City Council or other Commissions.

From the Commissioner's Manual (2019)

DFSC is a "Advisory" Commission:

Those are "commissions that advise the City Council concerning policies and programs, within the limitations of their enabling legislation.

Commissioner's Manual re: Workplans

A commission work plan should contain the commission's mission statement, goals, resources, activities, outputs, and desired outcomes. This planning document specifies how and when the commission plans to accomplish its objectives (by specifying outcomes) during the fiscal year. Goal statements explain the nature and scope of the work to be performed and the time needed to accomplish the goal. Designing yearly work plans or goal statements may be done in conjunction with the development of the relevant departmental work plan so that the work of the department and the commission will complement each other throughout the year. When developing a work plan, commissions should take special care to ensure that they remain within the subject area purview of their enabling legislation.

## Commissioner's Manual re: Communication with Outside Agencies

Commissions function in an advisory capacity and, in the absence of an explicit delegation of the role to act on the City's behalf by the Council on a particular issue, they may not directly communicate with outside agencies. Unless specifically authorized by the Council, commissions may not represent the City or its policies or positions to outside agencies either on their own behalf or on behalf of the City.

If a commission wishes to support or object to a particular policy or program run by an outside agency, it should frame this action as a motion and a recommendation to the City Council. If adopted, the communication to the outside agency will be from the City Council.

Furthermore, commissions may not take any action that commits or indicates an intention to commit the City without authorization by the Council and coordination with the City Manager, such as endorsing grant applications, receiving donations and gifts, sponsoring community events, or approving use of City property, facilities, or other resources.

The commission may not act as a sponsor of or participate in (such as having an information booth) community events without the authorization of the City Council.

Commissions cannot hold a joint meeting or joint event with an outside agency. If information from an outside agency is desired, the commission may request that the secretary invite the outside agency to make a presentation and field questions at a regular commission meeting.

Commissions may not, without approval of Council, represent City policy or communicate in an official manner outside of Commission meetings. A commission may authorize one of its members to appear before another City commission without Council approval. Any time a commissioner uses their commission title or references their membership on a city commission when speaking publicly, they must state the following: "I am speaking in an individual capacity and not representing the [Commission Name] or the City of Berkeley.

When considering the appropriateness of communicating publicly as a commissioner, remember these simple guidelines.

- The City Council speaks for the City
- Commissions speak to the Council
- Commissioners speak as private individuals

## DFSC Staff Report

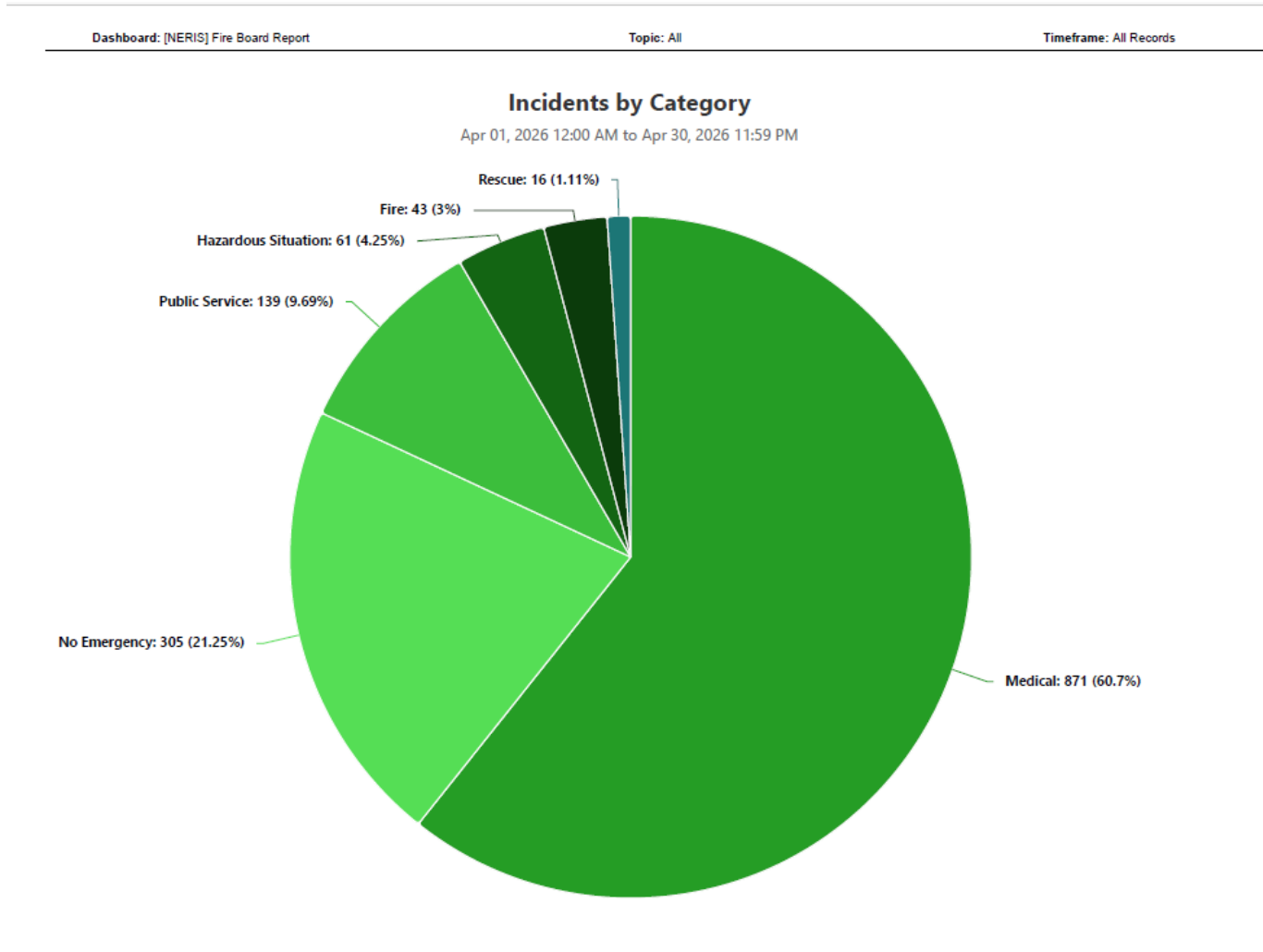
June 24, 2026

1. Measure FF Monthly Report
  - a. Budget Overview –
  - b. Quarter 1 (July, August, September) report due in November  
Quarter 2 (October, November, December) report due in February  
Quarter 3 (January, February, March) report due in May  
Quarter 4 (April, May, June) End of Year Report due in **October**
    - i. Program Review
      - **WUI Interns** – The Interns provide Berkeley Fire Department with a trained, mobile and mission-specific workforce that is principally assigned to monitor vegetative hazardous fuel on or near structures, collect data, and identify reduction activities
        - The new WUI Intern academy Training will wrap up on June 26<sup>th</sup>.
2. Measure GG Monthly Report
  - a. Budget Overview – No new update
  - b. Quarter 1 (July, August, September) report due in November  
Quarter 2 (October, November, December) report due in February  
Quarter 3 (January, February, March) report due in May  
Quarter 4 (April, May, June) End of Year Report due in **October**
3. Fire Facilities Master Plan (FMP): Berkeley Fire Department stations are undersized, in poor condition and in need of remodels or replacement. The Department initiated a long-term replacement planning process to better understand infrastructure needs. This process will provide the city leaders of today and tomorrow with actionable information ahead of future infrastructure bond measures. (*Measure FF has funded the study only*)
  - a. **Update:** No new updates.
4. Department Activities
  - a. **Firefighter Academy:** Firefighter Academy graduated on June 18<sup>th</sup> with twelve recruits. They have all been assigned shift and some started on June 21<sup>st</sup>.
  - b. **EMS Awards Ceremony:** On June 16<sup>th</sup> we recognized Derek Powell (Lifetime Achievement Award), Tom Bowring (2026 EMS Professional of the Year), Nate Koman (Clinical Excellence Award Nominee) and Jack Thiebaud (Paramedic of the Year).
  - c. **Regional Wildland Drill:** We hosted a regional multi-agency wildland fire training focused on progressive hose lay and water tender operations designed to simulate

the challenges of fighting a vegetation fire in areas with limited water supply and difficult access. Crews focused on rapidly deploying and extending hose lays over long distances, coordinating between companies and different agencies, maintaining communications, and sustaining fire attack operations as conditions changed. Water tender operations emphasized establishing a reliable water shuttle system, managing fill and dump sites, apparatus positioning, and maintaining a continuous water supply to support suppression efforts. The scenario challenged all ranks and participants in different ways. At the command post, Chiefs focused on improving interoperability, communications, command coordination, resource management, and evacuation planning in the Berkeley and Oakland Hills interface.

- d. **Virtual Commission Meetings:** The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission will begin holding hybrid meetings starting in August 2026. This is primarily for the public. Commissioners may only participate remotely under very specific circumstances. See page 55-57 on the [Commissioners Manual](#).

### 5. Call Volume Report



**DFSC Action Tracker**

| Date of DFSC Action     | Description                                                                                                                                                       | Status                                    |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| <b>October 29, 2025</b> | Direct staff to modify and revise the Draft Update to the Bike Plan dated July 29, 2025, to take into consideration recommendations from the DFSC noted in Report | Passed on the Consent Agenda on 5/19/2026 |

# DISASTER AND FIRE SAFETY COMMISSION

## REGULAR MEETING

May 20, 2026

7:00 PM

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District 3 – Todd Darling  
District 4 – Robert Kinosian

District 5 – Jacob Dadmun  
District 6 – Greg Murphy\*  
District 7 – Taj Herzer-Baptiste  
District 8 – Theo Gordon\*\*

### DRAFT MINUTES

#### Preliminary Matters

##### Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:01 PM

Present: Wilson, Bradstreet, Murphy, Herzer-Baptiste, Gordon, Kinosian

Late:

Absent: Katz, Darling

LOA: Dadmun

##### Public Present - 7

##### Approval of the Agenda

*Discussion –*

Motion to Approve: Wilson

Second: Gordon

*Agenda approved by Acclamation*

##### Public Comment on Non-Agenda Matters

*Public speakers: 0*

1. Chairperson's Report
2. Fire Department Staff Report

**REGULAR AGENDA MATTERS** *All Regular Agenda Matters are for discussion and possible action.*

3. **Action/Discussion:** Minutes of April 22, 2026 (Murphy)

**Recommendation:** Approve the Draft Minutes of April 22, 2026, Regular Meeting.

**Written Material:** DFSC April 22, 2026 Draft Minutes

Motion to Approve: Gordon  
Second: Herzer-Baptiste  
Vote:  
Ayes: Wilson, Bradstreet, Kinosian, Murphy, Herzer-Baptiste  
Gordon  
Abstain:  
Absent: Katz, Darling  
LOA: Dadmund
4. **Discussion/Action:** Requesting Alternative Budget Cuts to Those Proposed by The City Manager (Murphy)

**Recommendation:** The DFSC Approves a Written Memo to Request the Mayor and City Council Consider Other Budget Cutting Measure Than some of the Cuts Proposed by the City Manager.

**Written Material:** Draft Memo To City Council – With Friendly Amendment

Motion to Approve: Wilson -  
Second: Herzer-Baptiste  
Vote:  
Ayes: Wilson, Bradstreet, Kinosian, Murphy, Herzer-Baptiste, Gordon  
Abstain: None  
Absent: Katz; Darling  
LOA: Dadmun
5. **Discussion/Action:** Recommendation to City Council on Measures GG/FF

Tax Rate Adjustments (Murphy)

**Recommendation:** Approve the increase to use the 2027 PIG Tax Rate Adjustments..

**Written Material:** Memo To The Budget Office

Motion to Approve: Wilson  
Second: Herzer-Baptiste

Vote:  
Ayes: Wilson, Bradstreet, Kinosian, Murphy, Herzer-Baptiste, Gordon

Abstain: None  
Absent: Katz, Darling  
LOA: Dadmun

6. **Discussion/Action:** 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package (Katz)

**Recommendation:** Adopt Official Support Positions On All Thirteen Bills Comprising the 2026 Joint Megafire Prevention Package and Authorize and Direct the Mayor, City Manager, or Designee to Transmit Letters of Support To Each Bill's Author and to Senator Jesse Arreguin and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks, Representing Berkeley in the California Legislature.

**Written Material:** DFSC Report To Council (including letters of support)

Motion to Approve: Wilson  
Second: Gordon

Vote:  
Ayes: Wilson, Bradstreet, Kinosian, Murphy, Herzer-Baptiste, Gordon

Abstain: None  
Absent: Katz, Darling  
LOA: Dadmun

7. **Discussion/Action:** Street Trauma Prevention Program One Year Update  
(Staff/ UC Berkeley Team)

**Recommendation:** None

**Written Material:** PowerPoint Presentation  
Public Comment: 2

8. **Discussion/Action:** City of Berkeley FY26 Safe Streets and Roads for All Application (Wilson)

**Recommendation:** Approve A Letter of Support for the City of Berkeley FY26 Safe Streets and Roads for All That Is Led by the Berkeley Fire Department for Its Street Trauma Prevention Program (STPP).

**Written Material:** Draft Letter to reference the source “In the City of Berkeley, an average of 694 people are injured and five are killed in street trauma each year, with severe and fatal collisions disproportionately affecting people walking and biking”

Public Comment: 1  
Motion to Approve: Kinosian  
Second: Gordon  
Vote:  
Ayes:  
Abstain:  
Absent: Katz, Darling  
LOA: Dadmun

9. **Discussion/Action:** Work Plan FY 26/27 (Murphy) **Deferred**

**Recommendation:** Review Work Plan and select Work Group To Participate and/or Lead

**Written Material:** 2026-2027 DFSC Work Plan

Motion to Approve:  
Second:  
Vote:  
Ayes:  
Abstain:  
Absent:  
LOA:

#### 10. **Work Group Reports**

Receive reporting on recent activities by the following work groups:

- Plan & Budget Oversight
- Neighborhood Fire Resiliency
- Safe Passages
- Community Outreach
- Street Trauma Prevention Program

Future Agenda Items and Next Steps

•

**Motion to Adjournment**  
**Motion: Herzer-Baptiste**  
**Second: Gordon**  
**Adjourn 8:49 PM**

*This meeting will be conducted in accordance with the Brown Act, Government Code Section 54953. Any member of the public may attend this meeting. Questions regarding this matter may be addressed to Keith May, [kmay@berkeleyca.gov](mailto:kmay@berkeleyca.gov) 510-981-5508.*

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SECRETARY SIGNATURE

Action: Amendment and Approval of individual activities proposed in a 2026 – 2027 DFSC Work Plan that will then be finalized and submitted to City Council for Approval

Recommendation: The DFSC reviews, amends if necessary and approves the proposed workplan, with the activities and outcomes as detailed below. To the extent possible, commissioners will be selected for each work plan assignment with a designated leader of each work group. The final approved plan will be effective commencing on the date of approval of the new Work Plan for Fiscal Year 2026 by the City Council.

Rationale for Recommendation:

The City Council requires Commissions submit an annual Work Plan. The current Commissioner’s Manual, dated 2019* states:

DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PLAN

In 2016, the City Council took formal action directing all commissions, except Board of Library Trustees (BOLT), Design Review, and Zoning Adjustments Board (ZAB), to submit an annual work plan at the start of each fiscal year to the Council in the form of an Information Report. A commission work plan should contain the commission’s mission statement, goals, resources, activities, outputs, and desired outcomes. This planning document specifies how and when the commission plans to accomplish its objectives (by specifying outcomes) during the fiscal year. Goal statements explain the nature and scope of the work to be performed, and the time needed to accomplish the goal. Designing yearly work plans or goal statements may be done in conjunction with the development of the relevant departmental work plan so that the work of the department and the commission will complement each other throughout the year. When developing a work plan, commissions should take special care to ensure that they remain within the subject area purview of their enabling legislation.

Written Material:

**Berkeley Disaster and Fire Safety Commission
Proposed WORK PLAN – FY 2026-2027**

Mission Statement The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission serves as the public oversight body for Berkeley’s Measure GG and Measure FF funds, charged with reviewing the budget on a regular basis to ensure that the funds are spent in accordance with the intent of the voter approved measures, recommending the appropriate annual increase to the tax rate, and recommending new programs and policy positions requiring Measure GG and Measure FF funding. The ultimate goal of the Commission is to increase community safety, resilience, and education for community disaster preparedness. The Commission also reviews and makes recommendations on items referred by the City Council or other Commissions.

Summary of –2026-2027 Work Plan Activities

NAME	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	COMMISSIONERS
1. Plan & Budget Oversight BFD Staff Contact: D. Sprague / K. May	a) Review BFD budget materials on a quarterly basis b) Review current presentation materials / dashboards and make possible recommendations for changes or modifications c) Review the percentage of funds earmarked for Grizzly Peak and Panoramic Fire Zones	a) Provide input for quarterly and annual budget; Provide Annual budget recommendation to City Council on FF & GG; Provide City Council on annual GG increases b) Review and Support concentration of FF mitigation funds to Fire Zones 3 & 4 without sacrificing important programs and efforts in remaining fire zones c) Research possible funding for the Facilities Master Plan	<u>Murphy</u> Gordon Herzer-Baptiste
2. Neighborhood Fire Resiliency BFD Staff Contact: C. Arnold	a) Initiate process to monitor EMBER and new Building Code compliance with Staff- including the Fire Marshall and Building Department b) Obtain updates on HH mesh program	a) Review metrics and presentation materials/dashboards provided by Staff on EMBER and HH compliance b) Provide input and recommendations to BFD on expanding and improving the HH program	<u>Murphy</u> Dadmun Katz

2026-2027 DFSC WORK PLAN

Internal

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Monitor progress by Berkeley Firesafe Council on Tree removal and clean-up project d) Collaborate with Staff on providing recommendations to obtain additional funding for Vegetation Management and Home Hardening 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) Reports to full Commission from the Workgroup on a regular basis and requests an annual presentation from BFC d) Research possible funding resources for Home Hardening and Vegetation Management 	
<p>3. Safe Passages</p> <p>BFD Staff Contact: C. Arnold / S. Lana</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Review Safe Passage Components to EMBER ordinance, discuss implementation priorities with Staff b) Review Evacuation Study Results with Staff and draft recommendations for implementation c) Coordinate efforts with Vision Zero Workgroup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Recommendations for Safe Passages implementation in very high and high Fire Zones b) Provide input to Staff on recommendations and implementation c) Provide a joint report with Street Trauma Prevention Program workgroup to the full commission 	<p><u>Gordon</u> Bradstreet Darling</p>
<p>4. Street Trauma Prevention Program</p> <p>BFD Staff Contact: R. Ahmed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Meet regularly with the STP program manager on priorities, decision-making, internal processes, challenges and other matters. b) Develop policy briefs and recommendations related to street trauma prevention and response. c) Develop a compilation of research findings and best-practices related to street trauma prevention and response and provide, or arrange for, presentations to the DFSC, and, if warranted, to members of Council. d) Collaborate and communicate with other entities, including other City commissions, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assist in the development of written STPP goals, methods, and measurement tools. b) Provide ongoing feedback and recommendations to improve the STPP. c) Memoranda and / or referrals for approval from the DFSC for the City Council. d) Presentations and approved recommendations from DFSC to the City Council. Presentations for other entities 	<p><u>Wilson</u> Gordon Herzer-Baptiste</p>

2026-2027 DFSC WORK PLAN

Internal

	<p>on the role of the fire service in preventing, and responding to, street trauma incidents.</p>	<p>on the STP program and the role of the fire service in both preventing, and responding to, street trauma incidents. Written communications and possible special sessions with relevant City Commissions such as Transportation and Infrastructure, Planning, Aging and others.</p>	
<p>5. EMS Workgroup</p> <p>BFD Staff Contact: K. May</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Monitor implementation of Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) at the Emergency Communications Center and report on capacity and milestones. b) Provide structural support and oversight toward design and stand-up of a future Berkeley Emergency Alternative Response (BEAR) program. c) Develop a quantitative impact analysis of the planned Alta Bates closure on BFD response times, unit-hour utilization, and “Level Zero” frequency. Identify Medi-Cal, GEMT / IGT, and State community paramedicine reimbursement pathways to support EMS program build-out without new General Fund FTE. d) Coordinate with the Community Health Commission on Mobile Integrated Health and shared-client case management, and with the Transportation and Infrastructure Commission on EMS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Annual “State of Berkeley EMS” report to the full Commission. b) Quantitative model of Alta Bates closure impact maintained as the Commission’s reference scenario. c) Recommendations to the full Commission and City Council on Measure FF-eligible EMS investments and EMD implementation milestones. d) Memoranda and / or referrals for approval from the DFSC for the City Council on EMS matters. Joint reports and written communications with the Community Health Commission and the Transportation and Infrastructure Commission as warranted. 	<p><u>Herzer-Baptiste</u> [TBD] [TBD]</p>

2026-2027 DFSC WORK PLAN

Internal

	trauma data as an input to Vision Zero.		
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* COMMISSIONERS' MANUAL 2019 edition; Amended and officially adopted by Resolution No. 69,063-N.S. (2019)

Alternative Action Considered:

None

[] CALENDAR

Date

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

Submitted by: Greg Murphy, Chairperson

Subject: Evaluation of the Berkeley Emergency Alternative Response (BEAR) Program: DFSC Ad-Hoc Committee and Request for Council Support

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Council action to: (1) endorse the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission's formation of an ad-hoc committee to evaluate the feasibility, fiscal impact, and operational structure of reviving the Berkeley Emergency Alternative Response (BEAR) program; (2) direct the Berkeley Fire Department, the Health, Housing and Community Services Department, and the Berkeley Police Department to provide staff support, operational data, and subject-matter expertise to the ad-hoc committee, including timely written responses from the Berkeley Fire Department to the specific data and information requests set forth in the section titled "Requested Data and Information from the Berkeley Fire Department" below; (3) authorize City departments to coordinate with the Community Health Commission's parallel BEAR 2.0 planning process and to pursue external funding (state, federal, county, philanthropic, and hospital community benefit sources); and (4) request that the ad-hoc committee return to Council, through DFSC, with findings and recommendations within six months.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

No direct fiscal costs to the City of Berkeley. The recommended action authorizes the formation and support of an evaluation committee. No City appropriation or expenditure is required at this stage. Staff time required for committee participation is anticipated to be modest and absorbable within existing departmental capacity.

There are substantial potential fiscal benefits to the City. The 2024–2025 BEAR pilot demonstrated that a meaningful proportion of low-acuity 9-1-1 calls in Berkeley are concentrated among a small cohort of residents with chronic medical, behavioral health, and social needs whose emergencies are repeatedly routed through the most expensive components of the emergency response system. A revived and properly designed BEAR program would be expected to:

- Reduce avoidable emergency department transports and associated ambulance costs, which the City directly absorbs through Fire Department resources;
- Reduce overtime expenditures and crew fatigue at fire stations responding to repeat low-acuity calls;
- Free Advanced Life Support and suppression resources for higher-acuity emergencies, improving response time performance citywide;

- Reduce reliance on the Berkeley Police Department for wellness checks and psychiatric emergencies — a responsibility the proposed FY 2027–28 Budget Balancing Plan would shift exclusively to BPD following the elimination of the City’s Mobile Crisis Team; and
- Reduce City costs by capturing external reimbursement and grant revenue, including California EMS Authority Community Paramedicine / Triage to Alternate Destination program funds, CARESTAR Foundation grants, Medi-Cal Enhanced Care Management revenue under CalAIM, hospital community benefit contributions, and additional other sources.

The evaluation committee will be expressly tasked with developing budget scenarios that prioritize external and reimbursement-based funding pathways, recognizing the City’s structural General Fund deficit and the constraints articulated in the City Manager’s FY 2027–28 Proposed Budget Balancing Plan.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Berkeley continues to experience high volumes of low-acuity medical and social-service-related 9-1-1 calls that are not well matched to the traditional fire/EMS response model. From September 2024 through March 2025, the Berkeley Fire Department piloted the Berkeley Emergency Alternative Response (BEAR) program — a twelve-month, field-based, low-acuity response unit staffed by a Physician Associate and a senior paramedic. Preliminary program data indicate that BEAR meaningfully engaged a population whose needs were not being addressed by the standard EMS pathway:

- Older adults dominated the patient population: 68% of patients served were age 65 or over, with an additional 17% age 55–64.
- Medicare and Medi-Cal were the dominant insurance types, reflecting structural reliance on public coverage and constrained access to primary care.
- Patient touchpoints were geographically concentrated in four ZIP codes (94710, 94702, 94703, and 94704), indicating clear hot-spot patterns suitable for targeted outreach.
- The Black/African American patient cohort showed a higher per-patient touchpoint rate than the larger White cohort, indicating disproportionate unmet need within that population.

Despite these results, the pilot was discontinued at the conclusion of its year-long term due to a lack of identified continuation funding while the underlying service demand has not abated. In the months since BEAR’s discontinuation, the City has lost or restructured several adjacent specialized response capacities, most notably the Specialized Care Unit (SCU).

The City’s fiscal situation has further raised the stakes. The City Manager’s FY 2027–28 Proposed Budget Balancing Plan recommends elimination of the last General Fund–supported Mental Health Mobile Crisis Team positions and shifts responsibility for wellness checks and psychiatric emergencies entirely to the Berkeley Police Department. The Plan acknowledges that long-term reliance on Alameda County for these services “remains uncertain due to budget

challenges and policy shifts.” This creates an emerging gap in Berkeley’s emergency response system that an evaluated, properly funded BEAR successor program could partially fill.

The Community Health Commission has separately taken parallel action. On April 23, 2026, the CHC considered a recommendation directing the Health, Housing and Community Services Department and the Fire Department to jointly develop a “BEAR 2.0” implementation plan within ninety days, including service model, staffing, data and privacy framework, evaluation design, and budget scenarios. The CHC recommendation explicitly contemplates a liaison from the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission. Coordinated action by both commissions, with Council support, will avoid duplication and maximize the likelihood of a sustainable, cross-departmental program.

Compounding these pressures, the announced relocation of inpatient services from the Alta Bates Berkeley campus to Emeryville is expected to lengthen ambulance transport and unit out-of-service times for Berkeley’s four front-line medic units, increasing reliance on mutual aid from Piedmont, Albany, and Falck Northern California, and adding load to an Alameda County EMS system already at or near capacity — a system whose pressures derive in significant part from call volume in neighboring Oakland. Reductions in low-acuity 9-1-1 volume of the kind a properly designed BEAR successor would deliver will become more, not less, operationally important as that transition proceeds, and meaningfully implicate provider workload, emergency department throughput, and the City’s ability to keep Advanced Life Support resources available for higher-acuity emergencies.

BACKGROUND

The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission has maintained an active focus on the operational health of Berkeley’s emergency response system, including EMS call volume, response time performance, alternative response models, reduction in the incidence of street trauma, and the integration of public health and fire/EMS resources.

The 2024–2025 BEAR pilot reflected an effort to translate national best practices in mobile integrated health (MIH) and community paramedicine (CP) into a Berkeley-specific model. Comparable programs in peer jurisdictions — including the now-terminated CAHOOTS in Eugene, Oregon; CARE Department in Seattle, Washington; and EMS-6 / Street Crisis Response Team in San Francisco — demonstrate that, when properly designed and resourced, alternative response programs can reduce avoidable acute care utilization while improving outcomes for vulnerable residents.

California has a burgeoning policy environment for these programs. The California EMS Authority maintains a formal Community Paramedicine and Triage to Alternate Destination authorization pathway. The CARESTAR Foundation funds CP/MIH program development with an explicit equity focus. CalAIM’s Enhanced Care Management benefit creates a Medi-Cal reimbursement pathway for the high-utilizer cohort BEAR was designed to serve.

On March 25, 2026, the DFSC adopted Item 4 (Herzer-Baptiste), formally recommending the formation of an ad-hoc committee to evaluate the feasibility, fiscal impact, and operational structure of reviving the BEAR program. The ad-hoc committee will draw on input from the

Berkeley Fire Department, the Berkeley Police Department, the Health, Housing and Community Services Department, the Alameda County EMS Agency, labor representatives as appropriate, community-based service providers, and subject-matter experts in mobile integrated healthcare. The Commission seeks Council's endorsement of this work and Council direction to City staff to participate substantively in the evaluation.

SCOPE OF THE AD-HOC COMMITTEE'S EVALUATION

The ad-hoc committee will examine, at minimum, the following areas, and will coordinate its analysis with the Community Health Commission's BEAR 2.0 planning process:

- **Call volume and utilization analysis:** Examination of current 9-1-1 call data to identify the proportion of incidents potentially appropriate for an alternative response pathway, and characterization of the repeat-utilizer cohort by demographics, geography, and presenting need.
- **Cost-benefit and cost-avoidance analysis:** Quantification of avoided ambulance transports, reduced overtime, reduced ED utilization, and downstream system impacts, paired with realistic program operating cost scenarios.
- **Service model and staffing options:** Comparative evaluation of nurse practitioner or physician associate–led, paramedic-led, and hybrid clinical staffing configurations, with attention to clinical governance, medical direction, and dispatch protocols.
- **Interagency coordination:** Specification of the operational interface among Berkeley Fire Department, the Berkeley Police Department, HHCS, Alameda County EMS, hospital partners, and community-based organizations.
- **Lessons from the prior pilot and from peer jurisdictions:** Synthesis of available data from the 2024–2025 BEAR pilot, with structured comparison to CAHOOTS, CARE, EMS-6 / Street Crisis Response, and analogous national community paramedicine programs.
- **Funding strategy:** Identification of grant, county, state, federal, philanthropic, hospital community benefit, and reimbursement-based funding sources, with a clear pathway to a sustainable funding stack that minimizes General Fund exposure.
- **Equity and community accountability:** Design of an equity framework, community engagement plan, and disaggregated reporting commitments, in alignment with the Berkeley Wellness Blueprint 'Community Health Improvement Plan'.

REQUESTED DATA AND INFORMATION FROM THE BERKELEY FIRE DEPARTMENT

To support the ad-hoc committee's evaluation, the Disaster and Fire Safety Commission requests that the Berkeley Fire Department provide responses to the specific information requests set forth below. Several of these questions were initially directed to Fire Department EMS leadership in informal correspondence and remain outstanding; the Commission asks that they be addressed formally as part of this evaluation. Complete and timely responses are foundational to a credible cost-benefit analysis, to honest assessment of operational lessons

learned from the 2024–2025 pilot, and to the design of any successor program. The Commission requests that responses be transmitted to the ad-hoc committee through the Commission Secretary within sixty days of Council adoption of the recommended action.

1. Call volume, dispatch methodology, and Communications Center integration.

A central question for any evaluation of BEAR is how the unit was activated and how often. The Commission requests:

- The total call volume managed by the BEAR unit during the September 2024 – March 2025 pilot, disaggregated by call type, presenting complaint, time of day, day of week, and geographic origin (ZIP code or beat).
- A description of the dispatch methodology that governed BEAR responses — specifically, whether the unit operated on a self-dispatch model (identifying and responding to calls based on its own monitoring of radio traffic and CAD), a Communications Center–dispatched model, or a hybrid model. The Commission requests an account of how this design choice was made, by whom, on what timeline, and what alternatives were considered.
- The volume and types of community outreach and proactive contacts made by the unit outside of the 9-1-1 dispatch pathway (for example, scheduled follow-ups with high-utilizer patients, outreach to encampments, coordination visits with social service providers), with aggregate counts by category.
- The degree and quality of operational coordination between the BEAR unit and the Public Safety Communications Center, including any standard operating procedures, dispatch protocols, dispatcher training, and CAD configuration changes that were implemented (or that were proposed but not implemented) to support the program.
- Whether — and to what extent — the Berkeley Police Department, which operates the City’s combined Public Safety Communications Center, was engaged in the design, integration, and ongoing operation of BEAR’s dispatch interface. The Commission has received anecdotal accounts suggesting that PD/Communications Center collaboration on prior alternative response programs’ integration with 9-1-1 dispatch may have been incomplete. The Commission requests the Department’s candid account of the actual level of interagency coordination on dispatch integration, and an assessment of whether such concerns are well-founded or unfounded.
- To the extent feasible, a quantitative estimate of the additional appropriate calls that could have been served, additional ambulance transports that could have been avoided, and associated cost savings that could have been realized had dispatch integration with the Communications Center been more fully developed.

2. Clinical staffing model, paramedic training, and program design rationale.

The September 2024 DFSC staff report describing the program’s inception (Item 5.f) identified the BEAR unit’s clinical staffing as a Physician Associate paired with a Senior Paramedic. Subsequent informal accounts have described the unit as having operated, at least at points

during the pilot, with a Nurse Practitioner paired with a Senior “Community” Paramedic. The Commission requests clarification of, and supporting documentation for, the following:

- The actual clinical staffing configuration that operated on the BEAR unit at each phase of the pilot, including any mid-pilot changes to staffing model and the rationale for any such change.
- The Department’s rationale for selecting an advanced-practice clinician (Physician Associate or Nurse Practitioner) paired with a single paramedic, rather than a dual Community Paramedic configuration or a Community Paramedic / EMT configuration. The Commission recognizes that an advanced-practice clinician brings a clinical knowledge base distinct from traditional fire and EMS training; the Commission seeks the Department’s explanation of how that distinct value was weighed against the cost, staffing, and scope-of-practice considerations associated with alternative configurations.
- Whether the Berkeley Fire Department paramedic assigned to the BEAR unit held a current California EMS Authority Mobile Integrated Health — Community Paramedic (MIH-CP) certification at the time of assignment, and if not, what equivalent or supplemental training was completed.
- All additional training, didactic preparation, ride-alongs, clinical rotations, and competency requirements imposed on the assigned paramedic prior to assuming BEAR duties, and any continuing education or competency maintenance requirements during the pilot.
- The Department’s current view, with the benefit of the pilot experience, on the relative operational and clinical advantages of (a) NP-led, (b) PA-led, (c) dual Community Paramedic, and (d) Community Paramedic / EMT staffing configurations for a Berkeley successor program, including any preference and the basis for that preference.

3. Continuum-of-care pathways and downstream referrals.

A core premise of mobile integrated health is connection of patients to longitudinal services rather than episodic acute care. The Commission requests aggregate data on the continuum-of-care pathways utilized by the BEAR team for patients served during the pilot, including:

- Identification of the social service, behavioral health, primary care, housing, and community-based organization partners to which BEAR patients were referred.
- The volume of referrals made to each partner or service category.
- Available data on referral acceptance, completion, follow-up, and downstream patient outcomes.
- Any data-sharing, memoranda of understanding, or care-coordination agreements that were in place during the pilot, and any that the Department believes would be necessary to formalize for a successor program.

4. Integration with related City contracts and parallel response programs.

A revived BEAR program will be most effective, and most cost-effective, if it is designed in coordination with adjacent contracts and response capacities the City already maintains, rather than in isolation. The Commission requests:

- A description of any discussions, internal or interagency, that took place during BEAR's design or pilot regarding integration with the City's contracted involuntary psychiatric (5150) transport provider with the goal of building a more holistic mobile integrated health and behavioral-health response system rather than a stand-alone unit.
- The Department's assessment of integration models that combine community paramedicine, behavioral health, and alternative-destination capacity within a single coordinated program. Several peer examples the Commission suggests the Department to consider in its response include the prior Berkeley Fire Department Mobile Integrated Paramedic program; Eugene, Oregon CAHOOTS program; City of Alameda, CA's CARE team; Seattle's Health One and CARE Responder programs; Los Angeles County Fire Department's Advanced Provider Response Unit; Denver, Colorado's Support Team Assisted Response; Houston, TX's Harris County Emergency Corps; Dallas, TX's Mobile Community Healthcare Program; Washington, D.C. Fire Department and GMR's collaboration Right Care, Right Now; Colorado Springs, CO Community and Public Health Division CARES programs; and Tulsa, OK Fire Department Mobile Integrated Healthcare program which was recently awarded a National EMS Innovation award; each of which braids alternative response, behavioral health, and EMS resources under coordinated dispatch and clinical governance.
- The Department's view of how anticipated reductions in federal social-service funding will affect demand for non-emergency-department-resolvable medical, behavioral, and social calls in Berkeley and how a renewed BEAR program could be structured to absorb that demand without overburdening BPD, BFD, or hospital partners.

5. Pre-program needs assessment and Public Health Department collaboration.

A defensible alternative-response program design rests on documented community needs and on close coordination between the operational response system and the public health authority. The Commission requests:

- Confirmation of whether a Community Needs Assessment, gap analysis, or comparable structured pre-program study was conducted prior to BEAR's September 2024 launch — and, if so, a copy of that document and identification of who participated in its preparation.
- If no such assessment was conducted, the Department's view of how a needs assessment should be structured for a successor program, including the appropriate scope, the partners that should participate, the data sources that should be drawn upon, and an indicative timeline.
- Whether the Berkeley Fire Department would entertain a formal collaboration with the City's Public Health Department on a renewed BEAR program. The Commission notes

that the City's Public Health Officer and Medical Director has a clinical and academic background in fire and disaster medicine, and that meaningful Public Health Department engagement — in clinical governance, data collection, evaluation design, and equity framework — would substantially strengthen any successor program. The Commission requests the Department's position on the appropriate scope and structure of such a collaboration.

- The Department's view on whether a renewed program should sit administratively within the Fire Department, within the Health, Housing and Community Services Department, or as a jointly governed program, and the principal advantages and disadvantages of each option.

6. Funding model and pre-program funding development.

A clear understanding of the BEAR pilot's funding history is essential to any responsible projection of how a revived program would be financed. The Commission requests a complete account of the financial structure that supported BEAR, including:

- The specific grant or external funding source that supported the initial six months of BEAR, including the amount, the funder, the application timeline, and the conditions of award.
- The internal funding reallocation that, the Commission understands from prior remarks by Chief Sprague and Deputy Chief May, was used to extend operations beyond the initial grant period — including the source(s) of those reallocated funds, the budget category from which they were drawn, and the duration of the bridge.
- The funding-model discussions that took place prior to the program's inception: which funding pathways the Department explored, which were pursued, which were declined, and the reasoning supporting each decision.
- The factors that ultimately led to selection of the chosen grant, and any lessons learned that should inform a future funding strategy.
- Any sustainability analysis the Department conducted at the time of program design, and the Department's current view of the principal reasons the program was not extended past the initial twelve months.

In framing its funding analysis for a successor program, the Commission requests that the Department address each of the recognized funding strategies in current Mobile Integrated Health and Community Paramedicine practice, including: (a) integration of program costs into the EMS operational budget; (b) foundation and philanthropic grants; (c) hospital partnerships tied to readmission-reduction incentives under the Medicare Hospital Readmission Reduction Program; (d) hospice and home health agency partnerships; (e) partnerships with data-driven care management firms; (f) Medi-Cal reimbursement pathways, including Enhanced Care Management under CalAIM; (g) Medicare Advantage and commercial insurer contracts; (h) direct-to-patient or membership-based revenue, where appropriate; and (i) value-based or capitated contracts with commercial payers. The Department's narrative should identify which of

these strategies are most likely to produce a stable funding stack for a Berkeley program, which have been previously explored, and which warrant new exploration.

Based on informal information conveyed to the Commission, it is the Commission's current working understanding that the 2025 budget figure associated with BEAR was approximately \$700,000. The Commission requests that the Department confirm or correct this figure, specify the precise period it covers (calendar year 2025, fiscal year 2025, the full Sept 2024 – Sept 2025 pilot, or another defined period), and provide a line-item breakdown of how that total was composed across personnel, vehicle, equipment, medical direction, training, data and software, indirect, and any other operating cost categories, with each line attributed to its underlying funding source.

7. Hospital and health system partnership outreach.

Hospital and health system partners, particularly Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health (Summit Oakland and Alta Bates Medical Center) are direct beneficiaries of the reduced emergency department utilization, avoided admissions, and reduced 30-day readmissions associated with mobile integrated health programs, and represent a substantial and underdeveloped funding pathway. The strategic case for hospital co-investment in a Berkeley MIH program is materially strengthened by the announced relocation of inpatient services from the Alta Bates Berkeley campus to Emeryville: longer transport times for Berkeley's medic units, greater dependence on mutual aid, and increased emergency department crowding at receiving facilities together raise the financial stake every regional hospital system has in upstream demand reduction. Peer programs across the country demonstrate that hospital-anchored MIH models are viable; for example, the Greater Regional Health system in Polk County, Iowa operates a community paramedicine program in which the community paramedic is employed directly by the hospital, with corresponding alignment of clinical governance, data sharing, and financial incentives. The Commission requests information on:

- Any prior outreach by the Berkeley Fire Department to Kaiser Permanente, Sutter Health, or other regional hospital systems regarding clinical partnership, data sharing, alternate destination protocols, or financial co-sponsorship of BEAR or a successor program.
- The status and disposition of any such outreach, including the identity of points of contact, the nature of any responses received, and any agreements reached or declined.
- The Department's assessment of whether a hospital-employer or hospital-anchored MIH staffing model — in which one or more clinicians are employed by the partnering hospital system rather than the City — is a viable structural option for Berkeley, and the principal advantages and disadvantages such a model would present.
- The Department's current assessment of the most promising pathways for hospital community benefit funding, hospital-system co-sponsorship, or formal mobile integrated health partnership agreements as part of a sustainable funding stack for a revived

program, and a recommended sequence of outreach the Commission and Council can support.

EQUITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

A revived BEAR program would advance the City's adopted Community Health Improvement Plan by providing trauma-informed, clinically appropriate field response and follow-up to populations that are presently overrepresented in repeat 9-1-1 utilization, including older adults, residents of West and South Berkeley ZIP codes, residents reliant on Medicare and Medi-Cal, and unsheltered or housing-insecure residents with high medical vulnerability. The pilot data show that these residents are not effectively served by the traditional EMS-and-transport model. A properly designed alternative response program is the most direct policy lever available to the City to interrupt the cycle of acute-care utilization that disproportionately burdens these populations.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

- Take no Council action and allow the DFSC ad-hoc committee to proceed without formal Council endorsement. The Commission believes that Council's inaction would result in an untenable situation as coordination among the Berkeley Fire Department, HHCS, and Police, and coordination with the Community Health Commission's parallel BEAR 2.0 process is required for the effective discernment this work necessitates. Official direction from Council to staff is vitally important to the success and timeliness of the work.
- Defer evaluation pending the outcome of the FY 2027–28 budget process and the November 2026 Sales and Use Tax measure. The Commission believes that delay would worsen the emerging gap created by the proposed elimination of the Mobile Crisis Team and would foreclose timely pursuit of external funding cycles, several of which require lead time that is incompatible with deferral.
- Combine the DFSC ad-hoc committee with the CHC BEAR 2.0 workgroup into a single body. The Commission believes this approach would result in unnecessary confusion—whereby two bodies have distinct (and complementary) statutory and substantive perspectives — DFSC focused on the operational and fiscal health of the emergency response system, CHC focused on health-equity service delivery — and that coordinated parallel processes, with formal liaison representation in each direction, will produce a stronger and more durable result than consolidation.

CITY MANAGER

CONTACT PERSON

Keith May, Commission Secretary, Deputy Fire Chief, (510) 981-5508

Communication to the DFSC 6/17/26

Based on recent submissions for Workgroups and Referrals to Council, it seems to me that many of the commissioners do not fully understand the role of the commission along with the rules and regulations regarding the commission's authority. I have included specific excerpts for the Commissioner's manual and the mission statement of the DFSC for reference. Highlighted text is what I consider to be the most salient:

Disaster and Fire Safety Commission Mission

*Advises the **City Council** on all matters affecting fire safety and/or disaster resilience within Berkeley.*

The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission serves as the **public oversight body for Berkeley's Measure GG and Measure FF funds, charged with reviewing the budget on a regular basis to ensure that the funds are spent in accordance with the intent of the voter approved measures**, recommending the appropriate annual increase to the tax rate, and recommending new programs and policy positions requiring Measure GG and Measure FF funding. The ultimate goal of the Commission is to increase community safety, resilience, and education for community disaster preparedness. **The Commission also reviews and makes recommendations on items referred by the City Council or other Commissions.**

From the Commissioner's Manual (2019)

DFSC is a "Advisory" Commission:

Those are "commissions that **advise the City Council concerning policies and programs, within the limitations of their enabling legislation.**

Commissioner's Manual re: Workplans

A commission work plan should contain the commission's mission statement, goals, resources, activities, outputs, and desired outcomes. This planning document specifies how and when the commission plans to accomplish its objectives (by specifying outcomes) during the fiscal year. Goal statements explain the nature and scope of the work to be performed and the time needed to accomplish the goal. Designing yearly work plans or goal statements may be done in conjunction with the development of the relevant departmental work plan so that the work of the department and the commission will complement each other throughout the year. **When developing a work plan, commissions should take special care to ensure that they remain within the subject area purview of their enabling legislation.**

Commissioner's Manual re: Communication with Outside Agencies

Commissions function in an advisory capacity and, in the absence of an explicit delegation of the role to act on the City's behalf by the Council on a particular issue, they may not directly communicate with outside agencies.

Unless specifically authorized by the Council, commissions may not represent the City or its policies or positions to outside agencies either on their own behalf or on behalf of the City.

If a commission wishes to support or object to a particular policy or program run by an outside agency, it should frame this action as a motion and a recommendation to the City Council. If adopted, the communication to the outside agency will be from the City Council.

Furthermore, commissions may not take any action that commits or indicates an intention to commit the City without authorization by the Council and coordination with the City Manager, such as endorsing grant applications, receiving donations and gifts, sponsoring community events, or approving use of City property, facilities, or other resources.

The commission may not act as a sponsor of or participate in (such as having an information booth) community events without the authorization of the City Council.

Commissions cannot hold a joint meeting or joint event with an outside agency. If information from an outside agency is desired, the commission may request that the secretary invite the outside agency to make a presentation and field questions at a regular commission meeting.

Commissions may not, without approval of Council, represent City policy or communicate in an official manner outside of Commission meetings. A commission may authorize one of its members to appear before another City commission without Council approval. Any time a commissioner uses their commission title or references their membership on a city commission when speaking publicly, they must state the following: "I am speaking in an individual capacity and not representing the [Commission Name] or the City of Berkeley.

When considering the appropriateness of communicating publicly as a commissioner, remember these simple guidelines.

- **The City Council speaks for the City**
- **Commissions speak to the Council**
- **Commissioners speak as private individuals**