

Commission on Aging
Odile Lavault, Chair
Darlene Bronson, Commission Secretary

COMMISSION ON AGING REGULAR AGENDA

Wednesday, September 17, 2025
North Berkeley Senior Center
Gooseberry Room
1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair, Lavault
2. Roll Call by Secretary, Bronson
3. Public Comments

The public may comment about any item not on the agenda. Public comments are limited to two minutes per speaker. Public comments regarding agenda items will be heard while the Commission is discussing the item.

4. Approval of minutes from July 2025 (Attachment A)
5. Approval of order of agenda

The Commission may discuss any subject listed on the Agenda. Public comments regarding agenda items will be heard while the Commission is discussing the item. Public comments are limited to two minutes per speaker.

Presentation

None

Staff report

Discussion / Action Items

1. Ceramics class letter at South Berkeley Senior Center, Lavault (Attachment B)
2. Report from Senior Ambassador Outreach working group, Orrick, Davila, Newbery, and Evans
3. Filling vacancy for Commission on Aging, Lavault
4. Proposal for presentation by Senior and Disability Action, nonprofit in SF, Orrick
5. Cycling without Age, Orrick/Newbery
6. SF Chronicle, article, KQED Forum Show on Aging

Commissioner reports

Information Items

****Please submit all agenda items by *Wednesday October 1st* to the Commission Secretary, for the *October 15th* meeting only.**

Items for Ongoing Discussion

1. Safety & identify homebound seniors in Berkeley
2. Older drivers' safety and DMV policies

Adjournment

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.

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 commission secretary for further information.

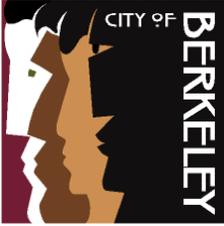
Any writings or documents provided to a majority of the Commission regarding any item on this agenda will be made available for public inspection at the North Berkeley Senior Center located at 1901 Hearst Avenue, during regular business hours. The Commission Agenda and Minutes may be viewed on the City of Berkeley website: <http://www.cityofberkeley.info/commissions>.

Secretary:

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Health, Housing & Community
Services Department
Commission on Aging

COMMISSION ON AGING REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 16, 2025
1:30 p.m.

1. Roll Call

Present: (7) Davila, Lavault, Newbery, Evans, Collins, Orrick, Porter

Absent:

Excused Absence: Yamaguchi

Staff Present: (2) Darlene Bronson, Donnaracia Scurry

Public: (3)

2. Public Comment (2)

Presentation

Mary Triston, City of Berkeley Aging Services Transportation Coordinator-BRSD's FY26 Program Plan

Staff Report

- Commission on Aging will be on hiatus in August. Will return to regular schedule on September 17, 2025. - Darlene Bronson, Commission Secretary
- Introduction on new Commissioner, Rose Ann Davila, appointed by Council member, Tregub

Action Items

1. Proposal for presentation by Senior and Disability Action, nonprofit in SF, Orrick
2. Senior Ambassador outreach working group- Outreach- Newbery, Orrick, Evans & Davila

Discussion Items

1. Filling vacancy for Commission on Aging
2. Cycling without Age (added to agenda by Orrick)
3. Older driver safety and DMV policies
4. SF Chronicle, article, KQED Forum Show on Aging

Commissioners adjourned at 3:04p.m.

Minutes Approved on:

Internal

Darlene Bronson, Commission Secretary

Sept 3, 2025

Dear Commissioners,

The purpose of this letter is to reach out to you on behalf of 100+ elder ceramic artists of the South Berkeley Senior Center with a matter of great concern and heartfelt urgency.

We were deeply shaken to recently learn that the South Berkeley Senior Center will soon close for renovations, with no plan to relocate what is, to our knowledge, the only equitable, ongoing, and entirely free art program for seniors in Berkeley.

In just two short years, volunteers have breathed new life into what was an essentially abandoned, desolate ceramics studio, turning it into a vibrant sanctuary where both lifelong artists and first-time creators come together to learn, grow, and belong. The response has been overwhelming: the studio is at full capacity, and the waiting list for our free classes continues to grow. This demand speaks volumes about the essential needs our program fulfills.

Though the City has never provided funding, we've sustained the program through the generosity of our members, who are so grateful for all it provides. The Berkeley Senior Center contributes the studio—the room, kiln, and electricity—while we ensure that the instruction, experience and supplies remain completely free and accessible to all.

Creative expression is a powerful tool for healthy aging. For seniors, participating in art offers far-reaching cognitive, emotional, and physical benefits. It can sharpen memory and mental agility, boost mood and emotional resilience, and support fine motor skills and dexterity. Just as importantly, it creates opportunities for social connection, fosters a sense of purpose and accomplishment, and helps ease stress and anxiety.

What makes this studio truly remarkable is not only the creativity it inspires, but the deep human connections it cultivates. At a time when seniors are facing an unprecedented crisis of loneliness, our members—who reflect a wide range of ethnic and economic backgrounds—have built a vibrant, tightly woven community. With nearly 20% of Berkeley's residents over the age of 65, the impact of such a program is both profound and far-reaching.

Yet this is the only arts program of its kind for seniors in Berkeley, and possibly across the Bay Area—fully inclusive, equitable, and accessible to all. Losing this program would be a painful and unnecessary setback for our senior community, to equitable programming, and to the Arts. We ask for your support to urge the City to honor and protect what has been built by helping us find a temporary home during the renovation.

In case there is any question, squeezing into the North Berkeley Senior Center is not a viable option. The facility lacks adequate space for our sizable program, has declined to make modifications to accommodate us, offers insufficient parking, and is located too far from most of our members. With the West Berkeley Senior Center permanently closed, our city's large and growing senior population is in urgent need of thoughtful, creative solutions and your

recommendation to the City of Berkeley that they provide a temporary or permanent location for our studio.

If any program embodies the mission of the Berkeley Commission on Aging—to enhance the quality of life for people 55 years and older in Berkeley, and to increase public awareness of their contributions and needs by actively promoting their health, safety, independence and participation in our community.—it is this one. Supporting our studio directly advances that purpose.

Why Frances Albrier?

Berkeley is facing a senior center crisis. Once we had three centers, now we have two, and with the South Berkeley Senior Center closing for renovations, seniors will effectively have just one. Yet, seniors make up over a third of Berkeley's population—about 27,000 people. By comparison, Emeryville, with just 1,500 seniors, has two senior centers. Oakland has ten. Berkeley elders deserve better.

Right now, the Frances Albrier Recreation Center's Art Room is used for a preschool that serves a maximum of 18 children for two and a half hours a day, four days a week. That's, at best, 45 hours of weekly use. Our ceramics studio, by contrast, serves about 30 seniors in a seven hour a day (approximately 84 people hours daily, or 420 hours weekly), a 933% better use of city space.

Berkeley already has countless preschools and 23 after-school programs. But there's only one free ongoing art program for seniors—and only one kiln in the entire city.

This program is not just recreation—it is a lifeline. It keeps seniors connected, creative, and healthy. Without a temporary home, it risks being lost forever.

We respectfully ask the Commission on Aging to urge the Berkeley Parks and Recreation to allocate the Frances Albrier Art Room to the SBSC ceramics studio during renovations. This is the most responsible and equitable use of city resources—and it honors the seniors who built this community.

With gratitude,

The volunteers and members of the Ceramics Studio