

PARKS, RECREATION, AND WATERFRONT COMMISSION

Golden Gate Fields Acquisition: Status Update

Commissioner's Information Communication · July 8, 2026 Regular Meeting

To: Allan Abshez, Chair; Roger Miller, Secretary; and Members of the Commission

From: Mary Muszynski, Commissioner (District 4)

Date: June 26, 2026; revised July 6, 2026

Re: Status of the Golden Gate Fields acquisition (Trust for Public Land / East Bay Regional Park District)

Item type: Information, discussion, and possible action: a proposal that the Commission extend an invitation to the EBRPD and TPL acquisition and planning teams to present the status of the project. No recommendation to Council is proposed at this time.

1. Purpose

This communication updates the Commission on the status of the proposed acquisition of the former Golden Gate Fields property by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) and the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD), consistent with the tracking charge of the Commission's Golden Gate Fields subcommittee, created April 8, 2026, and comprising Commissioners Nash, Muszynski, and Stewart, as recorded in the April 8, 2026 minutes as amended and approved on May 13, 2026. It is informational. Berkeley is not the decision-maker on the acquisition, which proceeds between TPL and EBRPD; there is no matter ready for a Council recommendation at this time. The observations below identify where this Commission's attention is consequential before EBRPD's planning process begins. As a discussion point and possible action, this communication proposes that the Commission extend an invitation to the EBRPD and TPL acquisition and planning teams to present the status of the acquisition and the anticipated community planning process.

2. Where the project stands

The acquisition is structured as a purchase by TPL, which holds an option on the property, followed by transfer to EBRPD as the long-term owner and steward. The principal facts, drawn from EBRPD's published materials and from EBRPD's June 26, 2026 board meeting at the site, which I attended:

- **Price and funding.** \$175 million purchase price, which EBRPD states includes removal of the existing above-ground structures. Committed to date: \$125 million through Proposition 4 (Governor's May Revise) and \$20 million from EBRPD's voter-approved Measure WW (2008). TPL and EBRPD are pursuing the balance from additional public and private sources.
- **Timeline.** TPL's option/funding deadline was described at the June 26 meeting as December 15, 2026; EBRPD's public materials describe securing the funds by early 2027 and completing the transfer by spring 2027. A public planning process, in partnership with the Cities of Albany and Berkeley, would follow acquisition.
- **Site.** Approximately 161 acres (about 31 submerged), the former Golden Gate Fields racetrack: approximately 122 acres in Albany and approximately 40 acres in Berkeley (including the historic stable area), per EBRPD's acquisition exhibit. These figures are approximate; the exact total and the jurisdictional split should be confirmed by EBRPD or the two cities' GIS/assessor records before being relied upon. The San Francisco Bay Trail runs along the site's shoreline edge. Lower Codornices Creek, at the boundary

between Albany and Berkeley, reaches the Bay through a channelized slough adjacent to the site near I-80; its restoration is an opportunity involving both cities.

3. Observations for the Commission

Three points bear on Berkeley specifically. None calls for a position on the acquisition; each is about Berkeley's standing and interests as the planning process forms.

Berkeley is the minority jurisdiction, and the planning window is the leverage point.

Berkeley holds the smaller share of the site, but EBRPD names both cities as partners in the post-acquisition community planning process. That process, anticipated for roughly 2027–2029, is where decisions about use, access, circulation, and shoreline treatment will be made. The front end of that process, before its assumptions are set, is where Berkeley's interests can still be shaped rather than reacted to: connections between the existing shoreline Bay Trail and the rest of the site, restoration of the Codornices Creek mouth at the Albany and Berkeley boundary, sea-level-rise adaptation continuity with Berkeley's own waterfront, and equitable shoreline access.

A seat at the table is moving on the Albany side; Berkeley's should be secured

deliberately. The day before the June 26 board meeting, the mayors of Albany and Berkeley met with EBRPD and TPL. Albany's mayor has signaled interest in having Albany's parks and recreation commission formally informed. On the Berkeley side, EBRPD's Acting General Manager and its Assistant General Manager for External Affairs have each indicated that EBRPD and TPL intend to present to this Commission in the fall. Confirming and scheduling that presentation is the concrete near-term step that establishes this Commission's channel before EBRPD's process is underway.

Long-term operations and maintenance funding is unresolved: worth tracking, not yet

actionable. EBRPD would be the long-term steward, and stewardship, maintenance, and programming would be guided by the Park District and informed by community input. The source of funding for ongoing operations and maintenance was not specified at the June 26 meeting. This is a question to watch as the project advances, particularly given its relationship to the regional-asset and waterfront-funding questions already before this Commission. As a matter of observation, Golden Gate Fields offers a nearby working example of regional stewardship of a shoreline asset. The Commission's State of the Parks Message recommended exploring funding and governance models that better reflect the waterfront's regional purpose; this acquisition will be a useful reference point for that inquiry.

4. Discussion item and proposed action

The consequential near-term step is at the Commission's own level rather than at Council. For the Commission's discussion, and for possible action if this item is noticed to permit it, I propose the following:

1. That the Commission extend an invitation to the EBRPD and TPL acquisition and planning teams to present the status of the Golden Gate Fields acquisition, and the anticipated community planning process, at the Commission's September 9, 2026 regular meeting, so that Berkeley is formally engaged before EBRPD's community planning process sets its assumptions; and
2. That the subcommittee continue tracking for a defined term, through TPL's option deadline of December 15, 2026, reporting to the full Commission at the September 9 and November 10, 2026 regular meetings. Any development that becomes ripe for action (a request to designate Berkeley a planning partner, a cost-share or governance

arrangement, or a development of the operations-and-maintenance funding question) would be brought to the full Commission in open session. At the conclusion of the term, the Commission may renew, redefine, or conclude the charge.

Sources

EBRPD, Future Golden Gate Fields Park project page (overview, site description, funding, and timeline).

TPL and EBRPD joint statements following the \$125 million state investment, May 14, 2026; statement of State Senator Jesse Arreguín (D-Berkeley), same date.

EBRPD board meeting and site presentation, Golden Gate Fields, June 26, 2026 (EBRPD staff and TPL); attended by the author.

Direct communications with EBRPD staff (Acting General Manager; Assistant General Manager, External Affairs Division), June 2026.

Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Commission minutes: April 8, 2026 (subcommittee created, Item 16); May 13, 2026 (April 8 minutes amended to record members Nash, Muszynski, and Stewart, Item 5).

Submitted as an individual Commissioner's communication for the July 8, 2026 regular meeting.

Golden Gate Fields — Site Meeting Photographs

EBRPD Board Meeting and Site Tour, June 26, 2026



EBRPD acquisition exhibit — parcel/jurisdiction map shown at the site meeting. Labels the split as City of Albany (122 acres) and City of Berkeley (40 acres), with the former racetrack oval and McLaughlin Eastshore State Park shoreline.



EBRPD regional context map — McLaughlin Eastshore State Park, Point Isabel shoreline, Brooks Island, and the Golden Gate Fields parcels with assessor parcel numbers.

Golden Gate Fields — Site Meeting Photographs

EBRPD Board Meeting and Site Tour, June 26, 2026



Former grandstand / clubhouse building with the “Welcome to Golden Gate Fields” signage, fronting the existing surface parking. Above-ground structures are slated for removal.



Attendees crossing the site during the June 26 EBRPD board meeting and walking tour, grandstand building at left.

Golden Gate Fields — Site Meeting Photographs

EBRPD Board Meeting and Site Tour, June 26, 2026



View west across San Francisco Bay from the site — Golden Gate Bridge and Marin headlands on the horizon, illustrating the shoreline setting and sea-level-rise exposure.



Site overlook during the tour, looking toward the racetrack/stable area, the Bay Bridge, and the Berkeley hills.