

Commissioner Rithwik Sudharsan
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City of Berkeley
Fair Campaign Practices Commission
Open Government Commission

Date: 15 October 2026
To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Janis Ching, Chair
Subject: Proposed revisions to the Open Government Ordinance regarding hybrid access and recording of public city meetings

Dear Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council,

The Fair Campaign Practices Commission (“FCPC”) and Open Government Commission (“OGC”) are concerned that most meetings of City boards and commissions are neither recorded nor accessible to the public remotely. When the Open Government Ordinance was adopted in 2011, it stated the City’s intent to broadcast certain commissions “as City resources become available,” and meaningful progress toward that goal has begun this year. Members of the public have also told us that most commission meetings lack remote public access, including some meetings where hybrid equipment is already in use for the Commissioners. We recommend amending the ordinance to set clear deadlines and standards so that all boards and commissions are hybrid-accessible and recorded. Our proposed language is attached.

We have spoken with city staff regarding these ideas, and we are excited about the rapid progress that is now being made towards the hybridization of all meetings. It is our understanding that the city clerk believes our June 30, 2027 hybridization deadline is feasible.

We propose that recordings of City Council and quasi-judicial board and commission meetings be retained for at least eight years, and recordings of all other boards and commissions for at least two years. We believe this is feasible given the rapidly declining cost of digital storage. We initially considered permanent retention but chose these periods in light of storage concerns raised by the City Clerk.

I have been directed by FCPC and OGC to write to you recommending that these revisions be made. We are excited that hybrid access will allow many more members of the public to attend public meetings, and that these powerful historical recordings will allow the public to examine the progression of public policy over time—two cornerstones of the spirit of the Open Government Ordinance.

Proposed Revisions to the Open Government Ordinance

2.06.100 Broadcast of meetings.

~~A. All regular and special meetings of the City Council, Redevelopment Agency, Rent Stabilization Board, and Zoning Adjustments Board, when held in the venue regularly used, shall be recorded, televised and video-streamed live as well as archived for replay. The live broadcasts shall be captioned.~~

~~B. It is the intent of the City to broadcast the meetings of the Planning Commission, Landmarks Preservation Commission, and Housing Advisory Commission, in the same manner as specified in paragraph A, as City resources become available.~~

A. All regular and special meetings of the City Council, Rent Stabilization Board, and Zoning Adjustments Board, when held in the venue regularly used, shall be streamed live on a two-way audio visual platform that is accessible by phone call, recorded, as well as archived for replay. The live broadcasts and archived recordings shall be captioned. No later than June 30, 2027, the above requirements shall apply to all public meetings of all boards and commissions.

B. Archived recordings for the City Council and all quasi-judicial boards and commissions shall be retained for at least eight years. Archived recordings for all other boards and commissions shall be retained for at least two years.

C. The City shall procure and maintain the necessary equipment and venues to support the regular broadcast and archival requirements of paragraphs A and B.

DG. The broadcast requirements shall not apply if necessary equipment malfunctions or if a public meeting is changed to a location that does not have the technological capacity to accommodate the broadcasting needs. This paragraph shall not be construed to excuse the City's obligations under paragraph C.

E. For all meetings of the city council and all quasi-judicial boards and commissions, in the event that technical difficulties prevent the streaming or recording of the meeting, the meeting shall not continue until these capabilities are restored.
