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PARKS, RECREATION, AND WATERFRONT COMMISSION
Regular Meeting
Wednesday, October 8, 2025, 7:00 P.M.
Frances Albrier Community Center - auditorium
2800 Park Street, Berkeley, CA 94702

Minutes - Draft

1. **Call to Order** (chair): 7pm.
2. **Roll Call** (Secretary). Present: Abshez; Cardile; Muszynski; Nash; Philip; Rybczynski; Samelson; Stewart; Absent: none.
3. **City of Berkeley Land Acknowledgement:**¹
4. **Action: Approval of Agenda.** (chair) (M/S/C: Rybczynski/Nash/U): Ayes: Abshez; Cardile; Muszynski; Nash; Philip; Rybczynski; Samelson; Stewart; Noes: none; Absent: none.
5. **Action: Approval of Minutes** for Wednesday, September 10, 2025 (chair).* (M/S/C: Rybczynski/Nash/U): Ayes: Abshez; Cardile; Muszynski; Nash; Philip; Rybczynski; Samelson; Stewart; Noes: none; Absent: none.
6. **Public Comment** (2 min each). a) Sara Anderson, Cal Sailing Club; b) Claudia Kawczynska, commission; c) Susan Schwartz, Codornices Creek; d) Jim McGrath, dock.
7. **Chair's Report/Discussion** (Abshez). New commissioners introduced (Stewart; Muszynski; Samelson; Philip).
8. **Departmental Overview for New Commission Members:** (Erickson/Miller).* Overview was provided.
9. **Director's Report:** Update on special events, community engagement, capital and maintenance projects, forestry, recreation (Erickson). Update was provided.
10. **Discussion/Action:** Potential November 2026 bond measure for city facilities and parks projects (Councilmember Taplin) (Erickson/Abshez).* Discussion was held. Public comment: a) Jim McGrath. The Commission M/S/C (Abshez/Rybczynski) to create a subcommittee for one year to study the the potential 2026 bond measure with the following appointees: Muszynski; Nash; Samelson; Stewart. Ayes: Abshez; Cardile; Muszynski; Nash; Philip; Rybczynski; Samelson; Stewart; Noes: none; Absent: none.
11. **Discussion/Action:** Create subcommittee on proposed Waterfront Fees (chair). Discussion was held. Chair Abshez appointed commissioner Philips to join him on the subcommittee for Waterfront Fees. Public Comment: a) Claudia Kawczynska; b) Emma Chrisman; c) Sara Anderson.
12. **Discussion:** Update on Throne portable toilet pilot program in Berkeley (Miller).* Update was provided.
13. **Discussion/Action:** Potential Fitness Court locations in Berkeley (Miller).* Update was provided. Public Comment: a) Gordon Stout.
14. **Discussion:** Addressing Litter, Graffiti, and Beautification issues in Berkeley – the Caltrans Clean California Grant Proposal (Miller).* Discussion was held.
15. **Information Reports:** Recent PRW Council Reports.*
16. **Future Agenda Items:** 3-on-3 basketball tournament; Public Art in Aquatic Park (Lavvorn); Citywide Accessibility Plan; Dog Parks locations.
17. **Communications.**
18. **Next PRW Commission meeting:** Wednesday, November 12, 2025.

¹ Text of the City of Berkeley Land Acknowledgement: <https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-agendas/SSCOC%20Agenda%20and%20Memorandum%20July%202%2C%202025.pdf>

19. Adjournment. 9:30pm.

* document is attached to agenda packet and on the commission website.

** document will be provided at the meeting.

- Commissioners in attendance: 8 of 8 appointed.
- Public in attendance: 8
- Public speakers: 8

I am Susan Schwartz, for more than 25 years head of all-volunteer Friends of Five Creeks, which works on watersheds and nature from Berkeley to Richmond. and about when that started we discovered a population of threatened Central Coast steelhead trout in Codornices Creek, our most intact. In general, agencies didn't want to believe this. It turned out that there were 100 trout in just one reach, when they did just one of several so-called restorations that provided new sports fields and protected a rebuilt University Village from flooding.

We have been protecting those trout ever since. In the process, we were a major part of creating, and then recreating, a creekside walkway along the creek west of San Pablo, a partnership among Albany, Berkeley, and UC Berkeley. Berkeley owns this part of the pathway, and there is a shared maintenance agreement.

This long story has no villains, but it has not been pretty. All the agencies forgot their promises of maintenance and a half million dollars in escrow to pay for it. The creek went to hell and hundreds of volunteers worked like dogs to bring it back.

Waves of large encampments have repeatedly wiped out vegetation and cost many thousands of dollars to clean up. I think it's safe to say that Berkeley has been the pretty consistent laggard, but Berkeley faces the worst of the epidemic of homelessness, and the most demanding citizenry want other things.

Berkeley has, however, consistently neglected low-cost preventive measures that could have reduced its costs, and lessened the likelihood of events like this near tragedy. The screaming campers could easily have died. That fire came very close to Urban Adaman's large shake dormitory.

These measures are

- (a) keep its commitment, made after a fire in Berkeley wiped out nearly all the trout, to post and maintain a system for reporting problems, so that visitors have a point of contact and are not shuttled among three agencies and
- (b) to make Berkeley's land a park, like the adjacent sports fields created as part of the bargain. This makes it legal to set hours and posting. The decision was made more than 20 years ago, when Lisa Caronna was superintendent, and I understand that Parks didn't want another bit to take care of. But the result has cost a lot more.

I ask that you read the background materials, ask questions, think for yourselves, and put this onto a future agenda. You cannot discuss this tonight, but I am happy to answer questions.



Berkeley's Waterfront faces serious environmental and economic challenges. The marina needs \$94 million in repairs, and Cesar Chavez faces serious issues due to deferred maintenance. Yet nearly 1.8 million people visited the waterfront in the year that ended this June. Clearly, there is something that attracts both new and returning visitors, despite the crumbling roads and closed restaurants. Boating generates nearly two thirds of the annual budget, but nearly twice as many people come to the other areas of the waterfront. Understanding why they come, and what they do when they are at the waterfront is a vital step for preserving this environmental and recreational resource. Would restoration of the pier, which once served 100,000 visitors in a year, attract more people? What kinds of facilities might encourage even more people to use this resource, stay longer, and benefit Berkeley businesses?

The San Francisco Boardsailing Association and Save the Berkeley Pier are proposing a symposium that focuses on the fiscal condition of the waterfront, and pathways to a more sustainable future. We seek a broad array of stakeholders, including the City of Berkeley, agencies that fund recreational and habitat projects, experts in commercial development who can provide insight into the contraction of the hospitality industry, and existing users, particularly those that now pay most of the waterfront budget. Experts in marketing, like Placer AI, which has data about the existing users, are particularly important partners in this effort.

For more information go to:

www.saveberkeleypier.org

