



Commission
on
Disability

Commission on Disability Minutes re March 11, 2026 meeting

North Berkeley Senior Center, Aspen Room
1901 Hearst Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94709

Preliminary Matters

1. Call to Order by Chair Fischer at 5:03pm
2. Land Acknowledgment recognizing Berkeley as the ancestral, unceded home of the Ohlone People.
3. Roll Call by Secretary
Commissioners present: Helen Walsh, Rena Fischer, Kathi Pugh, Jae Mann, and Fred Nisen
Commissioner on a Leave Of Absence: Richard Paz
Commissioners absent: Mina Sun, Bonnie Lewkowicz, and Valerie Coleman
Staff present: Thomas Gregory, Presenters: Terrance Davis, Nelson Lam, Evelyn Chan, David Sprague, and Uriel Gonzalez
Public members present: Chris Fendricks, Michai Freeman, and Anonymous
4. Public Comments
Michai Freeman announced that the Center for Independent Living launched a campaign documenting the experiences of people with disabilities encountering access barriers on Berkeley's public rights-of-way. The effort focuses on barriers, including damaged sidewalks and conditions that force disabled pedestrians into unsafe travel routes. The speaker said CIL is collecting stories and photographs and expects to return to the commission in one to two months with findings.
5. Approval of draft minutes: February 11, 2026 meeting
"...to approve the February 11 minutes." Moved by: Fischer. Seconded by: Pugh.
Ayes: Walsh, Fischer, Pugh, and Mann. Abstention: Nisen. The motion passes.
6. Approval: Order of Agenda
"...to approve the agenda." Moved by: Fischer. Seconded by: Pugh.
Ayes: unanimous. The motion passes.

Presentation

7. **A Potential Infrastructure Bond Measure in Nov. 2026**

Public Works Director Terrance Davis, supported by staff members Nelson Lam, Evelyn Chan, David Sprague, and Uriel Gonzalez, discussed a proposed \$300 million general obligation bond, focusing on infrastructure needs. This presentation is part of the staff process to conduct community engagement before deciding final priorities and ballot language.

Davis stated that Berkeley faces an infrastructure backlog estimated at \$1.65 to \$2 billion, while current funding addresses only a small portion of that need. The proposed

bond framework was organized around three broad areas: community facilities, public safety facilities, and citywide infrastructure.

Davis asked CoD to consider four questions and provide input:

1. Among the infrastructure needs discussed, which are most urgent?
2. Were any pressing infrastructure needs missing from the presentation?
3. What additional projects would most enhance accessibility and equity?
4. What investments would create the longest-term community benefit?

Fire Department Priorities

The Fire Chief described major needs in Berkeley's fire infrastructure. Most fire stations were built in the 1950s-'60s and no longer meet current staffing, apparatus, health, and operational requirements. Priority projects include replacing Fire Station 4, renovating Fire Station 6, relocating and modernizing the Training Center, and expanding and modernizing the 911 Dispatch Center. These projects are unusually expensive due to strict seismic and operational standards, and no meaningful grant sources are available.

Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Projects

Staff reviewed potential projects, including replacing the Frances Albrier Community Center in San Pablo Park; modernizing King Pool; upgrades to Harrison Field, Live Oak courts and lighting, and San Pablo Park sports field; creating additional dog parks; new or upgraded restrooms at parks including César Chávez and Harrison; playground improvements at parks such as Cedar Rose; new open-space design connected to the Adeline Corridor Plan; redevelopment of the Dreamland area at Aquatic Park; South Cove seawall replacement; and Bay Trail improvements.

Commissioners and Public Input on this Topic

Comments in response to this part of the presentation included:

1. Importance of accessible paths of travel in parks, e.g., Live Oak Park is insufficiently accessible and hosts many city events.
2. Need for shaded areas within the accessible paths of travel so that those who need to do so can use shade to help regulate body temperature, e.g., during summer months there are no shaded areas in the accessible areas of the Ohlone Dog Park, but there are many shaded areas that are not wheelchair accessible.
3. The importance of fully inclusive playground design, including material choice for a ground cover treatment that allows wheeled devices to easily navigate the surface.

City Buildings and ADA-Related Projects

Staff discussed modernization needs for city buildings including 2180 Milvia, the Public Safety Building, the Berkeley Animal Shelter, and the larger Civic Center complex, including the Maudelle Shirek (Old City Hall) building and related facilities. Staff said this pot of bond funding could also support citywide ADA accessibility improvements, including removal of trip hazards, crosswalk and curb-ramp upgrades, barrier removal in existing civic facilities, and expanded funding for the sidewalk

50/50 program, noting that this program currently has a backlog of roughly 1,400 properties.

Commissioners and Public Input on this Topic

Comments in response to this part of the presentation included:

1. Chair Fischer expressed concern regarding \$100 million budget in this category, as the funds could be exhausted in building projects before addressing ADA remediations outside of these buildings, e.g., the 50/50 program and other ways to address dangerous, non-compliant sidewalk and other paths-of-travel conditions. Citywide ADA improvements should not end up competing with large-scale building projects.
2. Public member Freeman appreciated the City's emphasis on safety improvements, but expressed concern that given the City's many priorities, addressing pressing accessibility issues might be delayed. Freeman emphasized that ADA compliance is paramount, but that the ADA is a floor rather than a ceiling. In addition, the City needs to incorporate Universal Design principles into its infrastructure design.

Core Concern Raised by the Commission

The central issue raised throughout the presentation was that ADA work could be overshadowed by larger, more expensive projects. Commissioners and public speakers repeatedly stated that accessibility should not be treated as an afterthought and that disabled residents cannot benefit from improved buildings if they still cannot safely travel to them. Commissioners emphasized that sidewalks, curb ramps, trip hazards, and path-of-travel issues remain urgent. People with disabilities continue to bear the burden of delayed accessibility improvements.

Discussion/Action Items

8. Updates from CoD subcommittees

a. Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)

Fischer reported that there have been no substantive developments since the February meeting and that the team of UC Berkeley students whose project supports WCAG compliance will be competing in the Big Ideas competition for \$100K in funding. The winner is expected to be announced in May.

b. Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

Fischer reported that Transportation Manager Mark Helmbrecht is in the process of editing contract-related documents to highlight the need for contractors to comply with PROWAG.

c. Accessibility at City Meetings and Events

Fischer reported that she hopes to focus on this topic during her participation in a public policy program, and will confer with subcommittee colleagues Walsh and Pugh on the subject.

9. Work Plan Updates and Developments

Commissioner Reports/Announcements

Staff Updates

10. Log of Access Complaints

11. Email and voicemail sent to the Commission

Adjournment at 7:13pm

Minutes approved by CoD vote on: _____5/13/26_____

Thomas Gregory

Thomas Gregory, Secretary to Commission