



Lori Droste  
Berkeley Vice Mayor

**ACTION CALENDAR**

May 25, 2021

**To:** Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**From:** Councilmember Lori Droste (Author), Councilmembers Rigel Robinson (Co-Sponsor), Rashi Kesarwani (Co-Sponsor) and Mayor Jesse Arreguín (Co-Sponsor)

**Subject:** Commission Reorganization for Post-COVID19 Budget Recovery

**RECOMMENDATION**

1. Refer to the City Manager and City Attorney to bring back changes to the enabling legislation to reorganize existing commissions as proposed below in a phased approach.

*Phase 1:* Prioritize merging the Homeless Commission/Homeless Services Panel of Experts and Housing Advisory Commission/Measure O Bond Oversight Committee first, and request that the City Manager bring back changes to the enabling legislation to implement these consolidated commissions.

*Phase 2:* All other Commissions as proposed below.  
As staff is able to make recommendations on consolidation, they can bring those recommendations forward one by one.

New Commission Name	Former Commissions to be Reorganized
Commission on Climate and the Environment	Zero Waste, Energy, Community Environmental Advisory, and Animal Care
Parks, Recreation, Waterfront (special Marina subcommittee)	Children, Youth, and Recreation and Parks and Waterfront

Peace, Justice, and Human Welfare <sup>1</sup>	Peace and Justice and Human Welfare, Community Action Commissions
Public Health Commission & Sugar Sweetened Beverage Panel of Experts	Community Health Commission and Sugar Sweetened Beverage Panel of Experts
Housing Advisory Commission	Measure O and Housing Advisory Commission
Homeless Services Panel of Experts	Homeless Commission and Measure P Homeless Services Panel of Experts
Public Works and Transportation	Public Works and Transportation
Planning	Planning and Cannabis
<p><b>All other commissions will maintain their current structure:</b> Aging, Library Board of Trustees, Civic Arts, Disability, Commission on the Status of Women, Design Review Committee, Disaster and Fire Safety, BIDs, Fair Campaign Practices and Open Government, Redistricting, Landmarks Preservation, Labor, Loan Adjustments Board, Personnel, Planning, Police Review/Accountability, Reimagining Public Safety, Mental Health, Zoning Adjustments Board, and Youth</p>	

2. Refer to staff to develop recommendations on the transition to new consolidated commissions and the effective date of the changes.

3. Consider establishing 18 members on the new Climate and Environment Commission and establishing specific subcommittees focused on the policy areas of the merged commissions.

4. The Peace, Justice and Human Welfare Commission will be composed of only Mayor and Council appointees.

5. Refer to City Manager and Commissions the following additional considerations:

- Federal, state or other external mandates that might be impacted, and determine how to handle.
- Whether charters of to-be-merged Commissions were adopted by City Council, through measures or initiatives passed by voters, or are by Charter, and by what means they might be merged/adjusted
- What elements of each Commission to keep, update, or retire, as well as relevant topics/issues not currently covered that might be added to a more comprehensive and/or relevant merged Commission’s charter.

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<sup>1</sup> Members will be appointed by Council and membership should adhere to Government Code Section 12736(e); 12750(a)(2) and 12751.

- Whether the merged Commission might include 9, or a greater number of members.
- The possibility of requiring specific qualifications for appointment to the merged Commission.
- The possibility of recommended or required Standing Committees of the Merged Commission
- Volunteer workload and capacity given scope of Commission’s charter

Policy Committee Oversight <sup>2</sup>	Commissions
Agenda and Rules	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Fair Campaign Practices/Open Government Commission</li> <li>2. Personnel Board</li> </ol>
Budget and Finance	(Any legislation that requires funding)
Public Safety	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Disaster and Fire Safety Commission</li> <li>2. Police Accountability Board/Police Review Commission</li> <li>3. Reimagining Public Safety Task Force</li> </ol>
Facilities, Infrastructure, Transportation and the Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Commission on the Environment</li> <li>2. Parks, Recreation and Waterfront with Marina subcommittee</li> <li>3. Public Works and Transportation</li> </ol>
Land Use and Economic Development	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Measure O Housing Commission</li> <li>2. Planning Commission</li> <li>3. Labor</li> <li>4. Civic Arts Commission</li> </ol>
Health, Equity, Life Enrichment, and Community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Peace, Justice, and Civil Rights</li> <li>2. Health and Sugar Sweetened Beverage Panel of Experts</li> <li>3. Homeless Services Panel of Experts</li> <li>4. Mental Health Commission (state/federal mandate)</li> <li>5. Commission on the Status of Women</li> <li>6. Disability Commission</li> </ol>
<p><b>Other Commissions:</b> Zoning Adjustments Board (DRC), Landmarks Preservation, Board of Library Trustees, BIDs, Independent Redistricting Commission, Loan Administration Board</p>	

<sup>2</sup> Primary policy committee oversight but legislation may be referred to multiple policy committees.

**POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION**

On April 5, 2021, the Agenda and Rules Committee made a qualified positive recommendation to City Council to:

1. Refer to the City Manager and City Attorney to bring back changes to the enabling legislation to reorganize existing commissions as proposed below in a phased approach.

Phase 1: Prioritize merging the Homeless Commission/Homeless Services Panel of Experts and Housing Advisory Commission/Measure O Bond Oversight Committee first, and request that the City Manager bring back changes to the enabling legislation to implement these consolidated commissions.

Phase 2: All other Commissions as proposed below.

As staff is able to make recommendations on consolidation, they can bring those recommendations forward one by one.

<b>New Commission Name (suggested)</b>	<b>Former Commissions to be Reorganized</b>
Commission on Climate and the Environment	Zero Waste, Energy, Community Environmental Advisory, and Animal Care
Parks, Recreation, Waterfront (special Marina subcommittee)	Children, Youth, and Recreation and Parks and Waterfront
Peace, Justice, and Human Welfare	Peace and Justice Commission and Human Welfare and Community Action Commission
Public Health Commission & Sugar Sweetened Beverage Panel of Experts	Community Health Commission and Sugar Sweetened Beverage Panel of Experts
Housing Advisory Commission	Measure O and Housing Advisory Commission
Homeless Services Panel of Experts	Homeless Commission and Measure P Homeless Services Panel of Experts
Public Works and Transportation	Public Works and Transportation
Planning	Planning and Cannabis

**All other commissions will maintain their current structure:** Aging, Library Board of Trustees, Civic Arts, Disability, Commission on the Status of Women, Design Review Committee, Disaster and Fire Safety, BIDs, Fair Campaign Practices and Open Government, Redistricting, Landmarks Preservation, Labor, Loan Adjustments Board, Personnel, Planning, Police Review/Accountability, Reimagining Public Safety, Mental Health, Zoning Adjustments Board, and Youth

2. Refer to the Commissions impacted a process to determine the charge/responsibilities of the newly merged commissions, and bring Commission input to the appropriate Policy Committees (as proposed by Vice-Mayor Droste in 4/5/21 submittal) for further recommendations to the City Manager on revised charge/responsibilities of merged commissions.

3. Refer to staff to develop recommendations on the transition to new consolidated commissions and the effective date of the changes.

4. Consider establishing 18 members on the new Climate and Environment Commission and establishing specific subcommittees focused on the policy areas of the merged commissions.

5. The Peace, Justice and Human Welfare Commission will be comprised of only Mayor and Council appointees.

6. Refer Councilmember Hahn questions to City Manager and Commissions: “Commissions to Combine/Merge - Suggested Considerations”

- Federal, state or other external mandates that might be impacted, and determine how to handle
- Whether charters of to-be-merged Commissions were adopted by City Council, through measures or initiatives passed by voters, or are by Charter, and by what means they might be merged/adjusted
- What elements of each Commission to keep, update, or retire, as well as relevant topics/issues not currently covered that might be added to a more comprehensive and/or relevant merged Commission’s charter.
- Whether the merged Commission might include 9, or a greater number of members.
- The possibility of requiring specific qualifications for appointment to the merged Commission.
- The possibility of recommended or required Standing Committees of the Merged Commission
- Volunteer workload and capacity given scope of Commission’s charter

## **PROBLEM/SUMMARY STATEMENT**

Commissions provide an important mechanism for residents to shape public policy and provide input on City business. However, the City of Berkeley maintains far more

commissions than other cities of similar size, with a significant investment of City resources to staff all 37 commissions. Some commission secretaries report spending upwards of 20+ hours per week on commission business, which takes valuable time away from addressing other pressing City priorities. The local public health emergency created by the global COVID-19 pandemic has required City staff to shift to new roles and maintain an Emergency Operations Center since January 2020; recovery from the pandemic will continue to demand the full attention of our City staff for the foreseeable future. Given the uncertainties that our City faces in recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and the demands that this recovery places on our City staff, it is an appropriate time to consider how best to consolidate our commissions in a manner that helps the City to achieve its core mission.

### **REITERATION OF PRINCIPLES**

Commissions are a fundamental part of the City's policymaking process. Members of boards and commissions provide an invaluable service to our City. They advise the City Council on a wide variety of subjects by making recommendations on important policy matters. Without the assistance of the various boards and commissions, the City Council could give many complex and significant matters only a perfunctory review. The detailed studies and considered advice of boards and commissions are often catalysts for innovative programs and improved services. Serving on a board or commission can be a rewarding experience for community service-minded residents. It is an excellent way to participate in the functioning of local government and to make a personal contribution to the improvement of our community. Making local government effective and responsive is everybody's responsibility.

- The Public Works Commission, for example, develops the City's five year paving plan which they then present to City Council for approval. Through extensive community outreach and research, the Commission identifies the streets most in need of repaving.
- With the passage of Measure D in 2014, a Panel of Experts on Sugar-Sweetened Beverages has guided the City's spending of over \$5 million in revenue generated from the Measure. Those dollars have bolstered local public campaigns and education initiatives.

These are merely two examples of the powerful role that Commissions play in City policymaking.

### **CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS**

#### *Current Commission Structure*

The City of Berkeley has approximately thirty-seven commissions overseen by city administration, most of which have at least nine members and who are appointed by individual councilmembers. These commissions were intended to be a forum for public participation beyond what is feasible at the City Council, so that issues that come before the City Council can be adequately vetted.

Some commissions are required by charter or mandated by voter approval or state/federal mandate. Those commissions are the following:

1. Board of Library Trustees (charter)
2. Business Improvement Districts (state mandate)
3. Civic Arts Commission (charter)
4. Community Environmental Advisory Commission (state/federal mandate--CUPA)
5. Fair Campaign Practices Commission/Open Government (ballot measure)
6. Homeless Services Panel of Experts (ballot measure)
7. Housing Advisory Commission (state/federal mandate)
8. Human Welfare and Community Action (state/federal mandate)
9. Measure O Bond Oversight Committee (ballot measure)
10. Mental Health Commission (state/federal mandate)
11. Personnel (charter)Police Review Commission (ballot measure)
12. Sugar-Sweetened Beverages (ballot measure)

Berkeley must have its own mental health commission because of its independent Mental Health Division. In order to receive services, the City needs to have to have an advisory board. Additionally, Berkeley's Community Environmental Advisory Commission is a required commission in order to oversee Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) under California's Environmental Protection Agency. Additionally, some commissions serve other purposes beyond policy advisories. The Children, Youth and Recreation Commission, Housing Advisory Commission, and the Human Welfare and Community Action Commission advise Council on community agency funding. However, some of the aforementioned quasi-judicial and state/federal mandated commissions do not need to stand independently and can be combined to meet mandated goals.

### *The Importance of Commissions*

Commissions serve a vital role in the City of Berkeley's rich process of resident engagement. An analysis of agendas over the past several years shows that the commissions have created policy that have benefited the community in meaningful and important ways. In 2020, 14 of the 16 commission items submitted to Council passed.

From 2016-2020, an average of 34 items were submitted by commissions to Council for consideration.

The City’s Health, Housing and Community Development department serves an important role in addressing COVID-19, racial disparities, inequitable health outcomes, affordable housing, and other important community programs. Additionally, Health, Housing, and Community Development also staffs ten commissions, more than many cities of Berkeley’s size. Council needs to wrestle with these tradeoffs to ensure that we seek the maximum benefit for *all* of the Berkeley community, particularly our most vulnerable.

*Commission Structures in Neighboring Jurisdictions*

In comparison to neighboring jurisdictions of similar size, Berkeley has significantly more commissions. The median number of commissions for these cities is 12 and the average is 15.

Comparable Bay Area City	Population (est.)	Number of Commissions	Links
Berkeley	121,000	37	<a href="https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Clerk/Level_3_-_Commissions/External%20Roster.pdf">https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Clerk/Level_3_-_Commissions/External%20Roster.pdf</a>
Antioch	112,000	6	<a href="https://www.antiochca.gov/government/boards-commissions/">https://www.antiochca.gov/government/boards-commissions/</a>
Concord	130,000	14	<a href="https://www.cityofconcord.org/264/Applications-for-Boards-Committees-Commi">https://www.cityofconcord.org/264/Applications-for-Boards-Committees-Commi</a>
Daly City	107,000	7	<a href="http://www.dalycity.org/City_Hall/Departments/city_clerk/Commissions_Information/boards.htm">http://www.dalycity.org/City_Hall/Departments/city_clerk/Commissions_Information/boards.htm</a>
Fairfield	117,000	7	<a href="https://www.fairfield.ca.gov/gov/comms/default.asp">https://www.fairfield.ca.gov/gov/comms/default.asp</a>
Fremont	238,000	15	<a href="https://www.fremont.gov/76/Boards-Commissions-Committees">https://www.fremont.gov/76/Boards-Commissions-Committees</a>
Hayward	160,000	12	<a href="https://www.hayward-ca.gov/your-government/boards-commissions">https://www.hayward-ca.gov/your-government/boards-commissions</a>
Richmond	110,000	29	<a href="https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/256/Boards-and-Commissions">https://www.ci.richmond.ca.us/256/Boards-and-Commissions</a>
San Mateo	105,000	7	<a href="https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/60/Commissions-Boards">https://www.cityofsanmateo.org/60/Commissions-Boards</a>



Sunnyvale	153,000	10	<a href="https://sunnyvale.ca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=22804">https://sunnyvale.ca.gov/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=22804</a>
Vallejo	122,000	17	<a href="http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/cms/one.aspx?pagelid=22192">http://www.ci.vallejo.ca.us/cms/one.aspx?pagelid=22192</a>

To understand the impact on various departments and staffing capacity, the following table shows which departments are responsible for overseeing various commissions.

*Staffing and Resources Supporting Berkeley's Current Commission Structure*

Commission Name	Overseeing Department (Total Commissions in Department)
Animal Care Commission	City Manager (8)
Civic Arts Commission	City Manager (8)
Commission on the Status of Women	City Manager (8)
Elmwood BID Advisory Board	City Manager (8)
Loan Administration Board	City Manager (8)
Peace and Justice Commission	City Manager (8)
Solano Ave BID Advisory Board	City Manager (8)
Cannabis Commission	Planning (7)
Community Environmental Advisory Commission	Planning (7)
Design Review Committee	Planning (7)
Energy Commission	Planning (7)
Landmarks Preservation Commission	Planning (7)
Planning Commission	Planning (7)
Zoning Adjustments Board	Planning (7)
Children, Youth, and Recreation Commission	Parks (3)
Parks and Waterfront Commission	Parks (3)

Youth Commission	Parks (3)
Commission on Aging	Health, Housing, and Community Services (HHCS) (10)
Commission on Labor	HHCS (10)
Community Health Commission	HHCS (10)
Homeless Commission	HHCS (10)
Homeless Services Panel of Experts	HHCS(10)
Housing Advisory Commission	HHCS (10)
Human Welfare & Community Action Commission	HHCS (10)
Measure O Bond Oversight Committee	HHCS (10)
Mental Health Commission	HHCS (10)
Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Product Panel of Experts	HHCS (10)
Disaster and Fire Safety Commission	Fire (1)
Commission on Disability	Public Works (4)
Public Works Commission	Public Works (4)
Transportation Commission	Public Works (4)
Zero Waste Commission	Public Works (4)
Fair Campaign Practices Commission/Open Government Commission	City Attorney (1)
Personnel Board	Human Resources (1)
Police Review Commission/Police Accountability Board	Police Review Commission/Police Accountability Board Staff
Reimagining Public Safety Task Force	City Manager *(8) and BPD (2)

Board of Library Trustees	Library (1)
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Gray=charter  
 Red=state/federal mandate  
 Yellow=quasi-judicial  
 Blue=ballot initiative  
 Orange=state/federal mandate and quasi-judicial  
 Green=quasi-judicial and ballot initiative

The departments that staff more than five commissions are Health, Housing, and Community Services (10 commissions), Planning (7 commissions), and the City Manager’s department (8 commissions). At the same time, some smaller departments (e.g. the City Attorney’s office) may be impacted just as meaningfully if they have fewer staff and larger individual commission workloads.

*Policy Committee Structure Expands Opportunities for Public Input*

With the recent addition of policy committees, proposed legislation is now vetted by councilmembers in these forums. Each policy committee is focused on a particular content area aligned with the City of Berkeley’s strategic plan and is staffed and an advisory policy body to certain city departments. Members of the public are able to provide input at these committees as well. The policy committees currently have the following department alignment:

**Department and Policy Committee alignment**

1. **Agenda and Rules**—all departments
2. **Budget and Finance**—City Manager, Clerk, Budget, and Finance
3. **Land Use and Economic Development**—Clerk, Planning, HHCS, City Attorney, and City Manager (OED)
4. **Public Safety**—Clerk, City Manager, Police, and Fire
5. **Facilities, Infrastructure, Transportation, Environment and Sustainability** (Clerk, City Manager, Planning, Public Works, and Parks)
6. **Health, Equity, Life Enrichment, and Community** (Clerk, City Manager, HHCS)

*Staffing Costs*

Based upon preliminary calculations of staff titles and salary classifications, the average commission staff secretary makes roughly \$60-\$65/hour. Based upon recent interviews with secretaries and department heads, individual commission secretaries work anywhere from 8-80 hours a month staffing and preparing for commission meetings. To illustrate this example, a few examples are listed below.

Commission	Step 5 Rate of Pay	Reported Hours a Month	Total <b>Direct</b> Cost of Commission <b>per Month</b>
Animal Care	\$70.90	8	\$567.20
Landmarks Preservation Commission	\$57.96	80	\$4,636.80
Design Review Commission	\$52.76	60	\$3,165.60
Peace and Justice	\$60.82	32	\$1,946.24

It is extremely challenging to estimate a specific cost of commissions in the aggregate because of the varying workload but a safe estimate of salary costs dedicated to commissions would be in the six-figure range.

Many commissions--particularly quasi-judicial and land use commissions-- require more than one staff member to be present and prepare reports for commissions. For example, Zoning Adjustment Board meetings often last five hours or more and multiple staff members spend hours preparing for hearings. The Planning Department indicates that *in addition* to direct hours, additional commission-related staff time adds an extra 33% staff time. Using the previous examples, this means that the Landmarks Preservation Commission would cost the city over \$6,000 in productivity while the Design Review Commission would cost the City over \$4,000 a month.

#### *Productivity Losses and Administrative Burden*

Current productivity losses are stark because of the sheer amount of hours of staffing time dedicated to commissions. As an example, in 2019 one of the City of Berkeley's main homeless outreach workers staffed a commission within the City Manager's department. She spent approximately 32 hours a month working directly on commission work. While this is not a commentary on a particular commission, this work directly impacted her ability to conduct homeless outreach.

#### **RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

At a time when the City needs to demonstrate efficiency and fiscal restraint, the current commission structure is costly and duplicative. At the same time, civic engagement and commission work absolutely deserve an important role in Berkeley. Consequently, this legislation retains commissions but centers on overall community benefit, staff

productivity, and associated costs. This is imperative to address, especially in light of COVID-19 and community demands for reinvestment in important social services.

**FISCAL IMPACTS**

Significant savings associated with reduced staffing.

**CONTACT**

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