



Zero Waste Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR  
September 14, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Zero Waste Commission

Submitted by: Christienne de Tournay Birkhahn, Chairperson, Zero Waste Commission

Subject: Referral Response: Recommendation to Retain Current Structure of Zero Waste Commission

### RECOMMENDATION

The Zero Waste Commission recommends that its current structure remain intact, and with an updated charter that reflects historic goals, and both current and future developments in the City of Berkeley's Zero Waste programs, facilities, services, policies, and state- and county-imposed mandates.

### FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Moderate amount of Zero Waste Division staff time, as follows current practice.

### CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Zero Waste is a Strategic Plan Priority Project, advancing our goal to be a global leader in addressing climate change, advancing environmental justice, protecting the environment, and achieve our established goal of 100% waste diverted from landfill by 2020. The Zero Waste Division's top focus falls close behind police and fire in terms of providing essential city services that affect everyone (note that this service was completely uninterrupted or abbreviated during the entire ongoing pandemic period).

The people of Berkeley care deeply and passionately about where their discards go, who handles them, and how they are handled. Large corporate forces continue to contend for control over the very structure that has evolved over time from entrepreneurial efforts in Berkeley. Citizen advisory voices are necessary to continue movement toward Berkeley's Zero Waste goal.

On June 15, 2021, City Council voted to consolidate the Zero Waste Commission, the Community Environmental Advisory Commission, and the Energy Commission into one 9-member Commission on Climate and the Environment. Zero Waste issues related to facilities are consolidated with the Public Works Commission and issues related to policy are consolidated with the Commission on Climate and the Environment. Council referred additional considerations regarding the reorganization to staff and Commissions for feedback.

On July 26, 2021, the Zero Waste Commission approved submitting a recommendation to Council to retain the current structure of the Zero Waste Commission with the following vote: M/S/C (de Tournay/Sherman) Ayes: de Tournay, Poliwka, Sherman, Doughty, Stein, Curtis, Ulakovic; Abstain: None; Absent: Schueler, Grubb

### BACKGROUND

Established in 1972, the Berkeley Zero Waste Commission would celebrate its 50th Anniversary next year. In 2005, Berkeley was one of the first cities in the United States to adopt a Zero Waste goal, aiming for 75% recovery by 2010, which it achieved. It continues to work toward its ambitious goal of 100% zero waste to landfill. With a history of being a leader in waste reduction and resource recovery, Berkeley became the first city in the nation to offer curbside recycling pickup in 1973.

Berkeley is one of the few cities to operate their own waste collection and disposal company. Berkeley's Zero Waste Program is a \$50 million dollar-a-year enterprise that ensures public health through the collection and processing of discarded materials, including trash, recyclables, compostables, and universal (hazardous) wastes.

To this end, the City employs independent local non-profit organizations and businesses as contractors (Ecology Center, Community Conservation Centers, Urban Ore), who build our local economy, returning profits back to the community through recycling and materials recovery. The upcoming rebuild of the City's Solid Waste & Recycling Transfer Station is an example of how the on-going existence of a commission specifically focused on disposal management is a key asset.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

A unified Zero Waste Commission will help further our City's mandated goal to achieve 100% of waste diverted from landfill by 2020, as well as the state's SB1383 goals.

### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

For Zero Waste efforts to succeed, its policies and implementation, operation of facilities and services, and necessary public outreach and education both merit and demand a unified, holistic approach.

### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

The Zero Waste Commission recommends *against* the action of taking the unprecedented step to inefficiently divide and subsume the Zero Waste Commission's purview into two separate advisory bodies, as Zero Waste by nature is achieved through a comprehensive, holistic, and systemic approach.

### CITY MANAGER

On June 15, 2021, City Council voted to consolidate the Zero Waste Commission with other commissions that have similar missions. The consolidation will allow for issues of sustainability to be addressed more comprehensively and efficiently. Staff supports the consolidation and is developing new enabling legislation to effectuate the council direction.

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