



Cheryl Davila
Councilmember
District 2

CONSENT CALENDAR
September 22, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Cheryl Davila (Author)
Subject: Resolution to Incorporate the Practice of 1 Minute and 46 seconds of Mindfulness into City Council Meetings

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution to amend the City Council Meeting Agendas and Council Rules of Procedures to include one minute and forty-six seconds of silence to adopt mindfulness into Council meetings to remember the loss of lives due to police violence.

POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

On August 31, 2020, the Agenda and Rules Committee adopted the following action: M/S/C (Wengraf/Arreguin) to send Item 11 to the City Council with a Qualified Positive Recommendation to observe one minute and forty-six seconds of silence at the September 22, 2020 regular meeting to remember the loss of lives due to police violence; and further remind Councilmembers that moments of reflection, recognition, or celebration are requested through the Mayor's office for inclusion on the ceremonial calendar. Vote: All Ayes.

BACKGROUND

According to the University of California at Berkeley's Greater Good Magazine, mindfulness means "maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of your thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens." Mindfulness involves acceptance without judgment of our thoughts and feelings and tuning into what we are sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imaging the future.¹

While mindfulness and meditation has its roots in the religion of Buddhism, mindfulness as a secular practice was popularized by Jon Kabat-Zinn, who launched the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program at the University of Massachusetts Medical School in 1979. Mindfulness is noted to improve well-being, physical health, and mental health.² The adoption of mindfulness practices are specifically beneficial for strengthening the immune system, reducing stress, and enhancing attentiveness.

¹ <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

² <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3679190/>

Particularly relevant to the role of city governance, mindfulness has been found to increase altruism and compassion,³ reduce implicit bias,⁴ increase emotional resilience when confronted with negative feedback,⁵ and to help leaders be more confident and act in line with their values.⁶ Due to its benefits, mindfulness has been deployed in a multitude of institutions such as schools,⁷ prisons,⁸ sports,⁹ hospitals,¹⁰ and even municipal governments, like San Jose, where Mindful Mondays has been promoted by the city.¹¹

Currently, the Berkeley City Council meetings run continuously for five hours or more on Tuesday evenings, with only a brief 10-minute pause for captioning. Incorporating mindfulness practices into the City Council meeting may increase Councilmember's ability to focus on the topics brought before them, alleviate stress or anxiety over decision-making, facilitate Councilmembers being more fully present and emotionally available to the public, and allow for greater creativity when generating solutions for how best to serve the constituency.

The adoption of mindfulness practices has the potential to improve the overall experience and efficacy of governing by reducing the physiological impacts of stress on members of City staff, elected officials, and the community. By reducing the physiological impairments of stress and cognitive fatigue better decision-making might occur. Given these potential benefits, a change to the structure and order of City Council meetings are proposed to include two-minutes of mindfulness at the beginning of the meeting and following ceremonial items, two minutes of mindfulness after reconvening from the captioner's break, and the ability of any Councilmember to request taking a mindfulness pause during the Consent or Action Calendar.

Section II. Meetings, Part D of the Berkeley City Council Rules of Procedure and Order¹² would be amended to read as follow:

"D. Council Meeting Conduct of Business: The agenda for the regular business meetings shall include the following: **One minute and forty-six seconds of silence and mindfulness**; Ceremonial Items (including comments from the City Auditor if requested); Comments from the City Manager; Comments from the Public; Consent Calendar; Action Calendar (Appeals, Public Hearings, Continued Business, Old Business, New Business); Information Reports; and Communication from the Public. Presentations and workshops may be included as part of the Action Calendar. The Chair will determine the order in which the item(s) will be heard with the consent of Council."

Section III. Agenda, Part E Agenda Sequence and Order of Business of the Berkeley City Council Rules of Procedure and Order would be amended to read as follow:

³ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/meditation_causes_compassionate_action

⁴ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_mindfulness_help_reduce_racism

⁵ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_mindfulness_help_students_cope_with_failure

⁶ https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/can_mindfulness_help_you_be_more_authentic

⁷ <https://www.mindfulschools.org/>

⁸ <https://www.prisonmindfulness.org/about-us/>

⁹ <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/08/mindfulness-method>

¹⁰ <https://hospitalnews.com/mindfulness-quiet-revolution/>

¹¹ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/Calendar/Event/1760/4738>

¹² https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Clerk/Level_3_-_City_Council/City%20Council%20Rules%20of%20Procedure%20-%20Feb%2011%202020%20-%20FINAL.pdf

“E. The Council agenda for a regular business meeting is to be arranged in the following order:

1. Preliminary Matters: (Ceremonial, **One minute and forty-six seconds of silence and mindfulness**, Comments from the City Manager, Comments from the City Auditor, Non-Agenda Public Comment)
2. Consent Calendar
3. Action Calendar
 - a) Appeals
 - b) Public Hearings
 - c) Continued Business
 - d) Old Business
 - e) New Business
4. Information Reports
5. Non-Agenda Public Comment
6. Adjournment

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

None.

CONTACT PERSON

Cheryl Davila
Councilmember District 2
510.981.7120
cdavila@cityofberkeley.info

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL FOR THE CITY OF BERKELEY TO INCORPORATE THE PRACTICE OF 1 MINUTE AND 46 SECONDS OF MINDFULNESS INTO CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

WHEREAS, Mindfulness is a secular practice of focusing attention onto your thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations in a moment-to-moment methodology that allows for greater awareness of yourself and your surroundings; and

WHEREAS, The practice of mindfulness has many noted benefits, including boosting the immune system, reducing stress, and enhancing attentiveness; and

WHEREAS, Due to the efficacy of mindfulness, its practices have been adopted in a wide array of institutions that serve impacted populations, such as schools, hospitals, and prisons; and

WHEREAS, Physiological impacts of stress have the ability to diminish the City Staff and Council's ability to effectively carry out the tasks associated with complex decision making; and

WHEREAS, Mindfulness practices have been shown to be an effective method to reduce stress levels in other workplaces; and

WHEREAS, Mindfulness might improve the working conditions during Berkeley City Council meetings by allowing Councilmembers and City Staff to become fully present and attentive at the beginnings of meetings, and more compassionate and self-aware when engaging with the public; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Berkeley will incorporate two minutes of mindfulness practice into the agenda of City Council meetings, wherein Councilmembers and members of the public are invited to hold a moment of silence to check in with their bodies and mind before embarking on the often arduous work of city governance; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Section II. Meetings, Part D of the Berkeley City Council Rules of Procedure and Order is amended to read:

“D. Council Meeting Conduct of Business: The agenda for the regular business meetings shall include the following: **One minute and forty-six seconds of silence and mindfulness**; Ceremonial Items (including comments from the City Auditor if requested); Comments from the City Manager; Comments from the Public; Consent Calendar; Action Calendar (Appeals, Public Hearings, Continued Business, Old Business, New Business); Information Reports; and Communication from the Public. Presentations and workshops may be included as part of the Action Calendar. The Chair will determine the order in which the item(s) will be heard with the consent of Council.”

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Section III. Agenda, Part E Agenda Sequence and Order of Business of the Berkeley City Council Rules of Procedure and Order IS amended to read:

“E. The Council agenda for a regular business meeting is to be arranged in the following order:

1. Preliminary Matters: (Ceremonial, **One minute and forty-six seconds of silence and mindfulness**, Comments from the City Manager, Comments from the City Auditor, Non-Agenda Public Comment)
2. Consent Calendar
3. Action Calendar
 - a) Appeals
 - b) Public Hearings
 - c) Continued Business
 - d) Old Business
 - e) New Business
4. Information Reports
5. Non-Agenda Public Comment
6. Adjournment

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, These changes to the Agenda will begin at the next scheduled Council meeting and the City Council will include one minute and forty-six seconds of silence and mindfulness as part of the City Council Agenda.

