



Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

CONSENT CALENDAR

June 27, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

Submitted by: Weldon Bradstreet, Chairperson, Disaster and Fire Safety Commission

Subject: Request That City Council Strongly Recommend That HUD-Owned Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments Install Solar Battery Back-up Battery Capability To Meet Medical Needs Of Their Residents During Loss Of Electrical Power And Consider Same Action For Other HUD Properties In Berkeley

RECOMMENDATION

The Disaster and Fire Safety Commission (DFSC) is requesting that Berkeley City Council strongly recommend that The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) owned Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments install solar battery back-up battery capability to meet the medical needs of their residents during loss of electrical power and consider the same action for other HUD properties in Berkeley.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

No fiscal impacts to the City of Berkeley.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

It has been brought to the DFSC's attention that during recent electrical power shutdowns residents in the Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments were without electrical power for around 10 hours. Since this is a facility for the elderly and disabled this is a problem for those that need electricity for refrigeration of prescriptions and operation of some medical equipment. This facility is owned and operated by HUD. Since the building is currently undergoing a planned renovation it seems reasonable that such a requirement for the installation of a battery backup to meet the medical requirements of their residents be considered at this particular time. While there are other HUD owned properties in Berkeley, it is also a reasonable requirement that the Council consider such a requirement for them as well, however, that should be left for the Council to consider when that should be done.

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### BACKGROUND

The Harriet Tubman Terrace Apartments, located at 2870 Adeline Street, is a 90-unit affordable housing community that was built in 1990. It is owned by HUD which selects a management system to operate it. It provides housing for adults 62 years or older and for adults with disabilities and as I understand, the facility is historically and currently at full occupancy.

The building is now undergoing a planned renovation. That renovation has proven to be controversial. We are not proposing that the Commission engage in the issues around renovation since that would not be within our purview. However, the renovation does provide an opportunity to address one issue that is within our purview, i.e. the health and safety of residents when electric power shut-offs occur. As we all know and expect, is that the loss of electrical power is likely to happen again in the future for periods of time that are not predictable. We believe that the issue of ensuring access to medical care during these times is within the purview of the Commission to address. However, it should be clear that this one issue is the only focus of this request for action being made by the Commission.

There is a reasonable solution in requiring the installation of a battery driven back up system which will generate enough electricity to maintain a central location within the facility to meet the essential medical needs of the residents.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Such a back-up should be powered by a solar panel rather than by a natural gas generator. Gas powered generators are noisy and result in complaints from neighbor properties and residents themselves. Solar powered back-ups are quiet. Environmentally friendly and cost less to operate.

### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

The existence of such a back-up not only would benefit the physical health of individual residents it would lessen the anxiety and panic over the loss of medical care for extended periods of time. Furthermore, as a sign of caring for the needs of everyone, it would contribute to an overall positive sense of being cared for by everyone living in the facility.

Vote: 5 Ayes: W. Bradstreet, T. Gordon, S. Dean, G. Murphy, H. Raines: 0 Noes; 2 Absent: J. Bedolla, A. Stein; 0 Abstain

### ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

None.

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CITY MANAGER

The City Manager takes no position on the recommendation in this report.

CONTACT PERSON

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