



Kate Harrison
Councilmember District 4

CONSENT CALENDAR
April 23rd, 2019

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmembers Kate Harrison, Cheryl Davila, and Rigel Robinson, and Mayor Arreguin

Subject: Resolution in Support of a Public Bank

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution affirming Berkeley's support for public banking and send that resolution to Governor Newsom, Senator Skinner, and Assemblymember Wicks urging state legislation to enable local agencies to create public banks.

BACKGROUND

Public banks offer a way for governmental agencies such as cities, counties and states, as well as some organizations such as pension funds, to invest their funds in an institution that allows the investing organizations to avoid the high financial costs of dealing with private sector for-profit banks. Because public banks are created in the public interest rather than to maximize profit, public banks also generate income from their investments that can be re-invested in public benefit projects such as affordable housing, public transportation, and social programs. A public bank could decide to have no investment in fossil fuels, weapons, or tobacco in line with the priorities set by the Peace and Justice Commission. It could adhere to principles of economic, racial and environmental justice.

Public banks are run by qualified bankers serving a public mission and these banks partner with and support rather than compete with local banks. The Bank of North Dakota, a public bank which was founded in 1919, successfully weathered the last recession without the bailouts that went to Wall Street banks, and has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to North Dakota's treasury over the years.

Public Bank of the East Bay (PBEB) is an organization founded in August 2016 to advocate for a public bank for Alameda and West Contra Costa Counties. In 2018, the City of Oakland spearheaded a study on the feasibility of an East Bay public bank, using contributions from the City of Berkeley and from Alameda County. The study deemed a public bank feasible, though still not legal under state law. We urge our representatives and governor to support legislation to allow local jurisdictions to create public banks through charter processes.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Because public banks invest according to common need, rather than private profit, the dividends from a public bank may reduce pressure on the General Fund.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Private banks often invest in fossil fuel capital projects such as the Dakota Access Pipeline. Public banking, through fossil fuel divestment, promote environmental sustainability.

CONTACT PERSON

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ATTACHMENTS

1: Resolution

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

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF A PUBLIC BANK

WHEREAS, a public bank is defined as a financial institution owned by one or more public entities such as a state, city, or county; and

WHEREAS, public banks are created in the public interest rather than to maximize profit, and income from their investments can be re-invested in public benefit programs; and

WHEREAS, a public bank can decide to have no investments in industries that run contrary to Berkeley's values, such as fossil fuels, weapons, or tobacco; and

WHEREAS, a bank owned by the Cities of Oakland, Richmond, and Berkeley and the County of Alameda will allow those jurisdictions to have more local control, transparency, and self-determination, and allow us to invest in public goods such as affordable housing, loans to low-income households, public transit, infrastructure, and renewable energy; and

WHEREAS, public banks are run by qualified bankers serving a public mission and these banks partner with and support local banks and credit unions; and

WHEREAS, the Bank of North Dakota, a public bank founded in 1919, is extremely successful and avoided a foreclosure crisis in 2008 because it did not issue risky mortgages; and

WHEREAS, in September 2018, the Oakland City Council accepted the East Bay Public Bank's Feasibility Study; and

WHEREAS, the State of California's lack of a public-banking charter option imposes an obstacle to efforts to explore a public bank and prevents public banks from becoming operational; and

WHEREAS, Assemblymembers Chiu and Santiago, with the support of the California Public Banking Alliance, have introduced AB 857 in the state legislature creating a uniform regulatory framework for municipal and regional public banks, which would allow for public banking charters under the regulatory oversight of the California Department of Business Oversight;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley supports the continued efforts to create and operationalize the East Bay Public Bank; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges the California state legislature to enact legislation amending the Government Code to enable local agencies to create public banks regulated by the Department of Business Oversight; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this Resolution will be sent to Governor Gavin Newsom, Senator Nancy Skinner, and Assemblymember Buffy Wicks.

