

**SOPHIE HAHN**

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CONSENT CALENDAR

February 25, 2020

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Vice Mayor Sophie Hahn and Councilmember Cheryl Davila
 Subject: Referral to Schedule a Special City Council Meeting on Ohlone History and Culture

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the Agenda & Rules Policy Committee to schedule a Special City Council Meeting of at least one hour in duration immediately prior to a Regular City Council Meeting for representatives of the Ohlone community to present on Ohlone history and culture to provide additional context for the placement of signs stating "Welcome to the City of Berkeley Ohlone Territory" at entrances to our City.

BACKGROUND

Long before the City of Berkeley was incorporated, the Bay Area was inhabited by Indigenous peoples, including the Ohlone. The Ohlone Village of Huchiun existed in what is now the Berkeley City limits, and the Ohlone language Chochenyo was (and is still) spoken here. The Ohlone peoples established sacred sites and burial sites in Berkeley and throughout the Bay Area.¹

The City of Berkeley has a proud history of recognition, inclusiveness and diversity. For example, in 1992, Berkeley was the first city in the United States to rename as Indigenous Peoples' Day the federal holiday formerly recognized as Columbus Day. In recent years, Native American groups, including Ohlone tribal members and conservation activists, have been organized in spreading awareness throughout the community about their homeland and sacred sites in the Bay Area.

In January 2018, Councilmember Cheryl Davila introduced an item to change Berkeley's City Limits signs to "Welcome to Berkeley Ohlone Territory."² In October 2018, the City Council adopted a measure referring the City Manager to replace all Welcome to Berkeley signs with new signage, including "Ohlone Territory."³ The purpose of the referral was to recognize the Ohlone Peoples as the original inhabitants of the land now called Berkeley, including the Bay Area region, and to celebrate the City's Indigenous communities. The measure underscored the

¹ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2016/01_Jan/Documents/2016-01-19_Item_31_Support_of_Indigenous_Peoples.aspx

² https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2018/01_Jan/Documents/2018-01-23_Item_39_Replace_City_Limit_Signs.aspx

³ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2018/10_Oct/Documents/2018-10-02_Item_E_Welcome_to_Berkeley_Signage.aspx

importance of helping current Berkeley residents and visitors to understand what came before the current landscape.

In addition to recognizing and celebrating the Ohlone People through signage, the Council discussed the need for learning opportunities to add historical context, including a Council session on Ohlone history and culture, and a webpage on the City of Berkeley website linking to historic and cultural information about the Ohlone. In the spirit of that discussion, and in keeping with the City's commitment to recognize diversity, inclusion and to learning more about the original inhabitants of Berkeley, representatives of the Ohlone community are invited to present to the Council on Ohlone history and culture at a Special Meeting of the City Council.

FISCAL IMPACTS

There are no fiscal impacts associated with adopting the attached referral.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE IMPACTS

This item is consistent with the City's vision on sustainability and environmental goals. Reports on the recent fires in Australia have highlighted the deep traditional ecological knowledge Australia's Indigenous people have about fire control and suppression.⁴ "What Australians should really learn from the Aboriginal people is custodianship over the land . . . The way Aboriginal people deeply know and care for the land is something Australians should ponder and embrace."⁵

The Ohlone people were also profoundly knowledgeable stewards of the land and environment of the Bay Area. Learning about their history, ecological practices, and cultural values will provide important information about how Berkeley can be more resilient, reduce our climate and environmental impacts, and how we can all become better stewards of our community, our land and water, and the planet.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Photograph of "Welcome to the City of Berkeley Ohlone Territory" signage

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-51043828>; <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/12/world/aboriginal-australia-fire-trnd/index.html>; <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/24/us/native-american-controlled-burns-california-wildfires.html>

⁵ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/12/world/aboriginal-australia-fire-trnd/index.html>



