



Kriss Worthington

Councilmember, City of Berkeley, District 7
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ACTION CALENDAR November 8, 2011

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
 From: Councilmember Jesse Arreguin
 Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Possible New Council Chambers – Options and Accessibility

RECOMMENDATION:

Request a report back to the Council in no less than 60 days on the proposal suggested to vacate Old City Hall and relocate the City Council Chambers to a new location. The report should analyze feasible alternate locations for a Council Chambers, issues of accessibility for the disabled, proximity to transit, adequate seating for large crowds, and connectivity to technology including television broadcasting.

The report should also discuss the City's plans for the future use of Old City Hall, including alternatives to securing and closing Old City Hall.

The Council also requests that when the report is developed that it be calendared as an Action Item for discussion on a City Council agenda.

BACKGROUND:

The Berkeley Unified School District has decided to relocate its administrative headquarters from Old City Hall to West Campus, due in part to the fact that Old City Hall is seismically unsafe. There have also been reports that the School District may create a new Council Chambers at West Campus for the School District and City to jointly use and that the City will close Old City Hall and change its meeting location to a new City Council Chambers at West Campus also due to concerns about seismic safety. The idea about relocating our meetings to West Campus has generated questions and concerns in the community. Where the City Council meets and how accessible the meeting space is, has a direct impact on the public's access to participating in our government process.

While funds have been earmarked in the budget, to date the City Council has not voted on whether to fund the construction of a new City Council Chambers or whether to move its meetings from Old City Hall. In order to make the most informed decision, the City Council should evaluate alternatives for potential relocation. This analysis should include (at least) the following issues:

1. Access for persons with disabilities and wheel-chair users;
2. Access to public transportation;

3. The costs of constructing a new Chambers and/or renting meeting space at each possible location;
4. Adequate seating for large crowds;
5. Connectivity to technology including television broadcasting.

The report should consider possible alternative uses for Old City Hall, if the City decides to move its meetings to a new location. Several non-profit organizations might temporarily use Old City Hall, as has been done with other buildings awaiting seismic retrofits.

Before any decision is made on changing our meeting location, on spending city funds for the construction of a new Council Chambers or in deciding what to do with Old City Hall, the Council should seek public input before any of these decisions are made.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The City budget already set aside \$400,000 for a potential new Council Chambers and 100,000 for dealing with Old City Hall.

CONTACT PERSON

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