

# CITY OF OAKLAND

## BUDGET ADVISORY COMMISSION

Meeting of the City of Oakland Budget Advisory Commission (BAC) held  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025, at 6:00 PM.

The Budget Advisory Commission meeting was held in Hearing Room 2 in City Hall.

### **Commission Members:**

Mandela Bliss, Armand Bryan, Larisa Casillas, Mike Forbes, Guadalupe Garcia, Margaret Grimsley,  
Mike Petouhoff, Jane Yang, Stephisha Ycoy-Walton

### **City's Representative(s):**

Nathan Bassett – Finance Department  
Walter Silva – Finance Department

### **Meeting Minutes:**

## **1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

- Present: Commissioners Bliss, Casillas, Forbes, Grimsley, Yang, Ycoy-Walton and City of Oakland staff members Bassett and Silva; Absent: Commissioners Bryan, Garcia, and Petouhoff.
- Roll call was conducted with six out of nine current commissioners present, establishing a quorum. Commissioners Bryan, Garcia, and Petouhoff were absent, with Mike Petouhoff noted as feeling unwell.
- Meeting called to order by Chair Yang at approximately 6:02 PM
- Nathan Bassett introduced Walter Silva, a new Finance Department staff member who will be assisting with future meetings.

## **2. PRESENTATION FROM SAFER OUTSIDE AND TGND0**

Rena Hernandez (also known as Siwatla) presented on behalf of Safer Outside Coalition and TGND0 (Trans\* & Gender Nonconforming people Demanding Opportunity). Key points included:

- Both organizations provide direct support, mutual aid, and emergency assistance to people living outside
- Services often come from personal funds or crowdfunding as the organizations do not currently receive grant money

- Organizations advocate for people who are denied services or cannot access them
- Issues with service delivery include:
  - People being denied services due to capacity issues
  - Lack of consistent drop-off of supplies and harm reduction materials
  - Lack of wraparound services and housing referrals
  - Administrative errors with healthcare documentation
- Impact of encampment cleanups:
  - Psychological trauma from seeing belongings destroyed
  - Loss of identification documents necessary to access services
  - No actual services or case management provided despite promises during sweeps
- Recommendations included:
  - Providers needing to offer support for obtaining new identification documents
  - Increased funding for eviction prevention grants
  - Implementing a harm reduction policy similar to San Francisco
  - Promoting dignified care for service recipients

Commissioner Ycoy-Walton summarized the key needs expressed by the presenter:

- Consistent drop-off of essential supplies at locations where people live
- Navigation services and referrals for housing
- Animal care for pets
- Improved healthcare services with qualified providers signing necessary forms
- Alternative appointment times outside early morning hours
- More equitable request for proposal processes for grants
- DMV fee waivers
- Long-term housing prioritization

Public comment was provided by Satya Bhaskaran, who spoke about:

- The devastating impact of encampment sweeps
- Deaths linked to constant displacement
- Particular concerns for disabled residents
- The high cost of sweeps that could be redirected to housing solutions

### **3. OPEN FORUM (*moved up in agenda order*)**

Public comments were provided by:

- Anne Jenks regarding proposed cuts to police oversight functions, particularly the Community Police Review Agency (CPRA) and the Inspector General's office
- Millie Cleveland regarding the importance of independent police oversight and the recommendation to shift internal affairs investigations to CPRA

### **4. APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioner Bliss made a motion to approve the minutes from April, May, June, July, September, November, and December of 2024 as a batch. Commissioner Grimsley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all commissioners present voting in favor.

## **5. COMMISSIONERS' PROTOCOL**

Updates on commissioner recruitment included:

- At least 17 new applications received for the BAC
- Districts 3 and 6 each do not yet have a BAC representative but do have at least one applicant
- District 7 currently does not have applicants
- One open slot for the Finance and Management Committee and two slots for mayoral appointees
- Commissioner Garcia is resigning effective February 13, 2025
- Commissioner Bryan is expected to resign, date pending

Commissioner Grimsley suggested creating standardized communication for interested applicants.

## **6. FINANCE DEPARTMENT AND CITY COUNCIL UPDATE**

Nathan Bassett provided updates on:

- Current year budget balancing:
  - Layoff notices sent to certain city employees
  - Work continuing on impacts to contracts and General Purpose Fund
  - Vendors receiving general notifications about potential contract changes
- FY25-27 biennial budget preparations:
  - Departmental submissions due to Finance next week
  - Performance metrics and capital programming due later in February

Larisa Casillas reported from the Finance and Management Committee:

- Discussion about possibly issuing another bond before the end of the fiscal year
- A seven-year contract for vacant property tax administration was sent back for renegotiation due to length concerns in light of budget deficit

## **7. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SURVEY**

Chair Yang and Vice Chair Forbes presented preliminary findings from the public survey:

- Over 6,700 responses received, compared to 1,200 in previous budget cycle poll
- Survey fielded in English, Spanish, and Chinese
- Data weighted to account for demographic representation differences
- Key findings included:

- Continuing downward trend in ratings of Oakland as a place to live
- Nearly 80% of respondents dissatisfied with city government services
- A lot of alignment across communities, but some notable differences especially a generational one with youth showing different priorities compared to adults
- Two key themes prevail throughout: anxiety about safety; and concern for homelessness and affordable housing
- Budget priorities by area:
  - Public Safety: Reduce police overtime spending
  - Economic Growth: Reduce funding for cultural programs and arts organizations
  - Transportation: Reduce street paving over accessibility and safety of sidewalks
  - Youth and Community: Reduce library improvements if forced to make cuts
  - Housing and Homelessness: Reduce funding for encampment sweeps
- Current opposition to the proposed sales tax increase, though enough undecideds to flip

*Public comment: 3 commenters who provided ideas for outreach to youth, clarified funding stream used for MACRO program, and asked questions about how the survey was advertised*

Commissioner Grimsley made a motion to empower the BAC leadership team to finalize and submit the survey report on behalf of the BAC. Commissioner Ycoy-Walton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all commissioners present voting in favor.

## **8. 2025-2026 CALENDAR YEAR STRATEGY**

Vice Chair Forbes presented the updated 2025 Calendar Year Strategy, which incorporated previous feedback to broaden criteria for commission membership to include lived experience and community involvement alongside financial expertise.

Commissioner Ycoy-Walton made a motion to adopt the 2025 Calendar Year Strategy. Commissioner Bliss seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously with all commissioners present voting in favor.

## **9. UPDATE FROM PUBLIC SAFETY AD HOC GROUP**

Commissioner Grimsley provided an update on the Public Safety Ad Hoc Group's work:

- Graduate student engaged to analyze police spending
- Plans to connect with community groups working on police spending issues
- Analysis being conducted of other cities' approaches to police budgeting
- Police staffing study nearing completion with final revisions underway

Nathan Bassett noted that the police staffing study vendor (PFM) will be doing presentations once the report is complete.

## **10. ACTION COMMITMENTS**

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was struck from the meeting.

## **11. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

Suggestions for future meetings included:

- Report on the community engagement forums (March 5 at 81st Avenue Library and March 11 at the main library)
- Potential discussion of pension matters
- Summary of the police audit findings if completed
- Q2 Revenue & Expenditure report discussion
- Form 700 ethics presentation

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at approximately 8:12 PM

*These minutes were drafted using a large language model using a transcript of the meeting recording. They were reviewed and edited by a human for accuracy.*