

BNC eNews, Issue 22

June 1, 2017 by [BNC Archivist \(Edit\)](#)

This June, we are reminded by what Lewis Carroll so astutely stated, *The hurrier I go, the behinder I get*. So, before telling you all that is happening in the Sections to follow, we thought we would open this issue by reminding you what BNC is all about, bring you up-to-date on how BNC is evolving, and, in case you haven't heard, tell you the Big News of the Day.

BNC's Purpose: BNC will strive to provide a safe harbor in which neighborhoods can discuss their specific issues and join together as they choose, to achieve the goal of a livable city that respects the environment we live in. Change is inevitable, but we have the obligation to shape that change for those that will follow us. At all times, we will do our best to help resolve problems through calm, accurate information and the civil exchange of ideas.

What's New: BNC is now a federal and state tax-exempt organization (501(c)3). In the next few months, we invite everyone to join in the discussion regarding whether we should restructure the organization. We will also re-design the BNC website. While all of this is happening we will keep you fully advised in the same way you normally receive this eNEWS.

Our Work: In our last eNEWS, we outlined five areas at the local level that are central to neighborhood concerns and where change must occur. This list is not ranked in any order. Running through each item on this list is the need for transparency and to hold accountable elected *and* appointed officials and staff.

1. Land use issues from the flats to the hills.
2. Deterioration of our infrastructure from sewers to parks and everything in between.
3. Public safety.
4. Continued lack of recognition by the University that they exist within and as part of the city of Berkeley.
5. A persistent dysfunctional Planning Department and lack of financial planning overall.

Your Work: Each and every one of us can help by:

1. Spreading BNC's eNEWS by
 - a. Sending an e-mail to bnc50@berkeleyneighborhoodscouncil.com with the work "subscribe" in the subject to ensure that you get your own personal copy.

- b. Forwarding the eNEWS to every List Serve you're on and every person on your personal e-mail list with the same request about forwarding.
2. Attending BNC's General Meetings and Forums and participating in discussions and decisions. *You are the most important part of this*, and you are needed to help plan what comes next.

Together, with your experience, and knowledge, we can both formulate a vision for Berkeley's future that respects our neighborhoods and also make that vision come true. We *can* find a balance between meeting our responsibilities regarding housing with the need for historic preservation, open space, neighborhood values, density and diversity, within an ever increasing number of State laws that seek to take away local discretion over land-use decisions within our already dense built-up environment. We *can* face up to the three major disasters looming in our future — the threat of climate change bringing us sea level rise, a major rupture on the Hayward Fault, and the approach of complete financial collapse over our accumulated unfunded liabilities.

Two Big Announcements Have Surfaced:

1. The City announced on June 8, that Council meetings have been moved from 7:00 pm to 6:00 pm *“as a Council strategy for managing the duration of meeting.”* June will be a transition period with:
 2. June 13, starting at 6:00 pm, Council Chambers, 2134 MLK
 3. June 20, starting at 6:00 pm, Longfellow School, 1500 Derby
 4. June 27, starting at 7:00 pm, Council Chambers, 2134 MLK
 5. Then, **starting with July 11, all regular meetings will begin at 6:00 pm.**
2. On June 7, the Berkeley Unified School District (BUSD) announced that effective June 8, they will collect “School Facility Fees” from developers of residential and commercial/industrial properties.

The District Announcement says that such fees are authorized by state law and are currently collected in many jurisdictions such as Oakland, Alameda, West Contra Costa County, San Francisco and Hayward. The stated purpose of these fees are *“to help school districts meet the costs of expanding their facilities to accommodate increased enrollment caused by new development.”*

The fees have been quietly under consideration by the District since October 2015. They were approved by the School Board on February 8, 2017 after holding a public hearing, and on June 7, 2017, the City posted a notice of BUSD's action on the City's website with the following information:

The fees apply to any new commercial or industrial developments, including additions of any size. The rate is \$0.56 per square foot.

The fees also apply to development and additions to existing residential properties greater than 500 square feet. The rate is \$3.48 per square foot.

Exemptions to residential development fees are listed as:

- repairs such as roofs, electrical upgrades, decks, and the like.
- senior housing (Note: BNC is not sure whether they mean housing lived in by seniors, or whether it applies to projects designated as senior housing.)
- reconstruction of a structure destroyed by natural disaster
- religious facilities
- government facilities
- private full-time day schools
- mobile homes in currently occupied mobile home spaces

Fees apply to any project that submits a city of Berkeley building permit application after June 8, 2017. Fees are paid to the BUSD and there is an appeal process which will be handled by the BUSD Facilities Office.

BNC makes the following observations to this news:

1. The study undertaken by the District must have considered how many school age children are projected to live in the hundreds of new units that have been and are being approved in Berkeley. One of the complaints by many neighborhoods has been that the units being built have not been for family housing, so BNC would sure like to know what that number is.
2. What will be the impact of these school fees be on affordable housing units?
3. The school fee on a new, modest 2-bedroom apartment of 800 square feet would equal \$2,784. This is not inconsequential, unless our calculator is wrong, or we've misread something.
3. We're in the process of asking for more information on how this all came about and will be reporting back to you in our next issue.

In the meantime, this issue is chock full of info that every neighborhood ought to know. Read all about:

- [What We're Thinking About](#) – and there are lots of issues floating around (pun intended) as yet another issue about **water** surfaces in the news with stories about cancer causing chemicals brought about in part by the drought; The **Berkeley Democratic Club** holds a Forum on *Planning for a Better Berkeley* and a club officer levies a charge against BNC; BNC puts on paper our concerns about the **failure of planning** in Berkeley and asks for a meeting with the City Manager.

- [Neighborhood News, Round and About](#)
- BNC questions whether the construction company that built **Library Gardens, aka K-Street Flats** got a way too-light disciplinary action by the Contractors' State License Board, and we tell the shocking news about how the proposed State law requiring public disclosure of the history of a contractor's construction problems may come to nothing as of January 1, 2018. You can also read about the second lawsuit against the City regarding **1310 Haskell Street**, and about our identification of the individuals and groups (**like SFBarf**) that are behind that lawsuit, and proposals to address our housing needs under the mantra of build, build, build that now also includes a movement to eliminate single family zoning in Berkeley.
- [Neighborhood Forum](#) — two neighborhoods tell their own stories.
- Toni Mester writes about the Planning Commission's failure to resolve the controversy regarding **changes to R-1A zoning**, and the Parker Street Neighbors Group tells how the developer got much more than he should have in the development at **2597 Telegraph Avenue**, leaving neighborhood residents wondering just who in the city of Berkeley is minding the store.
- [Featured Neighborhood](#) — 2902 Adeline
- Lessons learned from the experience of the neighborhood group that doubled the amount of affordable housing units the developer was willing to provide.
- [On the Neighborhood Food Prowl](#) — we speak of many things, butterflies, history, avocados, mail carriers and organized crime!
- We present information (and even include a recipe) that you simply can't find anywhere else. We dare you to prove otherwise.
- [The Cultural Corner](#) — let's honor our neighborhood activists There is much to say to honor a neighborhood activist who worked long and hard to establish Ohlone Park. There is an action that we can take to memorialize what she did, and we hope that you will help make that happen.

That's what is in this issue. We hope you enjoy it. There is much more to tell, but we just couldn't fit everything in so there will be more to come. Please let us know how we are doing. What you like, what you don't like. Did we make mistakes that need to be corrected? We'll be happy to do so. We will also be happy to have articles, or suggested topics submitted by you, so please don't hold back. Contact us at bnc50@berkeleyneighborhoodscouncil.com.

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