



The League of Women Voters
Berkeley • Albany • Emeryville
1414 University Ave., Suite D ♦ Berkeley CA 94702
Phone: (510) 843-8824 ♦ Fax: (510) 843-8828
E-mail: office@lwvbae.org
Website: <http://lwvbae.org>

To: Mayor & Council
CC: City Clerk, LWVBAE Board of Directors
From: Nancy Bickel, Past President
On Behalf of League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville
Re: Item 15. Proposed Open Government Ordinance, Adding BMC Chapter 2.06
(Continued from January 25, 2011)
BERKELEY CITY COUNCIL MEETING Tuesday, February 15, 2011

We repeat, with enthusiasm, our support of the proposed open government ordinance at the January 25 Council meeting, in its slightly revised form. We congratulate the City on taking action to improve further our access to city meetings and information.

We strongly support the various proposals to make your activities more accessible to the public. These include:

- Starting your meetings at 6 pm rather than 7 pm;
- Prohibiting public hearings from starting after 10 pm in most cases;
- Setting your agendas earlier and publishing packets substantially in advance of each agenda committee and City Council meeting.

Publication eleven days before the Council meeting will give Council more time to study each issue and to consult with citizens before you vote. We citizens will have more time learn that an issue that concerns us is on the agenda, and, if we wish, to organize with fellow citizens and to make our views known.

- Expanding the number of commission meetings you broadcast and stream is a great idea—please do it soon.
- Expanding citizen access to more city documents through the web should give citizens better information about what the city is doing—and it might even reduce the number of individual requests that city staff need to respond to.
- Assigning the FCPC to take on the job of hearing citizen complaints and trying to solve them informally—and of advising Council on open government issues. We thank the staff for not proposing yet another commission. We were glad to learn, from the additional staff report, which it is legally permissible for the FCPC to take on the task of serving as the Open Government Commission.
- An annual report on the public information requests and how and when they were resolved should be extremely helpful to citizens and City Council in evaluating how the expanded public access is working and in revealing problems that need to be corrected.

We found it helpful to see the new staff appendices responding to Council suggestions and questions and comparing the proposal with Oakland and San Francisco ordinances.

We look forward to seeing how the new system will work.