



Berkeley City Council
Laurie Capitelli, District 5

CONSENT CALENDAR
March 17th, 2015

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Laurie Capitelli and Councilmember Maio
Subject: Initiating a City-wide Tap Water Campaign

RECOMMENDATION

Direct City staff in the Public Health Department to devote time and resources towards developing a City-wide tap water campaign promoting the excellent quality of our local water and encouraging residents to consume it. As an initial step in this effort, direct staff to seek funding to support this campaign.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Staff time and resources.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

In November of 2014 voters in the City of Berkeley passed Measure D, imposing a 1 cent per ounce tax on sugar sweetened beverages. The impetus behind the tax was the persistent health disparities apparent within our communities, and mirrored throughout the nation. According to the Center for Disease Control, 1 out of 3 children born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime. For children of African American and Latino descent, that number rises to 1 in 2. These statistics hold true within Alameda County as well. More locally, according to the City of Berkeley's 2013 Health Status Report, 29% of BUSD students are overweight or obese, with the rates being higher among our African American and Latino youth than in other racial/ethnic groups.

The intent of a tap water campaign is to provide alternatives to sugary drinks. We want to highlight EBMUD water as the healthiest, least expensive, and most readily available beverage for consumers.

BACKGROUND

On June 10, 2014, Jane Micallef, Director of Berkeley's Health, Housing, and Community Services division, made a presentation to the City Council in which she detailed the Public Health Division's internal priority-based budgeting process, per Council's request. The goal of this process was to focus the division's work in an effort to maximize its impact and improve accountability for health outcomes in the City. This process is part of an ongoing initiative entitled "Health Happens in Berkeley."

The very first bullet point containing the Public Health Division's identified priorities highlights cardiovascular disease and related conditions (heart conditions, high blood pressure, and strokes). As mentioned in the June Council item, "all of these diseases are closely linked to the underlying health conditions of obesity and diabetes, which in turn are related to nutrition, physical activity, tobacco use, and environmental stress" (Information Calendar, June 10, 2014, Item 54). Current nutrition science identifies sugary drinks as the largest contributor of sugar to the American diet and a culprit in the nationwide rising diabetes and obesity epidemics.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Whereas redirecting people's beverage consumption away from sugary drinks to water in any form, from the tap or in a bottle, is a great step forward in terms of nutrition and health, we are recommending a focus on tap water for two reasons. First and foremost, water is virtually free to all residents and readily available from people's own taps and various public sources. Second, a focus on tap water fits in with the City's overall environmental sustainability efforts as plastic water bottles add to waste and landfill.

RATIONALE

In the June 2014 Council item Micallef also noted the need to focus the PHD's resources on evidence based practices that directly address the factors that the department has prioritized. Recent attention to the benefits of promoting water as the healthiest beverage range from Michelle Obama's Drink Up campaign, backed by the Partnership for a Healthier America; current public health initiatives to get a water symbol added to the dietary guidelines on MyPlate.Gov; to Santa Clara County's recently established water campaign consortium, comprised of the county health department, the water utility district, and First 5 Santa Clara. This request to initiate a local tap water campaign, informed by these endeavors, is an effort to direct time and energy to already identified strategic priorities of our PHD. It is a response to Berkeley voters' overwhelming expression of concern regarding the negative dietary impacts of sugary drinks, and a way to positively promote a readily accessible, healthful, and affordable beverage option.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS CONSIDERED

As national efforts to decrease tobacco use have shown us, redirecting public health practices can be achieved when approaching a social problem from various angles, such as imposing taxes, implementing educational campaigns, and changing the cultural environment in which those practices exist. If the city failed to support Measure D with additional public health related efforts we would be leaving the job partly undone. The goal of our PHD is to increase our residents' health outcomes by concentrating on some of the most pernicious and widespread diseases. It has already prioritized cardiovascular health as a primary concern. As a City we can move this issue forward by shaping beverage consumption practices and promoting tap water as the healthiest, most affordable, and most environmentally sustainable beverage option.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Laurie Capitelli, District 5 981-7150

Councilmember Linda Maio, District 1 981-7110

