



Office of the Mayor

CONSENT CALENDAR

April 11, 2023

To: Members of the City Council

From: Mayor Jesse Arreguín

Subject: Establishment of Fred Ross Memorial Bench in Cesar Chavez Park

RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a Resolution directing the City Manager to work with the family of the late Fred Ross Jr. to dedicate a memorial bench at the west facing edge of Cesar Chavez Park in his honor. The family of Fred Ross Jr. shall be responsible for the cost of the bench and shall be engaged in determining the location of the bench.

BACKGROUND

Fred Ross Jr., the son of the former labor organizer Fred Ross, and a lifelong labor organizer and activist in his own right, sadly passed away on November 20, 2022. Mr. Ross lived in Berkeley for two decades.

Inspired by the work of his father, Mr. Ross worked side by side with Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, founded the Neighbor to Neighbor initiative in the 1980s to provide support to Central American countries, helped elect Nancy Pelosi to Congress and later in life worked with IBEW Local 1245.

Former Labor Secretary Robert Reich had this to say about Mr. Ross:

“You have comforted the afflicted, and afflicted the comfortable,” he told Ross. “Your boldness and vision have been a source of inspiration to me and huge number of other people, working for social justice, labor unions, and the hopes and dreams so many people have for a better life.”

Mr. Ross was a renowned, beloved and effective organizer, who was honored at his recent memorial by over 650 people in attendance and notable speakers including Dolores Huerta and Nancy Pelosi. A bench in his memory at Cesar Chavez Park is a fitting tribute, as Mr. Ross loved walking in Cesar Chavez Park and enjoying the views to the west.

Tributes to Fred Ross, Jr. include:

https://www.sfexaminer.com/news/politics/remembering-fred-ross-jr-legendary-organizer-for-social-justice/article_26f7987a-6cfa-11ed-b816-1b394e47b767.html

<https://www.berkeleyside.org/2022/12/01/fred-ross-jr-obituary>

<https://www.fredrossproject.org/fred-ross-jr-memorial-1>

On April 26, 2007, the Parks & Recreation Commission approved a revised policy whereby park bench donations will be allowed at sites recommended by staff; and, also, established reasonable criteria for granting memorials. On July 22, 2008, Council adopted Resolution No. 61,148-N.S. approving a revised bench donation policy and establishing a process and conditions for granting bench donations, both anonymous and memorial types.

Pursuant to established policy, a bench memorial must be in recognition of someone who had a record of service to the City's parks or has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community. The honoree must be deceased for *at least one year*.

This action would make an exception to the City's bench policy given Mr. Ross' extraordinary contributions (see Attachment B) and would initiate the placement of the bench at an appropriate location in consultation with the family. The family has requested this memorial bench and will be paying the customary fees established by the City for its placement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None. Costs will be paid by the family of Fred Ross Jr.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact

CONTACT PERSON

Jesse Arreguín, Mayor 510-981-7100

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Resolution

Attachment B: Letter dated February 17, 2023 from City to the Family of Fred Ross outlining current city protocols for establishing a memorial bench.

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###N.S.
ESTABLISHMENT OF MEMORIAL BENCH IN CESAR CHAVEZ PARK
IN HONOR OF
FRED ROSS JR.

WHEREAS, On April 26, 2007, the Parks & Recreation Commission approved a revised policy whereby park bench donations will be allowed at sites recommended by staff; and, also, established reasonable criteria for granting memorials; and

WHEREAS, On July 22, 2008, Council adopted Resolution No. 61,148-N.S. approving a revised bench donation policy and establishing a process and conditions for granting bench donations, both anonymous and memorial types; and

WHEREAS, Pursuant to established policy, a bench memorial must be in recognition of someone who had a record of service to the City's parks or has made an outstanding contribution to the Berkeley community and has been deceased for at least one year; and

WHEREAS, On November 20, 2022, Fred Ross Jr. passed away quietly in his home after living in Berkeley for over two decades; and

WHEREAS, Fred Ross Jr. worked as an early age alongside Cesar Chavez in the lettuce fields of California; and

WHEREAS, His life work as an organizer included advocating for farmworker rights, effectively changing the U.S. policy of backing oppressive governments in Central America and accelerating the naturalization of legal immigrants; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Ross spent hours walking in his favorite location, Cesar Chavez Park, while enjoying the views to the west; and

WHEREAS, This action would be an exception to City protocols for memorial benches and would initiate the placement of the bench at an appropriate location in consultation with the family; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that a new memorial bench location should be established on the west facing edge of Cesar Chavez Park to honor Fred Ross Jr. and his contributions to Berkeley and immigrants.

ATTACHMENT B

On Feb 17, 2023, at 4:11 PM, Williams, Wanda <WWilliams@cityofberkeley.info> wrote:

Hi Margo:

My condolences for the loss of your husband. Thank you for your interest in donating a memorial bench to a City of Berkeley park. The Memorial Bench Donation Policy is outlined in the attached council resolution and is handled on a case by case basis depending on the availability of sites for benches at selected City parks.

At this time, we are only accepting donations for replacing old existing benches at our parks. No new bench locations will be considered. Honoree must be deceased for at least one year prior to application acceptance.

The donation process is as follows:

- Upon request, applicant should work with Parks Maintenance staff (Walt Vandernald) to identify a location where a bench needs to be replaced.
- Once site is approved by staff, complete and submit the application for Park Bench Donation, with a check for \$3,400 payable to "The City of Berkeley" to cover costs of purchasing a new bench, materials, installation and a cast iron plaque.
- City staff will process the application and submit a consent calendar item to the City Council for approval.
- Once approved, city staff will work with the applicant to finalize the text for the plaque, order it and finalize the location for the proposed bench. PRW maintains the right to the final decision for bench location.
- Building Maintenance staff will purchase, install plaque and assemble the bench.
- This bench donation shall be in effect for a minimum of 10 years or until the bench has exceeded its useful life (as determined by City staff). At that time, the existing bench may be replaced by the next family on the waiting list. The donor family may request the plaque at that time, or donate a new memorial bench.

The entire process can take up to 8 months to complete. If you have any additional questions, feel free to contact the me via Email or at 510-981-6702.

Thank you,