

# Order of The Golden Bear

ΔΙΩΚΩ

ESTABLISHED 1900

*The meeting was convened at 6:04pm.*

**Usual Place, March 18, 2025**

## **Items for the good of The Order:**

- A Fellow shares the 642-WALK Campus Walk service which can be assessed by students for safe walk escort.
- A Fellow announces an event taking place on March 19th at 12:30 PM where there will be a rally to defend our university, hosted by Berkeley's Center for Critical Theory, Humanities, and Digital Humanities, in support of the University.
- A Fellow shares the start of Charter Week as the 12 PM Charter Day Rally is scheduled for March 19th.
- A Fellow recommends the cemetery tour and encourages Fellows to sign up for the newsletter, stating that it is well worth their time. A Fellow shares that the organization was founded in 1910 for women's rights and the suffragist movement and presents an opportunity to learn more about the campus.
- A Fellow announces that registration for the Order's 125th Celebration is now closed and announces to the registered Fellows to keep the RSVP date in mind in terms of attendance.
- A Fellow asks if any information will be shared regarding Tuesday, April 29th. The Warden announces that the Election Meeting for the next Warden and Chronicler will take place on Tuesday, April 29th.

## **Items for the good of the university: Berkeley Student Housing**

- *Berkeley Housing Plans and Resources*
- *Residential Housing*
- *Theme Housing*
- *University Housing Plans*
- *Off-Campus Housing Accessibility (Cal Rentals, Tenant Legal Assistance)*
- *Greek Life Housing*
- *Co-ops*
- *International House*
- *House Insecurity*
- *Grocery Store Lack of Options (Berkeley Student Food Collective)*
- *Transfer Housing*
- *Graduate & Family Housing*
- *Berkeley Housing Initiative*

*The Warden opens the floor for discussion.*

- A Fellow shares that in residential housing, International House, and cooperative housing, co-ops are typically more affordable for students. Specific adjustments must be made for students with disabilities who need accessible entrances into all buildings. Commonly, students have experienced being stuck in elevators and facing challenges accessing housing. They advocate for nominating leaders in residential housing.
- A Fellow expresses that there will be new infrastructure with amenities open for graduate students on Bancroft and Fulton. Many campus facilities, including the Faculty Club, are independent of the university. Through staff needs, the Faculty Club was created to support staff and faculty members. Many student housing facilities were built by private owners in surrounding campus areas, which led to complexity. Housing pricing is beyond the university's funding. Berkeley is unique in its design for student housing, as other campuses were able to fulfill housing needs alongside the establishment of the campus.
- A Fellow states that students in based programs receive greater support. This was shown in building community in the dorms, and on-campus residential halls, where the design is created for student engagement with peers. This program was independent of the RA positions but served as a mentor role for incoming students. There is room for student engagement to advocate for their needs as we navigate other housing infrastructure.
- A Fellow shares that housing opportunities exist in downtown Oakland. They question if the housing infrastructure in Oakland can be accessed by students and whether the City of Oakland accounts for this.
- A Fellow expresses that the relationship between proximity and access is crucial. They share that the affordability crisis is clear for students and the workforce in the Bay Area. As a graduate student, they express concerns about the AC Transit lane from Albany, highlighting the interplay in infrastructure. The future of housing is a mixed-use model for commercial and student housing, leading to downtown development. They share that Anchor House is a great example. They add that on the Clark Kerr Campus, there could be a lack of development due to the moratorium. They question how the state can expect to increase student enrollment without sufficient housing.
- A Fellow shares that in conversation with the Berkeley Student Co-ops, they learned that co-ops have budget issues due to COVID. They share over 300 co-op vacancies, presenting a challenge for running these spaces. This non-profit organization faces financial difficulties. Room and board cost \$8,800 per year. There are 18 houses and 3 apartment complexes, but still have vacancies.
  - A Fellow shares that these infrastructures face debt issues beyond the housing need.
- A Fellow expresses that as a property manager for a 17-unit apartment complex. Last year, there were only two vacant apartments for the first time in 40 years. When hosting open houses, the competition is different. The projects happening on campus share similar challenges.
  - In the discussion of vacant apartments, a Fellow asks if there is a relationship between on-campus and off-campus housing. They believe the availability of Anchor House has affected housing, particularly for transfer students, as it serves as a way to build community.
- A Fellow shares that co-ops are not recommended due to the work hour requirements. Under legal issues, a lawsuit has led to controversy. The director stated that it is not a good place to live at the moment.
- A Fellow asks if there is an association between rent prices and moving further away from campus. Students who already work struggle to find affordable options.

- A Fellow answers that it is hard to get groups of four to sign a lease together.
- Some students can afford single apartments, but typically, they experience paying \$43,000 for one apartment annually. The lease runs from June 1st to May 30th which presents difficulties with student schedules. There are no subleases allowed in these places as well.
- A Fellow adds that, in their sophomore year, they used ADA resources to receive primary access to choosing on-campus housing. The Berkeley Housing website does not show pictures of the apartments or dorms, including the appliances, bathrooms, and amenities. This is unhelpful for students and their families. For many students, this is their first apartment. The lease was difficult for students to accept. This is hard for students who cannot have parental or co-sign support. As an out-of-state student, they faced challenges in affordability and had no time to figure it out. The cost of a studio apartment was \$1,900 which shows a financial burden.
- A Fellow shares that the price of rental properties in Berkeley has decreased due to tenant proposals. The vacancy issue is a symptom of a market where landlords compete for tenants.
  - A Fellow shares that properties built in the 1950s are rarely renovated. They believe landlords will have to adjust to the current housing climate students are experiencing.
- A Fellow shares that the socio-political landscape today presents significant challenges. The city of Austin has seen a decline in rental properties due to an increase in homeownership. Housing availability is affecting the university setting, and public policy should further incentivize development. An entire building remains vacant on Delaware and University. Other cities have an occupancy tax for landlords. Proposition 13 has been unable to readdress market-side economics. There should be a partnership between the City of Berkeley and the university for full occupancy.
- A Fellow shares that there are assessments to incentivize property owners to fill vacant spaces.
  - A Fellow asks what power property managers have to evict tenants. They threw out the criteria for admitting people into apartments.
- A Fellow asks about Anchor House. Students can stay as many semesters as needed. Students want single bedrooms, and the same is true for many student housing needs. They recall a two-bedroom house with 11 students. There are many "For Lease" signs. Mental health research on accommodating students is needed. Anchor House has great design elements for all students, including spaces for classes, study areas, and a gym. Many housing options for faculty exist, but questions remain about how these buildings were funded. What are we doing for staff and faculty? We need more student support. A survey is being conducted to assess staff needs, particularly in relation to housing. Would we move into a collegiate model of staff and student connection to foster mentorship? The university does not benefit from Anchor House's revenue. Anchor House funding goes back into its operations. The 27-story Center and Oxford project includes three new parking structures.
- A Fellow shares concerns about work/life balance and student affordability. Students living farther from campus typically do so due to affordability.
- A Fellow shares that in conversations with other students, they were randomly assigned to live on campus. The apartment-style housing is not available for students seeking a single unit. Keeping in mind that many students will return home to live with parents, it is important to have options that are more "adult-ish." They understand that development is in place, including community housing and lower-income housing, which some view as an "eyesore" near People's Park.

- A Fellow shares that the local government measures taxes on unoccupied housing units. These measures exist to provide revenue for the local government.
- A Fellow shares that families and students move further away due to pricing options they cannot afford. The construction market and vacancy rates impact these movements. Many who move into these spaces are not connected to the local culture.
- A Fellow shares concerns about public transit and the city of Berkeley. They question do the Bancroft, Shattuck, and University streets and buildings have full occupancy. Some hotels have been forced to close due to debts.
- A Fellow shares insights into market dynamics. Large apartments are financed and quietly bought and sold by stakeholders.
- A Fellow shares that during the recession, banks took away mixed-use buildings since debts could not be serviced. They renegotiated prices. They ask what banks can do to service financial readjustments in today's economic climate.
- A Fellow shares concerns about lower attendance at football and basketball games due to lack of parking. The lack of public transportation on game days affects students, alumni, and Berkeley supporters. This long-term effect negatively impacts participation in school events and overall integration to campus. The AC Transit and Berkeley Reverse Perimeter can also quickly become a lawsuit waiting to happen. Campus buses often leave students on the side of the street when the bus is full. This impacts the students standing, with limited movement for accommodation. This can affect student and professor relationships. This dampens the culture of our students. The food crisis is also apparent in the fact that students in dorms are forced to be in these spaces. All students have different dietary needs and eating patterns.
- A Fellow shares that Greek life has housing options. They have had a single apartment for three years. It is an affordable housing option for students and is close to campus. The community provides mentorship for personal and professional development. "Go Greek life!"
- A Fellow shares that 1,000 dorm-style beds will be available for transitional housing units. The campus is struggling financially due to budget and staff cuts. UC Regents owns the buildings, but they are not sustainable in the long term. In 20-30 years, they will belong to the students and university. The Fall 2027 Housing Project (Site #2) is under construction at the Ellsworth parking garage.
- A Fellow asks what students are doing to address the occupation of residential opportunities.
- A Fellow shares thanks for the enlightening conversation. They believe that They believe that the Units are empty ruins. There is a large overflow of students as we typically accept more than we can house. Doubles in the Units turned into triples, which were supposed to be temporary.
  - A Fellow shares that the T buildings were temporary and were here for decades. The high rises had so many empty rooms that they were turned into offices.

*Discussion Adjourned at 7:30 PM. The Meeting closed with Song. Notes were compiled by the Chronicler.*