

**City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**  
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

**Minutes\***  
**Wednesday, September 27, 2023, 5:30 P.M.**

*\*video recording and meeting transcript available*

**A. CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Small called the regular meeting to order at 5:45 P.M.

**B. ROLL CALL**

PRESENT: S. Bischoff, H. Burks,\* M. Cantú, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, K. Kilian-Lobos, A. Lee, L. Murray, J. Pursell, J. Schlemmer, L. Whitmore, and Chair D. Small  
\*Arrived after Roll Call

EXCUSED: M. Njissang, B. Therriault, T. Walker, and B.K. Williams

ABSENT: L. Chacon

STAFF PRESENT: Deputy City Manager-Community Services Director (Staff Liaison to the Task Force) LaShonda White, Assistant Administrative Analyst Guadalupe Morales, Associate Administrative Analyst Stephanie Ny, and City Attorney Alison Flowers

**C. AGENDA REVIEW AND ADOPTION**

The agenda was adopted, as presented.

**D. MEETING PROCEDURES**

Guadalupe Morales, staff to the Task Force, identified the meeting procedures and the public's ability to speak during the meeting. She announced that anyone may make an oral comment even if a written comment had previously been submitted; however, each speaker may raise their hand only once to make one oral public comment per each agenda item. She added that an announcement would identify the time to make public comment for each item.

**E. MINUTES APPROVAL**

**1. APPROVE the minutes of the August 23, 2023 Meeting of the Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**

Motion by Taskforce Member Cantú, seconded by Taskforce Member Kilian-Lobos to adopt the minutes of the August 23, 2023 meeting, as submitted, carried by the following Roll Call vote:

**City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**  
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

AYES: S. Bischoff, M. Cantú, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, K. Kilian-Lobos, A. Lee, L. Murray, J. Pursell, J. Schlemmer, L. Whitmore, and Chair D. Small  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: None  
ABSENT: H. Burks, L. Chacon, M. Njissang, B. Therriault, T. Walker, and B.K. Williams

**2. APPROVE the minutes of the August 30, 2023 Special Meeting of the Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**

Motion by Taskforce Member Joseph, seconded by Taskforce Member Whitmore to adopt the minutes of the August 30, 2023 special meeting, as submitted, carried by the following Roll Call vote:

AYES: S. Bischoff, M. Cantú, D. Gosney, R. Joseph, K. Kilian-Lobos, A. Lee, L. Murray, J. Pursell, L. Whitmore, and Chair D. Small  
NOES: None  
ABSTAIN: J. Schlemmer  
ABSENT: H. Burks, L. Chacon, M. Njissang, B. Therriault, T. Walker, and B.K. Williams

**F. CITY STAFF REPORTS**

Deputy City Manager-Community Services Director LaShonda White was attending a special City Council meeting at this time and there was no report from staff.

An unidentified speaker noted his understanding that Youth Works programs had been paused and he asked if that was the case and why.

Taskforce Member Joseph commented that there had been an influx of registrations and the program had been paused to be able to catch up.

The unidentified speaker asked for a detailed report on that situation at the next meeting.

Taskforce Member Cantú requested an update on a possible contract between the Office of Neighborhood Safety (ONS) and the West Contra Costa Unified School District (WCCUSD). She explained that the Task Force’s original proposal had identified eight Neighborhood Change Agents with two to be allocated to work within high schools. Given the surge in violence in the world of education she suggested that Neighborhood Change Agents could make a difference and she sought a report back on the status of that contract in the hope of moving it forward.

Chair Small encouraged the working groups from the Task Force that had taken on accountability for Youth Works and ONS to meet and talk to the heads of those programs so that the Task Force could be in regular communication with the various departments and agencies and keep the Task Force abreast of the work being done.

Taskforce Member Cantú asked that the next agenda identify the working groups, their current members, and potentially open the groups up to new members.

**City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**  
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

**G. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Randy Joseph stated that working at the RYSE Center he was in the process of constructing a Youth Action Board for Contra Costa County to deal with youth homelessness. The Youth Action Board would be comprised of 10 to 12 young people under the age of 25 who had experienced being unhoused or who were currently unhoused, and who would be able to work with the County to come up with recommendations of how funding should be spent on unhoused projects, with rules on how unhoused projects would be built. Those recommendations would go directly to the County Board of Supervisors. He explained it was a paid opportunity and travel to meetings would be provided. He would email flyers out to City staff to distribute them and noted it was a major opportunity for young people who wanted to see the end of homelessness in the community. He added that there were over 100 unhoused young people in the City and he re-emphasized that the young people would be paid to have their voices heard and would work directly with the County to make those changes.

Chair Small reminded everyone about the Kehinde Wiley Exhibit at the DeYoung Museum that would end on October 15, 2023. She added that the last of the speaker series would end on October 14. The last series was called Let There Be Voice, a grand concert for racial justice and criminal justice reform. The exhibit, a combination of paintings and sculpture, was offered free on Saturdays for Bay Area residents. She stated the exhibit was called Architecture of Sorrow, specifically designed to speak to youth of color, to address the issues of grief and sorrow that comes from all the various forms of violence experienced in the community.

**H. PRESENTATIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND ACTION ITEMS**

**1. RECEIVE a Presentation from Safe Organized Spaces Richmond on Detailed Expenditures**

O'Neill Fernandez, Director of Programs for Safe Organized Spaces (SOS) and Daniel Barth, the Executive Director of SOS presented SOS' success and financial measures over the last 21 months; from October 2021 to June 2023.

Mr. Fernandez stated a personal vision class was offered as part of healthy choices and he displayed photos to show some of the unhoused community, some from the Castro Encampment. The course was to teach people how to find the strength to achieve their goals and to notice their goals and be able to reach them. His slide presentation had been organized to identify the success measures, finances, and increased capacity, from tent to home.

Daniel Barth, Executive Director of SOS, identified the encampment services, engagement, outreach and engagement, and workforce deliverables and goals. He described the visioning process through the 21 months and explained that SOS was now entertaining and fulfilling its goals. He identified the encampment services that offered basic functions such as trash disposal with 91 tons per quarter, 600 showers per quarter, serving 21 encampments, which he noted would increase this year, and servicing toilets, providing drinking water, and laundry. He explained that laundry was a great connector to building engagement.

## **City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**

Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Mr. Barth explained there would be success measures on engagement when providing services to know the population, the encampments, establishing new relationships to identify individual interests and needs that would allow follow-up to seek, expand and deepen care management.

Mr. Barth reported that about seven employees were hired per quarter after about eight months with SOS, and one of the main goals was to get people into mainstream jobs. Another SOS goal was to raise other funds. He explained that under fiscal sponsorship SOS had only limited opportunities for administrative support but had raised \$340,000 over the 21 months that did not include the salaries that Lifelong had provided for two individuals to be SOS staff, which overall represented \$430,000. He provided a breakdown of the budget, noted that payroll represented three quarters of the entire expenditure with other costs for services, dumping fees, supplies, vehicle expenses and the like. He added that breaking down the administrative, streets team, unhoused and housed, there was a split of 28 to 72 percent of the total expenditures on payroll. A lot of that was because they were paying extra expenses for the programmatic support that Rebuilding Together East Bay North had provided along with an Administrative Manager and his Executive Director position. The rest were getting \$18/hour.

Tomi Nagai-Rothe, Director of Operations for SOS, reported they had been increasing capacity since July 1, 2023 and now had nine grant applications and proposals and were creating a fee for services proposal to diversify the funding streams. SOS had been working hard in the last five months on integral community of care partnerships and saw the community of care as the web and holding of unhoused neighbors in a one-to-one relationship. SOS was poised to apply for funding, grants or programs working with 13 organizations and she identified some of them. SOS had established a data collection system and had a new donor contact database and a project management platform that was getting them into a good place.

Mr. Barth explained that the notion of tent to home was what they were trying to do, getting more unhoused individuals to work on their income, their housing and their health goals to ensure housing sustainability. He stated the City of Richmond had worked with them in that regard and had garnered funds from the state to do Housing First, an approach to serving people experiencing homelessness. SOS was trying to lead the way for the City and it started with SOS being knowledgeable of unhoused residents, who they were currently mapping. He noted the situation with the young was different from the encampments. They were working with adults in the encampments and were mapping the encampments in Richmond to be able to introduce a community of care beyond the safety net that was robust, and doing that by diversifying funding and going to other jurisdictions to be part of the West County community of care development.

Mr. Barth stated SOS would be working with the City of San Pablo in the coming weeks and reaching out to other jurisdictions as well. The work they were doing was government funded work and they had to show themselves to be county worthy to get county funds and were currently in that process of building that level of institutional buy-in as additional goals for the coming year.

An unidentified member of SOS staff described new services such as a workforce clinic every Tuesday in North Richmond to help get a birth certificate, apply for a job, anything related to work. They were doing everything they could to find jobs, would soon work with the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program (GRIP) and Contra Costa Community College to extend service outside of North Richmond.

## **City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**

Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium

403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Mr. Barth explained that the encampment mapping deepened the engagement. SOS had been working with the City, had initially started it with fire safety but were now mapping for safety overall, to identify the needs, and finding hundreds of uncounted unhoused in one part of Richmond. SOS was spending numerous hours to map those needs and focus the resources. He spoke to the healthy choices' curriculum, wellness, job prep, career, support, everything to do with health to promote making healthier choices.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer asked how many folks had been transitioned into housing and into permanent employment, and Mr. Barth stated over 21 months, out of 46 employees 25 had been permanently housed and SOS had supported others into housing as well. Part of the engagement was working with people from tent to home in collaboration with partners. Housing Consortium of the East Bay (HCEB) had been the housing navigator for the two programs of Rydin Road resolution and Casto Road encampment resolution, and SOS had not been integral into getting them into the housing but SOS had navigated a few people, on average three per quarter, to get folks into housing that was not funded by the City but funded by other means.

Mr. Barth clarified that SOS' care management provided in housing was the relationships, the confidence of working with people and helping them through that process. He looked forward into the next round where the City would look at the encampments scattered up, down and around the I-80 and I-580 freeway and the corridors around them and those that did not get housing from Rydin and Castro. SOS would be the lead organization that had the relationship and act as the liaison and were creating an integral partnership where HCEB and their housing navigation and case management and SOS' relationship, curriculum, support and clinical social work would be part of the integrated system to work together to help the unhoused.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer noted that some people were skeptical about what SOS was doing with City funds to address the unhoused issues and he emphasized the importance of providing good statistics and a financial breakdown of SOS' activities related to job placement, employment opportunities, the showers, the laundry and most importantly the numbers to put some of the skeptics to rest.

Taskforce Member Cantú referred to the shuttling to SOS services and asked where SOS wanted to see growth in that regard, and Mr. Barth stated there were hundreds of encampments and the basics would have to be addressed first. The goal was to scale up the number of people reached with basic services because lives were at risk for a lack of connection and relationships were key to transitioning folks from the situations where they were literally trapped and sometimes dying.

Taskforce Member Cantú commented that she had only heard good things about SOS and she hoped SOS would serve when the Community Crisis Response Program (CCRP) came into fruition as another contact for the unhoused community to help community responders. With respect to unhoused youth, she asked how SOS was involved with the tiny village next to Richmond Police Activities League (RPAL).

Mr. Barth referred to the Neighborcare number, which was a 24-hour message number that SOS responded to in the field with engagement and encampment services.

**City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**  
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Mr. Barth explained that the care line and the shuttling was their way to reach people and address situations that did not otherwise get addressed. He emphasized that SOS would integrate with CCRP as much as possible and their competence in the encampments would be the glue that connected to the services provided through the CCRP. As to the tiny homes that SOS and others had developed, there would be a “ground honoring” on September 30, 2023 at 1:00 P.M. and he invited the Task Force to that ground honoring. SOS’ role would be that the young people were now beginning to connect with SOS, which was recognizing their strength and potential and would have the staffing to operate the program overseen by Hope Solutions as case managers. SOS would support the safety, security and wellbeing of the community that was peer driven. He added, when asked, that COVID had given them some resources which was where the camp resolution grants had originated, which depended on the availability of some safety net resource to immediately get folks out of the encampments when they were ready, and when they were ready Richmond’s Homekey project was the place. He noted the need for more of that.

When asked by Taskforce Member Bischoff if SOS currently had City funding, Mr. Barth stated that in March 28, 2023, SOS had received \$740,000 in funding from the City of Richmond to continue their work. Those funds would last to early spring next year, which was why SOS was looking at the current funding sources and recognizing the integral partnerships to deepen its work.

Taskforce Member Murray pointed out that SOS was also involved with Housing First and she commended SOS for everything it was doing in the area of homelessness.

Chair Small asked about data collection and noted when the state did its report on homelessness in California, it had been reported that almost half of all the homeless population was over 50 years of age, which was a surprise. It also showed that most people had lived in the county or where they were encamped. Many of them were working. She asked whether SOS was collecting that type of data from those in the encampments. She was curious about how many were women, if women’s special hygiene needs were being addressed, and how the data collection was being used to pinpoint SOS services for effectiveness.

Mr. Barth stated it started with the mapping, knowing where the encampments were, learning about the individuals, keeping data about individuals because that would be the tool for engagement to get information and work with them on their specific needs and eligibility based upon the individual situation. He commented that in the prior 21 months, SOS had just provided basic needs and now the intent was to engage to identify specific needs by individual in how to help people with incomes, identify their health issues and the like, which would lead to a street medicine component in West County and beyond on the ground at encampments to make sure people’s health would be addressed. SOS would call C.O.R.E., Contra Costa’s coordinated entry system for unsheltered persons, and shuttle people and actually access urgent services when needed through their training at Lifelong.

Chair Small recognized that the SOS team carried Narcan. She asked whether SOS also distributed fentanyl testing strips, condoms and syringes, and SOS staff reported that a four-dose, two syringe, two nasal overdose kit with instructions to call 9-1-1 and a pamphlet was available for distribution when needed. There were no fentanyl testing strips or condoms.

## **City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**

Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Chair Small stated she would help SOS secure fentanyl testing strips and condoms. She also asked if there was a way for SOS to create a way for some of the folks from the encampments, recipients of SOS' service, to provide input to the Task Force.

SOS staff concurred and stated that could be provided.

Chair Small also asked about employment, particularly given that some unhoused were older where employment would be difficult, and SOS staff stated that issue was also being supported and it was noted that Richmond Works had indicated there was no age limit. SOS pledged to work with individuals to find every possible avenue and work in any capacity.

As to what SOS was doing in the area of alcohol or substance abuse, Mr. Barth stated that SOS was also working with those who were addicted.

Mr. Barth reported that the SOS Budget would be on the website. He announced an event on Sunday, October 1 when Sierra Nevada would have Harvest Fest from 12:00 to 8:00 P.M. at the Backyard at South 3<sup>rd</sup> and Cutting. He added there would also be an open house at the SOS yard.

No written comments were submitted, or oral comments made, by any member of the public.

### **2. DISCUSS Next Steps for the Community Crisis Response Program Including the Community Advisory Board and APPROVE Recommendations**

Taskforce Member Cantú noted that the City Council had asked Urban Strategies Council (USC) to work with the Task Force to look at the composition, powers and purpose of a Community Advisory Board for the CCRP. To that end, she offered the following recommendations to identify those who should comprise the Community Advisory Board: People with lived experience with crises or mental health crises or calling 9-1-1 and being criminalized; people with lived experiences moving through services and being able to navigate systems; LGBTQIA representatives; systems-impacted people by either police violence, being unhoused and any other mental health substance abuse crisis; social and mental health service providers who could be social workers, therapists, licensed clinicians; medical professionals who could be nurses, doctors and any other medical professional; educators from WCCUSD; clergy and faith leaders or spiritual and indigenous leaders; people with undocumented or non-citizen status; paralegals and attorneys; and a reserved seat for a youth representative.

[The following discussion was not fully audible on the meeting recording. Only some speakers used the microphone during this time.]

When Taskforce Member Pursell asked about the expected number of members of a CCRP Community Advisory Board, Taskforce Member Cantú noted that she had been working with community members, did not believe a large group of people would be as effective as a smaller group, and suggested that an 11 to 15-member board would be manageable and could consider working groups to liaison with Contra Costa County, the WCCUSD and other sub groups.

**City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**  
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
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City Attorney Allison Flowers responded to Chair Small as to whether the Mayor alone would make those appointments, but her comments were not fully audible on the record.

Chair Small noted her understanding that unlike the appointments to the Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force, the Mayor would make the appointments to a CCRP Community Advisory Board, and with that understanding she reminded the Task Force that it could make recommendations in terms of structure but ultimately the composition of the Board would be what the Mayor wanted it to be. She urged the Task Force to think beyond today and consider 5 to 10 years into the future to ensure the longevity of the program. She suggested that having a lawyer was a good idea but she urged care in the selection of medical health professionals to ensure their expertise was appropriate to the situation. She also recommended in addition to the criminal justice system that someone with family law experience be considered for the board to be as holistic as possible.

Taskforce Member Pursell suggested rather than articulating individual qualifications, a bucket to describe direct services representatives be created to allow a range of individuals.

Taskforce Member Bischoff emphasized the need to involve people from the community, such as from the neighborhood councils. He emphasized the importance of community involvement.

Taskforce Member Burks noted that some people were like hubs and were connected to lots of different networks, and from the schools perspective it could be the new community school directors to get direct service to families and youth; peer mentors, and harm reduction to make sure that all areas were covered, especially to be able to consider those with the time and capacity to invest.

Taskforce Member Gosney did not like the idea of assigning a seat dedicated for attorneys given that there may not be any attorney applying. He suggested offering a list of qualifications to the Mayor and the City Council to identify what the Task Force recommended in terms of an application, especially to begin with.

Chair Small asked Urban Strategies Council to advise on what other cities had done with respect to an advisory board and to offer ideas on what had and had not worked in other cities.

Anne Jenks, USC, advised that had not been discussed a lot in the report because it had been advocated in the census that there was political room to have a solid Community Advisory Board. She commented that there had been issues with the advisory boards in other cities and noted, for instance, that in Oakland the advisory board met in private and not in public. She commented that many advisory boards, many made up of fine people, had been shut down. She added there were Best Practices for advisory boards and she suggested that the Task Force consider the role of the advisory board. She noted, for instance, that there would be no need for a subcommittee to work to build a relationship with the County since full-time staff would be hired. She suggested the advisory board would have to be very focused in terms of community engagement and creating a place for the community to talk about the issues when things were not working. She emphasized that it was advisory and there was oversight involved. She added there had been a conversation of what the Task Force envisioned about what the advisory board would do and she supported a bit of space for that to change overtime.

## **City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**

Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Ms. Jenks also urged not being overly descriptive in identifying every seat. She commented that a medical professional seat was not that big a priority and would potentially be hard to recruit. She would have more than one of the referral agencies involved in the advisory board given their unique perspective, she would not make the board too big given the ongoing recruiting situation, and she emphasized the need to look into the future. She liked the idea of ensuring that a young person would participate with a focus on the immigrant population. USC had argued for a staff person to reach out to those communities. She added that USC was a strong advocate for a very transparent, very effective, very engaged Community Advisory Board. She also noted that the social workers at the Public Defender's Office had a very unique perspective because they saw what people got arrested for but were also dealing with the other issues surrounding them.

Taskforce Member Whitmore supported an open and balanced advisory board.

Taskforce Member Gosney wanted a very public Brown Act body and he recommended to the Mayor that the advisory board be an independent body. While he supported the inclusion of young people, he noted they did not always show up given a number of challenges for them.

Taskforce Member Burks wanted to hear more about how to avoid what was occurring with the toxic situation in Oakland and she asked if there were some things that should not be done.

Taskforce Member Bischoff suggested looking at what was happening that may not be obvious whether it was mental health or something else, looking at what might be available.

Taskforce Member Pursell suggested that half the board should have a designation ability even if there were generalities whether it be criminal justice or social services or minority representation, to make sure there was a coerced diversity of people on the board with various backgrounds. He suggested a potential disqualification of members such as direct naysayers to avoid infighting and an undermining of the process but he did not know how to articulate that.

Chair Small suggested that the Task Force was not ready to make recommendations on the Community Advisory Board. As such, she asked the Task Force to consider the purpose of the advisory board such as to monitor the program budget and make sure it complied with its legal obligations, make sure the program was in compliance with state and county laws as to how the services were to be delivered and the types of people and the ways in which the program would be managed; to measure satisfaction of both staff and clients looking at HR practices and getting feedback from the community; holding a space of communications to both the community about what the program was doing and to the City Council about things that might not be working; a space for messaging from the community about how the program was working in relation to its purpose, which was an alternative to the police response of certain kinds of calls. The advisory board should also be able to have a vision of how the program would be managed today and how it could grow over time and be able to make recommendations to the City Council and the Mayor about ways to make the program even better in the future, with a space to ensure accountability. The advisory board should also reflect the values, viewpoint and vision of the Task Force. She urged the Task Force to consider the information discussed and return with a more concrete set of proposed recommendations.

**City of Richmond – Reimagining Public Safety Community Task Force**  
Meeting held in Person: Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium  
403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804

Taskforce Member Schlemmer asked if the advisory board would make recommendations or have the authority to dictate policy or make changes, and the Chair stated the Task Force did not have the ability to do that, all it could do would be to make recommendations.

Taskforce Member Schlemmer understood it would come down to the Mayor to make recommendations and designations. He recommended that members of the Task Force and the Mayor work together to create a job description, a definition of what the board would do and include some of the traits, characteristics, background and life experiences that would be a good fit after which an application could be filed. He wanted the Mayor to entertain holding interviews to whittle down the candidates for the advisory board.

Taskforce Member Burks suggested that the Task Force should figure out the structure and nature of the advisory board now with a structure to reflect as diversly as possible with those who had the time and interest to invest in a structure where volunteers and members of the community could participate, with regular reports to the City Council or a public safety committee of the Council to the board, and with issues related to compliance, evaluation and satisfaction to be done by staff. The advisory board would be the one to step in if there were concerns, so as long as staff was doing regular satisfaction surveys there wouldn't be a lot of time spent on it. In terms of youth, she recommended they be paid to get their attention.

Taskforce Member Joseph had to leave the meeting at this time and there would no longer be a quorum.

The meeting adjourned given the loss of a quorum. Chair Small stated she would work offline to see who could present the next City Council report and the remainder of the items on the agenda would be carried over to the next meeting.

3. **DISCUSS and APPROVE Assignments to City Council Monthly Reports for October, November, and December 2023 as well as the Process for Substitutes**
4. **DISCUSS and APPROVE Task Force Meeting Dates for November and December, 2023**
5. **DISCUSS a General Outreach Plan to Increase Public Awareness of and Participation in Task Force Meetings and APPROVE Recommendations**

**I. ACTION ITEM RECAP**

**J. ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:21 P.M. to a regular meeting on Wednesday, October 25, 2023 in the Bermuda Room, Richmond Memorial Auditorium, 403 Civic Center Plaza, Richmond, CA 94804.