




MEMORANDUM

May 9, 2025

TO: MEMBERS, PORT COMMISSION
Hon. Gail Gilman, Vice President
Hon. Willie Adams
Hon. Stephen Engblom
Hon. Steven Lee

FROM: Elaine Forbes
Executive Director 

SUBJECT: Informational presentation and possible action to amend the Port's sole source grant to the Fisherman's Wharf Community Benefits District to increase the not-to-exceed amount by \$3,147,590 and extend the term by 18 months.

DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION: Approve the Attached Resolution No. 25-30

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On June 13, 2023, the Port Commission approved a sole source grant (Grant) in the not-to-exceed amount of \$2,188,446 over two years to the Fisherman's Wharf Association of San Francisco (DBA Fisherman's Wharf Community Benefit District) (FWCBD) to develop and implement a multi-faceted public space activation and stewardship program for Port property adjacent to the FWCBD. The Port Commission subsequently approved a grant amendment on June 11, 2024 authorizing the reallocation of \$400,000 from the existing budget and increasing the not-to-exceed amount by an additional \$1,032,200, for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$3,220,646, to allow the FWCBD to implement a new initiative called the Little Embarcadero Activation Project.

After evaluating the success of the grant to date and recognizing the ongoing need for activation and beautification in Fisherman's Wharf to attract visitors and tenants, Port staff now requests authorization to amend the existing FWCBD grant agreement (the "FWCBD Grant") to add an additional eighteen months of term and increase the not-to-exceed amount by an additional \$3,147,590, for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$6,368,236.

The FWCBD Grant, which started July 1, 2023, is central to the Port's economic recovery strategy in Fisherman's Wharf (the Wharf), by creating a clean, safe, and vibrant waterfront to attract and retain visitors and tenants while the Port works to re-lease recently closed restaurant facilities in the area. The FWCBD Grant outlines stewardship, beautification, events, and marketing activities that serve to sustain and strengthen tourism, draw local visitors, support businesses, and attract new businesses and activation partners to Port properties and the broader Fisherman's Wharf neighborhood. In addition to helping the long-term viability of the district, these activities are anticipated to support the Port's balance sheet by rebuilding lease revenues as well as the City's overall economic recovery, given Fisherman's Wharf's importance as a destination for Bay Area residents and visitors.

In the first year of the Grant term, the FWCBD began their work in earnest by deploying ambassadors to the Wharf, installing hanging flower baskets and new murals, and activating the area with events such as the "Pier Party" summer event series at Crab Wheel Plaza. The FWCBD has also played a role in advertising the SkyStar Wheel, which is temporarily located at the eastern edge of the Triangle Parking Lot, between Jefferson Street and the portion of the Embarcadero between Taylor and Powell Streets, commonly known as the "Little Embarcadero". This major attraction helps draw visitors to Fisherman's Wharf at a time when the area is struggling from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including restaurant closures and a delayed return of tourism.

When the SkyStar Wheel was installed, the Port and FWCBD recognized unique issues along the Little Embarcadero promenade related to unpermitted vendors, which have negatively impacted the area since the tail-end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Pursuant to the first amendment, FWCBD engaged Street Plans, an urban design firm, to guide the FWCBD and Port staff through a planning exercise that resulted in a robust vision for temporary promenade and plaza improvements along the Little Embarcadero. These improvements have been implemented and, as a result, have beautified and improved public accessibility while hosting positive, family-friendly, permitted, free, and affordable activities.

The proposed second amendment will allow the FWCBD to continue the core services identified in the Grant scope, including management of the Little Embarcadero, now called Fisherman's Wharf Promenade. While the Port is making headway with leasing and opening facilities that were vacated during the pandemic, and Fisherman's Wharf is the top destination in the City for visitors, this work must continue to uplift the image of Fisherman's Wharf, ensuring ongoing attraction of visitors to support businesses in the area and prospective tenants to fill vacant leaseholds.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The proposed amendment to the FWCBD Grant supports the following strategic objectives:

Economic Recovery (Targeted Activation): The Port is actively implementing a \$64.4 million economic recovery and growth plan to address the financial impacts of the

pandemic and build a sustainable financial future for the Port, with focused investments in Fisherman's Wharf (\$11.6 million) and the Southern Waterfront (\$47.5 million). This request will increase investment in Fisherman's Wharf by \$3.1 million, to \$14.7 million. Fisherman's Wharf is receiving targeted activation due to its slow economic recovery and the critical need to retain and attract visitors, as well as new tenants, to reactivate closed restaurants in the area. Despite these challenges, the Wharf has been recognized as the top destination for visitors among the city's "Welcome Zones". Supporting recovery in the Wharf supports recovery for fishers, businesses, the Port, and the City as a whole.

Economic Growth (Property Portfolio): The work of the FWCBD is intended to contribute to the effort to attract new tenants to vacant facilities and restore Port revenues to pre-pandemic levels through beautification and activation, increased marketing efforts, and targeted building improvements in Fisherman's Wharf. In the first year and a half of the grant, the Port has been able to attract new investment, including the Skystar Wheel, an Exclusive Negotiating Agreement with a developer, two new tenants on Jefferson Street, and a new operator for Castagnola's. While this activity may not be directly attributable to FWCBD activities, the improvements in the look and feel of Fisherman's Wharf have been observed by all.

Equity (Share Economic Prosperity): The Port and FWCBD's work in Fisherman's Wharf equitably advances public benefits that appeal to and attract a diverse population to the Waterfront. The Port and its partners strive to ensure equal access to opportunities, particularly for BIPOC-owned and local business enterprises.

Engagement (Stakeholder Awareness): Partnering with FWCBD to engage with area businesses has helped identify issues and implement responsive solutions. The Little Embarcadero activation, in particular, has been successful due to the hyperlocal engagement between FWCBD staff and the adjacent Port tenants. This happened both in the context of design and continues in the FWCBD's day-to-day management efforts.

BACKGROUND

As an initiative to help the Port and Fisherman's Wharf tenants recover from the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Port has been partnering with the FWCBD through a two-year Grant approved by the Port Commission to improve the visitor experience in Fisherman's Wharf. The FWCBD Grant is designed to allow the Port to implement a multi-faceted public space activation and stewardship program for the Port properties adjacent to those maintained by FWCBD to complement the existing efforts by FWCBD within its district boundaries.

The FWCBD Grant agreement outlines stewardship, beautification, event, and marketing activities that serve to sustain and strengthen tourism, draw local visitors to the area, support area businesses, and attract new businesses in vacant restaurant spaces and activation partners to Port properties and the broader Fisherman's Wharf neighborhood. In addition to helping the long-term viability of the district, these activities are anticipated to support the Port's balance sheet by rebuilding lease revenues as well as the City's overall economic recovery, given Fisherman's Wharf's importance as a destination for residents and tourists.

In the first eighteen months of the Grant term, the FWCBD has accomplished an impressive list that includes the following:

Stewardship Assistance – FWCBD implemented a robust stewardship program that supports the daily use of Fisherman’s Wharf’s public spaces, with a particular focus on comfort, ensuring safety, and quality of experience for visitors. Community ambassadors were hired to spot and respond to cleanliness issues such as litter and Big Belly garbage receptacle issues, and address quality of life issues, including homeless encampments, graffiti, and illegal vending, in concert with Port maintenance and security teams and other City agencies. During the first eighteen months, ambassadors addressed:

- 928 instances of illegal dumping
- 774 instances of overflowing trash cans, and
- 3,708 instances of graffiti or stickers on Port property
- Initiated 60,142 Promenade hospitality engagements

Small Beautification Elements – FWCBD developed and implemented small-scale beautification projects and temporary amenities that facilitate area use and reduce blight, such as temporary murals and art installations, bistro lighting, and landscaping elements. To date, FWCBD has completed:

- A multi-piece, sea-themed temporary mural along the concrete barriers in the public plaza portion of the triangle parking lot, as well as on a temporary container in the area
- A movable mural dedicated to fishers on the wall next to the vacant 490 Jefferson
- Installed silk flower baskets on light poles along Taylor Street, Jefferson Street, and Little Embarcadero
- Installed bistro lights on the trees adjacent to the SkyStar Wheel
- Covered Big Belly trash cans with FWCBD and Port-branded vinyl designs

Outdoor Events and Storefront Activations – FWCBD developed and implemented regular event programming for the area’s public spaces, with a focus on activating the empty spaces in front of vacant Port-owned buildings and attracting locals as well as tourists, including:

- Worked with Port Maintenance to clean the front of Alioto’s and then decorate it in nautical themes for the “Pier Party” event series in 2023.
- Hosted 20 Pier Party events in 2023 and 21 events in 2024, featuring free concerts, seating, and drinks. These events attracted 60,500 domestic visitors plus more than 2.8 million international visitors in 2023 and 2024. In Summer 2025, FWCBD will host concerts every second and fourth Saturday, June through September.
- Conducted outreach to Port tenants and neighboring businesses to ensure that the events were designed to generate business for them, as well as to begin to draw interest in the neighborhood from new visitors and prospective businesses.

- Hosted the 20th annual Trolley Dances and brought 3,500 visitors to the Wharf, including along the docks of the Inner Lagoon.
- Hosted the first Crab Crawl event in March 2025, attracting 300 ticketed visitors and engaging five Port restaurant tenants in the event.

Marketing and Business Attraction – FWCBD developed a marketing campaign that included social media, press, and potential tenant engagement. Pier Party, the Trolley Dances, the SkyStar Wheel, Fisherman’s Wharf Promenade, and the new Executive Director announcement were major activations that resulted in the following activities:

- Generated 13.57 million social media impressions.
- The Pier Party concert series was featured in major outlets including KTVU (Fox), San Francisco Chronicle, Eater SF, The Frisc, KRON4 Live in the Bay segment, Sing Tao Daily, and San Francisco Business Times, as well as Calhoun Times and Seafood.com News. This coverage reached a combined audience exceeding 1.15 million people with an approximate publicity value of \$45,000.
- The new Fisherman’s Wharf Promenade received notable coverage in The Frisc, KRON4 Live in the Bay segment, and Sing Tao Daily. Additional coverage in the San Francisco Examiner and San Francisco Business Times (which also ran in print) highlighted both the promenade announcement and the new Executive Director’s appointment, reaching a combined audience of over 5.7 million people with a publicity value of \$53,000. Further coverage is scheduled for May 2025 in SF Standard and on KCBS Radio.
- Conducted outreach to neighboring communities with postcards and through partners.
- 23 social media posts featuring the SkyStar Wheel, which created over 2 million viewer impressions during November.
- Hosted Love Letters activation on Valentine’s Day Weekend in 2025, driving social media attention (engagements: 8,187; total views: 108,274).

The work completed by FWCBD, combined with the efforts of Port maintenance and security teams, has positively impacted the visitor experience in Fisherman’s Wharf. The installation of the SkyStar Wheel has also been a major win for the Port, drawing an estimated 427,000 visitors since November 2023.

Little Embarcadero Activation (now known as Fisherman’s Wharf Promenade) Project – Despite the successes of FWCBD’s work in the first year of the Grant, the prevalence of unpermitted vendors along the Little Embarcadero has been an ongoing challenge for the Port that neighborhood stakeholders repeatedly request additional and focused attention on. The call for support led the Port and FWCBD to closely examine the issue, which led to a new initiative designed to address the unique needs of the Little Embarcadero. FWCBD engaged Street Plans, an urban design firm, to guide FWCBD and Port staff through a planning exercise that resulted in a robust vision for temporary promenade and plaza improvements. The key elements of this installation include landscaped planters, decorative pergolas, shipping containers for pop-ups, a staffed

welcome kiosk, and movable furniture. These elements have been implemented by the partnership and, as a result, have beautified and improved public accessibility while hosting positive, family-friendly, permitted, free, and affordable activities. In summer 2025, FWCBD and Street Plans will implement a series of ground murals to complete the project.

In a series of interviews, online surveys, and other stakeholder feedback collected in late 2023 and July 2024, visitors expressed high satisfaction with Pier Party events, and area businesses noted the increase in shopping and dining corresponding to Pier Party events. Comments gathered included noted improvements in foot traffic at area shops and restaurants; safety and general presence of ambassadors; cleanliness, including public bathrooms; beautification, i.e., flower baskets; and overall fun and liveliness. Positive feedback was also received from numerous performers who were pleased with the conditions of the Wharf, the support from FWCBD, and the opportunity to perform. Area businesses and visitors were also very pleased with the Little Embarcadero improvements, noting the visible decrease in illegal vending, the addition of play-oriented furniture for kids to enjoy, and the greenery added to the area as part of the project.

FWCBD SECOND GRANT AMENDMENT

The cost of continuing FWCBD’s services for an additional eighteen months is \$3,147,590. This will be funded through existing Port funds dedicated to economic recovery. As detailed in **Figure 1** below, this funding increase will bring the FWCBD Grant from a not-to-exceed amount of \$3,220,646 to \$6,368,236.

In June 2023, the Port Commission authorized the sole source grant to FWCBD in accordance with the San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 21G, which governs the award of grants. This provision in the Administrative Code requires the Port to follow a competitive solicitation process to award a grant unless an exception to the solicitation requirement applies or a sole source award is approved in accordance with the Purchaser’s rules and regulations. The Port Commission determined that FWCBD was uniquely qualified to meet the terms of the Grant and authorized the award of a sole source grant. FWCBD continues to be uniquely positioned to spearhead this scope of services.

Figure 1: Proposed FWCBD Second Grant Amendment

GRANT CATEGORY	ORIGINAL	Change	AMENDMENT #1	Change	AMENDMENT #2
Stewardship Assistance	\$ 787,520	\$ 565,000	\$ 1,352,520	\$ 1,602,000	\$ 2,954,520
Small Beautification Elements	\$ 321,226	\$ 455,109	\$ 776,335	\$ 211,200	\$ 987,535
Outdoor Events and Storefront Activations	\$ 772,700	\$ (85,909)	\$ 686,791	\$ 1,012,840	\$ 1,699,631
Engagement and Marketing	\$ 187,000	\$ (77,000)	\$ 110,000	\$ 137,550	\$ 247,550
Admin and Staffing	\$ 120,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 295,000	\$ 184,000	\$ 479,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 2,188,446	\$ 1,032,200	\$ 3,220,646	\$ 3,147,590	\$ 6,368,236
Stimulus Funding	\$ 2,188,446	\$ 191,554	\$ 2,380,000	\$ -	\$ 2,380,000
FW Resilience & Public Realm	\$ -	\$ 840,646	\$ 840,646	\$ 759,354	\$ 1,600,000
Economic Recovery	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,388,236	\$ 2,388,236
TOTAL SOURCES	\$ 2,188,446	\$ 1,032,200	\$ 3,220,646	\$ 3,147,590	\$ 6,368,236

CONCLUSION

The FWCBD Grant is central to the Port's economic recovery strategy in Fisherman's Wharf by creating a clean, safe, and vibrant waterfront that will attract and retain visitors and tenants. The proposed second grant amendment will allow FWCBD to continue implementing a highly successful program, including the temporary public space activation project along the Little Embarcadero.

RECOMMENDATION

Port staff recommends that the Port Commission approve the attached resolution authorizing an amendment to the FWCBD Grant to increase the current not-to-exceed amount by \$3,147,590, so that the total not-to-exceed amount will increase to \$6,368,236 and extend the Grant term by 18-months to continue critical economic recovery work in Fisherman's Wharf, as described above.

Prepared by: Meghan Wallace, Interim Deputy Director of
Finance & Administration

Amy Cohen, Business Generation Manager

For: Scott Landsittel, Deputy Director, Real Estate &
Development

Attachment: Grant Budget

**PORT COMMISSION
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO**

RESOLUTION NO. 25-30

WHEREAS, Charter Section B3.581 empowers the Port Commission with the power and duty to use, conduct, operate, maintain, manage, regulate, and control the Port area of the City and County of San Francisco; and

WHEREAS, On June 13, 2023, pursuant to Resolution No. 23-27, the Port Commission waived an open and competitive process and authorized the award of a sole source grant agreement under San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 21G to FWBD and authorized the Port Executive Director, or the Executive Director's designee, to directly negotiate and execute a grant amendment with the Fisherman's Wharf Association of San Francisco (DBA Fisherman's Wharf Community Benefit District) (FWCBD) for an amount not to exceed \$2,188,446 with a maximum term of two (2) years to develop and implement a multi-faceted public space activation and stewardship program for the Port property in Fisherman's Wharf area; and

WHEREAS, Port and FWCBD entered into the Grant Agreement dated as of July 1, 2023, for a not-to-exceed amount of \$2,188,446 with a maximum term of two (2) years (the "FWCBD Grant"); and

WHEREAS, In the first year of the FWCBD Grant term, the FWCBD successfully performed the work as described in the memorandum accompanying this resolution, and FWCBD and Port staff also recognized unique issues along the Little Embarcadero promenade related to unpermitted vendors; and

WHEREAS, On June 11, 2024, the Port Commission approved reallocating \$400,000 from the original FWCBD Grant budget to the Little Embarcadero Activation Project (as described in the memorandum accompanying this resolution) and increased the not-to-exceed amount by \$1,032,200, which came from Port funds dedicated to economic recovery and planning efforts in Fisherman's Wharf; and

WHEREAS, The Little Embarcadero Activation Project was completed successfully by FWCBD, which continues to provide services outlined in the initial scope of work effectively and continues to be uniquely positioned to provide these services; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the Port Commission continues to find the award of a sole source grant agreement to the Fisherman's Wharf Association of San Francisco (DBA Fisherman's Wharf Community Benefit District), a

California nonprofit corporation, is justified because the organization's mission, deep knowledge of the local business and visitor community, and expertise as the only entity providing similar services in the area make them uniquely qualified as a Port partner. Engaging the organization in this work ensures a cohesive, holistic approach to marketing, activation, and community ambassador work that will maximize the benefits to the business district by leveraging current resources and activities; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Port Commission authorizes a second amendment to the FWCBD Grant that extends the term eighteen months and adds \$3,147,590 using existing Port funds dedicated to economic recovery and public realm planning efforts in Fisherman's Wharf so that the total not-to-exceed amount of the FWCBD Grant will increase, from \$3,220,646 to \$6,368,236; and be it further

RESOLVED, That the Port Commission authorizes the Port Executive Director, or the Executive Director's designee, to execute an amendment to the FWCBD Grant on the terms described in this resolution.

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the Port Commission at its meeting of May 13, 2025.

Secretary

ATTACHMENT 1: GRANT BUDGET

GRANT CATEGORY	ORIGINAL		AMENDMENT #1		FY 2025-26		FY 2026-27		AMENDMENT #2	
	Baseline	Promenade	Baseline	Promenade	Baseline	Promenade	Baseline	Promenade	Baseline	Promenade
Stewardship Assistance	\$ 787,520	\$ -	\$ 741,520	\$ 611,000	\$ 565,000	\$ 360,000	\$ 424,600	\$ 252,400	\$ 1,731,120	\$ 1,223,400
Small Beautification Elements	\$ 321,226	\$ -	\$ 246,135	\$ 530,200	\$ 85,000	\$ 80,000	\$ -	\$ 46,200	\$ 331,135	\$ 656,400
Outdoor Events and Storefront Activations	\$ 772,700	\$ -	\$ 605,791	\$ 81,000	\$ 295,400	\$ 377,940	\$ 147,500	\$ 192,000	\$ 1,048,691	\$ 650,940
Engagement and Marketing	\$ 187,000	\$ -	\$ 75,000	\$ 35,000	\$ 75,500	\$ 8,750	\$ 46,600	\$ 6,700	\$ 197,100	\$ 50,450
Admin and Staffing	\$ 120,000	\$ -	\$ 120,000	\$ 175,000	\$ 80,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 67,200	\$ 16,800	\$ 267,200	\$ 211,800
Subtotal by Program	\$ 2,188,446	\$ -	\$ 1,788,446	\$ 1,432,200	\$ 1,100,900	\$ 846,690	\$ 685,900	\$ 514,100	\$ 3,575,246	\$ 2,792,990
TOTAL EXPENSES		\$ 2,188,446		\$ 3,220,646		\$ 1,947,590		\$ 1,200,000		\$ 6,368,236
Stimulus Funding		\$ 2,188,446		\$ 2,380,000		\$ -		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,380,000
FW Resilience & Public Realm		\$ -		\$ 840,646		\$ 759,354		\$ -	\$ -	\$ 1,600,000
Economic Recovery		\$ -		\$ -		\$ 1,188,236		\$ 1,200,000	\$ -	\$ 2,388,236
TOTAL SOURCES		\$ 2,188,446		\$ 3,220,646		\$ 1,947,590		\$ 1,200,000		\$ 6,368,236