



Fisherman's Wharf Forward Community Meeting 1 Meeting Minutes

Date: April 30, 2026

Time: 5:30 – 7:30 pm

Location: Pier 1, Embarcadero and Online via Microsoft Teams

Attendance: 50-60 members of the public both in person and online

AGENDA

Item #1 - Land Acknowledgement, Agenda & Meeting Ground Rules

The meeting opened with a land acknowledgment honoring the Ramaytush Ohlone people, recognizing their role as original stewards of the land.

Nico Wright, Planner IV with the Port of San Francisco, provided an overview of meeting ground rules and the 90-minute agenda. He emphasized that the purpose of the meeting was to hear from community members at the start of the long-term Fisherman's Wharf Forward planning process.

Item #2 - Port of SF Executive Director Introduction

Acting Executive Director Mike Martin provided an overview of the Port's goals for long-term investment at Fisherman's Wharf.

The pandemic highlighted vulnerabilities in the Wharf's business environment and infrastructure, reinforcing the need for the Port to take an active investment role. Major improvements both waterside and landside in Fisherman's Wharf will require the support of commercial fishing fleet. The Port's goals with these improvements are to ensure seismic resilience, address sea-level rise, and maintain the Wharf's position as a regional economic driver. Funding for these improvements will primarily come from Harbor Funds and the Proposition A bond focused on earthquake and flood protection.

Near-term improvements are on track to open this summer, while long-term planning and design will continue through 2026, with permitting and detailed design beginning in 2027. The target for completing major resilience infrastructure is 2030.

Director Martin concluded by highlighting the importance of community insights to shape the design and ensure that Fishermen’s Wharf remains authentic, functional, and resilient.

Item #3 - Project Introduction

Nico Wright introduced the Fisherman’s Wharf Forward long-term project as the second phase of a multi-year initiative focused on the inner lagoon area. The project area includes waterfront structures along Taylor Street, wharf substructures around the lagoon, vessel berthing areas, and public spaces that connect to Jefferson Street.

Fisherman’s Wharf Forward is part of the Port’s Waterfront Resilience Program, which is an initiative to improve the seismic and flood resiliency of the entire 7.5 miles of San Francisco’s waterfront.

The first part of Fisherman’s Wharf Forward focused on near-term improvements to the project area, including a new public plaza at the former Alioto’s Restaurant site, a new overlook deck at the former smokehouse on Al Scoma Way, lighting upgrades, new interpretive signage, and initial harbor infrastructure repairs. These improvements are near completion and are targeted to open to the public in summer 2026.

Long term, the Fishermen’s Wharf Forward project seeks to address:

- Seismic stabilization
- Sea level rise adaptation
- Replacement or reconstruction of aging wharf structures
- Improving fishing-industry infrastructure, and
- Creation of new public spaces and economic opportunities.

The project team is a partnership between the Port of San Francisco and a team of engineering, architecture, and design consultants. The two phases of the project have had different consultant teams.

Item #4 - Planning and Project Goals

Port Staff described the planning framework guiding Fisherman’s Wharf Forward. The project is based on a substantial body of existing plans and policies, including the Port’s recently adopted Waterfront Plan (2024), the Port’s 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, and the guiding objectives of the Waterfront Resilience Program.

The project goals, which are derived from the objectives in the Port’s foundational documents, include:

- Creating a resilient shoreline
- Strengthening the working waterfront
- Improving public access

- Honoring the wharf’s cultural history, and
- Supporting small businesses.

Item #5 - Outreach & Engagement

Staff summarized engagement conducted to date, including meetings with fishers, businesses, the Fisherman’s Wharf Advisory Committee, and local organizations. Early themes included the need for authentic cultural identity, support for the fishing fleet, improvement of public spaces, and the need to address deteriorating infrastructure with urgency.

Upcoming engagement will include an online survey, summer outreach pop-ups, and ongoing coordination with the Fisherman’s Wharf CBD, which programs regular events and invites community members to participate in its upcoming Pier Party series.

Item 6 - Questions and Comments #1

At this point in the meeting, community members were invited to share questions and comments. Port staff emphasized that they most wanted to know: does this project foundation seem correct, and is there anything missing?

The first Q&A session covered topics including:

Fisherman’s Grotto Building

Community members asked whether the Grotto could be preserved and elevated for future use.

Staff explained that structural and engineering assessments are underway and no decision has been made. Long-term leasing is paused until feasibility is established, while a short-term café activation next door is being considered.

Port staff clarified the scope and differences between short term leases, which are intended to activate vacant spaces, versus long term leases, which often accompany significant facility improvements such as construction and planning efforts. The long-term lease actions are paused for the project area’s older buildings like Fishermen’s Grotto until structural feasibility, seismic requirements, and sea-level-rise elevation needs have been fully evaluated.

Fishing Infrastructure (Ice Machine, Fuel Dock, Pier 45, Public Hoist)

Members of the Wharf’s commercial fishing industry requested updates on the commercial ice machine, Pier 45 apron and trucking roads, public hoist, and fuel dock. Several fish processors stressed the immediate need to rebuild deteriorated roads on and around Pier 45 to better support forklift use.

Staff confirmed active planning for the replacement of the Pier 45 ice machine and apron, along with reestablishment of the fuel dock and hoist improvements. The Port is working to have these improvements completed in 2027.

Construction Timing During Crab Season

Fishers emphasized that construction must avoid December through April crab-season dock-sales operations.

Staff agreed to work closely with the fleet on phasing.

Support for the Fishing Industry

Participants stated that the Wharf must reinforce and centralize fishing operations, noting that reduced workspace makes running an entire industry difficult. There is significant opportunity to modernize facilities and re-establish San Francisco as a regional commercial fishing hub.

Historic and Cultural Identity

Community members stressed the importance of “renewing, not reinventing” the Wharf, retaining its historic fabric, and avoiding overly commercialized or theme-park-style development. Some of the historic aspects of the Wharf referenced included cioppino, Chinese shrimpers, Italian fishing families, and multigenerational Monterey boat owners. Participants asked how history, interpretation, and public art would be incorporated into the design and urged caution about chain restaurants overshadowing family-owned, local businesses.

Port Staff reinforced that authenticity, maritime heritage, and working-waterfront identity remain central to project goals.

Public Art & Cultural Spaces

A community member proposed establishing a Hellenic Square with public art and an annual cultural festival outside of the project boundaries on a port site near Pier 35. Staff confirmed that cultural programming concepts can be considered as part of public-realm planning.

Community Festivals & Event Space

Several participants asked whether the new design would accommodate concerts, festivals, and large community events. Staff noted that flexible open spaces are part of conceptual design discussions. The FWCBD also offered to coordinate on additional public programming.

Item #7 - Existing Conditions and Opportunities

Patrick Ryan, principal of RJSD Design, presented key site conditions.

The historic seawall and fill soils beneath the Wharf are seismically vulnerable to liquefaction and lateral spreading, requiring major stabilization. Current street elevations are nearly at today's flood levels and must be raised by roughly three feet, with the ability to increase further in the future. Much of the wharf's structure, built with century-old timber, has been repeatedly patched and is nearing the end of its life. Some buildings and sidewalks show substantial settlement. These conditions create opportunities to rebuild modern wharf structures, redesign the shoreline, improve circulation and microclimate comfort, enhance public-realm spaces, and modernize maritime support facilities.

James Lord, principal of Surface Design, presented a series of observations and opportunities associated with the Wharf's existing urban design conditions. There are opportunities to strengthen the working waterfront and the fishing industry, improve wayfinding and connectivity to the Bay Trail and the Embarcadero, strengthen identity of place, enhance water quality, and incorporate heritage interpretation and public art. Strengthening connections to the surrounding neighborhood and Embarcadero present opportunities to strengthen the Wharf's identity and promote economic opportunities for the fishing industry by drawing in locals and improving the visitor experience.

Item #8 - Questions and Comments #2

The public was once again asked to share questions and comments, this time related to the existing conditions and opportunities presented. Topics covered in the second Q&A session included:

Recreational Fishing Access

Participants asked about non-permit public fishing opportunities.

Staff noted that recreational fishing cannot be accommodated within the commercial berthing area but remains available at other waterfront piers.

Transportation & Access

Residents described transit limitations, including long travel times on the F-Line and cable cars, high parking costs, and lack of direct transit options.

Staff noted that the SFMTA is currently undertaking the Embarcadero Connectivity Plan, which focuses on improving mobility along the Embarcadero. Additionally, District 3's Supervisor has asked SFMTA to evaluate extending the Central Subway to North Beach and Fisherman's Wharf, with community meetings forthcoming.

Safety, Security, and Cleanliness

Public comments highlighted the need for more frequent trash removal, upgraded cameras, cleaner restrooms, and improved security presence at Pier 45. Litter from fast-food takeout was identified as a major contributor to water-quality issues.

Staff noted that initiatives are set in motion to improve the trash pollution in the Inner Lagoon as well as the hiring of new Port maintenance staff who will focus on cleaning up the harbor.

Visitor Trends & Affordability

Participants noted that business travel has declined post-pandemic, while regional visitors with modest budgets have increased, underscoring the need for affordable restaurants and local small businesses.

Traffic Congestion & Street Management

Attendees described significant confusion and conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians, particularly on weekends. A community member proposed to pilot weekend closures of Jefferson Street to create a pedestrian-focused environment with vendors and food trucks, similar to successful night market models elsewhere in the city. Representatives from the FWCBD shared that there are upcoming events within the neighborhood's recently approved Entertainment Zones which will focus on activating the street in a festival-like environment.

Business Disruption During Construction

Some tenants asked about potential rent relief or support for businesses that may experience revenue impacts due to long-term construction.

Item #9 - Next Steps

To conclude, Staff outlined the project timeline for 2026. The team will use feedback from this meeting and the online survey to develop multiple concept design options, which will be presented at Community Meeting #2 in June or July. These options will include shoreline adaptation strategies, maritime infrastructure improvements, public-realm concepts, historic interpretation, and evaluation of buildings such as Fisherman's Grotto. A preferred concept will be developed later in the year, followed by environmental review, regulatory coordination, and detailed design beginning in 2027.