


CITY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

OAKLAND CITY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION NO. _____ C.M.S.

INTRODUCED BY CITY ATTORNEY BARBARA J. PARKER, MAYOR SHENG THAO, COUNCIL PRESIDENT NIKKI FORTUNATO BAS, PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE DAN KALB, AND COUNCILMEMBERS CARROLL FIFE AND REBECCA KAPLAN

RESOLUTION HONORING JAMES VANN FOR MORE THAN 35 YEARS OF ADVOCACY ON BEHALF OF OAKLAND TENANTS; RECOGNIZING THE PROFOUND IMPACT JAMES VANN HAS HAD ON THE LIVES OF OAKLAND TENANTS; RECOGNIZING JAMES VANN AS A CHAMPION FOR THE PEOPLE OF OAKLAND; AND DECLARING APRIL 18, 2023, JAMES VANN DAY

WHEREAS, James Vann began his political activism in 1964 at the University of California Berkeley, as a member of the Congress of Racial Equality (“CORE”) and a co-chair of the National Committee for Independent Political Action; and

WHEREAS, James Vann is an architect and has dedicated his life to improving the lives of others and to pursuing social justice; and

WHEREAS, in 1989, when the City of Oakland lacked any meaningful protections for tenants, James Vann co-founded the Oakland Tenants Union (“Tenants Union) to protect and expand tenants' rights and interests in Oakland; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, James Vann served on a committee convened by then Councilmember Dick Spees to make improvements in the Rent Adjustment Ordinance, which, among other things, led to the Council’s adoption of Oakland’s first Rent Program Service Fee in 2003, establishing a permanent funding source for the Rent Adjustment Program; and

WHEREAS, for more than a decade, James Vann advocated for the Oakland City Council to adopt eviction protections similar to the protections San Francisco and Berkeley enjoyed; and when the Council failed to adopt such tenant protections, James Vann took this battle to the voters as part of the Just Cause for Eviction Coalition, and in 2002, the voters passed Oakland’s Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance which for the first time provided protection from unjust evictions to tens of thousands of Oakland tenants; and

WHEREAS, in 2003, James Vann provided detailed substantive feedback to City staff on the Ellis Act Ordinance advocating for provisions that would require that landlords provide extended notice periods and relocation payments to tenants in Ellis Act evictions, and was instrumental in improving and strengthening the Ellis Act Ordinance prior to its adoption by Council; and

WHEREAS, in July 2013, James Vann joined the Tenant Justice Campaign, a broad alliance of tenants' rights activists and organizations fighting for improvements to the Rent Adjustment Ordinance, including the elimination of the debt service pass-through and a 10% cap on all rent increases, both of which were enacted into law by the City Council; and

WHEREAS, in 2014, James Vann and the Oakland Tenants Union joined with Causa Justa/Just Cause to organize support and forcefully advocate for the adoption of the Tenant Protection Ordinance, authored by Councilmember Dan Kalb, a far-reaching ordinance that the Council adopted, and which provides broad protection to tenants who experience harassment by their landlords; and

WHEREAS, in 2016, James Vann actively campaigned for the adoption of Measure JJ, which was adopted by the voters and, among other things, expanded Just Cause for eviction protections to thousands of tenants living in buildings that were constructed after 1983 but before 1996; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 and 2018, James Vann provided valuable support for the adoption of additional tenant protections sponsored by Councilmember Rebecca Kaplan, including expanding eligibility for and increasing relocation payments for tenants displaced due to code compliance activities, and establishing a uniform schedule of relocation payments which the Council adopted in the Uniform Residential Tenant Relocation Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, James Vann and the Oakland Tenants Union worked tirelessly on the campaign to pass Measure Y, which was adopted by the voters and expanded eviction protections to tenants living in owner-occupied duplexes and triplexes and granted Council authority to adopt additional eviction protections; and

WHEREAS, in 2019, James Vann and other members of the Close the Loopholes Coalition successfully advocated for the expansion of rent stabilization to more than 5,000 Oakland tenants living in owner-occupied duplexes and triplexes and for the elimination of the substantial rehabilitation exemption from the Rent Adjustment Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, James Vann engaged with City policy makers for more than 15 years assisting in the development of a Condominium Conversion Ordinance that did not unfairly disadvantage tenants; helping to defeat proposals that would increase conversions and remove the replacement unit requirement; and providing valuable input and support for the Ordinance proposed by Council Member Dan Kalb and adopted by Council in 2020, that strengthened tenant protections and expanded the requirement to provide replacement rental units prior to conversion; and

WHEREAS, James Vann provided unwavering support for the passage of the Fair Chance Access to Housing Ordinance and the Eviction Moratorium Ordinance, authored by Council President Nikki Fortunato Bas and adopted by Council in 2020; and

WHEREAS, James Vann proposed and advocated that the City should change the maximum allowable rent increase from 10% to either 5% plus Consumer Price Index (“CPI”), or 10%, whichever is lower, and Council adopted James Vann’s proposal, amending the Rent Adjustment Ordinance in 2020; and

WHEREAS, James Vann provided substantial feedback regarding amendments to the Tenant Protection Ordinance proposed by City Attorney Barbara J. Parker; and James Vann spoke eloquently and persuasively in favor of the amendments, which the Council adopted in 2020, expanding and strengthening the Tenant Protection Ordinance; and

WHEREAS, in 2021 and 2022, James Vann continued to fight for tenant protections by playing a pivotal role in the passage of the City’s first Residential Rent Registry Ordinance; advocating for lowering the maximum allowable CPI rent increase as proposed by Councilmember Carroll Fife, and campaigning for the adoption of Measure V, which the voters passed in 2022, extending eviction protections to all tenants living in rental units more than ten years old and to those living in Vehicular Residential Facilities; and

WHEREAS, James Vann’s work on tenants’ rights issues, including eviction protections, rent control, tenant harassment, and relocation benefits has helped to establish Oakland as a leader among California cities with some of the strongest tenant protections in the state; and

WHEREAS, in addition to policy advocacy, throughout his decades of working with the Oakland Tenants Union, James Vann has provided individual counseling to tenants about their rights and has represented hundreds of tenants at administrative hearings before the Rent Adjustment Program and at appeal hearings before the Housing, Residential Rent and Relocation Board, always free of charge; and

WHEREAS, in addition to championing tenants’ rights, James Vann has devoted countless hours to numerous coalitions promoting equity and environmental and economic and racial justice, many of which he helped found and/or lead, including African Americans for Peace and Justice; the Berkeley-Oakland Rainbow Coalition; the Coalition of Advocates for Lake Merritt (CALM); and the Homeless Advocacy Working Group (HAWG); and

WHEREAS, a generous advisor and educator for all, Mr. Vann graciously volunteers his time, advice and support, without question and never in exchange for recognition or reward; and

WHEREAS, one of the keys to James Vann’s effectiveness is his ability to cooperatively work with the many different personalities who have served on the City Council; and

WHEREAS, James Vann has educated and inspired thousands of young activists who will carry on his legacy for generations to come; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED: That City Attorney Barbara J. Parker, Mayor Sheng Thao, the City Council and the entire City of Oakland honor and express our deep gratitude for James Vann’s more than thirty years of tenacious and effective advocacy on behalf of tenants; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the City of Oakland recognizes that James Vann has profoundly and immeasurably improved the lives of Oakland’s tenants through decades of selfless activism; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the City of Oakland further recognizes James Vann as a champion for the people of Oakland; and be it

FURTHER RESOLVED: That the City of Oakland declares April 18, 2023, James Vann Day.

IN COUNCIL, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA,

PASSED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES - FIFE, GALLO, JENKINS, KALB, KAPLAN, RAMACHANDRAN, REID, AND
PRESIDENT FORTUNATO BAS

NOES –

ABSENT –

ABSTENTION –

ATTEST: _____

ASHA REED
City Clerk and Clerk of the Council of the
City of Oakland, California