

Council passes resolutions urging Chevron to tighten refinery safety, invest in Richmond



The city passed two resolutions calling on Chevron to observe higher safety standards and invest in Richmond.

(Photo by: Tawanda Kanhema)

By [Tawanda Kanhema](#) Posted 1 hour ago

The City Council unanimously adopted two resolutions Tuesday: an industrial safety resolution calling on Chevron to adopt the highest possible safety standards during renovations to the crude distillation unit damaged in the Aug. 6 refinery fire, and a long term investment resolution encouraging the energy giant to invest in a technology campus at Marina Bay.

The industrial safety resolution, authored by Mayor Gayle McLaughlin and Councilmember Jovanka Beckles, received public backing from the Asian Pacific Environmental Network, an environmental conservation network of Asian Pacific Islander communities in the Bay Area. APEN sent 11 members to speak in support of the city's efforts to take a tougher stance on Chevron.

"We need to stop Chevron from polluting our community," Moang Sae Teurn said through a translator, as she spoke in her native Mien. "We request as APEN that Chevron power their refinery with clean energy and not dirty energy."

As investigations into events leading to the refinery fire enter their third month, the council called on Chevron to take the necessary steps to prevent any further accidents. At least 15,000 Richmond residents sought medical treatment after the Aug. 6 accident. The resolution also demanded Chevron invest locally.

"Chevron must assist Richmond in becoming a more economically viable and sustainable city for all our residents by investing in renewable energy, education, job training, economic development and healthy living," the resolution reads. "(The corporation must) expedite implementation of previous commitments to install air monitors and participate in improvements to the community warning system."

McLaughlin said the city had created the resolution as a way to ensure that Chevron delivers on its promises to the city and to facilitate closer monitoring of its compliance with safety standards during anticipated repairs to Crude Unit 4. Chevron, McLaughlin said, needs the city's permission to repair the unit and has filed an application for improvements.

"We are committed to expeditiously processing permits for repairs to all the damage to the plant and will ensure that all the work conforms to all the standards and abides by requirements to minimize emissions to the maximum extent possible," McLaughlin said.

More than 22 speakers contributed to the debate on the implementation of the safety resolution and the investment resolution, which directs the city manager to approach Chevron with a letter proposing the establishment of a technology campus at Marina Bay. The majority of public speakers supported both resolutions and called on Chevron to ensure that its operations promote community safety and integrate more with the community.

"The neighborhood of the Iron Triangle neighbors Chevron, but does it look like a neighborhood next to one of the largest corporations in California?" RPA member Michael Beer wrote in a statement that was read at the meeting.

Richmond resident Don Gosney asked what the city would do if Chevron refused to meet the demands made in its industrial safety resolution, and urged Richmond to work with Chevron rather than against it.

"This is a bold resolution," Gosney said. "We are talking about repairing a small part of the plant. It is better for the city to work with Chevron to make sure that this repair job is done as quickly as possible. They have already hired contractors to do that job, including union contractors hiring the residents of Richmond."

Others, though, called for protests against Chevron. "The people need to do something for themselves," said Richmond resident Tarnel Abbot, calling on Richmond residents to join a planned march on the Chevron plant that will begin in Washington Park at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday.

"Chevron acts irresponsibly, Chevron acts criminally, Chevron hides toxic emissions from the monitors, Chevron does not inspect its machinery adequately, Chevron does not replace its own pipes, Chevron burns periodically," the RPA's Juan Reardon said to applause.

Councilmember Nat Bates asked what the resolution would do that the city is not already doing to implement higher safety standards, and said it was a "symbolic resolution."

"I was under the impression that staff was already moving in this direction to resolve problems with Chevron," Bates said. The resolution "merely reinforces what staff is already implementing," he said.

Bates did ultimately vote in support of the resolution as well as the proposal for Chevron to establish a technology campus.

Chevron spokesperson Derek Jansen said last week that Chevron is committed to improving the quality of life for Richmond and West County residents.

"The Richmond Refinery invested over \$3.4 million in community programs in 2011 in public safety — focusing on at-risk youth, improving the quality of K-12 education, and job creation," Jansen said. "In 2001 we also spent about \$14.4 million in West Contra Costa County with 69 local vendors. Through May of 2012, we've spent \$7.3 million with 44 local suppliers."

Councilmember Jeff Ritterman said the city needs to take a more active role in ensuring that Chevron does more and follows through with its commitments to the city and residents.

"Chevron has not held its side of the bargain, which was to run the refinery safely," Ritterman said, addressing Chevron representatives in attendance. "We need to, as a city, now hold your feet to the fire and ensure that this doesn't happen again. You've been here 100 years, we want you to stay, but we want something more."