

By Carolyn Jones

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Berkeley became the first city in the United States, and possibly the world, to agree to international human rights treaties on Tuesday night, after the City Council approved a measure usually reserved for countries.

After a brief but spirited debate, the City Council voted unanimously to allow unpaid interns to report to the United Nations on how, or whether, Berkeley complies with treaties on civil liberties, racial discrimination and torture.

The council also agreed to take the first step in raising parking revenue by voting unanimously to add 420 meters and increase the parking meter rate 25 cents an hour, to \$1.50.

But the decision to comply with the U.N. treaties generated the most energetic response from council members and the public.

"This is extremely important," said Councilman Max Anderson, who represents south Berkeley. "This is the way Berkeley should be talking. This should be an inspiration to other communities."

Councilman Kriss Worthington called the initiative a creative and important way Berkeley can support the values put forth in the U.N. treaties.

"In our small and humble way, we can submit our own record," he said. "I think this is a wonderful thing for us to do."

The treaties contain high standards, and it is possible Berkeley does not meet those standards, backers of the

plan said.

They have used as examples Berkeley's record on homelessness, achievement gaps in the public schools and John Yoo, the author of the Bush administration's justification for torture who teaches at UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall School of Law and lives in Berkeley.

The council also voted to take the first step toward increasing the city's parking meter rate.

The city would add 420 new meters around San Pablo Avenue, near Camelia and 10th streets, around south Shattuck Avenue and near Adeline Street.

The increases will return to the council for a second vote before becoming final.

The city hopes the new meters and parking rate increase will help compensate for a \$300,000 shortfall in parking revenue last year, due largely to the recession. The city made \$4.8 million on parking in fiscal year 2009, less than the \$5.1 million it budgeted.

The meter rate increase is expected to bring in about \$1 million annually. The new meters would bring in \$400,000 more a year, according to the city.

The new meters would cost about \$125,000 to purchase and install.