Minutes

Regular Meeting of the
Commission Streamlining Task Force
City and County of San Francisco

Daniel Lurie
Mayor

Wednesday, June 4, 2025
1:00 pm

City Hall, Room 408
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Meeting will also be broadcast online and remote public comment will be available via WebEx event. To view the online presentation, join the meeting using the link https://tinyurl.com/4sw6aw4z and password PropE. Members of the public may use email address CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org to join the WebEx meeting if needed. To join by phone, dial 415-655-0001 and enter access code (webinar ID) 2663 049 7525 followed by ##. See page 3 for additional remote public comment instructions.

Agenda

1. **Call to Order**
   Chair Ed Harrington called the meeting to order at 1:04pm

2. **Roll Call**
   Present:
   - Ed Harrington, Chair
   - Jean Fraser, Vice Chair
   - Andrea Bruss
   - Sophie Hayward
   - Natasha Mihal

   Lily Moser called roll. With all five members present, a quorum was established.

3. **Announcements (Informational Item)**
   The meeting was held in hybrid format, with participation available both in person and via WebEx. Technical instructions for public participation via WebEx were provided.

   Chair Ed Harrington noted recent press around the release of the Mayor's budget. He reminded those involved that the Mayor's budget and board deliberations will include some topics which overlap with Task Force discussions; the Task Force will adjust its work as things move forward.

4. **General Public Comment**
   No members of the public wished to speak.

5. **Approve Minutes – May 21, 2025 meeting (Action Item)**
   Vice Chair Jean Fraser expressed appreciation for the detailed summaries prepared by staff but requested that the Task Force defer the vote and instead consider a shorter and simpler version of the minutes. She shared concern that, in today's digital environment, some statements could be taken out of context if presented in extended narrative form. She emphasized her support for summarization that accurately reflects the meeting while avoiding overly detailed language. Other Task Force members expressed support for the suggestion, and there was general agreement to defer approval to the next meeting while staff prepare a revised document.

   One member of the public, Laura, stated that she had not been able to attend Task Force meetings in person but had relied on the posted minutes to stay informed. She praised the existing minutes as thorough and helpful, and expressed concern that reducing their level of detail would hinder the public's ability to understand Task Force proceedings.

   Chair Harrington and Project Director Rachel Alonso confirmed that the Webex video recordings were available online for members of the public to view.

   The matter was deferred to the next meeting.

6. **[Stakeholder Engagement](Discussion) (Discussion and Possible Action Item)**
   Project Director Rachel Alonso began with an **updated work plan** structured around a three-tier decision framework. Tier 1 (Jul-Aug) includes core template components; Tier 2 (Sep-Oct) focuses on decisions regarding individual public bodies; and Tier 3 (Oct-Nov) covers more complex or unresolved items about templates and bodies as well as general operational improvements. She emphasized the need to begin decision-making soon to avoid a last-minute rush.

   Chair Ed Harrington supported moving away from abstract template debates and toward concrete decisions about real bodies. He proposed addressing inactive bodies in July, followed by structured discussions on specific groups of public bodies—starting with certain enterprise departments in August, arts and culture commissions in early September, health and human services bodies later in September, and public safety and regulatory entities in October.

   Sophie Hayward emphasized the importance of creating templates to guide future public bodies, not just those currently in existence. Natasha Mihal also prefers to have a framework before diving into discussions about all types of bodies.

   Chair Harrington emphasized that this process should center on the public and noted that clustering discussions by policy area would allow stakeholders to attend once and engage meaningfully. He cautioned against dramatically altering the city's commission structure, stating that Proposition E was about streamlining, not radically overhauling, public governance.

   Vice Chair Fraser agreed that the Task Force must move forward but advocated continuing the template discussion rather than going commission-by-commission.

Andrea Bruss suggested focusing on advisory bodies after inactive bodies, since they may present the highest likelihood of agreement among Task Force members. She is in favor of spending additional time on templates, but perhaps not through August. She requested clarification on whether policy area discussions would cover both whether a body should continue to exist and which template category it should fall into; Chair Harrington confirmed both dimensions would be addressed simultaneously.

Rachel Alonso noted that staff could prepare multiple proposals to support a planning discussion at the next meeting, including whiteboarding to compare approaches. She also clarified that the Task Force's only required action is approval of its final report, but it could take non-binding interim votes along the way. [Post-meeting note: the Task Force will also need to vote on legislation by March 1, 2026].

The Task Force then turned to **discrete engagement tasks**. For each, Rachel Alonso described potential value, timing, risks, and resource considerations.
1. Task 1 – Convening Commission Secretaries to gather feedback on best practices and process improvements.
   - Vice Chair Fraser, Natasha Mihal, and Chair Harrington agreed this information would be more useful later in the process when the Task Force is focused on operational improvements.
   - Rachel Alonso noted that secretaries have been informed that outreach is forthcoming, and she will continue to reinforce this message.
2. Task 2 – Surveying Commissioners.
   The group had mixed views on the utility of surveying commissioners.
   - Chair Harrington questioned whether an open-ended survey would yield actionable, useful insights.
   - Andrea Bruss and Sophie Hayward emphasized that unless there are one or two well-defined questions, a broad survey may not be justified.
   - Vice Chair Fraser added that surveys could allow for thoughtful feedback outside public meeting constraints and may be preferable to trying to give every public body a speaking slot.
   - Sophie Hayward highlighted the benefits of asynchronous input and that there will be multiple opportunities for people to weigh in throughout the Task Force process.
   - Seeing value in a primarily multiple-choice format to get a pulse check of stakeholders impacted by the Task Force's decisions, Natasha Mihal proposed two discrete survey questions.
   - Rachel Alonso offered to return with draft questions and stated that the decision on whether to move forward could be made later, but she urged the Task Force to augment their capacity by utilizing staff to perform work in between meetings.
3. Task 3 – Task Force Members Attending Commission Meetings.
   This idea received minimal support.
   - Vice Chair Fraser, Andrea Bruss, and others agreed it would be inequitable and inefficient to attend only some commission meetings.
   - In response to a question from Chair Harrington, Rachel Alonso clarified that she is already responding to inquiries and offers to meet with departments individually, and that public bodies could still be kept informed via direct outreach.

The Task Force then briefly considered outreach to city departments that interact with public bodies. The group discussed one of three proposed tasks: attending existing citywide meetings of staff whose work is impacted by public bodies. Vice Chair Fraser, Natasha Mihal, and Andrea Bruss agreed such

input would be more valuable once the Task Force identifies specific questions. Chair Harrington offered to attend the CFO forum and Procurement Advisory Body to gather best practices into how commissions impact departmental operations, which could influence the template decisions.

The Task Force agreed to table further discussion of engagement strategies and return to them at the next meeting.

One member of the public, David Pilpel, encouraged the use of a short survey directed at commissioners and the public. He suggested including targeted questions about governance value, process improvements, and structural classification (e.g., advisory vs. regulatory). He also cautioned against unequal outreach methods and stressed the importance of efficiency given the limited timeline.

7. **Proposal for Commissions** (Discussion and Possible Action Item)
   Additional materials: Fraser Proposal for Templates for Bodies PDF

Vice Chair Fraser concluded the previous meeting's presentation by reviewing her vision for the City's independent, expert appeals boards, bodies which function similarly to appellate judges in reviewing specific decisions made by city departments to ensure fairness and consistency. She recommended that appeals bodies be independent of the departments they review and resistant to political interference. The Vice Chair noted that in some cases, professional administrative law judges may be more appropriate than volunteer board members. She called for further input from Deputy City Attorneys on boards with mixed duties, particularly those that both write and enforce regulations. She, Andrea Bruss, and Chair Harrington discussed the nomenclature of appeals boards, regulatory bodies, and quasi-judicial bodies.

Vice Chair Fraser then presented a revised framework for evaluating and categorizing San Francisco's public bodies using template models. She stressed that public engagement is essential, but that it can occur through many formats beyond standing bodies, such as public performance reporting, listening sessions, and open meetings.

The Vice Chair introduced schemas for advisory councils, appeals boards, and protected governance commissions. She proposed that all existing advisory councils be sunset, with the opportunity for departments or the Board of Supervisors to reconstitute any they wish to retain using the new advisory template. Characteristics include purpose-driven expertise, limited terms, clear appointing authority, and regular sunset provisions. On governance commissions, Fraser proposed a category of "protected" commissions, which would operate with greater independence from political influence due to their responsibility for long-term, potentially controversial policy decisions.

She proposed the Task Force come to agreement on the template elements, apply them to existing bodies, publish a tentative decision accordingly, and then hear responses from individuals. The Vice Chair asked whether Task Force members found the template approach useful. Andrea Bruss and Natasha Mihal responded affirmatively, saying that it gives a fair way for the Task Force to systematically evaluate bodies. Sophie Hayward agreed but cautioned against spending time applying templates to bodies which no longer serve a purpose. Natasha Mihal also supported the development of decision criteria for systematically evaluating bodies. Rachel Alonso confirmed that staff had already prepared decision criteria proposals for review.

Andrea Bruss and Chair Harrington discussed the Board of Supervisors' existing policy which recommends sunsetting new advisory bodies after three years, but which is not retroactive to existing bodies and does not apply to bodies formed through other processes.

During public comment:
- Niall Murphy urged the Task Force not to overlook the option of merging or combining bodies, especially in areas like arts or homelessness.
- David Pilpel raised concerns about the potential disruption caused by abolishing all advisory bodies and starting from zero. He suggested a more selective approach, retaining functional bodies and eliminating or consolidating others.

Chair Harrington expressed concern about making decisions based on templates without evaluating specific bodies, stating that Proposition E tasked the Task Force with making determinations—not simply handing the responsibility over to the Mayor, departments, or Board of Supervisors. The Chair supported establishing a clear structure for future bodies but emphasized the need for direct decision-making about the current ones.

Vice Chair Fraser countered that the Task Force doesn't have sufficient time to have such a detailed discussion. If the group spends ten minutes discussing each of the approximately 80 advisory groups, it would take 800 minutes—not including public comment. Andrea Bruss noted that whatever the Task Force recommends still has to go through the legislative process and wouldn't be binding or fundamentally limit policymakers' future ability to make different choices and reconstitute certain advisory bodies.

Vice Chair Fraser offered to produce a proposed meeting-by-meeting calendar for the group to discuss on June 18th.

8. **Future Agenda Topics (Discussion Item)**
Natasha Mihal stressed the importance of clarifying terminology to guide analysis and data accuracy. She proposed that the Task Force agree on working definitions, beginning with advisory councils.

Andrea Bruss proposed tackling inactive bodies. Rachel Alonso and Chair Harrington discussed the plan to publish the list of inactive bodies with the June 18th meeting agenda, so the public would be aware of which would be discussed and voted on in the July 16th meeting.

No members of the public wished to comment.

9. **General Public Comment – Continued from item 4 if necessary**
Item 9 was not needed, as item 4 did not exceed 15 minutes.

10. **Adjournment**
Chair Harrington adjourned the meeting at 3:04

Minutes prepared by Rachel Alonso, Project Director