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SUBJECT: Attendance of a Commissioner or Board Member and Removal

VIA E-MAIL: CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org

Commission Streamlining Task Force –
Members Sophie Hayward, Natasha Mihal, Andrea Bruss, Ed Harrington, and Jean Fraser:

I write as a former Commissioner on the Status of Women (2009 – 2021) and a Member of the Sheriff's Department Oversight Board (2021 – present), now serving a second term as its president.

I wanted to share an observation concerning board members and commissioners fulfilling their civic duty in general, that of attendance and sitting on a body with vacant seats.

Most bylaws or rules of order provide that a person may only be removed for cause. I believe that preserves continuity and institutional knowledge necessary to efficiently conduct business and prevents over politicization of a body that should be ostensibly neutral. However, I would add to the Charter that more than three absences in a given calendar year without very special circumstances should be grounds for removal. Some bodies take a summer recess. If a body only meets 11 times per year, three absences would mean missing 33 percent of the meetings. Absent members cause a strain on other members and create a situation where meetings are often curtailed or canceled for lack of quorum.

Commissioners and board members have little control of appointments by the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors filling vacant seats but this should be noted as bodies try to conduct business with vacant seats. Lack of quorum is not always based on lack of attendance of all seated persons. The importance of a fully seated body is highlighted where some votes require a quorum of the seats of a body and not a simple majority.

Thank you for your work and thoughtful consideration.

Very truly yours,

