

## Presentation of former Yes on Proposition E/No on Proposition D Committee to the Commission Streamlining Task Force

(members Douglas Engmann, Dale Carlson, Margaret Brodtkin, Asia Duncan, Christin Evans, Aaron Peskin)

### Background:

Yes on E was passed by the Board of Supervisors responding to the Civil Grand Jury Report and in opposition to the meat-ax approach proposed by Proposition D.

We are not here as experts on SF Commissions but to share with you what we have learned in our campaign in listening to the people and voters in San Francisco, as well as the hundreds of current and former city Commissioners who participated in our campaign.

Despite being outspent by our opponents 100 to one, we were able connect to our voters one on one at farmers markets, MUNI Stops, neighborhood meetings, meetings in NC district businesses and through door to door canvassing.

What we learned, as evidenced by the clear voting results (Prop E won in 9 of the 11 districts while prop D lost in 10 of the 11 supervisorial districts.) is that while San Franciscans value their commissions and object to a meat-ax approach to reduce the number of commissions arbitrarily, they want a rational review of our commission structure which will make the system more effective and responsive.

Based on our experience and dialog with voters. We urge the Task Force to consider the following points:

- Please do not try to set an arbitrary number or goal for the number of commissions; the voters rejected this approach in Proposition D and there is no way to set an ideal number of commissions for San Francisco based on comparisons with other cities/counties as San Francisco is quite unique in its structure both in California and the nation. The best way to determine the appropriate number of commissions is by evaluating commissions on a case by case basis, and by eliminating those that are no longer needed, required, or effective.

- While the costs of support should be a factor in evaluating each commission, that evaluation should be tempered by a consideration of both the direct and indirect costs that will be incurred by the elimination of that commission. For example, the Entertainment Commission holds hearings on permits that will need to be conducted by the Police Department hearing officers-what additional staff or resources will be needed to reassume that function?

-Another factor that the Task Force should consider, particularly among commissions that were created by Charter Amendment, or by voter initiative, was the rationale for the need to create that commission. Before we eliminate commissions created by the voters, we need to respect their intentions and current relevance. For example, the Public Works Commission was recently created because the voters wanted oversight of the expenditures of that Department because of the improprieties that had occurred.

- Evaluate, but respect, the reasons behind any compensation or expense reimbursement for commissioners, particularly to achieve economic diversity

-As you approach the meetings where you will discuss specific commissions, we encourage you to broaden your public outreach by:

1)e-mailing the current serving commissioners with notice of that discussion

2) asking that each commission post a notice in their agendas of the Task Force meetings relevant to that commission being conducted

**Other and related points from Margaret:**

- We learned that most people, particularly the proponents of Measure D, knew very little-to-nothing about commissions – had never been to a meeting, didn't know what commissions could or couldn't do, based their opinions only on the number of commissions and misinformation in the Rose Institute report. We learned how granular information needs to be in order to determine the legitimacy of a commission – for instance, whether it is needed to leverage federal and state dollars, whether its functions would have to be taken over by another person/body, the level of public involvement in commission meetings, benefits that the commission has brought to the city and department, issues that have been raised at the commission, the workload of each commission, etc., etc.

Therefore, we recommend that the committee recognizes the time and depth of knowledge it will take to make informed decisions. The Committee should be prepared to do such things as:

Attend commission meetings in person.

Study minutes of commissions.

Survey department heads about their opinions of each commission.

Survey commissioners about the benefits and challenges of each commission.

Provide the public with ample opportunity for written and verbal input.

Spending, for instance, one hour on each commission at the task force's public meetings is totally inadequate.

Analyze the origin of the commission in question.

Note: The Grand Jury report is, by far, the most comprehensive and detailed report on commission, but it too is flawed. For instance, it recommends abolishing a commission that would be illegal and would cost the city revenues. This is just an example of how detailed information needs to be before decisions are made.

- We learned that while there was general acknowledgement that the commission system might need improvements, that was usually just a pro-forma agreement and very few people had any idea about what improvements would mean.

Therefore, we recommend that the task force spend appropriate and ample time on recommendations for improvement. For instance:

Training for department heads on how to maximize the benefits of a commission.

Training for commissioners on how a commission should function, what powers it has, how to work collaboratively with a department when that is appropriate, etc.

Ending appointments of political supporters on commissions, as opposed to members of the public with expertise, talent in handling a public role, ability and willingness to do the work required, etc.

- We learned that the most valued function of commissions was providing a public forum for discussion of budget, policies and programs – and being the link between the public and the department head/staff. Very few saw commissions as a substitute for the Mayor knowing what is happening in departments, managing staff, identifying misconduct, etc. Doing a better job of these things requires “fixes” outside the commission functions – such as the policy chiefs that have recently been created by Mayor Lurie.
- We learned that no one really knows the cost and cost-benefits of the commission system. What work by a department would have to be done whether there is a commission or not (such as regular reporting that is required by the state or others), how a department would effectively address the need to hear from the public without a commission, how many and what kind of mistakes are avoided by having a commission, how commissions leverage dollars and meet funding requirements,