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From: Ben Bleiman [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 26, 2025 12:07 PM
To: Cyn Wang
Cc: commissionstreamlining; [REDACTED]
Subject: Re: Entertainment Commission & Prop E Commission Streamlining Task Force

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Hello Commission Streamlining Taskforce,

I also wanted to chime in here as the President of the Entertainment Commission, but it appears that Cyn has perfectly stated the facts in a much more eloquent and elegant way than I could ever accomplish. I'm not even mad at her, just impressed!

So first and foremost, I completely stand by every word Cyn laid out in her letter. And I'll emphasize a couple points here for what it's worth.

It is difficult to overstate just how effective the Entertainment Commission is in both promoting and mitigating issues related to nightlife in SF. Most of this comes from our all-star staff who - as far as I'm concerned - is the model for how government can and should work: efficient, fair, transparent, and extremely engaged, (not to mention doing it all with a shoestring budget!). However, part of what makes the Entertainment Commission so effective is the commission itself. The commission allows the department to operate more efficiently for a number of reasons:

- We provide a public forum that does absolute wonders for mitigating potential issues between neighbors and nightlife operators BEFORE they become a problem down the road.
- Our hearings routinely uncover unforeseen concerns and grievances through the public comment process. We're able to call up operators in real time, in front of the public, to help address these issues. Often, after a license has been granted, we even connect concerned neighbors with operators in the hallway outside of the hearing room to talk through things themselves! This kind of interaction simply would not occur if our commission did not regularly meet and has huge real world benefits.
- The added fact that our commission has specific seats for industry, community, police, health, and urban planning means that it is composed of experts in the field who have robust PUBLIC conversations, giving an extra gravitas to our decisions and helping the public to understand the issues more thoroughly.
- Way too often, departments are at the whims of pressure and politics that are outside of their core missions; and we routinely see departments making decisions in City Hall based on cold political pressures. Having our permitting decisions be made by a diverse group of subject matter experts *publicly* provides much needed relief to the department who is then free to proceed without the burdens that other departments might face.
- The last bullet is especially salient due to the fact that the Entertainment Commission has two missions expressly stated in its charter: Regulate nightlife (the issues that sound and humans

cause in and around venues) and PROMOTE nightlife as a whole due to its cultural and economic significance to a thriving city. Politics and nightlife are not always happy bedfellows!

- Every year, members of our commission and department staff visit a nightlife/government conference called Sociable Cities which has government officials from around the globe specializing in the specific issues facing nightlife. Every single year, we are asked to sit on keynote panels to explain how and why San Francisco got it so right. It is no exaggeration to say that officials from around the globe line up - quite literally - to speak with us after we speak, hoping to emulate San Francisco's solution in their own cities. Even cities famous for their music - Seattle, Austin, London, New York - want to know who they can have what we have! We are the gold standard for how a city can both regulate nightlife and promote it. Much of this is due to the existence of our commission.

It is my understanding that your task force is trying to target commissions that cost the city valuable money and resources, muck up the gears to prevent progress, and represent government bloat. The Entertainment Commission not only does the OPPOSITE of all of these, but we are - I believe - the model for how a commission and a department can work together to help things move faster, more efficiently, and fairly.

I would be thrilled to talk to you all more about this, and look forward to the opportunity. I can be reached at this email or on my cell, [REDACTED].

Thank you kindly for your consideration,
Ben Bleiman
President - SF Entertainment Commission

On Tue, Aug 26, 2025 at 8:39 AM Cyn Wang [REDACTED] wrote:

Dear Members of the Commission Streamlining Task Force,

As Vice President of the San Francisco Entertainment Commission, I am writing to strongly urge the Task Force to preserve the Commission's current regulatory and enforcement authority. While I appreciate and support the intent of Proposition E to streamline government, I want to emphasize that the Entertainment Commission is unique among City commissions: instead of adding bureaucratic bloat, we **increase efficiency, reduce legal exposure, and provide a transparent adjudicatory forum that strengthens both government and community trust.**

The Commission was created because San Francisco needed a specialized, expert body to navigate the complexities of nightlife and entertainment: industries that are central to our City's culture, economy, and global reputation. Our work goes far beyond issuing permits and enforcing violations. We train and employ the City's only professional sound inspectors, set enforceable decibel limits, and, crucially, provide a **public forum where residents and venues can resolve disputes openly and fairly, insulating staff from external and political pressure.** If the Commission were eliminated or reduced to an advisory body, that impartial venue for public mediation would disappear, leaving communities and businesses without a trusted mechanism to resolve conflicts - creating instability and threatening the vitality of an important industry that generates more than \$7 billion in economic impact to the City, per the last [economic impact report](#). Notably, *before our sound inspectors took on the function of enforcing noise limits and unpermitted entertainment, this responsibility fell to the San Francisco Police Department.* Our work allows the SFPD to focus on their core mandate of keeping our city safe.

Proposition E correctly recognized that many commissions have contributed to delay and bloat – but the Entertainment Commission was created for the opposite reason. In most cities, entertainment permits are handled exclusively by departments without a public process. The result is predictable: disgruntled neighbors bypass the permitting agency and go straight to the police or to the courts, filing lawsuits or private rights of action that drain public resources and strain community relations.

San Francisco's model avoids these costly and inefficient outcomes. By providing a **public forum where grievances can be aired and all sides heard**, we mediate disputes openly and resolve conflicts before they escalate. This not only protects neighborhood quality of life while supporting nightlife businesses, but it also **reduces lawsuits, minimizes reliance on police (opening up their resources to address real crimes), and insulates staff from external pressure**. Consequently, we have been viewed as a gold standard model for other cities to emulate.

This shield function is critical. When the Commission issues permits - particularly in highly sensitive cases, such as a recent case involving a nightclub opening adjacent to a mosque - we create a transparent, fair decision-making process that staff alone could not shoulder. Without the Commission, staff would be left to absorb months of public records requests, litigation threats, and political pressure. With the Commission, the City provides a calming forum with a clear public process, reaches resolution that involves input from all sides, including community stakeholders, and allows staff to focus on implementation rather than conflict.

In addition to efficiency and accountability, the Commission ensures **public safety and violence prevention** through enforceable security conditions and compliance oversight, functions that would be severely weakened without our regulatory authority. San Francisco was also the **first city in the world to create a dedicated Entertainment Commission**, and other major cities look to us as a model for balancing nightlife vibrancy with community accountability. Weakening our role now would diminish both our global leadership and our local recovery.

Reducing the Commission's authority would eliminate the very tools that allow us to balance the needs of residents, businesses, and neighborhoods in a dense, mixed-use city with a vibrant – and growing - entertainment ecosystem. It would leave San Francisco without an effective mechanism to manage noise, entertainment, and late-night activity - sectors that generate thousands of jobs, attract millions of visitors, and are vital to the LGBTQ community and to the City's cultural identity. The nightlife and entertainment industries generate thousands of jobs, attract millions of visitors, and are integral to the cultural identity of San Francisco. To limit the Commission to an advisory body, or to eliminate it altogether while leaving enforcement solely to staff, would risk creating **more bureaucracy, more conflict, and greater legal vulnerability**, at the very moment when the City needs effective, trusted governance to foster economic and cultural renewal.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Task Force to recommend retaining the Entertainment Commission's full regulatory and enforcement authority. The Commission has proven itself to be not part of the problem, but part of the solution—a model of how government can be both a fair regulator and a strong advocate for San Francisco's nightlife.

Thank you for your consideration and for your work to strengthen San Francisco's government. I welcome the opportunity to provide additional information or to present to the Task Force directly.

Sincerely,
Cyn Wang
Vice President
San Francisco Entertainment Commission

([REDACTED] Esq.)

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Ben Bleiman

Tonic Nightlife Group

California Nightlife Association (CalNight) www.calnight.com

Excelsior Action Group (EAG) www.eagsf.org

Discover Polk CBD www.discoverpolk.org

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"I find that a duck's opinion of me is very much influenced by whether or not I have bread."

-Mitch Hedberg