

From: [REDACTED]
To: [commissionstreamlining](mailto:commissionstreamlining@sfgov.org)
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San Francisco Commissions Streamlining Task Force
San Francisco City Hall

CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org

Dear Members of the Commissions Task Force,
Thank you for your commitment to this important work. As someone who has served on several commissions over the past thirty years, I want to share candid observations and recommendations based on lived experience.

Our current commission system is not working. Inconsistent rules, minimal training, and vague lines of authority have produced dysfunction that fuels both ethical lapses and poor policy outcomes. Instead of serving the public, the system too often serves insiders—and even our elected leaders struggle to manage it.

To restore transparency, accountability, and public trust, I urge the Task Force to consider the following reforms:

1. Department Leadership

- The Mayor should hire and dismiss all department heads and oversee the search process.

2. Financial Oversight

- The Controller's Office should centrally manage all accounting for grants, contracts, and related activities, with Controller staff embedded in departments (auditing including Inspector General review).

3. Role of Commissions

- Commissions should not have policy-making authority. Policy decisions belong with

elected leaders who are directly accountable to voters.

- Commissions should exist only where defined in the City Charter, and their purpose should be either to provide space for public discussion or to offer specialized expertise—free from conflicts of interest—in an advisory capacity.

4. Ethics and Accountability

- The City Attorney and Controller should jointly review all potential conflicts of interest

among commissioners. Across decades of service, I have witnessed how the current structure enables misconduct

because there is a mistaken assumption that commissions provide oversight.

Agendas are

manipulated to avoid real debate, public input is dismissed, and both staff and commissioners are

silenced or punished for speaking out. This culture does not serve the people of San Francisco—

it protects power and, at times, corruption.

San Franciscans deserve better. The Task Force has the opportunity to create a system that is

clear, accountable, and resilient. I urge you to act boldly and decisively so that commissions once

again serve the public good rather than entrenched interests.

Respectfully,

Debra Walker

Arts Commissioner

ExPolice Commissioner

Ex-Building Inspection Commissioner



Sent from my iPhone