

From: [Doug Engmann](#)
To: [commissionstreamlining](#)
Subject: October 1 Statement of Douglas Engmann, former President of the City Planning Commission, objecting to the application of the governance template to the Planning Commission.
Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2025 6:19:04 PM

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Task Force Members:

Applying the governance template to the Planning Commission is a huge mistake.

As the Task Force report correctly notes, the Planning Commission is a unique body with powers far beyond overseeing the Planning Department. Your report says that these powers "are not fully aligned with how other City Departments and their governing bodies are structured". If that is true, it would an error to apply your governance template to the Planning Commission.

In fact, the Planning Commission acts more like an appellate commission than a governance commission. The Commission does set policy through its approval of the General and Neighborhood Plans. However, Section 4.105 of the Charter also gives the Commission the power to approve every permit and license required under the Planning Code, which approval or disapproval may be delegated to the Department. But every resident, homeowner, business, residential developer, office builder has the right to appeal those Departmental decisions to the Commission. Substantially more than 50% of the planning hearings are appeals of Department approvals or disapprovals, and in many cases require the Commission to serve in a quasi-judicial function in interpreting the code.

Therefore, the Task Force should apply the Appeals template with regards to commission appointees and approvals and make no recommendations for changes in the current process. The City Charter was amended in 2002 to give the Board of Supervisors three appointees and require Supervisor approval of all appointees. That Charter amendment was passed with 66% of the vote which reflected the voters' desire for a more democratic and balanced governance model for land use and urban planning.

There is even more reason why this rationale is still important today. Please do not recommend any changes in the powers to appoint or approve city planning commissioners.