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To: [commissionstreamlining](#)
Cc: [Kohanzadeh, Hannah \(ADM\)](#); [Alonso, Rachel \(ADM\)](#)
Subject: Response to the Commission Streamlining Task Force Interim Decision to Eliminate the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare
Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 12:53:49 PM

Dear Chair Harrington and Members of the Commission Streamlining Task Force,

As Chair of the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare, I appreciate the time and effort that the Commission Streamlining Task Force has devoted to reviewing our City's commissions, advisory boards, committees, and other public bodies. However, I am deeply concerned by the interim decision to recommend the elimination of our Commission as outlined in the *General Administration and Finance Bodies Memo (October 24, 2025)*. I believe that a number of the findings underlying the decision are inaccurate and do not reflect the Commission's purpose and value to the community.

1. Mischaracterization of the Commission's Role

The memo states that "Department of Animal Care and Control (ACC) staff could absorb the functions" of the Commission. This reflects a misunderstanding of our Commission and what we do. The Commission's work is advisory, ethical, and involves community interaction. The Commission does not duplicate the work of any City department; rather, the Commission ensures transparency, accountability, and recommends compassionate policy in ways that no City department is able to do.

City departments focus on operations and enforcement; the Commission, by contrast, provides a public forum for policy guidance, citizen participation, and discussion around department decisions affecting living beings. Eliminating the Commission would remove the only public body dedicated to representing the community's values regarding the well-being of animals and wildlife in San Francisco.

2. Public Engagement and Transparency

Contrary to the implication that the functions of the Commission and the Department of Animal Care and Control are redundant, the Commission has always been and continues to be an important way for the community to be involved. Each month, members of the community attend our meetings to make public comments and see presentations on a wide range of issues involving animals in our City. Without the Commission, the community would lose its only consistent, transparent venue for addressing animal-related policy matters before they become crises.

The Department of Animal Care and Control does not offer a way for the community to provide comments regarding city policies or matters involving animals. In fact, the Department of Animal Care and Control regularly refers members of the public to the Commission in order for their concerns to be heard.

The Commission also understands that hearing public comments will involve the possibility of hearing criticism and complaints about our public body. As Chair, I have heard many public comments over the years criticizing past actions of the Commission. The Commission knows that it is all part of being a public body. The Department of Animal Care and Control, in the past, has refused to participate in Commission meetings because of the belief that the Department will have to endure negative comments from the community. As a city department, the Department of Animal Care and Control is allowed to make that choice and therefore chooses not to interact with the community. The Commission, on the other hand, does not have that choice and even if it did, the Commission would always choose to interact with the community.

This is another way in which the Commission is different from a City department.

3. Cross-Departmental Collaboration

The Commission plays an incredible role in collaborating with City departments. Not only through our work on the Commission, but some of our commissioners also serve as volunteers for the Department of Animal Care and Control, and some commissioners help the community connect with City representatives when animal or wildlife matters arise. This is done by the commissioners for the community on an individual basis and is not part of the commissioners' work on the Commission.

The Commission is unique in that no other public body brings City departments and members of the community together with a shared ethical lens towards helping animals and wildlife.

4. San Francisco's Identity and Leadership

As the **City of St. Francis**, San Francisco has long led the nation in animal protection—banning fur sales, banning cat declawing, and prioritizing compassionate animal policies. These advances have originated in public discussions with the Commission, which has served as a moral compass for local policy. Eliminating the Commission would contradict our city's historic commitment to compassion and set back decades of progress in humane governance.

5. Response to the *General Administration and Finance Bodies Memo* (October 24, 2025).

I would like to comment on a few of the findings and statements published in the Task Force's document:

Regarding statements on page 63:

- Estimated Annual Costs of \$11,000

This number is inaccurate (I have no idea how this number was decided).

Regarding statements on page 64:

- City departments perform the necessary functions of the Commission.

As far as I am aware, there is currently no way for the community to interact with the Department of Animal Care and Control in order to offer feedback on current department policy.

- The Commission's scope has "morphed" from that of an advisory body to an advocacy group.

The Commission was formed back in the early 1970s. City entities that were created over 50 years ago are going to evolve and change to reflect current times. As views about animals have evolved over the years, so has the Commission. Contrary to what is written in the Task Force's Memo, the Commission remains what it has always been: it is an advisory body.

- The Commission's work regarding the Joint Zoo Committee's 2024 Animal Welfare Advisors Report

As an animal welfare advisor for the Joint Zoo Committee, a member of the Commission created the report working along with the other Joint Zoo Committee animal welfare advisors and a number of animal advocates and current and past employees of the Zoo. The Chair Commission also contributed to the Report and attended a Zoo visit with the group. Contrary to what is written in the Task Force's Memo, members of the Commission did have a role in preparing the Report.

Regarding statements on page 65:

- Commissioners sometimes make duplicate requests for data.

This is inaccurate. I have checked with a number of commissioners and department representatives, and contrary to what is written in the Task Force's Memo, no one can remember a time when this has happened.

- If ACC wishes to preserve this public engagement role.

The Department of Animal Care and Control (ACC) does not have oversight over the Commission. Contrary to what is written in the Task Force's Memo, the Commission is independent of the Department of Animal Care and Control.

Regarding statements on page 67:

- ACC feedback concerning the Commission's veterinarian seat.

Back in 2020, the Commission held discussions on making changes to seat 7 (the veterinarian seat). At the time, the Department of Animal Care and Control representative argued that the seat should remain a veterinarian-only seat and was

against making any changes to it. It's rather surprising to me that they are now offering the opposite as a suggestion.

As a side note, I have always been quick to respond to the Task Force's requests and would have welcomed the opportunity to answer questions and provide clarification concerning the Commission's role and our relationship with the Department of Animal Care and Control prior to the release of the Task Force's memo.

In closing, I want to say that eliminating the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare would silence a vital public voice, diminish transparency, and weaken the City's capacity to respond ethically to animal and wildlife issues. The Commission serves a role that is a lot different than the Department of Animal Care and Control and I, as Chair of the Commission, serve a completely different role in the community than the Director of Animal Care and Control does.

Along with many residents of San Francisco and representatives from the animal advocacy community, I respectfully urge the Task Force to reconsider their tentative decision to eliminate the Commission and instead vote to support the Commission.

Please vote to KEEP the Commission of Animal Control and Welfare!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Angelo Torres

Chair, San Francisco Animal Commission - Commission of Animal Control and Welfare
City and County of San Francisco