

From: [REDACTED]
To: [commissionstreamlining](#)
Subject: Strengthen—Don't Weaken—the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force
Date: Tuesday, November 4, 2025 9:54:14 AM

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Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

I'm writing to oppose the recommendations to (1) convert the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force (SOTF) from a decision-making body into a mere advisory committee and (2) impose an automatic sunset unless the Board of Supervisors reauthorizes it. The City should be doing the very opposite: **strengthening the SOTF's independence and authority to act**. Sunshine isn't a box to check—it's the foundation of a well-run government. There should be no secrets.

For years I've worked on public records issues related to the San Francisco Zoo. I've lived the consequences of opacity: protracted delays, partial or confusing disclosures, and disputes that drag on because no empowered, independent body can quickly compel compliance and restore public trust. When it takes months—or years—to access records that should be routine, the public loses faith and policy suffers. A robust SOTF is one of the only reliable mechanisms residents have to enforce transparency without hiring a lawyer.

Here's what's at stake:

- **Transparency is a core public service, not a courtesy.** Advisory-only bodies can “urge” openness; they can't ensure it. Residents deserve timely, enforceable outcomes, not suggestions.
- **A sunset invites backsliding.** Automatic expiration would destabilize the City's transparency architecture and chill whistleblowing, records requests, and honest deliberation. Strong institutions shouldn't be set to quietly disappear.
- **San Francisco sets a global example.** Emerging democracies and reformers worldwide look to this City for models of open government. Weakening SOTF signals that accountability is optional. It isn't.

What actually improves transparency?

1. **Retain and expand SOTF's decision-making and enforcement authority.** Empower it to issue binding findings, order corrective actions, set deadlines for compliance, and refer willful violations for sanctions under existing law.
2. **Strengthen investigative tools.** Ensure timely access to records in dispute, require written justifications for delays or redactions, and mandate public, trackable remedies.
3. **Guarantee independence and continuity.** No sunset. Provide stable staffing, public reporting, and clear performance metrics so residents can see whether agencies are meeting their Sunshine obligations.

4. **Center the public.** Keep hearings accessible, timelines reasonable, and outcomes published so people can learn from precedents and agencies can improve.

Advisory status and a sunset would move San Francisco backward—toward more closed-door decision-making, more litigation, and more cynicism. Strengthening SOTF moves us forward—toward faster resolution of disputes, better records practices across departments, and renewed confidence that our government works in the open and for the people.

Please reject the recommendations to downgrade and sunset the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force. Instead, affirm its essential role and give it the authority and resources to safeguard transparency and accountability—every day, for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration and your service.

Sincerely,
Justin Barker
San Francisco resident
Golden Gate 94115