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November 18, 2025

Ed Harrington, Chair
Commission Streamlining Task Force
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 263
San Francisco, CA 94102

Regarding: Item 5, Historic Preservation Commission (HPC)

Dear Task Force Members:

I am writing to urge you to oppose the two proposals before you regarding the Historic Preservation Commission.

With regard to simplifying seat requirements and qualifications, please be aware that the current definitions are related to San Francisco's status as a Certified Local Government with regard to preservation of historical and cultural resources. Being so certified includes having specific professional qualifications for Commission members.

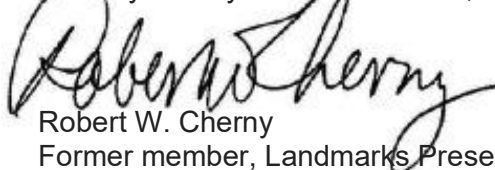
Is there any significant evidence indicating that it has been difficult to find individuals with appropriate professional qualifications to fill the seats on the Commission? I know of none. For example, I know from personal experience that there were at least three fully qualified candidates for the historian's position the last time it was open, and that the mayor's office found a fourth person who also met the qualifications.

In general, San Francisco does not suffer from a shortage of well educated residents. As of the 2020 census, 59 percent of city residents had graduated from college (compared to 48 percent nationally), and nearly a quarter had graduate or professional degrees (compared to 14 percent nationally). The qualifications for Commissioners are not unusual or extreme.

From my perspective, the only reason to "simplify" seat requirements is to allow mayors to avoid professional qualifications. And that would call into question the City's status as a Certified Local Government.

It is also important that the Board of Supervisors retain the authority to reject a mayoral nomination. Recall that a recent mayor attempted to do exactly that with regard to the Historian's seat. Although there were clearly a number of well qualified people available, that mayor sent the Board of Supervisors a nomination that clearly did not fit the charter description, and the Board appropriately denied the nomination.

Thank you for your consideration,


Robert W. Cherny
Former member, Landmarks Preservation Advisory Bd.