

TALKING POINTS Commission Streamlining Task Force
December 3, 2025

1) Keep SFAC in the Charter! It's a mistake to remove its authorities. Hard stop.

[We should not even engage on the subject of Governance vs. Advisory in the Admin. Code; [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]]

2) If you remove the independent oversight that the Arts Commission currently has you are doing exactly what the Trump Administration did by terminating the Federal Commission on Fine Arts which led to the demolition of the East Wing of the White House. That federal commission's authorities – granted by the US Constitution just as the City Charter gives authority to our municipal Arts Commission – could have prevented the demolition of a historic, sacred public space that upheld the design standards of the Capitol. Similarly, by removing the authorities of the Arts Commission, and eliminating the art and design expertise of the Arts Commission, there is nothing from stopping the Mayor or the Board of making unilateral decisions about San Francisco's public realm.

3) If you take the Arts Commission out of the Charter, you will be laying the business of that agency at the foot of the Board of Supervisors. If you recall the many hours of public testimony recently given regarding the Villaincourt Fountain (one of hundreds of items discussed at SFAC meetings), that will then land in the Board Chambers.

4) The Arts Commission authorities date back 92 years—some of the longest standing in the City. Other cities look to San Francisco to design their own cultural affairs charter provisions; we serve as a best practice for the rest of the country.

5) Removing the Arts Commission from the Charter removes the expertise that should be overseeing the City's cultural spaces and resources. It's duplicating what DOGE did—fired all the field experts and left critical decisions to individuals who did not have decades of experience and knowledge in the subjects they were suddenly charged with.

6) This framework being presented is looking at this ONLY from a cost-saving perspective, and not the significant value the City will lose with this ill-advised Charter reform proposal. This is not the spirit of Prop E – which is what put the Task Force in these seats. Moving the Arts Commission to the Charter is a consolidation of decision-making power, masquerading as efficiency.

6) If this Task Force does not keep the Arts Commission in the City Charter, the arts community—from individual artists and small organizations to major donors and large institutions—will mobilize to vote against it at the Ballot box, potentially bringing down the work of this entire Task Force.

7) Lastly, I have to say, it's beyond frustrating to have the future of the Arts Commission's authorities in the hands of a body that clearly does not understand the agency's mandates or functions, or the astounding ROI of its role in municipal life (remember, it is a \$1.7 billion economic engine), much less the agency's name. It's the San Francisco Arts Commission (ARTS not Art) and it should stay in the City Charter.

submitted by Rachelle Axel