

# San Francisco Elections Commission

## 2025 Annual Report *DRAFT*

### January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025

Prepared by:  
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2025 President

Approved by the Commission on:  
Xxx

San Francisco Elections Commission  
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# 1. Introduction

2025 included high-than-usual turnover in the Commission’s membership, so much of the work of the year can be characterized by onboarding and orientation for new members to the work of the Commission. By the end of the year, only five of seven seats were full, and three of the five members had served less than one year in the role. Time was spent immersing everyone in budgeting and election review processes, and starting conversations to set new Commission priorities and goals.

## 2. Purpose

### 2.1. The San Francisco Elections Commission.

The Elections Commission was established by San Francisco Charter § 13.103.5 pursuant to a Charter amendment called Proposition E that was passed by voters in the November 6, 2001 Consolidated Municipal Election. The Elections Commission assumed policy-making authority and oversight of all public federal, state, district and municipal elections in the City and County of San Francisco effective January 1, 2002.

### 2.2. Commission Annual Report.

Pursuant to Article XI of the Bylaws of the Elections Commission, the purpose of this report is to preserve and pass on to successive Commissions relevant information so as to make more effective subsequent Commission tenures by providing institutional memory to assist in resolution of recurring Commission problems. This report contains the President's report of the activities of the Commission during 2025, as well as other information the President deems significant and of likely assistance to subsequent Commissions.

## 3. Commission Organization

### 3.1. Commission Members.

The San Francisco Election Commission members are appointed to staggered 5-year terms by the elected office holders as defined in the San Francisco Charter § 13.103.5

| <b>Name</b>     | <b>Commission Role</b> | <b>Appointed By</b>  | <b>Term in 2025</b> |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Michelle Parker | President              | Board of Education   | Full year           |
| Renita LiVolsi  | Vice-President         | Public Defender      | Full year           |
| Lucy Bernholz   | Commissioner           | Treasurer            | Jan 1-Mar 27, 2025  |
| Kelly Wong      | Commissioner           | Board of Supervisors | Jan 1-Nov 17, 2025  |

|               |              |               |                     |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Trevor McNeil | Commissioner | Mayor         | Full year           |
| Rebecca Bers  | Commissioner | City Attorney | Jan 6-Dec 31, 2025  |
| Neil Hallinan | Commissioner | Treasurer     | Oct 14-Dec 31, 2025 |

**3.2. Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee (BOPEC) Members**

The Commission’s Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee reviews Election Plans, Budgets and other matters referred to it by the President or full Commission and provides findings and recommendations for consideration at Commission Meetings. The Commission didn’t convene a BOPEC in 2025 and instead conducted those responsibilities as a full commission as a way to orient new members to some of the items within the scope of responsibility.

**3.3. Director of Elections**

The Director of Elections is hired by the Election Commission, serves as the executive of the San Francisco Department of Elections, and is a full-time employee of the City and County of San Francisco.

|            |                       |           |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| John Arntz | Director of Elections | Full Year |
|------------|-----------------------|-----------|

**3.4. Secretary**

The Commission Secretary is hired by the Election Commission and serves as the administrative staff to the Commission and is an employee of the City and County of San Francisco

|              |                        |           |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------|
| Marisa Davis | Commissioner Secretary | Full Year |
|--------------|------------------------|-----------|

**3.5. Deputy City Attorney**

The deputy City Attorney is assigned to the Elections Commission to advise the body on matters pertaining to its authority.

|            |                      |           |
|------------|----------------------|-----------|
| Ana Flores | Deputy City Attorney | Full Year |
|------------|----------------------|-----------|

**4. Commission Business**

**4.1. Elections**

The Department of Elections conducted two (2) elections in 2025: The September 16, 2025 Special Recall Election and the November 4, 2025 Statewide Special Election. The Commission reviewed and approved Election Plans for both elections. The Commission

also conducted post-election reviews for both elections and voted to affirm that the elections had been administered in a free, fair, and functional manner.

**4.1.1. September 16, 2025 Special Recall Election**

The Commission reviewed and approved the Special Recall Election Plan on August 20, 2025, with the Special Election scheduled for September 16, 2025. The Commission conducted a post-election review and unanimously voted to deem the election free, fair, and functional on October 15, 2025.

**4.1.2. November 4, 2025 Statewide Special Election**

The Commission learned about the Statewide Special Election Plan on October 20, 2025, with the Special Election scheduled for November 4, 2025. The Commission conducted a post-election review and unanimously voted to deem the election free, fair, and functional on January 21, 2026.

**4.2. Annual Budget Reviews**

For each annual budget review, the Elections Commission is required to conduct two public reviews of the Department of Elections' proposed budgets no less than 15 days apart. The Department of Elections operates on a rolling two-year budget; budget submissions thus contain proposed amendments to previously approved, current fiscal year budgets as well as a new budget proposal for the next fiscal year.

**4.2.1. First Review at Special Meeting on January 30, 2025**

The Director of Elections submitted its FY 2025-2026 and FY 2026 – 2027 proposed budgets for Commission review on January 28, 2025. The full commission reviewed the budget for both years at a special meeting on January 30, 2025. This first review is typically conducted by BOPEC, but with the high number of new commissioners, the President suggested both reviews be done by the full Commission to allow ample time to understand the proposals. The budgets and all associated documents can be found on the website. The annual budget is fairly consistent each year, primarily including predictable and legally required services to be performed by staff. This budget also included creative solutions to respond to City budget reduction requests by the Mayor, while still delivering core services.

**4.2.2. Second Review at Regular Meeting on February 18, 2025**

The full Commission reviewed and unanimously approved the budgets on February 18, 2025. The Department met its requirement to submit final versions to the Mayor's Office and the Controller's Office by the Charter-mandated deadline of February 21, 2025.

#### **4.3. Director’s Annual Performance Evaluation**

The [evaluation process](#) for the Director’s 2025 performance review was similar to prior years. It began during Closed Session at the May 28, 2025 Regular Meeting and concluded at the September 17, 2025 Regular Meeting.

### **5. Other Commission Activities**

#### **5.1. Commission Priorities and Goals**

The Commission began discussing ideas for new Commission priorities and goals at the October 15, 2025 meeting. These would be focused on what the Commission might do to advance its purpose (to ensure San Francisco elections are free, fair and functional). Criteria set by President Parker included: the Commission must be able to act on it as a Commission (not dictating department’s work), it must be measurable, and it must be realistic with volunteer time and a part-time Commission Secretary. They could also be goals that would help the Commission do its job more effectively by increasing its understanding on key topics or its skills.

The Commission agreed that at least one of its goals in 2026 would be focused on learning – both to be more effective in its own service in these roles and to educate the public on topics related to free, fair and functional elections. Commissioners were assigned topics that would be covered in educational sessions during Regular Meetings: AI implications on elections (led by VP Renita LiVolsi), outreach to other elections commissions regarding professional development best practices (led by Commissioner Trevor McNeil), language access (led by Commissioner Kelly Wong), open-source voting (led by President Parker), and qualitative election issues and barriers for voters (led by Commissioner Bers).

Conversation continued into the November 2025 Regular Meeting and Commissioners were asked to write up proposals for the Commission’s review and approval during the January 2026 meeting, along with any other potential goals.

#### **5.2. Racial Equity Progress Report**

The Commission has historically contributed a brief update to the Racial Equity Progress Report submitted by the Elections Department. After new guidance from the Office of Racial Equity which clarified that these Reports are primarily intended to be completed by the Department – not Commissions – the Commission decided to discontinue contributions to the Report. Instead, the Commission agreed to move some of its previous priorities represented in that document to its work to determine priorities and goals.

## 6. Regular Commission Meetings

Regular Commission meetings are held monthly on the third Wednesday at 6pm, unless otherwise notified. The Commission held eight regular meetings in 2025, and one Special Meeting mentioned above to conduct a first review of the department budget.

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| January 15, 2025   | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting--january-15-2025--elections-commission-regular-meeting-jan-2025">https://www.sf.gov/meeting--january-15-2025--elections-commission-regular-meeting-jan-2025</a>             |
| February 19, 2025  | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting--february-19-2025--elections-commission-regular-meeting-february-2025">https://www.sf.gov/meeting--february-19-2025--elections-commission-regular-meeting-february-2025</a> |
| April 16, 2025     | LINK NEEDED   |
| May 28, 2025       | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-elections-commission-regular-meeting-april-2025">https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-elections-commission-regular-meeting-april-2025</a>                           |
| August 20, 2025    | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250820-august-2025-regular-meeting">https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250820-august-2025-regular-meeting</a>   |
| September 17, 2025 | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-elections-commission-regular-meeting-june-2025">https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-elections-commission-regular-meeting-june-2025</a>                             |
| October 15, 2025   | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-march-2025-meeting">https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-march-2025-meeting</a>   |
| November 19, 2025  | <a href="https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-elections-commission-regular-meeting-november-2025">https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20250319-elections-commission-regular-meeting-november-2025</a>                     |