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January 11, 2026

Ed Harrington, Chair
Commission Streamlining Task Force
c/o City Administrator's Office
City Hall, Room 316
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102-4694

"The Urban Forestry Council was created by the Board of Supervisors 22 years ago by Ordinance #171-03 in July 2003 under the 'Precautionary Principle' to manage trees in San Francisco by emphasizing public participation."

Re: **Reverse Streamlining Task Force's Decision to Eliminate the Urban Forestry Council**

Dear Chair Harrington and Commission Streamlining Task Force,

As lawyer Joshua Klipp — an environmental activist and Member of the Urban Forestry Council — just [wrote](#) in the *Westside Observer*, “We live in a time when federal elected and appointed leaders routinely ignore the law, and the people’s right to speak out is being systematically silenced. ... Our own City government is [effectively] doing the same thing: violating their own laws, then telling the public to sit down and shut up.”

Importantly, Klipp noted the efforts underway to remove citizen’s rights to appeal tree removal to the Board of Appeals doesn’t impact private or commercial development; it only effects City-initiated tree removals. Removing the public’s right to appeal has nothing to do with streamlining City government!

San Francisco already has the smallest urban canopy of any major city in the U.S. and we need the Urban Forestry Council to help preserve and expand our urban canopy.

Klipp’s *Westside Observer* article included a link to an ActionNetwork petition to the Board of Supervisors urging that the District Supervisors reject the Mayor’s proposed Ordinance in Board File #251211 to eliminate, in part, the public’s right to appeal removal of street trees to the Board of Appeals. As of Sunday afternoon at 2:00 p.m., Klipp’s petition has gained 686 signatures, which has gained 81 signatures in the last three days and is still growing.

This Streamlining Task Force should take note of the public support of Klipp’s petition. After all, those 686 people will probably be inclined to vote against this Streamlining Task Force’s proposed Charter Reform ballot measure on the November 2026 municipal ballot if you don’t fully reinstate the Urban Forestry Council as an advisory body required by both the Environment Code and the Public Works Code.

Klipp rightly worries that the Mayor’s proposed Ordinance would incentivize developers to lean on the City to remove those trees on their behalf, effectively underwriting the work of tree removals for private development — using taxpayer money! (I’ve personally never met a developer adverse to shedding their own costs onto the backs of taxpayers, or a developer who doesn’t like free City money!)

This “*Commission Streamlining Task Force*” foolishly recommended eliminating the “*Urban Forestry Council*” completely, and assigning the Forestry Council’s oversight duties to the Commission on the Environment — if (a big if) the Environment Commission deigns to take on the oversight functions of the Forestry Council. The Streamlining Task Force also simultaneously recommended taking the Environment Commission out of the City Charter, moving it to the Administrative Code, and converting it from a “*regulatory body*” to an “*advisory body*,” slapping a three-year sunset date on the Environment Commission, and taking budget approval authority over the Environment Department away from the Environment Commission. Applying a sunset date opens the door to the Environment Commission being shut down by the Board of Supervisors anytime in the future.

The Urban Forestry Council was created by the Board of Supervisors 22 years ago by Ordinance #171-03 in July 2003 under the “*Precautionary Principle*” to manage trees in San Francisco by emphasizing public participation in the preservation and expansion of the urban forest before causing actual environmental harm — including through illegal tree removal and greedy developers avoiding responsibility to protect and expand our urban canopy.

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It was created in Chapter 12 of the **Environment Code** to manage, protect, and enhance the City's urban forest as critical and essential, high-value infrastructure. §1200(a) of the Environment Code states that the Urban Forestry Council is "*to protect the community interest and ensure that San Francisco realizes the full range of tree benefits into the future.*"

As well, the "*Urban Forestry Ordinance*" was also added as Article 16, §800 *Urban Forestry Ordinance* of the San Francisco **Public Works Code** 30 years and 6 months ago on May 19, 1995 by Board of Supervisors Ordinance #165-95. §803, *Urban Forestry Council; Additional Powers and Duties*, added duties and functions of the Urban Forestry Council to advise the Director of the Public Works Department in an advisory capacity, including paragraph §803(a)(7) on "*Making recommendations to the Director on appeals of applications for tree removal.*"

After operating successfully for 22 to 30-plus years on a lean cost of just \$109,000 annually, the Board of Supervisors should not allow the Commission Streamlining Task Force, Mayor Lurie, and newbie Supervisor Wong to simply eliminate the Urban Forestry Council created by Board of Supervisors Ordinance #165-95 and Ordinance #171-03.

This Streamlining Task Force needs to revisit your decision to eliminate the Urban Forestry Council since you should now not be running roughshod over 22 to 30 years of existing precedent preserving our urban canopy protected by the Environment Code and Public Works Code.

Following public pressure and advocacy, this Streamlining Task Force just overturned its initial decision to eliminate the "*Reentry Council*," showing public pressure works. You should similarly overturn your initial decision to eliminate the *Urban Forestry Council*, too!

Supervisor Matt Dorsey wrote to the Commission Streamlining Task Force January 5, 2026 requesting that the Task Force re-evaluate and overturn its initial decision to eliminate the Mission Bay Transportation Improvement Fund Community Advisory Committee (CAC). The Streamlining Task Force has placed on its January 14 meeting agenda item #5-e to reconsider its initial decision to eliminate the Mission Bay TIF CAC. Dorsey's letter prompted this Task Force to schedule reconsideration of eliminating the Mission Bay TIF CAC this Wednesday on January 14.

The Streamlining Task Force can — and should — do the same with the Urban Forestry Council.

Just as Supervisor Dorsey believes the *Mission Bay CAC* has provided valuable transparency and community-based advocacy, the same applies to the "*Urban Forestry Council*" — just as it applies to the "*Reentry Council*."

As Dorsey wrote on January 5: "*The Mission Bay TIF CAC is working as intended.*" So, too, is the Urban Forestry Council working as intended. Both bodies must be retained, just as the Reentry Council was retained.

This Streamlining Task Force has listened to reason before and rescinded your previous wrongful decisions. You must do the same with the Urban Forestry Council.

Mr. Klipp is right: "*We are expressing public opposition to overrunning another of our rights.*"

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Patrick Monette-Shaw

Columnist/Reporter

Westside Observer Newspaper

cc: Rachel Alonso, Project Director, City Administrator's Office

The Honorable Raphael Mandelman, President, Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Connie Chan, Supervisor, District 1

The Honorable Stephen Sherrill, Supervisor, District 2

The Honorable Danny Sauter, Supervisor, District 3

"This Commission Streamlining Task Force should not now alter the Environment Code and Public Works Code to eliminate the Urban Forestry Council by overturning 22 to 30 years of existing precedent preserving our urban canopy by public citizens!"

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The Honorable Alan Wong, District 4

The Honorable Bilal Mahmood, District 5

The Honorable Matt Dorsey, Supervisor, District 6

The Honorable Myrna Melgar, District 7

The Honorable Jackie Fielder, Supervisor, District 9

The Honorable Shamann Walton, Supervisor, District 10

The Honorable Chyanne Chen, District 11

Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board

Alisa Somera, Legislative Deputy Director, Clerk of the Board's Office

Board of Appeals