January 3, 2026

A So-Called "Good Government" Policy Body Violates Good Government

Streamlining Task Force Accused of Violating State and Local Public Meeting Laws

Streamlining Task Force Decides It Is Above the Law and Can Do Whatever It Pleases, Laws and Precedents Be Damned

The Commission Streamlining Task Force pulled on their **wellies**, and plunged into the wastewater and ***do-do*** treatment plant's cesspool, choosing to violate state and local public meeting laws — with the tacit approval of San Francisco's number 2 official in the City Attorney's Office, Jon Givner, looking on.

\by Patrick Monette-Shaw

It was bad enough that in it's mad dash to place a measure on the November 2026 municipal ballot to revise our City Charter, San Francisco's five member Commission Streamlining Task Force has been wielding its Elon Musk-style "*streamlining*" chainsaw to the structure, functions, and very existence of approximately 150 governing boards, commissions, and advisory bodies comprising San Franciscans' checks and balances on what *we the people* want our City government to do on our behalf.

Then — adding injury to insult — the Streamlining Task Force chose to knowingly and willfully violate both the California Brown Act and San Francisco's Sunshine Ordinance governing open meeting laws, by deciding they were above the law and could just do whatever they please, laws be damned.

> **"Adding injury to insult, the Streamlining Task Force chose to knowingly, willfully violate both the California Brown Act and San Francisco's Sunshine Ordinance governing open meeting laws."**

One such violation occurred on December 12, 2025 in full view — and with the tacit approval — of Chief Assistant City Attorney Jonathan ("Jon") Givner, who has attended nearly every public meeting of the Streamlining Task Force, at least since September 3, 2024 when the Task Force began it's body-by-body deliberations of what to do to streamline San Francisco's 152 public boards, commissions, and advisory bodies. As Chief Assistant City Attorney since February 2025, Givner is essentially second-in-command in the City Attorney's Office, just under elected City Attorney David Chiu.

Since it was incumbent on one citizen watchdog (or another) to complain about the Brown Act and Sunshine Ordinance violation, a formal Sunshine Ordinance **complaint** (Number 20-130) was soon filed with San Francisco's Sunshine Ordinance Task Force (SOTF) regarding what appears to be an open-and-shut case of the Commission Streamlining Task Force having willfully violated prohibitions in both laws requiring not discussing — or worse, taking official action on — a matter or topic that was **not** listed on a published meeting agenda, whether for a regularly-scheduled meeting, or a "*special*" meeting.

> **"A Sunshine Ordinance complaint was soon filed regarding what appears to be an open-and-shut case of the Streamlining Task Force having willfully violated prohibitions in both laws."**

Full disclosure: This author filed the Sunshine complaint as a civic duty.

The December 12 Violation

On December 12, 2025 the Commission Streamlining Task Force held a "*Special Meeting*," during which it improperly discussed and took action on the "*Reentry Council*," a body that had not been publicly noticed anywhere on the Special Meeting's agenda.

They did so near the end of its meeting agenda, when they were ostensibly discussing Agenda Item #7 on "Future Agenda Topics" that had been formally listed on the meeting agenda as being strictly a "*Discussion Item*." After support staff to the Task Force discussed preliminary future agenda items, Task Force Chair Ed Harrington took public comments on that specific agenda item, as required by the Sunshine Ordinance.

Although the Streamlining Task Force's "*Special Meeting*" was scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on December 12, community members had organized to attend the meeting to advocate that the "*Reentry Council*" be reinstated as an advisory body.

The draft meeting minutes of the Task Force's December 12 meeting now report that 17 community members spoke in support of retaining the Reentry Council, urging the Task Force to reverse its initial decision to eliminate the Council entirely. At least 6 of the 17 speakers self-identified as being formerly incarcerated people. Two of the 17 speakers were employees of San Francisco's Adult Probation Department, testifying in support of their clients: Ms. Westbrook, the Probation Department's Reentry Director and a former member of the Reentry Council, testified on the importance of having formerly incarcerated individuals "*at the decision-making table*," and Alek Hartwick, the Probation Department's Legislative Affairs Manager, urged the Task Force to keep the Reentry Council as an advisory body in the Administrative Code.

After closing public comment on the agenda item, the meeting's audiotape reveals Chair Harrington started discussion saying, "*I must admit when we first talked about the Reentry Council it seemed like mostly* [it was a] *staff* [working group]. *It's clearly important to a number of people* [from the community] *and* ***I don't think it causes harm*** *to have it where it is today*." The draft meeting minutes also report Harrington and other Task Force members opened the discussion by stating that the Reentry Council clearly provides expertise that only certain community members can offer.

Harrington stated he supported bringing the Reentry Council item back for a **future** meeting, and introduced a formal motion to that effect, which motion was seconded.

But rather than waiting for a future meeting to place it on a published meeting agenda as required by the Brown Act and Sunshine Ordinance, that's where the December 12 meeting plunged off the rails and into the cesspool of violating open meeting laws.

Here's why the initial decision to eliminate the Council needed to be revisited.

"Harrington stated he supported bringing the Reentry Council item back for a future meeting. But rather than waiting for a future meeting to place it on a published meeting agenda as required by the Brown Act and Sunshine Ordinance, that's where the December 12 meeting plunged off the rails and into the cesspool of violating open meeting laws."

Task Force's Initial September 3 Decision

Because the Task Force had unceremoniously voted unanimously by voice vote on September 3, 2025 to eliminate the Reentry Council — with nearly zero discussion of the composition of the Reentry Council members, or discussion of the costs, functions, or merits of the Council — it was begging for reconsideration.

The Budget and Legislative Analyst's analysis had revealed the Reentry Council costs approximately $60,873 annually, none of which was for full-time staff "*hard costs*" that would actually be saved, and the majority involved "*soft costs*" for part-time City staff who would keep their jobs to perform other duties even if the Reentry Council were eliminated. That compares to the estimated cost of approximately $132,860 **per inmate** annually as of early 2024 in a State prison, and slightly less in a County jail. Preventing just one case of recidivism, or a new inmate, could easily pay for the cost of the Reentry Council. But the Streamlining Task Force didn't discuss the costs or benefits of the Council on September 3 either, before rushing to eliminate it, as if the Task Force members had no common sense on which to guide their decisions!

"'*Vice Chair Jean Fraser recommended eliminating the Reentry Council so as not to limit the group to public body rules such as quorum or the Brown Act.*'

Fraser's chief concern appears to have been the Reentry Council shouldn't have been *burdened* by having to comply with public open meeting rules such as the Brown Act."

Indeed, the Task Force's September 3 **meeting minutes** report on page 5 that the only discussion by Task Force members was "*Vice Chair Jean Fraser recommended eliminating the Reentry Council so as not to limit the group to public body rules such as quorum or the Brown Act. Chair Harrington supported Vice Chair Fraser's recommendation*."

[As an aside: Both Harrington, and Fraser (before her abrupt resignation from the Task Force) are Board members of SPUR: Mayor Lurie's "*Chief of Infrastructure, Climate & Mobility*," Alicia John-Baptiste, is the former CEO of SPUR.]

Fraser's chief concern appears to have been the Reentry Council shouldn't have been ***burdened*** by having to comply with public open meeting rules such as the Brown Act. Harrington, for his part, went along blindly. Go figure!

That's the extent of Task Force deliberations on the Reentry Council prior to its unanimous initial vote to eliminate the Reentry Council. The Task Force had relied on the Support Staff **recommendation memo** that reported on page 11 that the Reentry Council was merely a "[City] *Staff Working Group*," stating:

> "*The Task Force should consider eliminating the Reentry Council; since many members are department heads, this group can continue to collaborate and meet with community members without needing this body explicitly established in the Administrative Code.*"

Buried in the weeds on page 14 of the recommendation memo was the Staff's admission as an afterthought that because seven formerly incarcerated members of the public are also appointed to the Reentry Council by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors, the Council is actually a "***hybrid***" Staff Working Group **and** an "*Advisory Committee*."

The fact the Reentry Council was a hybrid **advisory** body escaped Jean Fraser and Ed Harrington on September 3.

Elsewhere, the Streamlining Task Force's "***Decision Log***" lists that on September 3, the Task Force had concluded that the Reentry Council could be eliminated from the Administrative Code and converted to merely being a "*passive meeting body*," which essentially removes its authority to act as a bona fide advisory body to City Hall, and could be disbanded at the whim of political operatives.

The Streamlining Task Force also completely ignored the fact that the Reentry Council's existence over 1.7-decades has routinely been periodically extended through City ordinances, and not allowed to Sunset since its creation in September 2008, demonstrating ongoing commitment by the Board of Supervisors and a succession of San Francisco Mayors to retain this valuable *Council*.

Despite significant functions for the Reentry Council listed in San Francisco Administrative Code §5-1-1, the Streamlining Task Force chose on September 3 to eliminate it entirely, without any discussion whatsoever about whether another advisory body or City staff could, or would, assume the functions of the Reentry Council.

> **"The Streamlining Task Force — in its haste to eliminate as many public advisory bodies as possible — just eliminated the Reentry Council without any meaningful deliberation at all."**

The Streamlining Task Force — in its haste to eliminate as many public advisory bodies as possible to serve their master's at SPUR — just eliminated the Reentry Council without any meaningful deliberation at all!

Task Force's December 12 Meeting Derails

At 3:01:00 on the December 12 meeting **audiotape**, Streamlining Task Force Chair Ed Harrington introduced a motion to bring back the Reentry Council for further discussion and action at a **future** meeting to see if they wanted to change their initial recommendation to eliminate the Re-entry Council. Harrington's motion was seconded for a future meeting.

> **"Rather than waiting the mere six days to their December 18 meeting, during the December 12 meeting Streamlining Task Force member Sophia Kittler asked *'Separating "best practices vs. Brown Act" rules ... would it be inappropriate for us to discuss this today?'* Of course it was inappropriate!"**

After discussion by Streamlining Task Force members about bringing it back at a future meeting, Hannah Kohanzadeh, a support staff member to the Streamlining Task Force, stated Support Staff could reschedule the Reentry Council for a future Task Force meeting on December 18 or January 14. That was so the item could be legally reconsidered.

Rather than waiting the mere six days to their next December 18 meeting, at 3:05:10 on the December 12 meeting audiotape, Stream- lining Task Force member Sophia Kittler asked "*Separating* '*best practices vs. Brown Act*' *rules ... would it be* ***in****appropriate for us to discuss this today*?" Of course it was inappropriate! Given Kittler's mention of the Brown Act, she appears to have had foreknowledge the Streamlining Task Force was prohibited from taking action on an item ***not*** on the published meeting agenda. There's nothing in "*best practices*" that allows violating State law, even if Ms. Kittler doesn't

know that! In fact, even "*best practices*" support **following** State law; it was a frivolous bifurcation. And no, it **wasn't** "*appropriate*."

Then, at 3:05:30 on audiotape, Deputy City Attorney Jon Givner surprisingly stated, "*You could go back to* [Agenda] *Item 7 and discuss*."

[**Note:** Givner misspoke, and should have referred to going back to Agenda Item #6. Given his role as Chief Assistant City Attorney Mr. Givner had to have known of the City Attorney's "***Good Government Guide***" (November 2024 edition that he likely helped co-author), which states on page 157 the same three exceptions listed in Sunshine Ordinance §67.7(e) for regular meetings prohibiting discussing items not on a published meeting agenda, none of which applied to the Reentry Council's situation. Givner had to have known that for "*Special Meetings*" of policy bodies, the City Attorney's "*Good Government Guide*" also specifically states: "*For special meetings,* ***the body may consider only matters stated on the agenda; there are no exceptions***." [Cal. Govt. Code §54956(a); Admin. Code §67.6(f).]

"Givner must surely know of the Brown Act's and Sunshine Ordinance's prohibition against discussing and taking action on items not listed on published meeting agendas, particularly not during '*Special Meetings*'."

Givner — despite knowing better that it was prohibited, with no exceptions — simply made up a fake rule on the spot. Givner must surely know of the Brown Act's and Sunshine Ordinance's prohibition against discussing and taking action on items not listed on published meeting agendas, particularly not during "*Special Meetings*."

Then at 3:06:54 on audiotape, (armed with Givner's false "*cover*," at 3:05:30 on audiotape), Task Force Chair Harrington said "*So let's reopen Item 6.* ***I would typically not want to have*** [***discussion*** and decisions] ***about things that were <u>not</u> on the posted agenda****, but I think this is not controversial*." Harrington, who had to have known he was chairing a "*Special Meeting*," also willfully chose to violate the Brown Act, as Kittler had proposed doing, but his mea culpa was actually an **admission of guilt** about what he was proposing to do, regardless of whether or not it was "*controversial*"— that had nothing to do with it!

At 3:07:32, Giver started to say "*The Board of Supervisors rules …*" but he did not finish his thought.

[It's thought Givner may have been poised to wade into the Board of Supervisors "*Rules of Order*" that provide exceptions that exist for "*Imperative Agenda*" items, requiring a two-thirds vote (or unanimous if fewer are present) for urgent matters or commendations, or when an item arises after the agenda is posted. But clearly, the Board of Supervisors Rules of Order do **not** apply to other public meeting bodies, like the Streamlining Task Force, which clearly Givner knew. Givner was essentially "*throwing sand in the eyes of the bull*," as lawyers well know how to do. It's a metaphorical way of using **The Dilemma Logic** to create a false logical problem to deceive or blind an opponent**.** *It's also known colloquially as* "*baffling with bullshit*."]

Givner should have advised the Streamlining Task Force to wait to discuss the issue at a subsequent meeting!

At 3:07:33, Sophia Kittler interrupted Givner, asserting "*See, that's my problem. That's where I was indoctrinated*," referring to whatever excuse Givner was about to offer regarding the Board of Supervisors to justify her confusion about whether it would be *inappropriate* to violate the Brown Act. She was referring to her two-year and seven-month service as former-Mayor London Breed's *Liaison to the Board of Supervisors*. Clearly, it didn't dawn on Kittler that Board of Supervisors "*Rules of Order*" don't apply to her service as a member of the Commission Streamlining Task Force.

At 3:08:05, Givner then said, "*You don't need to* [take public comment again on the additional discussion topic], *but you could re-open public comment for those who did not already comment*."

"Chair Harrington closed Agenda Item 7, and reopened Item 6, at which point the Streamlining Task Force eventually voted to rescind its September 3 recommendation to eliminate the Reentry Council, and keep it as an advisory body."

At 3:08:12, Chair Harrington closed Agenda Item 7, and reopened Item 6, at which point the Streamlining Task Force eventually voted to rescind its September 3 recommendation to eliminate the Reentry Council, and keep it as an advisory body.

But another procedural problem was that Agenda Item #6 had been listed on the meeting agenda to discuss previous Task Force decisions regarding five specific, but narrow, topic areas, including member qualifications, compensation and benefits, contract approval authority, appointing authority, and policy body naming conventions. That had been the stated purpose of Agenda Item #6. That agenda item wasn't intended to focus on other previous Task Force decisions writ large. It was clear the Reentry Council issue didn't fit the narrow topic areas listed for Agenda Item #6.

After the discussion by the Task Force of Harrington's motion that had been seconded to schedule the Reentry Council for a future meeting, the December 12 meeting draft meeting minutes report that Vice Chair Bruss then introduced a (competing) motion to reverse the Task Force's prior September 3 decision and restore the Reentry Council to its current form but keep the Council's planned 2029 Sunset date, which motion was seconded by Member Kittler.

Another problem was there was no formal "*Motion to Withdraw*" made, or seconded, required under *Robert's Rules of Order*, to withdraw Harrington's initial motion to schedule the Reentry Council for a future Task Force meeting. The Task Force just blithely passed Bruss' alternative motion unanimously to restore the Reentry Council on the spot, without closing Harrington's initial motion.

That's what set the stage for the violation of both the Brown Act and Sunshine Ordinance, with Givner's tacit approval.

It's clear the Streamlining Task Force violated the Sunshine Ordinance, the Brown Act, and Givner's own City Attorney's "*Good Government Guide*" on December 12.

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Rogue Task Force

It seems as if the Streamlining Task Force believes it can flout the combined 25.6 decades of regulations and precedents — set by the Brown Act, Sunshine Ordinance, and *Robert's Rules of Order* — simply because it is in a rush to please Mayor Lurie and SPUR with placing a City Charter reform measure on next November's municipal ballot. The Task Force appears to be quite willing to take whatever shortcuts are necessary.

Although the Commission Streamlining Task Force holds itself out to be a paragon of good government trying to create government "*efficiency*," they actually are a lawless bunch. The five members almost appear as if they are above the law when it comes to rules and regulations governing their own powers and duties. They've violated the law in their rush to please their masters, Mayor Daniel Lurie and the San Francisco Bay Area Planning and Urban Research Association, colloquially known as "*SPUR*."

Two of the six people who have served as members of the Streamlining Task Force are Board members of SPUR: It's clear SPUR is driving the decision-making of the Streamlining Task Force.

And two members of the Streamlining Task Force do not possess the stated qualifications to hold their respective seats on the Task Force. The first is Task Force Chair Harrinton, who holds Seat #4 that was supposed to be filled by "*a representative of organized labor representing the public sector*." Harrington has no such experience or qualification.

The second is Sophia Kittler, Mayor Lurie's Budget Director. She was appointed by the Mayor to Seat #5 which is reserved for someone with experience as an "*Open Government Expert*" with expertise in open and accountable government. Kittler's background is in budgeting, not open government.

The Streamlining Task Force wantonly ignores *Robert's Rules of Order* pertaining to the conduct of its own meetings. *Robert's Rules* were developed and published by Henry Martyn Robert 15 decades ago in 1876 adopting parliamentary rules for general societies with the goal of creating orderly, fair processes for meetings.

"The Streamlining Task Force isn't above flouting the 7.3 decades-old *Brown Act* — California's '*sunshine law*' — and doesn't want to abide by San Francisco's 3.3 decades-old Sunshine Ordinance."

The Streamlining Task Force isn't above flouting the 7.3 decades-old *Brown Act* — California's "*sunshine law*" ensuring public access to local government meetings enacted in 1953 and authored by then-Assemblymember Ralph M. Brown and

signed into law by then-Governor Earl Warren, to guarantee the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies, and promote transparency and accountability.

And it seems the least of regulations the Streamlining Task Force wants to abide by is our 3.3 decades-old Sunshine Ordinance enacted by the Board of Supervisors in 1993 and signed into by then-Mayor Frank Jordan.

But let's not forget: This "*ain't their first rodeo*." And their ***cover-up*** of the violation is even worse.

Separately, this author had to force release of the Streamlining Task Force's December 12 meeting minutes under a separate public records request. The Sunshine Ordinance requires that the draft meeting minutes must be made publicly available 10 working days following a given meeting. The Task Force attempted to keep it's draft meeting minutes secret until January 9, but this author forced release of the draft minutes under a promise of filing a second Sunshine complaint.

> **"The draft December 12 meeting minutes seem to be attempting to cover up the Task Force's illegal discussion of, and action on, the *Reentry Council*, reducing the entire fiasco to a quaint description that it was a mere discussion of the sequence of agenda items *vs* '*readiness*' to act immediately.**
>
> **Sounds like lies Donald Trump spews!"**

The draft December 12 meeting minutes seem to be attempting to cover up the illegal discussion of, and action on, the Reentry Council, reducing the entire fiasco to a quaint description:

> "*After some discussion of the sequence of agenda items, members expressed readiness to act immediately rather than delay. Chair Harrington closed Item 7 and reopened Item 6 to consider the Reentry Council*."

[**Note:** The Streamlining Task Force's draft December 12, 2025 **meeting minutes** are posted at the very top of the page in the right-hand main section at the top.]

That's it. Their "*readiness*" to act immediately apparently trumped the Brown Act and Sunshine Ordinance prohibitions **against doing so. Sounds like the lies Donald Trump spews!**

Rather than accurately reporting in the meeting minutes Kittler and Harrington's acknowledgements they knew they shouldn't discuss the Reentry Council or take action on it on December 12 — knowing they could alternatively wait just six days and take action on December 18 — and without accurately reporting Mr. Givner's incorrect legal advice, the cover up was complete, reduced to having been a *mere* dispute about the "*sequence of agenda items*."

The Streamlining Task Force has flouted other provisions, too. On August 6, I had to correct the Task Force that Jon Givner's oral legal advice to Chair Harrington that the Task Force didn't need to take public comment following each and every agenda item on a published agenda, including taking public comment before a body enters into a "*Closed Session*" agenda item, which clearly violated the Sunshine Ordinance.

Even earlier, the Task Force had initially refused to publish 150-word written testimony submitted for inclusion in their published meeting minutes as required by Sunshine Ordinance §67.16, *Meeting Minutes*, until I brought that requirement to the attention of Task Force support staff, who then complied.

Throughout their meetings since August (and before), the Streamlining Task Force has been sloppy (to put it kindly), about "*process*" issues, as though they are above those, too.

> **"As such, many of the decisions made and votes taken by the Streamlining Task Force should be overturned by San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, as having been improperly made, and declared null and void."**

On October 15, I testified the Task Force's motions are often unclear about what they are actually voting on. The Task Force's draft October 1 meeting minutes indicated four problems with motions made during that meeting, including motions that were not properly seconded. I begged the Task Force to follow *Robert's Rules of Order* when it comes to making motions before voting on them, because those four problems ***weren't*** isolated examples. *Roberts Rules of Order* provides that a motion to adopt a recommendation **without** stating its contents is generally

improper, and can create procedural problems, but many of the motions made by the Streamlining Task Force during the past year have merely stated "*to accept the staff's recommendation*."

As such, many of the decisions made and votes taken by the Streamlining Task Force should be overturned by San Francisco's Board of Supervisors, as having been improperly made, and declared null and void.

November 2026 Ballot Box

The Streamlining Task Force doesn't get it. There are many other bodies than just the *Reentry Council* that the Task Force has recommended be eliminated that are *equally clearly important* to a number of people in the community.

The Task Force has drastically altered the qualifications for member seats on many bodies, qualifications that also provide expertise that only certain community members can offer. The Task Force has eliminated qualifications entirely for four bodies, and changed the qualifications of at least 23 bodies to being merely "*desirable*," rather than mandatory, silencing community voices — including on the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force itself. That grants cover to appointing authorities to simply claim they couldn't locate candidates having "*desirable*" qualifications, and ignore the qualifications requirements to appoint preferred toadies, instead.

All of that needs to be overturned.

And like the Reentry Council, those other bodies **don't cause harm** to have them remain as they are today. That alone speaks to the fact that when a Charter reform measure is placed on the November 2026 ballot, voters should simply reject it at the ballot box — if the Board of Supervisors fail to overturn many of the Streamlining Task Force's misguided and ill-founded recommendations.

Acknowledgement: My great-nephew is in prison in another state, and I support the work of Reentry Councils to help former inmates re-adjust to living again safely in the community. That does not mean I support City Officials breaking our Sunshine Ordinance and State open meeting laws.

Monette-Shaw is a columnist for San Francisco's Westside Observer *newspaper, and a member of the California First Amendment Coalition (FAC) and the ACLU. He operates stopLHHdownsize.com. Contact him at monette-shaw@westsideobserver.com.*