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January 20, 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

Re: **Preserve Status Quo: Ethics Commission Ballot Measure Authority**

Dear Chair Harrington and Commission Streamlining Task Force,

During the Streamlining Task Force's January 14, 2026 meeting, you finally deigned to begin making any decisions about San Francisco's Ethics Commission after taking so long to begin deciding what to do with the 23 bodies in the "*General Administration and Finance*" topic area category of your deliberations. You took no action whatsoever on the 33-year-old Ethics Commission for fully two months and 10 days by deferring to take action on November 5.

When the time came, this Task force still quibbled on January 14 over what to do with the Ethics Commission's voter-approved mandate to be able to place ballot measures on the municipal ballot, still "*stuck*" on who in our democracy gets to have the "***final word***" over what appears on our municipal ballots. Obviously, ***"We the People" get the final word!***

"We the People" Get the Final Word!

You quibbled and quibbled, and Member Kittler raised multiple *ad nauseum* "*what-if*" scenarios — demonstrating that she was clearly over-thinking scenarios about events that may never happen or come to pass (except in her own mind).

Worse, Chair Harrington essentially insulted the intelligence of voters, stating on January 14 that in his opinion the voters don't understand, and can't intelligently "*evaluate*," what the mere five ballot measures the Ethics Commission has placed on the ballot over a 30-plus year period — as if we voters are too stupid to understand campaign expenditures, public campaign finance, lobbyist expenditures, restricting gifts and campaign contributions from lobbyists, or local ethics laws. How stupid do you think voters are, Mr. Harrington? Those five ballot measures weren't that complicated!

As it was, the Ethics Commission had to take independent action and place these on the ballots — precisely because San Francisco's elected officials — including the Board of Supervisors and out Mayor — failed to, or were unwilling to, do!

Of course we understood what these topic areas were, and we don't need you insulting us that it is above our heads, and only the five of you as Streamlining Task Force members know what is good for us — ***"We the People"***!

Quibbling Made You Punt, Again!

Comically, during your January 14 meeting Kittler questioned repeatedly "*about access to placing measures on the ballot writ large*." But Kittler failed to get it that if you strip the Ethics Commission from independently placing measures on the ballot because of political interference of elected officials who don't, or won't, support a given ballot measure, ultimately ***"We the People"*** can (and have) mobilized to place measures on the ballot via voter signature gathering efforts, no matter how many roadblocks you throw in the way of citizen access to the ballot! In our democracy (damaged as it is), ***"We the People" get the final word!***

Today's Proposal for Ethics Is Inadequate, and Flawed

Although this five-member Streamlining Task Force acknowledged the Ethics Commission needs to be protected from political interference, particularly from elected officials, the five of you eventually elected to defer this decision about the Ethics Commission **again** to today's January 21 meeting, playing a "*game of chicken*" over who gets the last word about placing measures on the ballot.

Comically, since you are running out of time, Deputy City Attorney Givner just reminded you, that your planned Charter amendments will be bound by whatever you place in your "*Final Report*" due at the end of January. So, you must finally get off of the pot, and make this decision today to meet the end-of-January deadline.

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Unfortunately, the two-page handout today about the Ethics Commission's ballot measure authority authored by Jon Givner is still flawed.

First, there's no explanation why the previous 30-day periods for the Board of Supervisors to act have suddenly been increased to 45-day periods, just in the two days between the January 14 meeting and when Givner's updated presentation appeared on Friday, January 16.

Second, the ability for the Board of Supervisors to make amendments that the Ethics Commission won't be allowed to **reject** is just a horse of a different color, and opens the door to allow the Board of Supervisors to engage in political interference on Ethics Commission recommended ballot measures.

Your "*Decision Log*" updated on January 16 following your January 14 meeting states the Ethics Commission will retain its authority to place measures on the ballot, but Givner's presentation states in Step #4 that if the Board of Supervisors **amends** a ballot measure proposal that Ethics had submitted for review, the Ethics Commission may only vote whether to withdraw the measure — **but doesn't state that if the Ethics Commission agrees to accept the Board of Supervisor's amendments, that the measure can still be placed on the next ballot!**

This Streamlining Task Force needs to explicitly clarify — **today** — that the Ethics Commission does not have to just **withdraw** the amendments proposed by the Board of Supervisors, and Ethics can vote to place the amended measure on the ballot.

Don't forget: In our democracy "***We the People***" will get the final word, one way or another — **whether this Streamlining Task Force likes it, or not!**

Go back to square one: Adopt Option #1 presented on Slide #8 in your January 14 "*Deferred Decisions and Consistency Chexks – Part 5*" document: "**Make No Changes** [and preserve] **the Status Quo**"!

Respectfully submitted,

/s/

Patrick Monette-Shaw

Columnist/Reporter

Westside Observer Newspaper

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