



Draft Minutes

Regular Meeting of the
Commission Streamlining Task Force
City and County of San Francisco

Daniel Lurie
Mayor

Wednesday, May 21, 2025
1:00 pm

City Hall, Room 408
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Meeting will also be broadcast online and remote public comment will be available via WebEx event. To view the online presentation, join the meeting using the link <https://tinyurl.com/47pnf3wt> and password PropE. Members of the public may use email address CommissionStreamlining@sfgov.org to join the WebEx meeting if needed. To join by phone, dial 415-655-0001 and enter access code (webinar ID) 2664 042 8414 followed by ##. See page 3 for additional remote public comment instructions.

Agenda

1. Call to Order

Chair Ed Harrington called the meeting to order at 1:02pm.

2. Roll Call

Present:

- Ed Harrington, Chair
- Jean Fraser, Vice Chair
- Andrea Bruss
- Sophie Hayward
- Natasha Mihal

Lily Moser called roll. With all five members present, a quorum was established.

3. Announcements (Informational Item)

The meeting was held in hybrid format, with participation available both in person and via WebEx. Technical instructions for public participation via WebEx were provided.

4. General Public Comment

Three members of the public addressed the Task Force:

- **George W.** offered historical context for the current discussion, noting that the structure and strength of San Francisco's commission system is inherently tied to the strength of the Mayor. He referenced the 1996 Charter reform, which included many political decisions and which Chair

Harrington was involved in via his former role as City Controller. George W. noted many commissioners lack independence and just do what they are told to do. In the previous two decades, the Board of Supervisors (BOS) has put forth a series of ballot measures that created more commissions and incrementally reallocated powers between themselves and the Mayor by expanding BOS's role in appointing commission members and confirming Mayoral nominees; Police, Public Utilities, Planning, Building Inspection, and Homeless have been affected. George W. asked how the City ended up with so many public bodies, especially since the original 1898 charter only established 21. However, he stressed that the Task Force's work was less about the number of bodies and more about the strength of the Mayor, since the original intent of commissions was to serve as a check and balance on mayoral authority within a strong mayor system.

- **Caryl Ito** responded to George W.'s comment by sharing her experience as an Airport commissioner during Mayor Willie Brown's administration. She recalled a pivotal moment when Mayor Brown reportedly sought to replace the Airport Director, John Martin, who had been appointed by Mayor Jordan at the end of his term. Although Mayor Brown had not formally contacted the commissioners, it was clear that he wished to make a change for political reasons. However, a vote of the Airport Commission was required to proceed with Martin's removal. Ito and her fellow commissioners unanimously disagreed with the removal proposal, citing Martin's effectiveness as an administrator and the potential fiscal consequences—specifically, a possible downgrade in the Airport's bond rating. She described meeting with Mayor Brown and expressing her dissent directly, despite getting her "head bit off."
- **David Pilpel** thanked the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors (BOS) for continuing to list Task Force meetings on the BOS website and advocated for the Task Force to recommend that the City maintain a centralized list of all meetings of public bodies. He agreed that the pendulum swings back and forth between having a strong mayor and a balance of power. Pilpel recalled a retreat held by the Public Utilities Commission in 2012—facilitated during Chair Harrington's tenure as General Manager—which was a well-framed and challenging discussion with staff, commissioners, and the public; he held it up as a model of an annual retreat for a policy body. He noted the limitations of the City's current mandatory Ethics and Sunshine training, which he recently completed, saying they should be expanded to include practical guidance for how to be an effective commissioner. He suggested adapting a training developed years ago by Jill Lerner and that the Task Force recommend citywide commissioner training materials that go beyond compliance.

5. Approve Minutes – May 7, 2025 meeting (Action Item)

The Task Force unanimously approved the minutes of the May 7, 2025 meeting without comment.

6. Commission Attributes and Data Gathering (Discussion and Possible Action Item)

Additional materials: [excel workbook of commission data](#)

Henry O'Connell, Senior Performance Analyst with the Controller's Office, provided a comprehensive update on the development of the commission workbook—a centralized dataset designed to inform the Task Force's decisions regarding San Francisco's public bodies. The workbook aims to resolve long-standing inconsistencies across City records by compiling accurate, standardized data on commissions, committees, and boards.

149 total public bodies have been identified within the Task Force’s scope, using the definition set forth in Proposition E: namely, bodies created by charter, ordinance, resolution, or formal action of a policy body, and which fall under San Francisco’s jurisdiction. Excluded from the list are:

- Multijurisdictional commissions, and
- Subcommittees composed solely of commissioners from a parent body

The 149 bodies were categorized into three buckets:

1. **In-scope and actively meeting** (113 bodies),
2. **In-scope but inactive** (34 bodies), and
3. **Technically in-scope but sunset in law** (2 bodies),

Chair Harrington asked whether the Task Force could begin making **tentative decisions**—for example, publicly identifying and publicizing the **34 inactive bodies** and finalizing their elimination or consolidation. He emphasized the importance of not deferring all decisions until the end of the Task Force’s work. Project Director Rachel Alonso agreed and said she would work with the City Attorney to determine how to structure and publicize interim decisions.

Henry O’Connell noted that **25** of the 149 bodies are **required under state or federal law** or have legally required duties which could be shifted to another bodies; deeper analyses will be necessary for each body to determine such subcategories. Chair Harrington directed staff to start determining which of the 25 bodies could be combined versus must remain as-is.

Henry O’Connell also reported that only **14** of the 113 active bodies have **sunset dates**. Specific dates range between 2026 and 2035, while a few others have sunsets triggered by specific events (e.g., bond repayment) rather than a fixed date. The Task Force will need to determine whether to establish sunset dates for some or all existing public bodies and/or new bodies going forward. Chair Harrington commented that he assumes sunset dates could be established only for non-charter bodies. Vice Chair Fraser inquired whether any of the inactive bodies have sunset dates; the answer was unknown in the meeting.

68 of 113 active public bodies have split **appointments** involving multiple authorities. Most (19 of 31) governance bodies are mayoral appointments; a few (e.g., Children and Families First Commission) are appointed solely by the Board of Supervisors (BOS). Chair Harrington suggested the Task Force begin using the term “bodies” or “groups” rather than “commissions” to reduce confusion, reserving the latter for governance commissions only; Vice Chair Fraser concurred. She also stated that she believed staff were using the terms governance, advisory, and regulatory without definitions. She and Chair Harrington would also be using those terms, but not necessarily in the same way.

Advisory bodies are far more likely to have required seat qualifications than governance bodies. These include lived experience (e.g., homelessness), professional background (e.g., architects, CPAs), or demographic traits (e.g., neighborhood). Henry O’Connell reminded the Task Force of its future decisions regarding when qualifications were needed and whether to maintain board- or seat-level requirements; he also noted a forthcoming analysis to examine whether stringent seat qualifications are correlated with chronic vacancies, which could aid in the Task Force’s decision-making.

The Task Force also discussed several data fields the Controller’s Office had proposed to drop:

- **Quasi-judicial and policy-making** labels, which were deemed too subjective without formal definitions;

- **Contract authority**, which can be explained through presentation materials rather than coded fields;
- **Last meeting date**, which proved difficult to collect.

Andrea Bruss concurred with the recommendation. Comfortable with two of the three, Vice Chair Fraser urged the group **not to drop the quasi-judicial designation outright**, but instead define it in a consistent way, because it is important for the Task Force to be aware when a body has the responsibility to make a specific decision on a specific case.

Chair Harrington requested that the last meeting date be identified for inactive bodies. In response to an inquiry from Vice Chair Fraser, Henry O'Connell stated that bodies were being categorized as inactive based on department input, rather than last meeting date, given the variation in meeting cadence across bodies.

Vice Chair Fraser recommended that **bodies should be considered inactive if they have not met within the past year**. Natasha Mihal noted that some legitimate commissions may only be required to meet every two years. Chair Harrington proposed a compromise: define a one-year inactivity threshold by default but allow departments to explain and document exceptions. For instance, the Redistricting Task Force only meets once every ten years. Chair Harrington also noted that such exceptions may make it difficult for the Task Force to incorporate a definition of inactivity into the charter or code,

Sophie Hayward inquired about bodies with filled seats but which still cannot make quorum because appointees do not show up to meetings. Henry O'Connell responded that additional information was currently being gathered from departments about the number of meetings held and cancelled in the previous calendar year.

Chair Harrington asked whether gathering the outstanding data about vacancies, expired terms, and the number of required meetings per year was worthwhile, especially given how frequently the data can change. Henry O'Connell responded that the work was already underway. Natasha Mihal, who had recently completed the task, confirmed that the task was simple and lightweight. Andrea Bruss emphasized the importance of vacancy data, since some bodies have long-standing vacancies, which may speak to seat qualifications being onerous or a body being too large.

Five members of the public spoke during public comment:

- **Angela Calvillo**, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, offered three clarifications: (1) Board Rule 2.21 [about sunset dates] applies only to bodies established by ordinance, not to charter commissions; (2) bodies authorized by the board tend to be required to meet a minimum of four times per year; and (3) an example of a quasi-judicial body is the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force. Ms. Calvillo offered to meet with staff to review what her office has used for the last 60 years.
- **John Monson**, a member of the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ), noted that his team had encountered the same problem of tracking vacancies. He explained that they initially tracked vacancies by hand but later created a script to scrape Granicus/311 vacancy data automatically. He praised the inclusion of a quasi-judicial designation, saying it had proven useful for their analysis.
- **Caryl Ito** shared history about the Commission on the Status of Women, which was established in 1975 by Mayor Alioto and to which she was appointed in 1989 by Mayor Agnos. In the intervening years, Mayor Feinstein had shut the commission down due to litigation issues like those currently facing the department. There are one hundred women leaders still around San Francisco who made the case that women's issues need to be addressed separately from human rights. When Ms. Ito was appointed, the commission tackled domestic violence, which had been

the leading cause of homicide in the City, as well as sexual harassment lawsuits. Chair Harrington noted that this was relevant to the next agenda item.

- **Dr. Kathryn Kenley Johnson**, a long-time San Franciscan and sociologist with a focus on women's issues, reiterated Ms. Ito's comment on the importance of protecting the Commission on the Status of Women. While different disparate groups share the experience of subordination in different ways, there are differences that need to be attended distinctly, such as gender-based violence. It's important not to collapse the COSW under one commission, where each would be fighting with the other. Rather, disparate groups should be able to then express their views autonomously and then come together in coalition around commonalities, if so desired.
- **David Pilpel** recommended splitting advisory bodies into permanent or temporary, since most created by BOS to address a perceived problem have a limited life, while others may be connected to a program or tax, such as news racks or sugary drinks; once the program or tax ends, so should the body. He noted that some bodies with narrow scopes, such as the PUC Residential Users Appeal Board or the Relocation Appeals Board, only meet on appeal or request. Mr. Pilpel suggested that perhaps governance bodies could be distinguished from regulatory bodies based on contracting or other decision-making authority, with regulatory bodies being more limited. He recommended a short and limited public survey to work through the difficult issues of elimination, mergers, or maintenance and modification. Mr. Pilpel concluded by noting that the Special Strike Committee authorized by charter section A8.346 was missing from the workbook.

7. **Proposal for Commissions** (Discussion and Possible Action Item)

Additional materials: [Advisory Committee Comparison](#) PDF, [Governance Committee Comparison](#) PDF

Chair Harrington and Vice Chair Fraser presented conceptual frameworks for defining San Francisco's public bodies. Vice Chair Fraser stressed that these are intellectual proposals, and no decisions have been made yet. She reviewed a three-part nomenclature:

- **"Commissions"** for governance bodies,
- **"Committees"** for advisory groups, and
- **"Boards"** for quasi-judicial or regulatory bodies tasked with applying rules to individual cases.

Governance commissions were discussed first. Chair Harrington's framework emphasized public engagement, civic trust, accountability and departmental oversight (at a high level, pushing towards excellence), transparency, contributing expertise, and responsiveness. He praised San Franciscans for feeling a sense of ownership of and involvement with their government, as this leads to better decision-making and builds trust. He understands that part of government's job is to make things happen; while San Francisco's process may not always be the most efficient, slowing things down slightly is acceptable to either improve them or increase understanding. He also spoke of public participation and contributing expertise as being applicable to both commissioners and members of the public attending meetings.

Chair Harrington proposed that governance commissions be small (5-7 members) and largely mayoral-appointed (with BOS able to veto appointments and removals by a two-third vote within a short, 30-day time frame). He shared that he has advised multiple mayors about specific unpopular appointments being unable to make it through BOS.

Chair Harrington distinguished between "general" governance commissions (e.g., Fire, Police, PUC, Port) which affect the lives of many San Franciscans and more "focused" commissions (e.g., arts and cultural bodies) that may not need to oversee separate departments but still provide value.

He addressed the **unique status of arts-related commissions** such as the Fine Arts Museums, Asian Art Museum, War Memorial, and Film Commission, questioning whether each should remain in control of a full department with separate HR, IT, and contracting functions, particularly given the relatively small size and administrative capacity of these departments. He noted that November 2024's Proposition D intentionally left these commissions intact—not because of operational necessity, but because they provide a level of prestige or formal status that encourages private individuals to serve and raise money on behalf of the City's cultural institutions. This consideration—ensuring that commissioners feel their participation carries weight and recognition—was described as potentially sufficient to justify the continued existence of the commissions, even if they are no longer managing departments directly. Despite being somewhat outside of the Task Force's purview, he proposed a potential restructuring where these commissions continue to exist while consolidating back-office services under a centralized department (e.g., a unified Arts Department), which would preserve their ability to attract fundraising talent without requiring full departmental infrastructure.

Similarly, the **Commission on the Status of Women** may need to exist to make people feel represented, but it doesn't need to be a governance commission overseeing a separate department. Another option is for all departments below a certain size to have their back-office functions transferred to the City Administrator. Continuing his discussion of focused governance commissions, Chair Harrington does not see a problem with five of 113 active bodies being focused on **children and families**. The Task Force will need to look closer at the **disability and aging**-focused bodies. Finally, he noted that San Francisco is the only county in California that maintains a separate **Juvenile Probation** Department, distinct from Adult Probation, which is more commonly the norm statewide and often housed within or affiliated with a Sheriff's Department. Describing this structure as "hard fought," though maintaining a separate Juvenile Probation Commission and department is atypical, he believes it has merit—but suggested that the Task Force "double check" whether the current structure still makes sense.

Chair Harrington recommended modifying elements of charter section 4.102 related to department head hiring and firing so that governance commissions may recommend one or more candidates to the Mayor for hiring and may recommend the Mayor terminate a department head. This reflects the reality that governance commissions are part of the executive branch of government, which is run by the Mayor, to whom department heads should report. It is important for department heads to have a relationship with commissioners, and the commission should operate as an executive search firm for the Mayor.

Discussing Chair Harrington's proposal for governance commissions, Andrea Bruss asked whether all such bodies would be placed in the Charter. Chair Harrington responded affirmatively that he would like all governance commissions (and no advisory committees) to exist in the charter. Andrea Bruss noted that functionally, five commissions have been interpreted as permitted to send fewer than three names to the Mayor for department head hiring. Chair Harrington noted that there have been cases where the Mayor wants a certain individual, but the commission has had to affirm the choice; Andrea Bruss added that there have also been cases where commissions have refused to submit three names, instead only submitting one to the Mayor, forcing the Mayor to hire the commission's choice of department head.

Sophie Hayward asked for clarification on whether Chair Harrington was recommending arts-related commissions be governance commissions or simply listing them that way due to their current status. She expressed concern about assigning governance power (responsibility to oversee a department) simply to encourage participation or fundraising, especially if its members lack the necessary skills to exercise oversight. Chair Harrington clarified that under his proposal, these bodies would not necessarily retain governance authority but could continue in a different form that preserves their symbolic and philanthropic role without maintaining operational control. The terminology still needed to be

determined; they could be charter commissions, boards, or some other term that makes appointees feel valued.

Natasha Mihal asked whether the logic about preserving arts bodies would apply to children's commissions to ensure people were willing to serve on such bodies. Chair Harrington responded that while the arts bodies tend to exist largely to support fundraising and public prestige, the children's bodies are intended to bring in a diversity of expertise and lived experience. He also noted that Mayor London Breed's previous proposed consolidations of several children- and youth-serving bodies never advanced due to strong constituent resistance. This is one of the few areas where an advisory body was intentionally memorialized in the charter. He cautioned the Task Force against expecting absolute certainty when applying templates, and instead recommended they identify norms while allowing for exceptions.

Natasha Mihal stressed that while community pushback may be important history, previous voter sentiment or political outcomes should not be the sole guiding factor in Task Force decisions. She emphasized the importance of using clear, principle-based frameworks, warning against the temptation to preserve certain commissions solely because they are well-defended or long-standing. She cautioned against a system in which a small number of well-connected public bodies wield disproportionate influence, while other voices and needs are left out—especially if public participation is one of the purposes of commissions, committees, and boards.

Chair Harrington noted that he preferred approaching issues with specific examples, while other Task Force members preferred using generalities. However, he does not believe the general will always fit, and the Task Force needs to be willing to grapple with exceptions and be open to the fact that the City's operations aren't black and white.

This led to a related discussion on the uniqueness of certain high-profile governance bodies—specifically the Police Commission, the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA), and the Planning Commission. Natasha Mihal asked why Chair Harrington had identified these three as potential exceptions to his general proposal for governance commissions. The Chair cited historical overwhelming interest and concern and unproductive disagreements between the Mayor and BOS when only one side has ownership (appeals for development projects and stop signs were hoped to be mitigated by adding BOS appointees to the Planning Commission). He acknowledged that he could not provide a strict definitional rule for when an exception is warranted but argued that flexibility is necessary.

Vice Chair Fraser asked whether Chair Harrington recognized any costs to governance commissions. He acknowledged that some commissions create management challenges, but strong department heads can usually manage such situations effectively, and commissions can improve staff performance. The Vice Chair then inquired about his previous statements that mayors cannot effectively run departments. Chair Harrington confirmed that he did not believe mayors and their chiefs of staff could effectively oversee all departments, which necessitates citizen oversight.

Vice Chair Fraser questioned whether having the Mayor's Office control 5–7 commissioners was easier or more effective than overseeing one department head. Chair Harrington responded that the Mayor needed to do both, and that it was important for trusted people to be appointed to get involved in detailed departmental discussions, since the Mayor's Office would be unable to do so.

Vice Chair Fraser inquired whether commissioner terms should extend beyond a Mayor's tenure. Chair Harrington stated that he favors staggered four-year terms, with some rotating as the Mayor is changing and others staying on for a while after the Mayor comes in. However, the Mayor would have the ability to remove commissioners at will. With 25 five-member governance bodies and staggered terms, there would be 30 appointments per year, which Chair Harrington does not see as an untoward burden.

Finally, Vice Chair Fraser asked whether department heads in Chair Harrington's model would report to the Mayor or to their commission. Chair Harrington answered, "both," suggesting such a dual structure is functionally manageable despite previous discussions to the contrary. In his previous roles as Controller and General Manager of the PUC, he personally intervened, either advising the Mayor to remove problematic appointees or working with commissioners to change their behavior. He said most strong department heads can do the same, and staff are only driven crazy by commissioners when their department head is weak. However, commissioners are not always removed despite bad behavior, since mayors make appointments for many different reasons.

Andrea Bruss asked how Chair Harrington envisioned handling departments associated with children and families, particularly whether he expected those departments to continue as separate entities overseen by a different type of body. She also asked for his perspective on the recent Homelessness and Public Works governance commissions. He responded that Children and Families First was the only children's body in the charter; the rest are advisory, which is why they were not included in his governance commission slide. He also does not think the Homelessness Department, much less the commission, should have been created, and he could live without the DPW commission.

Andrea Bruss asked what will be defensible reasons warranting exceptions—a department being unnecessary? An alternative structure to a commission providing oversight? She also asked Chair Harrington whether he thought the newest governance bodies, Homelessness and Public Works, improved oversight, transparency, focus, and resource management. Chair Harrington proposed that the Task Force invite department heads, commissioners, and the public to evaluate what is and isn't working.

Sophie Hayward asked how Chair Harrington would categorize the Planning and Historic Preservation Commissions. He did not list them as governance commissions because their primary purpose is not overseeing a department. More information is needed about the commissions' roles in departmental management, policy-setting, and implementing policy. He considers the Planning Commission responsible for overseeing the city and setting and adjudicating policy.

Once discussion closed on Chair Harrington's governance commission presentation, the meeting was handed over to Vice Chair Fraser, who opened by emphasizing the need for the Task Force to develop a clear set of criteria for determining how San Francisco's public bodies should be structured and governed. The criteria should then be applied to existing bodies, with exceptions being inevitable. Without overarching rules, the Task Force risked defaulting to case-by-case hearings, which would almost inevitably result in preserving every existing body. "If we did that," she said, "what is the point of the Task Force?"

Vice Chair Fraser believes the public's support for Proposition E likely stemmed from frustration with a system that lacks clarity on who is in charge—whether that be the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, department heads, or commissioners. While she is aligned with Chair Harrington that the executive branch is ultimately accountable for how departments run, she does not see sense in putting commissions as intermediaries between the Mayor and departments. The diffusion of power can preserve the status quo, because change provokes opposition, while potential beneficiaries are often unaware. She believes

public input should be purpose-fit: when something impacts a specific group, that group's input should be solicited, but when something impacts large groups, elected officials should be relied on. Small groups of people who tend to be appointed repeatedly to multiple commissions should not be privileged to make decisions.

To illustrate her framework, Vice Chair Fraser introduced the concept of enterprise departments—agencies that function quasi-independently, must optimize service delivery, and often generate revenue. Such agencies need to be able to act nimbly and provide high-value services. Their work requires long-range planning and insulation from short-term politics. Examples include the Airport, Port, and Public Utilities Commission (PUC).

Enterprise agencies should be overseen by strong governance commissions with a legitimate management role, similar to nonprofit or corporate boards. Governance commissions should hire, set compensation for, and fire department heads. Appointees should have specific expertise and a fiduciary responsibility to stakeholders, not appointing authorities. They would set strategic goals, make major policy decisions, and review key performance indicators (KPIs). To encourage long-term thinking, appointments should be split between the Mayor and BOS. Terms should be fixed with removal only for cause and staggered to maintain continuity and minimize massive changes. People could be reappointed, but there should be term limits so people cannot serve for decades. Appointments would be part-time but should be compensated to support socioeconomic diversity in appointments.

Vice Chair Fraser contrasted this model with most other city departments, which should not have governance commissions. Exceptions may include bodies like the Elections Commission. She recommended two other types of bodies: advisory committees and appeals boards (aka quasi-judicial bodies) that hear challenges to departments' decisions.

Considering Vice Chair Fraser's governance commission model as distinct from government as it currently exists, Natasha Mihal asked whether the Vice Chair still considered the enterprise agencies as being part of the City and County of San Francisco and whether she saw any challenges in the enterprises' inability to set their own rules for accounting, contracting, and hiring. Vice Chair Fraser did not see challenges in these regards.

Andrea Bruss noted previous discussions have shown agreement that the Mayor needs to be recognized as the leader of the executive branch and that clear accountability for the public is important. She asked how to square that with the proposal that some of the City's largest functions become primarily managed more exclusively by unelected officials who cannot be removed. There is a very high bar to remove a commissioner for cause and official misconduct. The proposal diffuses the mayor's responsibility for core government functions. Vice Chair Fraser responded that she doesn't consider these to be core government functions.

Andrea Bruss asked why departments like the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA) were not included as enterprises overseen by governance commissions. Vice Chair Fraser responded that MTA has a more direct impact and is on a shorter time cycle, for the most part; decisions about how to use streets and how buses run can change more rapidly. In contrast, SFO and PUC are asset-heavy organizations, and water service is less political.

In response to a question from Andrea Bruss about who dissatisfied ratepayers would hold accountable, Vice Chair Fraser responded that people would direct complaints to the board and elected officials. She cautioned against changing rates based on public comment turnout.

Andrea Bruss noted the importance of cumulative term limits. MTA might be one of the last few bodies where you cannot serve more than a certain number of years. This results in an increasingly smaller number of people that serve.

Andrea Bruss, Vice Chair Fraser, and Chair Harrington discussed the various types of conflicts commissioners could face. Vice Chair Fraser had been thinking of financial conflicts of interest, but Andrea Bruss noted over the years, the types of conflicts have grown to include permits, land use, and compensated advocacy. Chair Harrington noted that half of the City's commissioners had to quit when Mayor Feinstein determined they could not have business before any commission.

Chair Harrington sought to clarify whether in the Vice Chair's proposal, the Mayor would have limited oversight over enterprise departments, even though the buck stops with the Mayor in terms of accountability. Vice Chair Fraser concurred, noting it would be a very small group of departments, and reiterated the importance of long-term thinking; often, the damage caused by elected officials does not occur until after they leave office. Chair Harrington noted it was naïve to think that decisions made by the PUC, where he was the department head and later a commissioner, are apolitical; raising rates and buying PG&E are political.

Moving on to the final section of the day's presentation, Vice Chair Fraser presented her framework for **advisory committees**, which is rooted in the belief that most city departments should report directly to the Mayor and not through commissions. Advisory committees are an appropriate venue for gathering public input without undermining executive accountability.

Vice Chair Fraser sees advisory committees as useful tools when a department or the Board of Supervisors wants to seek input from a small group of stakeholders with particular expertise or experience. However, they must be time-limited, with clearly defined scopes and purposes. Re-authorizations would be possible only through deliberate action to ensure that the groups maintained are adding real value.

Vice Chair Fraser proposed that the Mayor and department heads should have sole authority to create advisory committees which provide input to departments, while the Board of Supervisors could create its own advisory bodies for legislative matters. She argued that this approach would clarify lines of accountability and prevent the diffusion of power between branches of government.

She also acknowledged that departments often have multiple advisory bodies, which can be duplicative and burdensome—requiring staff to prepare similar presentations for multiple audiences without receiving meaningful or differentiated feedback. In such cases, she said, advisory bodies are not serving their intended function.

Chair Harrington noted that advisory committees are created by ordinance or a department head's discretion (for instance, at the Port). He isn't interested in restricting appointments because it could limit the ability to hear from diverse viewpoints. They do not have decision-making authority. Staff working groups are a type of advisory committee. He agrees that some advisory committees are duplicative and/or no longer useful. Ensuring they continue to add value over time is important, and they should sunset within three years unless BOS takes action to reauthorize them.

Vice Chair Fraser asked why it was important for the BOS to have appointing authority if the Mayor was ultimately accountable. Chair Harrington used the PUC's Rate Fairness Board as an example of de-

coupling the rate increase process from election cycles while maintaining inclusivity and a diversity of input. Vice Chair Fraser would prefer to limit BOS to passing legislation; permitting them to make appointments muddies the Mayor's responsibility. The Chair reiterated that including BOS appointees better guarantees a diversity of viewpoints, and that there would be no management or decision-making authority, only advice-giving.

Based on her experience, Vice Chair Fraser expressed concern about privileging only a small group of people able to show up to public meetings and knowledgeable about how the city works. This approach is leaving out core groups of people. The Task Force demonstrates this, as only a small group of people attend regularly. Highlighting the importance of alternative engagement strategies, she recommended requiring every department to use the Office of Civic Engagement [and Immigrant Affairs] to obtain public input that is fit-for-purpose. Chair Harrington expressed discomfort with eliminating public bodies based only on the hope that alternative approaches would be successful. He also disagreed that the current system maintains a privileged status quo.

Opening the discussion up to the rest of the Task Force, Sophie Hayward returned to the previous discussion about arts-related commissions, expressing discomfort with categorizing those as governance commissions in order to maintain fundraising. However, the advisory committee category didn't feel like a good fit either. She agreed that there are other and better ways for people to be engaged. She also noted that despite the discussion, the Chair and Vice Chair's proposals are quite similar; they agree on the importance of sunset dates in principle, and the group can quibble over two versus three years.

Sophie Hayward asked about the importance of advisory committees being created by ordinance. Chair Harrington clarified that only ordinance-based advisory committees were under the Task Force's purview. Department heads can appoint whoever they want to their own advisory groups, like at the Port, but that isn't relevant to the Task Force. Sunshine and Brown Act requirements are not applicable to such meetings. Natasha Mihal asked if advisory bodies were necessary if the other mechanism exists; Chair Harrington agreed that that was a good question.

Natasha Mihal wondered whether exceptions to sunset dates were needed based on the specificity of the group or if rates and fees were impacted. For example, kids and arts issues have a much longer time horizon than two or three years. Chair Harrington noted that enthusiasm is often high early on but wanes over time. Advisory groups should have to prove they still add value. It will keep things fresh. BOS would only need to deal with one or two per month. Interests change over time; at one point, graffiti abatement was a big deal. Things are not perennially important. It doesn't need to require a major audit of effectiveness, just some sense that meetings are still taking place and people believe they are useful.

Andrea Bruss returned to the Port's model of elective community advisory groups. She asked if the Task Force could defer to department heads to develop sensible structures for obtaining public input. Mayors would instruct department heads to be inclusive and capture certain issues, and BOS can inform department heads about their interests. As an example, Rec Park would need to capture stakeholders interested in playgrounds, tennis, pickleball, swimming, and senior activities, among others. Rather than continuing to return to the rigid structure of public bodies, why not grant that authority to department heads? If people are asked to prove their worth every two or three years, inevitably the same three to five people will show up, claim they are adding value, and the pool of people involved will actually shrink. It would be politically unpalatable for elected officials not to reauthorize certain bodies.

Chair Harrington cautioned that some groups would not trust department heads to successfully engage them and recommended using whatever engagement strategies work for different groups. He does not

believe in a one-size-fits-all approach. He does not see commissions as the only way to get public input, but it's what the City has now, and it works for at least some people; he isn't willing to give it up hoping that another engagement approach takes its place.

Five members of the public spoke during public comment:

- **Caryl Ito** only found out about the Task Force meetings in April and recommended the Task Force engage in a social media push. \$11M being spent on Proposition D means there is a lot of buy-in on the Task Force's work; nobody is present, but it's only by word of mouth that people find out about it. She had problems getting on the email list because the link didn't work. She was involved in the group that wrote the charter amendment forming the Commission on the Status of Women, which was approved by 70% of voters despite \$0 being raised. While it may make sense to consolidate small departments, the decision should not just be made based on a fiscal perspective. DOSW is responsible for 50%+ employees and residents of San Francisco. HRC has an array of other responsibilities. The charter established term appointments, so a mayor can't just get rid of anyone. COSW also has subpoena power.
- **Tom Radulovich**, a former elected official for twenty years, emphasized the role of deliberation in producing better outcomes and incorporating diverse viewpoints. He supports split appointments, especially for quasi-judicial bodies, to enhance legitimacy and reduce successful appeal. He also recommended that the Task Force consider functional alignment within and across departments when making structural recommendations.
- **Dr. Kathryn Kenley Johnson** understands the advantages of economies of scale regarding centralizing small departments' administrative functions but feels it is outweighed by the central body having to prioritize among competing needs. She also supports the continuation of the governance function for the Commission on the Status of Women. The Task Force is failing to discuss the concept of leadership. The function of a good commission is to provide the mayor with expertise about their constituencies. Women vote; how will the mayor know what women want if they don't have a source for that information? A commission's job is to identify those needs and relate them to the mayor's agenda.
- **Stacy Smith** offered a metaphor drawn from his lived experience with incarceration. He described how trust in a prison kitchen depended on all communities being represented among those preparing food—otherwise, certain groups wouldn't eat. Applying that to civic engagement, he characterized the meeting as part of "one City Hall" and urged the Task Force to ensure that "someone from the other City Hall" is "in the kitchen."
- **David Pilpel** didn't see fundamental differences on paper between the Chair and Vice Chair's proposals. The broad categories within governance could be the "big six" with contracting authority, the other general commissions, and the focus commissions. He addressed the issues around arts and museums in the letter he submitted to the Task Force several months ago. He recommended the City consider whether department heads, rather than commissions, should select commission secretaries. At a high-level, he sees governance bodies as involving budget, contracts, oversight, and policy, while regulatory bodies approve, deny, or put conditions on appeals or requests for certain approvals, funds, or permits, with minimal if any involvement in governance. He concurred with Chair Harrington's analysis of the unique issues around MTA, Planning, and Police, though he noted that the MTA may be different if it didn't have authority over street changes. Advisory committees advise and make recommendations and should get formal responses back. He encouraged the Task Force to review the book *Making City Planning Work* by Allan Jacobs.

Chair Harrington noted the next meeting would review the remaining slides on regulatory and quasi-judicial bodies.

8. Future Agenda Topics (Discussion Item)

Rachel Alonso, Project Director, stated that in its next meeting, the Task Force would revisit department and commissioner engagement to inform subsequent decisions. An update on the overall work plan was also needed but may not be possible before the engagement discussion.

Chair Harrington shared that he has been encouraging departments to provide estimates for the Budget and Legislative Analyst's financial analysis request.

Rachel Alonso noted that today's discussion on governance commissions and advisory committees, as well as next meeting's discussion on appeals boards/regulatory/quasi-judicial bodies would be incorporated into materials posted online for today's meeting but not reviewed during the meeting itself. It should become clear which template elements are close to consensus and which warrant further discussion.

No members of the public wished to speak.

9. General Public Comment – Continued from item 4 if necessary

Item 9 was not needed, as item 4 did not exceed 15 minutes.

10. Adjournment

Chair Harrington adjourned the meeting at 3:47pm.

Minutes prepared by Rachel Alonso, Project Director