

San Francisco Animal Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 12, 2025

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Present: Chair Michael Angelo Torres; Vice Chair Irina Ozernoy; Commissioners: Mikaila Garfinkel; Michael Reed; Nick Chapman; Dayna Sherwood

Absent: Department Representatives: Deputy Director Amy Corso, SF Animal Care and Control; Department Representatives: Natural Resources Manager Christopher Campbell, SF Recreation and Parks; Officer Greg Sutherland, SF Police Department; Dr. George Han, SF Department of Public Health

2. General Public Comment

No in-person public comments were provided.

Commissioner Chapman responded to written public comment regarding the surge of dogs in shelters.

3. Approval of the draft meeting minutes from May 2025.

Commissioners approved the May 2025 meeting minutes.

4. Chairperson and Commissioner reports

No chairperson and commissioner reports were provided. No public comments were provided.

5. New Business

A. San Francisco Zoo City Audit Update [Discussion Item] [Commissioner Torres]

Justin Barker, Founder of SF Zoo Watch, shared a recap and recent updates involving the Legislative Analyst Audit of the San Francisco Zoo. Updates included that the SF Zoo refused to fully participate in the audit and that the City is demanding compliance from the Zoo. Barker also shared that there has been no documented plan on improving the welfare or state of the zoo.

Barker explained that transforming the lion exhibit into the anticipated panda exhibit was approved in March 2025 by the Planning Commission, bypassing environmental reviews or public comment. SF Zoo Watch is calling for an end to the Panda exhibit plans, and for the termination of the City's contract with the Zoological Society and to instead work with another organization.

Commissioner Ozernoy asked about if there are any updates on new Board appointees and for more detail on the \$4.2M being withheld. Barker shared he does not have further updates than what has been reported out.

Commissioner Chapman asked Barker about the SF Zoo's intent of withholding documents. Barker shared that many employees came to him with information that indicated there should be concern.

Commissioner Torres shared that he felt the Zoo's responses to the auditors showed a lack of respect and were questionable, such as not being able to provide data that showed which employee positions were currently vacant. Commissioner Sherwood pointed out that the Zoo would have a list of vacant union jobs.

Commissioner Garfinkel asked about examples of zoos transforming into accredited sanctuaries instead due to ethical concerns.

Commissioner Reed asked if the size of the SF Zoo was suitable for a sanctuary. Barker responded that the Zoo is about 100 acres, but it's underutilized.

Public Comment

One community member shared that the SF Zoo had no vegan food options and asked if the opening of the Great Highway will likely lead to both more income and scrutiny from an increase in visitors.

B. San Francisco Climate Action Plan 2025 [Discussion/Action Item] [Commissioners Garfinkel and Torres]

The Commission discussed and voted on recommendations for San Francisco's revised Climate Action Plan. The issue was brought to the Commission's attention by a resident during the public comment period of the previous month's meeting.

Commissioner Torres thanked community members Emily Guzzardi and Ashley Hoffman for their support and collaboration on the letter.

Commissioner Garfinkel introduced the letter of recommendations, a response to the draft Climate Action Plan, which does not mention animal agriculture as a contributor to the climate crisis.

Commissioner Chapman made a small correction to one of the statistics included in the letter of recommendations. Commissioners Garfinkel and Torres agreed to update the letter with the correction.

Commissioner Chapman expressed that all city departments should include environmental and democracy stewardship in their strategies.

Public Comment

A community member suggested that the city promote indigenous stewardship programs to benefit both animals and the environment.

Commissioners unanimously voted in support of the recommendations.

6. Items to be included on the Agenda for Future Commission Meetings. The next meeting is Thursday, July 10th.

Tentative agenda items include continued discussions on glue trap bans and the SF Zoo, a presentation from Panda Voices, and an update on requests for live animal market records.

Commissioner Reed shared that he has had unsuccessful attempts to get FOIA requests on live market records.

No public comments were provided.

8. Adjournment - 6:27 PM PT