

BOARD OF APPEALS

CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

MEETING MINUTES – WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 26, 2026

REGULAR MEETING (IN-PERSON AND REMOTE ACCESS VIA ZOOM)

5:00 P.M., CITY HALL, ROOM 416, ONE DR. CARLTON B. GOODLETT PLACE

PRESENT: President John Trasviña, Vice President Rebecca Saroyan, Commissioner Jose Lopez, and Commissioner Lily Wong.

Jesse Mainardi, Deputy City Attorney, Office of the City Attorney (CAT); Kevin Jensen, Disability Access Coordinator, San Francisco Public Works (SFPW); Charlie Murphy, Assistant Superintendent, San Francisco Public Works, Bureau of Urban Forestry (SFPW-BUF); Julie Lamarre, Executive Director; Alec Longaway, Legal Assistant.

ABSENT: Commissioner Robin Abad Ocubillo.

(1) PUBLIC COMMENT

At this time, members of the public may address the Board on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Board except agenda items. With respect to agenda items, your opportunity to address the Board will be afforded when the item is reached in the meeting with one exception. When the agenda item has already been reviewed in a public hearing at which members of the public were allowed to testify and the Board has closed the public hearing, your opportunity to address the Board must be exercised during the Public Comment portion of the calendar. Each member of the public may address the Board for up to three minutes. At the discretion of the Board President, public comment and remote public participation may be limited to two minutes per person. If it is demonstrated that public comment and remote public participation will cumulatively exceed 15 minutes, the President may continue Public Comment and/or remote public participation to another time during the meeting.

SPEAKERS: None.

(2) COMMISSIONER COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

SPEAKERS: President Trasviña welcomed everyone to the hearing.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

(3) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Discussion and possible adoption of the August 12, 2026 minutes.

ACTION: Upon motion by President Trasviña, the Board voted 4-0-1 (Commissioner Abad absent) to adopt the August 12, 2026 meeting minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

(4) APPEAL NO. 26-033

JOSHUA KLIPP, Appellant(s) vs. SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC WORKS, BUREAU OF URBAN FORESTRY, Respondent	699 Rhode Island Street. Appealing the ISSUANCE on June 5, 2026 of a Public Works Order (Approval for the City to remove a Sycamore tree that is healthy and in fair condition. Removal is necessary so that an ADA compliant curb ramp can be built. Replacement will be relocated elsewhere on the block or added to deferred replacement report if a replacement location is not found within 120 days). ORDER NO. 300079. FOR HEARING TODAY.
--	---

ACTION: Upon motion by Vice President Saroyan, the Board voted 4-0-1 (Commissioner Abad absent) to grant the appeal and overturn the order on the basis that Public Works did not provide sufficient justification for the tree removal and the lack of alternatives.

SPEAKERS: Josh Klipp, appellant; Kevin Jensen, SFPW; Charlie Murphy, BUF.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Marie Sorenson, Mary Klipp, Iris Feldman, and Nayantara Jain spoke in support of the appellant.

(5) SPECIAL ITEM

Discussion and Possible Action: The Board will review proposed legislation (File No. 251211) which would eliminate appeals to the Board of Appeals for hazardous tree removals undertaken by City departments and commissions. The legislation would also require that the Board act on appeals of City initiated tree removals within 30 days after the filing of such an appeal and not entertain a request for a rehearing. The Board may take a position on the proposed legislation and/or authorize a letter to be sent on its behalf to the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor or applicable departments, setting forth the Board's recommendations and positions on the proposed legislation. [Note: The Board reviewed an earlier version of this legislation at its hearing on January 14, 2026. At that time, no action was taken by the Board.]

ACTION: Upon motion by President Trasviña, the Board voted 4-0-1 (Commissioner Abad absent) to direct the President, with assistance from the Executive Director, to develop comments for the Board of Supervisors, in opposition to the pending legislation (File No. 251211) as it relates to the elimination of Board of Appeals' review of city-initiated hazard tree removals (copying the Mayor's office and relevant departments).

SPEAKERS: [The following summaries do not include every comment made by the speakers. To hear all the comments, click on the link to a video of the hearing on the page four].

President Trasviña stated that the Board of Appeals had not been consulted prior to File No. 251211 being introduced and noted that the Board only found out about it from a member of the public. He stated that some departments had tried to remove themselves from the Board's jurisdiction and public review after receiving unfavorable decisions by the Board. He noted that he and Executive Director Lamarre had reached out to the department and the Mayor's Office and that the Board was primarily focused on the part of the legislation that removed the right to appeal city-initiated hazard

tree removals to the Board of Appeals. He emphasized the importance of protecting the due process rights of individuals. He also noted that the Commission Streamlining Task Force had conducted an exhaustive review and recommended giving the Board of Appeals jurisdiction over more matters. President Trasviña noted that there was already a code section that allowed Public Works to remove a tree without a hearing if there was imminent danger and that the definition of a “hazard” tree was too broad and could include a branch of a tree blocking the public on the sidewalk. He noted that the Board rarely had these types of cases, but it was important for the public to have an avenue of review.

Vice President Saroyan stated that this issue needed to be discussed and asked the City Attorney what the Board could do. She echoed the eloquent comments of Commissioner Lopez and inquired about the timeline for writing a letter to the Board of Supervisors. She suggested taking a narrow scope of opposition to the legislation, more specifically the part on page seven of the legislation that removed the right to appeal city-initiated hazard tree removals to the Board of Appeals.

Commissioner Lopez echoed President Trasviña’s comments and thanked him for his work on this matter and also thanked the public. He noted that these types of appeals were rare and that this was not a public safety issue. He stated that it was difficult to reach a conclusion other than that the City department did not want their positions scrutinized. He stated that this did not result in good government. He thought it was strange that this matter was a priority for the Board of Supervisors given all the other challenges faced by the City.

Commissioner Wong echoed Commissioner Lopez’ comments and stressed the importance of transparency. She noted that city departments were not always 100% correct and that they made mistakes. She stated that part of the Board’s purpose was to shine light on these departments and to make things right. She noted how important trees are to San Francisco.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Marie Sorenson stated that she really hoped the Board would be able to keep the tree appeals. She stated that a hazard tree could just be a tree that DPW did not like. She referenced the tree removal efforts by DPW on 24th Street and noted that many trees were saved after the public went through the Board process and hired an independent arborist. She stressed the importance of the independent review provided by the Board of Appeals and thought the low volume of these types of appeals meant having an appeal process was not a problem.

Josh Klipp stated that when it came to trees, San Francisco was a failure. He noted that it had the smallest tree canopy of any major city in the United States. He stated that the city had failed the goals of the Urban Forest Plan and every climate action plan for trees. Mr. Klipp referenced two prior cases that had gone before the Board of Appeals which significantly benefited the city: the UCSF and 24th Street tree removals. Mr. Klipp appealed the order allowing UCSF to remove 28 trees because DPW did not require UCSF to pay the appraisal fees. As a result of the appeal, UCSF had to pay nearly a quarter of a million dollars to the city for tree planting. For 24th Street, DPW sought to remove 78 trees. Because of the appeals, however, that number was reduced to 33 trees. He urged the Board to write a letter soon since the proposed legislation was scheduled to go before the Board of Supervisors on Tuesday (September 1, 2026).

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, President Trasviña adjourned the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

The supporting documents for this meeting can be found at the following link:

<https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20260826-board-of-appeals-hearing-august-26-2026>

A video of this meeting, can be found at the following link:

https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/player/clip/53068?view_id=6&redirect=true