



Mayor
Daniel Lurie

City and County of San Francisco
Department on the Status of Women



San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women
MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, October 22, 2025 | 5:08 PM
San Francisco City Hall, Room 408

COMMISSION ROSTER

Commission President	Diane Jones Lowrey
Commission Vice President	Ani Rivera
Commissioner	Sophia Andary
Commissioner	Cecilia Chung
Commissioner	Dr. Shokooh Miry
Commissioner	Dr. Anne Moses
Commissioner	Dr. Raveena Rihal

I. CALL TO ORDER: *DISCUSSION*

President Diane Jones Lowrey called the meeting to order at 5:08 pm.

Ms. Dominique Blakely performed roll call and confirmed that 6 of 7 Commissioners were present (quorum). Ms. Blakely read the land acknowledgement.

President Diane Jones Lowrey made a personal statement thanking former Presidents Shokooh Miry and Sophia Andary for leading the Commission with passion and for providing both a path and model to follow. Amid nationwide attacks on gender equity, President Jones Lowrey shared how proud she is to work alongside the Commissioners to build a truly gender-equitable city.

II. ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MAYOR'S APPOINTEE FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT: *DISCUSSION*

President Diane Jones Lowrey officially welcomed Dr. Diana Aroche as the new director of DOSW before the Commission.

Dr. Aroche thanked the Commission and the public for the opportunity. She noted that it was her 12th day in the position and expressed her gratitude and excitement to begin the work. She said she looked forward to advancing women's equity in San Francisco.

Commissioner Chung and Vice President Rivera welcomed Dr. Aroche and expressed their excitement, noting they look forward to future work and collaboration.

Public Comment:

Beverly Upton and Dr. Tate welcomed Dr. Aroche and shared their excitement about starting work together.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: *DISCUSSION AND ACTION*

The Commission reviewed the minutes from the regular Commission meeting on September 24, 2025.

(Vote) Chung/Miry – 6 ayes, 0 nays – Unanimous

No Public Comment.

**IV. PROP E COMMISSION STREAMLINING TASK FORCE COMMITTEE:
*DISCUSSION***

Commissioner Andary provided an update on the outcomes of the October 15 Commission streamlining hearing. She explained that it was a long meeting with a decent turnout from staff and community organizations. She noted that many community members and partners expressed support during public comment, including in-person comments from herself, speaking in her individual capacity, and President Jones Lowrey, who read a statement on behalf of the Commission. Commissioners Moses and Rihal commented remotely.

Commissioner Andary expressed her belief that the public comments would not have made a difference, as the outcomes appeared predetermined. She explained that the committee voted on two templates—Governance and Advisory—which determine oversight and authority. The vote passed 4 to 1, with Ed Harrington as the sole “no” vote, expressing frustration that all the women Task Force members voted “yes,” resulting in the Commission being changed from Governance to Advisory. She noted that public commenters, both in person and by phone, urged that COSW remain a governance body rather than be converted to an advisory body. Commissioner Andary stated

that she had expected COSW's governance oversight to be maintained, with only changes to hiring and member removal to "at will," but did not anticipate the following outcome.

Commissioner Andary outlined the changes that the Task Force members voted on as part of this transition. These changes include increasing COSW membership from 7 to 11 members, changing Commissioner removal from "for cause" to "at will," and noting that term limits were not a significant issue. She further explained that while an Advisory template typically includes a sunset date, COSW does not have one. Additionally, authority over hiring and firing, budget approval, and contract approval would all be removed.

Commissioner Andary noted that although the ballot measure is a year away, she would like the Commission to continue its work and build support against the current recommendations. She proposed some of the following actions on an individual level:

- Email the Board of Supervisors (BOS) and the Mayor to request that these recommendations not move forward to the November 2026 ballot, outlining how changing the Department from a governance to an advisory body would have negative impacts.
- To educate community and stakeholders on what the Commission Streamlining Task Force is and what these recommendations mean.
- Commissioners should meet individually with members of the BOS.

And as a group:

- Prepare a joint Commission letter by February or March, prior to when the BOS meets.

Commissioner Andary made a motion to make a public statement opposing the decision made by the Commission Streamlining Task Force as a Commission.

Commissioner Chung confirmed that a vote couldn't be made as this is a discussion item. Deputy City Attorney Jana Clark confirmed.

President Jones Lowrey expressed that she would like to hear input from all Commissioners and for everyone to understand the situation and has the opportunity for discussion. She then thanked Commissioner Andary for all the work she put into the Prop E Committee over the last several months and the summary she provided.

Vice President Rivera thanked Commission Andary and said that she would like to process and review the recommendations and requested that staff send the recommendations in an email. She also expressed that she would like to have a better understanding of what Commissioners can do within their role versus publicly.

Commissioner Rivera also expressed interest in understanding how to be aligned with other commissioners who are facing these challenges and how to think about strategy.

Commissioner Chung agreed with Vice President Rivera and expressed interest in learning what the final version of the recommendations would look like, particularly regarding which chartered commissions would remain on the ballot versus those being transitioned to advisory status.

Commissioner Andary reiterated that all chartered commissions went through the two templates. Commissioner Chung asked for confirmation that COSW was not the only chartered commission being affected, and Commissioner Andary confirmed that other Commissions such as, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) was also recommended to transition to an advisory body. She also mentioned that she had spoken with other commissions—some were aware of the issue, while others were not.

President Jones Lowrey suggested looking at other commissions with a similar scope and constituencies served, noting that doing so might provide helpful context. She proposed that approaching the Board of Supervisors (BOS) collectively—as a group of commissions with shared missions—rather than individually, might carry more weight.

Commissioner Miry praised DOSW for its long-standing commitment to advocating for women in leadership positions and promoting gender equity across the city, as well as for collecting data on women's representation in San Francisco. She noted that 55% of commissioners are currently women but expressed concern that this number could align more closely with the federal average of 26% if the task force recommendations move forward. Commissioner Miry also highlighted the importance of examining how these recommendations could impact leadership opportunities for women and requested data to better understand the potential effects.

Commissioner Chung stated that she would like more time to process the discussion but acknowledged the urgency of the matter, especially considering developments at the federal level that need to be taken into account. President Jones Lowrey agreed, noting that there are broader, big-picture issues the Commission must consider.

Vice President Ani requested that this topic be included on the agenda for the next two meetings. Commissioner Andary asked that it be made an action item. Vice President Ani emphasized the importance of ensuring that space is provided to continue the discussion at the upcoming meetings.

Commissioner Miry requested that Dr. Aroche bring forward some ideas.

Dr. Aroche thanked Commissioner Miry for the question and shared her perspective. She explained that, when considering oversight of commissions, there are two main perspectives she has heard: one focused on efficiency within the City and County—such as budget and staffing—and another emphasizing the decades of work that could be diminished by the recent decisions being discussed. She noted the importance of finding a balance or compromise between these perspectives.

Dr. Aroche emphasized the value of maintaining open dialogue with the Board of Supervisors and the Mayor's Office and exploring strategies that address both perspectives without compromising the values of women and girls. She also stated that this moment presents an opportunity for the Commission to be intentional about its messaging and to consider the language that should be used in future discussions with the Board.

President Jones Lowrey agreed to continue the discussion and to add it to the next meeting agenda.

Commissioner Andary shared her concern that "there's no media on this" and emphasized the need to be vocal and educate the community. She requested that this be made an action item in December.

Commissioner Miry expressed the importance of taking a nuanced and balanced approach and allowing time for thoughtful consideration of the issue.

President Jones Lowrey reiterated that this item should remain on the agenda for the next several meetings.

Public Comment:

Andrea Jackson thanked Commissioner Andary for her passion and dedication to the community, as well as all the Commissioners for their ongoing commitment. She expressed that she continues to learn more from each meeting and appreciates COSW's support of the San Francisco community.

Dr. Kathryn Kenley Johnson, who works with the SF Independent Women's Commissioners—a group of former commissioners—emphasized the importance of educating the public. She acknowledged that the Commission's advocacy powers are limited but encouraged continued efforts to inform and mobilize citizens to contact their Supervisors, noting the need for visible community support.

Dr. Tate thanked all members of the Commission. She shared that she attended the October 15 Commission Streamlining hearing and had been in the queue to provide remote comment, but was canceled. She also submitted written testimony in the chat box, which was only acknowledged after the fact. Dr. Tate expressed concern that there has been no media coverage on the issue and stated that something needs to be said. She thanked the Commission for mobilizing around this matter and emphasized the importance of coming together to plan next steps.

Sung Sohn, representing the Education for Social Justice Foundation, invited the Commission to consider participating in the 70th session of the Commission on the Status of Women at the UN Headquarters in New York March 2026. They noted that San Francisco was the first CEDAW city and emphasized the importance of sharing the Commission's ongoing work and contributions at the international level.

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: *DISCUSSION AND ACTION*

Dr. Aroche acknowledged October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) and highlighted city events attended by staff. She uplifted the DVAM event held the previous day at City Hall, coordinated by the DV Consortium, describing it as a “full circle moment” from advocating for survivors to seeing the City lit in purple in the evening.

She noted that DOSW is engaged in the internal strategic planning process, which will be presented later in the meeting and shared via a survey by Commission Secretary Blakely. She emphasized the value of Commissioners' feedback and expressed interest in meeting individually with Commissioners to discuss ways to improve the department and implement best practices.

Dr. Aroche highlighted continued collaboration with Cameo House and Indigenous Justice, as well as support for income pilot programs. The department will share voting reminders on social media and engage with local leaders and agencies to ensure women are represented in the voting process. She also highlighted ongoing work with the SF SOL collaborative for youth impacted by commercial sexual exploitation (CSEC).

She thanked Dr. Alfredo Huante for his work on the analysis phase of the upcoming Gender Analysis on Commissions and Boards report, which examines data across race, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and disability status. The department also finalized its annual progress report related to the Racial Equity Action Plan and continues to focus on addressing systemic barriers.

Commissioner Miry shared feedback from community members who were not reappointed to commissions—all three cases involved women from

disadvantaged or oppressed groups. She emphasized the importance of analyzing these cases in relation to data to determine whether systemic issues exist.

Public Comment:

Sharell shared her perspective on ensuring efficiency and inclusivity in the community. noted that while some progress has been made, there are still gaps and opportunities for growth. She emphasized the importance of being inclusive in conversations, reaching a diverse range of women across different social, cultural, and intersectional backgrounds, and actively engaging with the community.

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. PRESENTATION FROM THE MAYOR'S OFFICE OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (MOHCD) *DISCUSSION*

Julia Sabory and Elisabet Avalos presenting.

Presentation (Julia Sabory):

1. Overview of MOHCD's community development division
 - a. They're working on holistic approach, facilitate city funding, and foster collaboration across city depts and community organizations. Team members are committed to advancing equity, stability, and empowerment. MOHCD has 3 pillars in community development: people, housing, and neighborhoods.
 - i. Housing Based Strategies: Homelessness prevention and housing stabilization.
 - ii. Community Based Strategies have two focuses: community safety & community vitality. GBV Prevention & Intervention Program under this work.
 - iii. Placed-Based Strategies strengthens neighborhoods.
2. The procurement process
 - a. MOHCD operates on a five-year funding cycle. The department begins preparations two years in advance by developing a Community Needs Assessment. This process includes at least a year and a half of forums, surveys, workshops, and town halls to gather extensive community input. Following this, MOHCD drafts the Request for Proposals (RFP).
 - i. Timeline of GBV RFP:
 - The RFP was posted on September 23, 2024, with proposals due on November 1, 2024.
 - An initial screening was conducted to confirm that all proposals met the minimum qualifications.
 - The review process included two phases:

- Phase 1: Each proposal was reviewed by three readers.
 - Phase 2: Proposals were scored internally by fiscal and compliance staff, focusing on neighborhood-weighted indicators such as target populations, strategic alignment, fiscal health, past performance, and alignment.
 - Scores from both phases were combined to inform final funding recommendations.
3. The encumbrance process
- a. In May grant award letters were sent out. Checked registration verifications and collected Certificate of Insurance (COI). Had an in-person orientation in May & June.
 - b. Grant Management System (GMS) set up where grant coordinator has 1:1 with grantee to determine and agree on a budget and outcomes.
 - c. The City process includes issuing the award letter, uploading required documentation, negotiating work plans, and final submission. Contracts are reviewed by MOHCD staff, the City Attorney, and then routed through DocuSign for signatures in the following order:
 - i. Grantee's Executive Director
 - ii. MOHCD Department Head
 - iii. City Attorney
 - d. Once all the 260 contracts were signed, they were forwarded to the Mayor's Office for final review. Upon execution, the corresponding funds were attached to each contract. Please note, organizations were able to back bill if process was delayed.
4. GBV & MOHCD (Elisabet Avalos)
- MOHCD was asked to manage the GBV grants, with \$8.4 million transferred to align with their procurement cycle. The department conducted a competitive procurement process and hired experienced staff to manage the GBV portfolio. Five new programs were added to the portfolio, including Crisis Line, Emergency Shelter, Intervention, Prevention Education and Advocacy, Legal Services, and Transitional Housing. In total, the portfolio includes 39 grants, totaling \$9.3 million—total includes the increase from transition baseline 8.4 million total.

Elisabet Avalos mentioned they've already had orientations, compliance reviews, two convenings, and have launched a website to promote public awareness and to find service providers for survivors. Website page has the links of the 5 breakdowns: Crisis Lines, Legal Services, Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, Intervention & Advocacy Programs, and Prevention & Education.

Julia closed by sharing that nonprofit organizations have both raised and saved her life in many ways. She worked in the nonprofit sector for 15 years before joining the City, where she has now served for 16 years. Julia mentions they only have one more grantee that's missing a paperwork item before complete completion.

President Diane Jones-Lowrey thanked Elisabet Avalos and Julia Sabory for their presentations. She then asked Ms. Sabory about the differences between DOSW's and MOHCD's RFP processes, expressing curiosity about any similarities. Ms. Sabory responded that she was not familiar with DOSW's RFP process but noted that, given the current political climate, the overall RFP process looks very different now. Ms. Avalos adds that she appreciates the procurement process as it gave programs the flexibility to maintain their identities and their core services of what they serve and how they serve people in ways that are compatible with the Violence Against Women's Act and ways that are appropriate that serve this population.

Commissioner Moses sought clarification regarding the \$8.4 million transferred from the Department on the Status of Women and MOHCD's \$9.3 million portfolio. Ms. Sabory explained that MOHCD used \$900,000 from its General Fund to cover the difference. Commissioner Moses restated that there are 39 grants in total, including 5 new programs, with 92% of funds awarded. She inquired about the three Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) that did not submit applications, and Ms. Sabory confirmed that only three CBOs chose not to apply.

Commissioner Moses also asked whether the additional \$900,000 impacted the City's budget deficit. Ms. Sabory responded that while the Community Development Division faced a \$4.5 million shortfall, the Mayor and MOHCD leadership prioritized maintaining emergency rental assistance, tenant right-to-counsel programs, immigration legal services, and the GBV portfolio—finding necessary cuts elsewhere.

Commissioner Moses and Ms. Sabory clarified that former Mayor Breed requested MOHCD assume responsibility for the GBV portfolio. Commissioner Moses noted there had previously been discussion about transferring the portfolio to the Department of Public Health (DPH). Ms. Sabory stated that she cannot confirm the previous discussion of arrangement, however it is not uncommon for the Mayor's Office or other sister departments to ask MOHCD to facilitate funding.

Vice President Rivera congratulated Ms. Avalos and Ms. Sabory for establishing a significant platform for the GBV Portfolio and noted the encumbrance timeline. VP Rivera inquired how DOSW could continue to

collaborate and support this initiative. Vice President Rivera noted that MOHCD had hired two staff members to assist with the portfolio and sought confirmation on the number of DOSW staff involved with the portfolio. Hannah Cotter, a staff member from DOSW, responded that they initially had three staff members dedicated to the portfolio but ultimately reduced to two. Julia added that although they were supposed to have three staff members working on the portfolio, budget constraints due to the current financial climate resulted in only two being available.

Ms. Sabory expressed hope that both departments can establish interdepartmental and interdivisional coordination, allowing them to come together to review a 24-month calendar and collaboratively envision the future of gender-based violence and domestic violence prevention—focusing on how best to support women and families and achieve shared goals.

Ms. Sabory addresses VP Rivera's statement regarding the encumbrance process and mention how the City Attorney's review process took most of the time due to the landscape changes.

Commissioner Miry inquired whether it is appropriate to ask questions regarding policy changes related to the port of the portfolio. She referenced COSW and DOSW's previous strategic planning presentation concerning the proposal to transfer the portfolio. Commissioner Miry highlighted several suggestions from the past strategic plan: 1. A significant challenge for survivors is the lack of housing stability and safe housing, which aligns with the objectives of other city departments. 2. Other departments, particularly MOHCD, have access to larger funding streams and already manage and coordinate major affordable housing projects and community development budgets. This could potentially expand resources for survivors. 3. Integrated service delivery is needed to streamline coordination between shelters, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. 4. Policy leverage is crucial; embedding domestic violence work within a higher-profile office with a larger budget could enhance visibility and influence within broader city policy and among stakeholders. 5. Cross-sector collaboration should be encouraged to provide access to housing developers, nonprofit partners, and economic development networks. 6. Homeless prevention alignment is essential to position survivor safety within citywide anti-displacement and homelessness prevention strategies. 7. Operational infrastructure should be established, including contracting and compliance systems, to bring efficiency and ensure long-term stability. 8. Long-term funding stability is crucial; housing-based funding is generally more predictable than advocacy-oriented grants from the department. 9. A community-building lens is important to connect survivor recovery to neighborhood revitalization, ensuring that the voices of victims and survivors are integrated into social infrastructure

programs. Commissioner Miry sought clarification on whether the plan was reasonable.

Ms. Avolos believes that COSW's strategic plan meets the established criteria. Ms. Sabory mentioned that the commission is aligned with the vision and funding for the survivors. She stated that both departments can work together strategically to achieve specific milestones and measure progress over time. Ms. Sabory envisions that in the first year, they will rejuvenate their processes by focusing on internal operations, while in the second year, they would like to bring providers together for collaboration.

Commissioner Chung thanked everyone for the presentation and expressed gratitude for the additional resources allocated to the portfolio. She inquired whether the program supports startups and minority-owned businesses in securing contracts with the city. Ms. Avalos responded to this concern by stating that they are working to reduce barriers. They are providing one-on-one technical assistance and hosting office hours, with the goal of setting up community-based organizations (CBOs) for success. Commissioner Chung adds during her time with the Health Commission, trauma informed training had been implemented about 10 years ago, and wondered how is that incorporated in their practice. Ms. Sabory states their Director, Helen Hale, works closely with Department of Public Health, has trained set of MOHCD staff to be trauma informed care trainers—community development staff host a day training four times a year.

Commissioner Andray thanked our presenters and looking forward to collaboration.

Commissioner Miry notes that the Strategic Plan mentioned was from 2018, with Emily Murase serving as the Department Head.

No Public Comment.

B. PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT STATUS UPDATE: *DISCUSSION*

President Diane Jones Lowrey stated that she and Vice President Ani Rivera will be attending the California Convening of Commissions and Anniversary Celebration, hosted by the California Commission on the Status of Women, and will provide a report at the next meeting. They expressed interest in making this a regular practice.

She highlighted for the Commissioners the department head performance and evaluation process. President Jones Lowrey noted that performance evaluations should align with strategic planning, as performance outcomes will be made visible. She also emphasized that she wants the Commission to take this responsibility seriously and to work with the Director to help her

achieve her goals. She added that their HR partner has provided citywide templates to serve as guidance for performance reviews.

Commissioner Andary asked for clarification on the HR process related to the performance evaluation, questioning whether it is HR's responsibility to reach out to the Commission and provide them with what they need. President Jones Lowrey confirmed that HR had already done so. Commissioner Andary noted that, in her experience as President, this had not been done in the past. She expressed that she is glad a process is now in place, but emphasized that it should have been established previously as well.

President Jones Lowrey agreed and confirmed that she had reached out to HR, and since she had been working with them on the hiring process, it seemed like the natural next step.

No Public Comment.

C. DOSW PRIORITIES/STRATEGIC PLANNING TIMELINE: *DISCUSSION*

Dr. Aroche presented on the focused on aligning the Department's priorities with emerging data and evolving gender equity policies. Dr. Aroche discussed updating the Department's mission statement and clarifying the Commission's role for the public, noting that the City Charter and Gender Equity Policy suggest elevating the Commission's visibility and authority.

Denise Heitzenroder presented a timeline from the last Strategic Plan and highlighted the 2024 Community Needs Assessment (CNA) across DOSW's three core program areas. She shared challenges identified through the CNA, outlined DOSW's policy and advocacy work at the city, state, and federal levels, and proposed potential external stakeholders for Commissioners' consideration. Tentative dates for community meetings were proposed for mid-November and a follow-up in December, with evening sessions and requests for Commissioner support.

Commissioner Miry suggested collaborating with the Youth Commission, and Dr. Aroche confirmed she had already spoken with the Youth Commission President.

The DOSW team aims to provide a draft of the Strategic Plan in January, and Commissioner Andary noted that a vote will be required to approve the Strategic Plan for FY 2026–2028.

Commissioner Andary noted the importance of considering the Strategic Plan for the next two years in relation to future changes of COSW, including the possibility of it no longer being a chartered Commission.

President Jones Lowrey thanked Dr. Aroche and staff for putting together such a thorough presentation in a short amount of time.

Public comment:

Sharell complimented the team on their presentation and Strategic Plan and encouraged them to consider what issues they can address and how they can engage with women from diverse backgrounds who are dealing with a wide range of societal issues and intersectionality.

VII. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS: *DISCUSSION*

This item was postponed due to the possibility of losing quorum.

No Public Comment.

VIII. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT *DISCUSSION*

No Public Comment.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 7:53 PM