



Commission of Animal Control & Welfare

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Joe Majeski

San Francisco Police Department

Christopher Campbell

San Francisco Recreation and Park
Department

August 08, 2025

Commission Streamlining Task Force
San Francisco City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

RE: Prop E. Commission Questionnaire

Dear Commission Streamlining Task Force,

Here is our Commission's response to the Task Force's Questionnaire.

Please let me know if there are any questions, or if you need any additional information from me.

Sincerely,

Michael Angelo Torres

Chair, San Francisco Animal Commission – Commission of Animal
Control and Welfare

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Commission of Animal Control & Welfare

Prop E. Commission Questionnaire

Mandate and Purpose

What was the original purpose or rationale for creating this body?

The Commission of Animal Control and Welfare was created under Public Health Ordinance 41.2 – 41.3 during the late 1970s. As indicated in the Ordinance, the Commission has the power and duty to: hold hearings and submit recommendations regarding animal control and welfare to the Board of Supervisors and the City Administrator; study and recommend requirements for the maintenance of animals in public, private, and commercial care; and work with the Tax Collector, the Director of the Animal Care and Control Department, and authorized licensing entities to develop and maintain dog licensing procedures and make recommendations on fees.

The Commission also provides written reports of its activities, including recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, the Mayor, and the Chief Administrative Officer for the development of policies and procedures which will further the objectives of animal welfare and control; of additional legislation deemed by the Commission to be necessary for animal welfare and control; and of actions to be taken by any agency, board, officer of this City and County for the purposes of furthering the objectives of animal welfare and control.

The Commission consists of seven voting members: six members who show an interest in animal issues, and one voting member who is a licensed veterinarian. All members of the Commission are volunteers and do not receive a stipend or any compensation from the City. The Board of Supervisors appoints the Commissioners. There are also four department representatives who advise the Commission and attend meetings on an “as needed” basis. The representatives are from the Department of Animal Care and Control, the Department of Public Health, the Department of Recreation and Parks, and the San Francisco Police Department.

Has the commission’s role or purpose changed over time? If so, how?

The Commission pre-dates the Department of Animal Care and Control, so some of the initial areas of responsibility for the Commission are now addressed by that department, including concerns regarding infectious diseases (such as rabies) and “vicious”

dogs. As the City's (and the world's) thoughts regarding animals and our (humans) interaction with them has evolved, so have the responsibilities of the Commission. The Commission now regularly hears and responds to concerns and public comments from the community regarding issues involving animals – both domestic and wild – in the City. As Chair of the Commission, I see our commissioners as advocates for animals – even though that was not the intent of the Commission when it was created almost fifty years ago.

Public Engagement

How many public commenters typically speak? Is a variety of public comment made? Do the same individuals typically provide public comment?

The Commission meets between the months of January – November (we do not meet in December) the second Thursday of each month at City Hall. Our meetings are also streamed live via WebEx so community members can attend remotely. Videos of our meetings are accessible on our website by the following afternoon. In addition to in-person public comments, we also allow written public comments. Written public comments are shared with commission members, uploaded to our website (personal information is redacted) and acknowledged during the meeting.

Our in-person meeting attendance, as well remote attendance, can fluctuate depending on that meeting's agenda and the matters expected to be addressed by the Commission. Media coverage involving an animal issue can also increase meeting attendance. An average meeting can receive between three to seven public comments, counting both in-person as well as written comments received. All of our public comments generally concern animal issues, and some of our attendees attend a number of meetings and will provide a comment at each meeting.

Commission Business

What kinds of topics does your department typically bring to meetings?

All of our topics involve animal matters in our City. Here are the topics covered at meetings during the last twelve months: Department of Animal Care and Control in-take reporting and shelter updates; animal conservation and working with local communities and non-governmental organizations; horseback riding in Golden

Gate Park; animal concerns at San Francisco Zoo; tracking animal disease and surveillance; animal cruelty in the City's live markets; giant pandas in zoos; glue traps and a proposal to ban them; the impact of animal agriculture on the City's Climate Action Plan; and artificial turf in our City parks and how it impacts wildlife.

Does the commission (or other public body) provide input or approval on departmental policies, strategic plans, or budgets?

The Commission does not officially participate in the policy, planning, or budgeting process of any city department, but the Commission will provide recommendations to a department when it's a matter that is within our jurisdiction.

What types of decisions, policies, or initiatives has the commission (or other public body) reviewed or approved in the past year?

The most newsworthy review and approval by the Commission during the past year involved the San Francisco Zoo Recommendations presented to our body by the animal welfare advisors on the Department of Recreation and Parks Joint Zoo Committee. This was a report regarding the animals at the Zoo that was created with input from local and national animal advocates, as well as current and former Zoo employees. A draft of the report was presented to the Commission for consideration, and the Commission voted unanimously in support of it. The Joint Zoo Committee's advisors' report was erroneously attributed to the Commission in most of the media coverage, even though it was created by the Committee's advisors (which included one member of the Commission) and a number of concerned community members. The vote in support of the Report was covered by all the local media, including a front-page headline article in the San Francisco Chronicle.

What is the typical follow-up process when the commission makes a recommendation or request?

Once a recommendation is made, a letter signed by the Commission Chairperson is forwarded to the Mayor, the Board of Supervisors, and the City Administrator for their review. In some cases, it is sent as just an "FYI" to those officials; and any others who the Commission feels needs to be aware of it are "cc"-ed. Outreach is also made by the Commission to the various officials who received the letter, letting them know the Commission is available to answer any questions or meet/offer support as part of the follow-up process.

Contracts

The Commission doesn't currently participate in the review and/or approval process for any department contracts or grant programs.

Outcomes and Impact

What measurable outcomes or impacts has the commission achieved in the past year?

The Commission, through our meetings, has been available to hear from the community regarding issues affecting animals. This includes concerns regarding animals at the San Francisco Zoo. Based on the Commission's support of the Joint Zoo Committee's animal welfare advisors' Report, the Board of Supervisors approved that an audit of the San Francisco Zoo be conducted. An audit was one of the major recommendations presented in the Report.

How does the commission's work align with your department's strategic goals and priorities?

The Commission is (what is known as) an "orphan" commission. The Commission is not part of any City department, and no department has oversight of our body.

Are there overlapping reporting, engagement, or approval processes across public bodies that involve this commission?

If there are any matters before those public bodies involving animals, their processes may eventually involve our Commission. An example of a public body that does involve discussions around animals is the Department of Recreation and Parks' Joint Zoo Committee, of which a member of our Commission typically serves as one of the two animal welfare advisors on that Committee.

Are there other public bodies performing similar functions or working on similar issues as this commission?

There are currently no other public bodies concerning animal issues in the City.

Can you provide examples of how the commission has influenced department policy, operations, or helped address key issues?

The Commission has a rich history of looking into, and offering recommendations regarding, issues that affect animals in our City. Over the years, we have addressed and helped implement legislation to make our City fur-free; ban cat declawing; bring awareness around

the breeding industry and encourage the adoption of companion animals; and many other manners that may now seem common sense – but were considered radical when they were being considered years ago.

More recently, I would point again to the Commission's support of the Department of Recreation and Parks Joint Zoo Committee's animal welfare advisors' Report. Following the media attention on the Report, issues involving the Zoo were brought to the attention of a large audience and as a result, change is finally being seen at the Zoo.

Last, a number of our elected officials, and department representatives, regularly refer constituents and community members to our Commission when they have an animal concern that they hope will be addressed. Being there for the community, and working with them to make change is perhaps the most important way the Commission has helped and influenced policies around the way that animals in our City are viewed and treated.