



Mayor  
Daniel Lurie

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



# COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

March 25, 2026

San Francisco City Hall, Room 408

## COMMISSION ROSTER

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

## Agenda

### I. CALL TO ORDER: DISCUSSION

**President Diane Jones Lowrey called the meeting to order at 5:11 pm.**

Ms. Dominique Blakely performed roll call and confirmed that 4 of 7 Commissioners were present (quorum). Ms. Blakely read the Ramaytush Ohlone Land acknowledgement.

## II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: DISCUSSION and ACTION

The Commission reviewed and approved the minutes from the regular Commission meeting on February 11, 2026.

### **No Public Comment.**

**February 11, 2026, Minutes— (Roll Call Vote) Rivera (motioned)/Miry (seconded) – 4 ayes, 0 nays – Unanimous**

## III. NEW BUSINESS

### A. RECOGNITION OF FREEDOM BRAIDERS AND YOUNG WOMEN'S FREEDOM CENTER: DISCUSSION

President Jones Lowrey expressed her happiness at seeing the room full of people. She discussed the work of the Commission, noting that it does not happen in isolation. She also referenced that the 70<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women had just occurred, and that the focus of the session was the advancement of justice for women. She noted that the United States was the only member present that did not approve the CSW's declaration, highlighting the challenges we face when the federal government does not uphold our rights.

The Commission formally recognized Freedom Braiders and the Young Women's Freedom Center (YWFC) for their outstanding contributions to empowering justice-impacted women and fostering safe, healing-centered spaces that support their growth, confidence, and independence.

Dr. Aroche shared remarks honoring the work of both organizations. She expressed how important it is to highlight the meaningful work of community agencies in this forum, thanking the Commission for doing so. She noted that Freedom Braiders has been a partner over the past few months as the Department works to address concerns about the treatment of incarcerated women in SF County Jail,

reminding us that incarcerated women are still members of our community and deserve our support. She also shared that, as a native San Franciscan, she is honored to recognize this work. She then invited both organizations to come forward and share a few words.

Freedom Braiders Executive Director Joanna Hernandez began by thanking COSW for the recognition and spoke about the organization's history, sharing that she and her daughter started the program after recognizing the need to support women in county jails who are also mothers and daughters. She noted that this honor is shared with, and dedicated to, all incarcerated women. She also uplifted Rocky, who was formerly incarcerated and now runs her own business as a braider and barber, and who has been named Barber of the Year two years in a row.

Rocky thanked COSW for the recognition and expressed appreciation for the work being honored. She shared that returning to jails as a mentor has been personally meaningful and impactful, allowing her to support and help guide women toward better opportunities. She emphasized the challenges formerly incarcerated women face in finding employment to support their families and noted the importance and necessity of this work.

Dr. Aroche formally recognized Freedom Braiders and presented them with a certificate of recognition on behalf of the Department and Commission.

Dr. Aroche highlighted the Young Women's Freedom Center's 40-year history and shared her personal connection as a native San Franciscan, noting she grew up with U.S. Representative Latifah Simon, who began her career as the organization's Executive Director. She expressed appreciation for the Center's continued advocacy for women in custody and its emphasis on both support and sisterhood. She then welcomed YWFC Executive Julio Arroyo to share a few words.

Julia Arroyo, Executive Director of the Young Women’s Freedom Center, introduced herself and reflected on her personal journey from entering the juvenile justice system at age 13 to becoming a leader within the organization, also navigating foster care, homelessness, and the shelter system. She shared that her growth was supported by a strong sisterhood and mentorship, including Latifah Simon, who encouraged her participation in global spaces such as the United Nations. Julia emphasized the importance of uplifting women and gender-expansive people, noting they are often marginalized or excluded from decision-making spaces. She concluded by affirming the power of sisterhood and collective care, and invited all YWFC members present to join her, noting that the recognition belonged to all of them.

Dr. Aroche also highlighted Dr. Pamela Tate of Black Women Revolt Against Domestic Violence, who was recently recognized as Woman of the Year.

**Commissioner Comment:**

Commissioner Miry congratulated everyone, noting that the strong attendance was a bright spot for her, and expressed gratitude for the work of the organizations and individuals in the room.

Commissioner Andary and Vice President Rivera echoed Commissioner Miry’s comments and also thanked Freedom Braiders and the Young Women’s Freedom Center.

**Public Comment:**

Tiani, who has been with the Young Women’s Freedom Center for about four years, thanked the Commission for the recognition and shared how the organization has supported her.

Tumani, who started as a Community Organizer with the Young Women’s Freedom Center, spoke about how the organization helped her find her voice and emphasized its impact in supporting young Black women and gender-expansive youth.

Destiny, who has been with the YWFC for about two years, thanked the organization for supporting her through challenges and said she likely could not have done it without them.

Eva, a Fellow at the Young Women’s Freedom Center, thanked the community in the room and shared how much the organization’s support has meant to her, noting that YWFC has helped guide her.

Rebecca Jackson, Community Forward, thanked Freedom Braiders and discussed the challenges and barriers involved in bringing the program into jails. She also acknowledged Joanna’s leadership in expanding the program, describing it as a tremendous accomplishment.

Breasia, who is from the Bay Area, thanked the sisterhood in the room and shared her appreciation and love for the community.

Journey, from the Young Women’s Freedom Center, recognized Julia and Eva for their work and shared that they welcomed her when she moved to the Bay Area from Chicago. She also expressed appreciation for the sisterhood and thanked them.

## B. DOSW WOMEN’S AGENDA UPDATE: DISCUSSION

Executive Director Aroche discussed the finalized FY 26–28 Strategic Plan, which has been adopted by the Mayor as the City’s official Women’s Agenda. She shared a timeline for implementation and deliverables.

She also discussed behested payments, as well as the forthcoming policy work at the state and local level.

### **Commissioner Comment:**

Commissioner Miry thanked her for the presentation and the reminder this is a city-wide agenda.

Vice President Rivera also thanked Dr. Aroche for the detailed plan and noted the fast timeline. She asked how Commissioners would be involved and how they could strategically elevate the Agenda.

Dr. Aroche responded that the Department is accountable to the Commission and plans to leverage its authority. She encouraged Commissioners to identify the roles they would like to take on, including potential involvement in supporting behested payment waivers, policy research, and advocacy. Vice President Rivera congratulated the Department on its work.

President Jones Lowrey described the plan as bold and audacious, noting the importance of integrating budgets and staff across departments. She asked how the Department's expertise could be ensured and supported in building the infrastructure for the Women's Agenda, and how the Commission could assist in that effort.

Dr. Aroche shared that she has been working with the Health & Human Services Chief Kunal, Chief of Staff Staci Slaughter, and has full support for the agenda. She noted that Mayor's staff will provide input as the implementation plan moves forward. She also acknowledged the current budget deficit and emphasized the need to leverage existing assets and resources to advance the agenda, citing the SF Strong Starts program as an example of exploring more creative funding approaches.

President Jones Lowrey responded that she thought the approach was fantastic, describing it as a new way of working by integrating the Women's Agenda across departments, particularly in light of budget constraints.

Vice President Rivera added that she was impressed and pleased to see multiple departments present alongside the Department at the Supervisor's Government Accountability and Oversight (GAO) Subcommittee hearing, and noted that the Department of Public Health had offered to present to the Commission.

**Public Comment:**

Dr. Kathy Johnson, SF Women for an Independent Women’s Commission, congratulated the Department and Commission and stated that she thought the action plan was excellent. She noted the significance of the shift from the Commission being threatened to the establishment of a citywide Women’s Agenda within a broader political context.

Ronisha Sharde, Department Willie Brown Fellow, thanked the Commission for their work and asked whether the CEDAW Ordinance would be one of the ordinances updated.

Dr. Aroche added that the Department is reviewing the CEDAW Ordinance from 2000 and is working with the BOS on potential updates. She added that community input would be welcomed.

Commissioner Miry asked what the best email for the Department is and Ms. Blakely replied that [dosw@sfgov.org](mailto:dosw@sfgov.org).

**C. CONSIDERATION OF BYLAWS REVISIONS: DISCUSSION and POSSIBLE ACTION**

Vice President Rivera reviewed the suggested bylaws updates submitted by Commissioners. She, Commissioner Rihal, Commission Secretary Blakely, and Deputy City Attorney Brianna Voss met to review the submitted recommendations.

The Commissioners discussed several potential changes and clarifications, including:

- The terms for Commission officers
- Language clarifications suggested for the motions and ethics requirements
- Meeting cadence, including a potential recess and shifting officer elections to accommodate the recess
- The scope and requirements for subcommittees, as well as special committees
- Attendance policies

- The role of the President, officers and the Commission Secretary

There was no consensus or vote. Vice President Rivera stated she would bring the comments and questions back to the subcommittee and Deputy City Attorney for further review and would provide an update at the next Commission meeting.

**Public Comment:**

Ms. Murcia thanked the Commissioners for the time spent on the review and on the Women’s Agenda. She noted that circumstances change and changes to bylaws are not set in stone, and emphasized that if adjustments are needed, such as considering budget cuts, they should be made.

Dr. Kathy Johnson acknowledged the workload and demands on Commissioners but expressed concern that reducing meetings, in her view, could be contrary to goals of increasing access and transparency, given ongoing advocacy for the Commission as well as the implementation of the Women’s Agenda.

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

Commissioner Andary shared that she and President Jones Lowrey provided public comment at the Board of Supervisors hearing held on March 17, and that approximately 80 people, including past Commissioners, also gave public comment, with many speaking on behalf of the Commission.

Commissioner Andary reported that President Mandelman stated the Board would not take up the recommendations from the Prop E Task Force as a whole. Instead, Supervisors may adopt select recommendations and develop their own amendments, avoiding areas of concern and controversy. Supervisor Walton also raised concerns about the lack of diversity on the task force and limited community input.

She further noted that there are several potential changes under consideration related to the removal, hiring, and firing of department heads, budget authority, and contract review, including three charter amendments proposed by the Mayor for the November ballot. The proposed measures would grant the Mayor sole authority to hire and fire department heads, allow the Mayor to dismiss Commissioners without cause, and permit the Mayor to reorganize departments.

The Commission hopes the BOS will draft amendments that would prevent these measures. Commissioner Andary noted that the Commission still needs to continue advocating on these issues.

### **Public Comment**

Dr. Pamela Tate, Black Women Revolt Against Domestic Violence, thanked the Commission for their work to push back on the proposed changes. She affirmed the importance of the Commission, stating that women are capable of governing themselves, and encouraged continued perseverance.

Commissioner Andary added that a community event held on March 11 received very positive feedback, and noted that continued education and outreach could help build sufficient awareness to push back against the proposed changes.

## **IV. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: DISCUSSION**

Executive Director Diana Aroche wished everyone a happy Women's History Month and honored women ancestors. She highlighted the Women's History Month event held the previous week and shared the words of honoree 92-year-old LaVerda Allen, emphasizing that women should be uplifted every day.

She noted that on March 19, the Women's Agenda was formally announced and shared with the community during an energizing and empowering evening. She thanked the event cohosts and staff and

shared that the team has already debriefed and thinking about planning for next year.

Dr. Aroche reported that the Department worked closely with Supervisor Melgar on a hearing held the morning of March 19. The Department presented alongside multiple partners, including the Department of Public Health, Mayor's Office of Community Development, Mayor's Office of Victim Services, Office of Economic and Workforce Development, Department of Children, Youth and Their Families, and community partners. The resolution passed unanimously and will be heard in full on April 7, which the Department plans to attend.

Dr. Aroche shared updates on ongoing initiatives, including work with the SF Strong Starts Initiative, which is meeting weekly to advance next steps and secure commitments. She also reported that the Department is collaborating with the Department of Police Accountability and the Human Rights Commission to address abuse and misconduct at County Jail #2, marking the first time the Sheriff's Department has brought in outside agencies for policy consultation. Hannah is participating in the policy subgroup and providing feedback on proposed changes.

She noted that the Department is in final budget negotiations and is working with HRC Executive Director Tugbenyoh to host a half-day convening with Department and Commission members to align on purpose, vision, and values, with the goal of strengthening shared commitments to civil and human rights. Dr. Aroche asked Commissioners about attending the retreat with HRC.

**Commissioner Comment:**

Commissioner Miry confirmed her availability and thanked staff for the detailed report. Vice President Rivera also confirmed availability, noting she could step aside if needed, and thanked

Dr. Aroche for her leadership and work during a complex month. Commissioner Miry and President Jones Lowrey also expressed appreciation and confirmed availability for the HRC convening.

Dr. Aroche added that she participated in an interview for SOMOS, the Department's Spanish-language programming, which has been shared on social media and will be added to the Department's website.

**No Public Comment.**

## **V. COMMISSIONER UPDATE: DISCUSSION**

Vice President Rivera shared reflections as a Commissioner from the Women's History Month event. She thanked Commissioners Rihal, Moses, and Andary for attending and noted that the event was exciting, with many new people expressing interest in connecting. She expressed hope for more engagement events in the future to help build collective power and noted follow-up outreach from attendees. She also highlighted that Galería de la Raza showcased artwork representing San Francisco's ten cultural districts.

President Jones Lowrey asked the Commission to take a moment to recognize the passing of former Commissioner Andrea Shorter.

### **In Memoriam: Andrea Shorter**

The Commission honored Andrea Shorter, who served as a Commissioner on the San Francisco Commission on the Status of Women from 2001 to 2021. She is being remembered for her dedication as a community leader and passionate advocate for women and LGBTQ+ communities.

Commissioner Andary shared that she served with Ms. Shorter, describing her as a strong voice and a tremendous advocate for women of color and the LGBTQ+ community. She noted that Ms. Shorter served on the Commission for twenty years and said she will be deeply missed, adding that many are saddened and shocked by her untimely passing.

Commissioner Miry added that Ms. Shorter was a powerful voice for underserved communities and will be missed.

Dr. Kathy Johnson added that Andrea was a member of the SF Independent Women's Commission and was actively fighting for COSW.

Commissioner Miry shared that March marks the beginning of the Iranian/Persian holiday Nowruz and spoke about its tradition of reflection. She then expressed concern about a recent incident at San Francisco International Airport involving federal agents and a woman, stating that it traumatized a child and constituted an act of state violence. She called for the Commission to condemn the incident, seek accountability, and affirm commitment from the Mayor and other leaders to uphold Sanctuary City values and protect women and girls from state violence.

Vice President Rivera agreed, stating that this is a dangerous moment for women and immigrants and that accountability must come from leadership at all levels. She supported including these concerns in a resolution and described the incident as shameful, disturbing, and uncalled for. She noted that the woman and her child were deported to Guatemala within 12 hours and requested that their names and ages be included in the resolution.

Commissioner Miry also requested that the resolution include language referencing abuse, violence, and assault. Dr. Aroche stated that the Department would place the item on the agenda for the next month's meeting.

Vice President Rivera further requested a resolution addressing harms associated with César Chávez, including those raised by Dolores Huerta. She stated the Commission stands with Dolores Huerta, Anna, and Debra, who have shared accounts of abuse by a respected leader, and emphasized the importance of the Women's Commission in addressing such issues. She noted the difficulty and pain this has caused in the community and indicated she would work with the Department on a resolution.

### **Public Comment:**

Ms. Murcia thanked the Commission for acknowledging these issues and considering how they may unfold.

Beverly Upton, DVC, shared that the Consortium loved and will miss Andrea Shorter. She noted that over two decades, Ms. Shorter served under multiple Supervisors, three Mayors, and other city leaders, and cared deeply for survivors. She added that those involved in efforts to preserve the Commission saw her in recent weeks, during which she continued to strongly advocate for the Commission.

## **VI. GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENT : DISCUSSION**

This item is to allow members of the public to address the Commission on matters that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission and that do not appear on the agenda, as well as to suggest new agenda items for future meetings.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.