



Mayor
Daniel Lurie

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



COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 22, 2026

5:00 pm

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 Jones Lowrey called the meeting or order at 5:02 PM.

Ms. Dominique Blakely performed roll call and confirmed that 4 out of 7 Commissioners 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 June 24, 2026.

No Public Comment.

June 24, 2026, Minutes— (Roll Call Vote) Miry (motioned)/ Rivera (seconded) – 4 ayes, 0 nays – Unanimous

President Jones Lowrey opened the meeting with a memorial acknowledgment honoring the life and legacy of Dr. Estela Garcia. Vice President Rivera was invited to share remarks recognizing Dr. Garcia's longstanding contributions to the Latino community and to San Francisco.

Vice President Rivera reflected on Dr. Garcia's more than 35 years of leadership with the Instituto Familiar de la Raza (IFR), highlighting her role in the organization's growth and expansion of services. Her leadership helped strengthen IFR's presence in the community and expand its work in areas including health and wellness, violence prevention, and community-based initiatives.

Vice President Rivera also recognized Dr. Garcia's broader impact as a respected elder, mentor, counselor, and community leader. She was remembered for her wisdom, compassion, and ability to help bring communities together, resolve conflicts, rebuild relationships, and advocate for resources and support for San Francisco's Latino community. Following the remarks, a video highlighting Dr. Garcia's life, work, and contributions to the community was presented.

Dr. Diana Aroche shared personal reflections on Dr. Estella Garcia, recognizing her as a dear friend, mentor, and influential community leader. She highlighted Dr. Garcia's mentorship of women, young people, and LGBTQ+ and nonbinary communities, as well as her

contributions to feminist movements, community healing, and advocacy in San Francisco.

Dr. Aroche extended condolences to Dr. Garcia's family and shared that the family had requested time to make arrangements for a public memorial. Dr. Aroche concluded by encouraging attendees to continue honoring Dr. Garcia's spirit, legacy, and decades of service to the community.

III. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: DISCUSSION

Executive Director Aroche provided updates on the Department's current priorities and initiatives, including:

Dr. Aroche acknowledged recent sexual assault incidents in the community and reaffirmed DOSW's commitment to survivor-centered, trauma-informed services, accountability, and policies that protect and support survivors.

DOSW has received the majority of departmental action plans and is transitioning into the implementation phase. The Department will monitor progress and outcomes, with the goal of producing a one-year Women's Agenda report for Women's History Month.

DOSW supported legislation expanding family leave protections for private-sector employees by reducing the employment eligibility period from 180 to 90 days. The legislation advanced to a final vote at the Board of Supervisors. DOSW is also working on potential revisions to the San Francisco CEDAW ordinance to strengthen implementation, accountability, and alignment with the Women's Agenda.

DOSW completed recommendations for the first of five policies concerning in-custody settings, including policies related to strip searches, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department, Department of Police Accountability, and Human Rights Commission.

DOSW continues its work with the SF Strong Starts initiative, including community input sessions with Indigenous and Pacific Islander communities focused on maternal and child health outcomes. Additional sessions are planned.

Dr. Aroche announced that the August 26 Commission meeting will include a special commemoration honoring the late Commissioner Andrea Shorter in recognition of Women's Equality Day.

Commissioner Comment:

Commissioner Miry thanked Dr. Aroche for the Director's Report and noted the value of receiving the materials in advance. She asked whether DOSW had heard from community partners regarding a proposed Department of Justice rule that would allow domestic violence service grants to be terminated without an appeal process, and whether the Department was considering ways to support impacted organizations.

Dr. Aroche responded that the Department has heard concerns regarding the tight budget constraints facing agencies and is working with sister agencies and partners to safeguard existing resources. She noted ongoing conversations with the Mayor's Office about potentially reconvening a roundtable to discuss protections for agencies, as well as exploring City and philanthropic funding opportunities. She emphasized the importance of safeguarding areas that remain priorities for women in San Francisco, even if they are no longer directly overseen by the Department.

Dr. Aroche responded that the Department has not heard of a specific agency pursuing legal action. She noted that the Department is focused on moving forward with new contracts and ensuring that the programs approved in the General Fund continue. She also invited members of the public, including partner organizations, to share any relevant concerns during public comment.

Commissioner Miry also expressed concern regarding recent reports about the San Francisco Police Department's handling of rape kits,

noting the city's low clearance rate compared to federal standards and other large California counties. Drawing on her experience supporting survivors at a rape crisis center, she emphasized the importance of ensuring that evidence is properly safeguarded and processed. She urged the Commission and Department to proactively address the issue and request a report from the Police Commission on the handling of rape kits, in coordination with the Public Safety Committee, particularly given public safety's importance to the Women's Agenda.

President Jones Lowrey asked for further clarification. Commissioner Miry clarified that she would like the Police Commission and Department to provide a concurrent report directly to the Commission on the rape kit issue, rather than reporting first to other committees or task forces and coming to the Commission later. She emphasized the urgency of the issue and the Commission's historical role in supporting related services and partner organizations. She expressed support for the Public Safety Committee's planned hearings and suggested that the Commission receive a report within the same timeframe, either through a joint hearing with the Public Safety Committee or through separate hearings held within the same timeframe.

Dr. Aroche requested clarification on the Commission's desired next steps and noted that the Police Department reports to the Police Commission on policy and disciplinary matters, with the Department of Police Accountability also involved. She stated that Department staff would support efforts to facilitate a report to the Commission. She also noted that the Board of Supervisors is planning a hearing in September and that she had spoken with Supervisor Melgar about making the hearing productive.

Commissioner Miry stated that public comment at another commission meeting would not be sufficient given the significance of the issue. She proposed two actions: (1) a joint meeting with the Police Commission, consistent with past practice on significant public safety issues affecting women and girls; and (2) having the San Francisco Police Department appear before the Commission to present its response and planned actions regarding the rape kit issue.

President Jones Lowery requested clarification on the purpose of a joint commission meeting and expressed support for having the Police Department appear before the Commission. Commissioner Miry explained that a joint meeting with the Police Commission would allow both commissions to hear directly from the Police Department, ask questions, and participate equally in discussions regarding accountability and next steps, rather than being limited to public comment.

Vice President Rivera expressed concern about the severity of the issue and asked whether other departments, particularly the Department of Public Health, should be included given the potential public health and survivor-support implications. She emphasized that the issue should be approached as a broader systemic concern rather than solely a Police Department matter. She requested clarity on which agencies and stakeholders should be included so the Commission could issue a clear directive and move forward with urgency.

Dr. Aroche clarified that the upcoming September Board of Supervisors hearing may include presentations from the San Francisco Police Department, the San Francisco Department of Public Health Trauma Center, and potentially other agencies. She noted that the Government, Audit, and Oversight Committee could provide an opportunity for a broader discussion, while cautioning that involving more than two commissions could create logistical and oversight challenges.

Commissioner Miry agreed that a trauma-informed approach should address the issue from beginning to end but emphasized the importance of ensuring that the Commission on the Status of Women is involved early in the process. She expressed concern that waiting for a broader hearing could result in the Commission being among the last to receive information. She reiterated her support for formally requesting a joint meeting with the Police Commission so the Commission can be directly involved in addressing the issue from the outset.

Commissioner Andary expressed full support for Commissioner Miry's proposal, emphasizing the Police Commission's role in establishing policies and the need for the Commission to strongly advocate for the community. President Jones Lowery then moved to formally request a joint meeting with the Police Commission to discuss the processing, handling, and next steps related to rape kits in San Francisco.

The Commission unanimously supported the Commission President making the request for a joint meeting with the Police Commission. Dr. Aroche clarified that the Department of Police Accountability would also participate in the joint meeting, although its oversight authority does not extend to the civilian crime laboratory, which falls under the Police Department and the Chief of Police.

Commissioner Miry also proposed inviting San Francisco Police Department leadership to a Commission meeting to directly address the issue and answer questions. The Commission agreed to pursue an invitation for SFPD leadership to attend a September Commission meeting, subject to scheduling and agenda requirements.

Public Comment:

Taylor Stommel, Youth Coordinator for Black Women Revolt Against Domestic Violence, thanked the Director and Commission for the report and expressed support for community-based feedback from Native and Pacific Islander communities. She asked how the Department could help promote opportunities for public comment.

Ms. Stommel also highlighted the importance of ensuring survivors are aware of available sexual assault response and healthcare services, including the option to have rape kits held without immediately deciding whether to have them tested. She expressed concern that reduced confidence in the rape kit process could discourage survivors from accessing these services. She also asked whether the civilian hiring freeze may be contributing to the rape kit backlog and whether the Department could receive quarterly updates on the backlog.

IV. STATE/LOCAL LEGISLATION UPDATE

Denise Heitzenroder, Project Manager for Strategic Initiatives, provided an update on state and local legislative matters. She reported that the State Legislative Committee unanimously supported AB 1267, which would prohibit marriage and domestic partnerships for individuals under 18 in California, and noted that the bill is moving through the legislative process. She also reported that other legislation supported by the Department is progressing, with final outcomes expected after the close of the legislative session.

She provided updates on the state budget, including ongoing discussions regarding funding for counties in response to changes to Medi-Cal and other federal programs. She then reviewed several local ballot measures, including measures related to transit funding, affordable housing, a potential public bank, and updates to the City's Administrative Code. She noted that the Department successfully secured amendments preserving several reporting requirements relevant to the Commission.

Ms. Heitzenroder also reviewed proposed ballot measures that would make significant changes to City government, including expanding the City Administrator's authority, changing the local ballot measure process, and increasing mayoral authority over department heads and appointments. She noted that the latter changes could affect the Department's oversight structure and the involvement of commissions in department leadership.

Commissioner Comment:

President Jones Lowery thanked Heitzenroder for the legislative update and emphasized the importance of the work despite its complexity.

Commissioner Miry thanked staff for the ongoing legislative tracking and advocacy. She highlighted AB 2540, which focuses on expanding services and access at community colleges, noting the importance of supporting the legislation given recent reductions in reproductive healthcare access and the impact on college-aged women.

Denise explained that the legislation would expand abortion care access and information requirements beyond UC and CSU campuses to eligible community college and two-year college health centers, with an emphasis on medication abortion. She noted that the Department is tracking the legislation but has not taken an official position due to cost concerns.

Commissioner Miry asked about legislation to protect San Francisco residents involved in providing or assisting with reproductive healthcare, including abortion and contraception, as well as those involved in drag performances and gender-affirming care. Denise clarified that the Fair Chance Ordinance has been passed and provides protections related to housing and employment for individuals with convictions for activities that are not considered crimes in San Francisco, including certain activities involving drag, gender-affirming care, reproductive healthcare, and contraception. She also noted that additional “shield law” protections are primarily being considered at the state level.

Commissioner Miry emphasized the importance of the Fair Chance Ordinance, noting that reproductive healthcare providers have relocated to Northern California after facing criminal convictions in other states for providing services. She expressed appreciation that the ordinance remains in effect and provides protections for individuals affected by such laws.

Vice President Rivera thanked staff for the report and asked whether future legislative updates could more clearly identify how the legislation aligns with and informs the Women’s Agenda. She noted that additional guidance on the Commission’s oversight role and the potential positive or negative impacts on the Women’s Agenda would be helpful in prioritizing and tracking issues.

Ms. Heitzenroder and Dr. Aroche confirmed that, moving forward, legislative updates can be organized by the Women’s Agenda pillars to help the Commission better understand their relevance to its priorities and oversight responsibilities.

Dr. Aroche thanked Ms. Heitzenroder and the team for their extensive legislative work and responsiveness, particularly on recent ordinances and reporting changes, the Fair Chance Ordinance, the stroller package, and the FMLA ordinance. She emphasized the importance of quickly analyzing and responding to legislative matters, noting that some decisions require action within 24 hours.

President Jones Lowery thanked Ms. Heitzenroder for the legislative work and noted the value of engaging with state and local partners to amplify the Commission's voice. Dr. Aroche reminded the Commission that it may take formal positions on city ordinances and state or federal legislation, with those positions entered into the public record and submitted to the Board of Supervisors.

No Public Comment:

V. COMMISSIONER UPDATE: DISCUSSION

President Jones Lowery provided an update on efforts to potentially reestablish the Friends of the Commission on the Status of Women, noting that former commissioners and longtime community supporters have expressed interest in reviving the organization to support the Department's mission and community work. She shared her enthusiasm for the strong interest from former commissioners and supporters and noted that public updates will be provided as the effort develops.

Commissioner Miry raised a concern regarding publicly released federal information concerning physicians named in the Epstein files, emphasizing that none of the individuals discussed have been criminally charged. She proposed that the California Commission on the Status of Women formally ask the California Medical Board to review whether any California-licensed physicians identified in the released information warrant examination under existing professional and ethical standards. She clarified that the proposal would not name individuals or seek to adjudicate allegations, but would simply request that the appropriate licensing body review the publicly available information.

Commissioner Miry noted that she has been speaking with female healthcare providers who are interested in supporting a letter to the Medical Board and offered to lead the effort. Commissioner Andary expressed support for the request and suggested that the Commission consider working jointly with the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls.

President Jones Lowery and Commissioner Andary discussed whether the proposed inquiry should be submitted on behalf of Commissioner Miry or the Commission. Commissioner Andary supported bringing the matter forward as a Commission action, potentially in partnership with the California Commission on the Status of Women.

Vice President Rivera expressed support for the concept but requested an opportunity to review the proposed language and clarify the specific request before determining whether to participate individually or as a Commission. Commissioner Miry agreed to draft language for review.

President Jones Lowery suggested circulating the draft before the next Commission meeting to allow commissioners time to provide input and proposed also contacting the California Commission on the Status of Women and girls to gauge its awareness and interest in the matter.

Commissioner Miry confirmed that she could draft the proposed document and have it reviewed by the Deputy City Attorney, with support from the Commission Secretary.

President Jones Lowery questioned why the proposed inquiry would not identify the physicians named in the publicly released files, noting that a general reference could be perceived as unclear or disingenuous.

Commissioner Miry clarified that she was not opposed to naming individuals but had not reviewed the full body of released materials and therefore could not provide a complete list. She emphasized that the intent was to request that the appropriate California licensing

authorities review the publicly available information, rather than have the Commission conduct its own investigation.

Commissioners agreed that the matter should be developed carefully with guidance from the City Attorney.

Vice President Rivera asked for greater clarity on the intended outcome of the proposed inquiry, including whether the goal is statewide accountability, stronger local practices, or coordination with other city agencies. She suggested exploring additional strategies and potential involvement from agencies such as the Department of Public Health and the Ethics Office, as well as whether the effort could be broadened through partnerships.

Commissioner Andary suggested coordinating with the California Commission on the Status of Women and Girls and other organizations, while President Jones Lowery expressed interest in hearing the state commission's perspective.

Commissioners agreed that the issue should be tied to the public safety pillar of the Women's Agenda and the Commission's mandate.

Vice President Rivera highlighted the importance of recognizing and preserving women's contributions to San Francisco's cultural history. She shared her experience visiting London for the opening of an exhibition on Frida Kahlo that highlighted San Francisco's role in introducing her work to American audiences nearly 50 years ago. She emphasized the importance of continuing to honor women by naming streets, buildings, and other public spaces after them and preserving their legacies. She also highlighted the international recognition of San Francisco's LGBTQ+ cultural history through the exhibition of the Gilbert Baker Pride Flag in Cork, Ireland.

President Jones Lowery highlighted Black Women's Equal Pay Day and the persistent wage disparities affecting women, particularly women of color. She emphasized that the wage gap continues to require women to work longer and harder to earn less, and reaffirmed her commitment to

achieving pay equity. She also reflected positively on recent events and advocacy efforts with the Department, including rallies and meetings with City leadership, emphasizing the importance of showing up and supporting continued work toward equal rights.

Beverly Epton of the San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium highlighted concerns regarding the rape kit backlog, noting the progress made in 2016 to reduce testing delays but emphasizing that the current 14% clearance rate is unacceptable and that the City should set more ambitious goals. She also raised concerns about federal funding cuts affecting gender-based violence programs and educational institutions. Finally, she honored the contributions of former community partners and mourned the recent loss of Ayesha Louis, a domestic violence survivor and advocate who became a strong voice for survivors and their families.

VI. GENERAL PUBLIC: DISCUSSION

No Public Comment.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 6:53 pm.

