

BOARD OF APPEALS

CITY & COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES – WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2025

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 Jose Lopez and Commissioner Rick Swig.

Jesse Mainardi, Deputy City Attorney, Office of the City Attorney (CAT); Corey Teague, Zoning Administrator, Planning Department (PD); Joseph Ospital, Senior Building Inspector, Department of Building Inspection (DBI); Julie Lamarre, Executive Director; Alec Longaway, Legal Assistant.

ABSENT: Commissioner Rebecca Saroyan.

(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 and stated that the commissioners were prepared to hear the cases. He noted that, thanks to the Board of Supervisors, the Board of Appeals would have a new commissioner at the beginning of January.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

(3) ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Discussion and possible adoption of November 19, 2025 minutes.

ACTION: Upon motion by President Trasviña, the Board voted 3-0-1 (Commissioner Saroyan absent) to adopt the November 19, 2025 minutes.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

(4) SPECIAL ITEM

Recognition of Chris Buck, Urban Forester with the San Francisco Public Works, Bureau of Urban Forestry, on his numerous contributions to the Board of Appeals and the City of San Francisco. Chris Buck is retiring from City service.

SPEAKERS: President Trasviña thanked Chris Buck for his years of tremendous service to San Francisco. He stated that Mr. Buck has been a really big help to the Board and a very able representative of his department.

Vice President Lopez echoed President Trasviña's comments. He stated that Mr. Buck was an exemplary figure of commitment to the City and to the values of the Bureau of Urban Forestry.

Commissioner Swig stated that Chris Buck gave him an appreciation for the importance of trees and was the catalyst for making him a tree hugger. He acknowledged Mr. Buck's dedication and hard work in San Francisco and thanked him for taking care of the City.

Chris Buck thanked the commissioners for their heartfelt comments. He noted that in the past 20 years there had been a sea change in how the City handled street trees in San Francisco. More specifically, since Proposition E was passed in 2016, the City is now responsible for maintaining street trees. He stated that park trees are great, but the street trees of San Francisco were the true proletariat of the urban forests. He further thanked his colleague, Carla Short, who was his predecessor and the current Director of Public Works, and also thanked his wife, daughter, parents and Board staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Carla Short thanked the Board for recognizing Chris Buck's many years of service. She stated that it made her heart sing to hear that Commissioner Swig became a tree lover and tree advocate, in part, because of his experience serving on the Board and hearing from Chris Buck. She noted that Mr. Buck has dedicated his whole career to advocating for trees and to planting more trees.

Andy Levine stated that he was an architect who had worked on many projects with Chris Buck and Carla Short. He thanked Chris Buck for his dedication and wished him well in his next career.

Corey Teague thanked the Board for recognizing Chris Buck. He stated that it was really important for City employees to be recognized. He further stated that Chris Buck was a wonderful public servant who always handled himself professionally. He thanked Mr. Buck for his service.

[Executive Director Lamarre read written statements submitted by former Commissioner Ann Lazarus and former Executive Director Cynthia Goldstein].

Ann Lazarus thanked Chris Buck for his years of dedication to San Francisco. She stated that he had complete integrity and brought infinite patience to often difficult and contentious situations. She wished him a fulfilling retirement.

Cynthia Goldstein noted that during her tenure, Mr. Buck was always well-prepared for Board hearings, with a sound understanding of the applicable laws and regulations, and specific circumstances of each case. She noted that he could be counted on to submit timely briefs and was always responsive to her requests. She stated that she appreciated his unfailing professionalism and patience with the public and Board members. She wished him happiness in his retirement.

(5) APPEAL NO. 25-033

JESSICA MYRA and MEHMET OZBEK, Appellant(s) vs. DEPT. OF BUILDING INSPECTION, Respondent PLANNING DEPT. APPROVAL	589-591 Connecticut Street. Appealing the ISSUANCE on August 15, 2025, to Eric Hole, of an Alteration Permit (remodel existing two-unit building, including a horizontal addition at the rear, conversion of the existing unconditioned basement to habitable space, expansion of a portion of the first floor to accommodate a new entry for the lower unit, and upgrade of all building systems). PERMIT NO. 2023/10/23/9219. FOR FURTHER CONSIDERATION. Note: On September 30, 2025, President Trasvina denied the permit holder's request to reschedule this matter to November 19, 2025. On October 8, 2025, upon motion by Commissioner Saroyan, the Board voted 3-0-1 (Vice President Lopez absent) to continue this matter to November 19, 2025 to allow the permit holder time to revise the plans, so that they are complete and code compliant. On November 19, 2025, President Trasvina rescheduled this item to December 10, 2025 given that there was not a quorum (Vice President Lopez was absent and Commissioner Saroyan had a potential conflict with this case).
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ACTION: Upon motion by President Trasviña, the Board voted 3-0-1 (Commissioner Saroyan absent) to grant the appeal and uphold the permit on the condition that the revised plans dated November 17, 2025, be adopted, on the basis that the revised plans are Code compliant.

SPEAKERS: Eric Jacobs, agent for permit holder; Greg Wood, attorney for appellants; Corey Teague, PD; Joseph Ospital, DBI.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

(6) APPEAL NO. 25-043

SARAH LANGE, Appellant(s) vs. DEPT. OF BUILDING INSPECTION, Respondent PLANNING DEPT. APPROVAL	506 Gates Street. Appealing the ISSUANCE on September 29, 2025, to Alexia Martini, of an Alteration Permit (two-story addition to front, east elevation; add one bathroom, remodel two bathrooms; re-configure kitchen). PERMIT NO. 2024/12/11/6574. FOR HEARING TODAY.
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ACTION: Upon motion by Vice President Lopez, the Board voted 3-0-1 (Commissioner Saroyan absent) to deny the appeal and uphold the permit on the basis that it was properly issued.

SPEAKERS: Jeremy Paul, agent for appellant; Alexia Martini, permit holder; Laura Strazzo, attorney for permit holder; Fallon James, agent for permit holder; Corey Teague, PD; Joseph Ospital DBI.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None.

(7) SPECIAL ITEM: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

The Board will consider a draft letter, prepared by President Trasviña and addressed to the Board of Supervisors, which outlines the decision by the Recreation and Parks Department to disregard the 15-day appeal window for the tree removal order that was the subject of Appeal No. 25-007 @ 50 UN Plaza (on October 8, 2025 the Board denied the appeal and upheld the order). The draft letter will be considered for adoption by the Board.

ACTION: Upon motion by President Trasviña, the Board voted 3-0-1 (Commissioner Saroyan absent) to adopt the letter with the amendment from Vice President Lopez to copy the Mayor's Office.

SPEAKERS: President Trasviña stated that the Recreation and Parks Department disregarded the appeal window of a tree removal order and removed trees prior to the expiration of the appeal widow. He stated that the Board of Appeals wanted to raise the concern that it does not have the authority to sanction departments that intentionally disregard appeal timelines. He noted that disregarding the appeal timelines has an impact on the integrity of the appeals process. He stated that the Board wanted to raise this issue to the Board of Supervisors and to invite all affected agencies to work on solutions to ensure compliance. President Trasviña emphasized that the letter should not be perceived as an attack on other agencies, rather, the point was to raise awareness that the current framework lacks the checks and balances needed to ensure there is appropriate integrity for the appeal process.

Commissioner Swig stated that the Board was appalled by the city agency that disregarded the law for their convenience. He noted that the agency was being fined, and that the fine was being paid by the citizens of San Francisco. He thanked President Trasviña for the great letter.

Vice President Lopez thanked President Trasviña for the letter which he thought was appropriate given the circumstances. He suggested copying the Mayor's Office on the letter.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Josh Klipp thanked the commissioners for taking this matter up and for speaking out when a city department intentionally broke the law. He stated that it was unfortunate that in response to this situation, Phil Ginsburg (the Recreation and Parks Director) was proposing that the Public Works Code be amended to remove the right to appeal tree removal orders issued to City agencies. Mr. Klipp stated that this was disheartening and shortsighted.

Michael Nulty stated that there was a flaw in the current system because the fine is paid from one city fund to another. Mr. Nulty indicated he is opposed to taking away appeal rights.

ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, President Trasviña adjourned the meeting at 7:30 pm.

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

<https://www.sf.gov/meeting-20251210-board-of-appeals-hearing-december-10-2025>

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

https://sanfrancisco.granicus.com/player/clip/51336?view_id=6&redirect=true

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