

A Few Thoughts

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Date Wed 5/28/2025 11:51 AM
To Alonso, Rachel (ADM) <rachel.alonso@sfgov.org>

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Hi Rachel,

Below are a few thoughts about improving the San Francisco commissions that would continue to exist moving forward. I'm not sure the Taskforce would be interested in these suggestions because they aren't about streamlining the number of commissions. However, they could make our commission system more consistent and effective. They may be something to share with other commission secretaries to get further input before considering sharing with the Taskforce.

Problems/Issues

- 1) From a community member standpoint, participating in SF commissions by attending and providing public comment may be a frustrating and confusing experience because there is very little consistency:
 - a) Different agenda formats and fonts; very different ways in which items are noted on agendas. There are also different styles of minutes (some minimal records and some details records of what everyone said)
 - b) Commissions organize webpages very differently.
 - c) Each commission interprets required procedures differently (and likely gets different nuanced guidance by separate deputy city attorneys); this includes varying public comment procedures. Therefore, members of the public have to learn each commission's culture to understand how to attend and effectively communicate with staff and commissioners.
- 2) There is no standard HR or departmental/commission orientation for commissioners. The result is that onboarding of new commissioners is not consistent throughout the city. Each commissioner may have received very different general information from their secretary, departmental HR staff, and City Attorney staff. Even within one commission, onboarding experiences can widely vary because there are no standards. (In 2016 I created the attached suggested list of topics for secretaries to use in their onboarding processes-however, not everyone has that info at this point, not everyone interprets that list similarly or even uses it, and the list has not been updated.)
- 3) Training of new commission secretaries can widely vary because departmental staff rarely understand the work of the commission or complex role of the secretary. This leads to some secretaries having to orient themselves. They may also have to develop policies and procedures that did exist before they were hired but were not appropriately retained or passed along to the new secretary.
- 3) Commission secretaries are often the only staff members in their department who know the work of the commission. We all have varying difficulty identifying departmental staff to fill in for us when we are

out for planned time off. This is especially difficult with unplanned time off. This seems to be an unnecessary burden on the secretaries-which could negatively impact the functionality of a commission.

4) There are currently no commissioner evaluations to give any feedback to commissioners from the department staff/leaders, community members, or their commissioner colleagues. In 2025, feedback seems important so we can ensure our commissioners continue to evolve into effective leaders for our communities.


Suggested Remedies

1) Create a "Clerk of the Commissions" type of position which would be housed in the Controller's Office or Office of the City Administrator. This position would be responsible for:

- a) Working with DHR on an ongoing basis to develop/update and ensure implementation of a consistent citywide commissioner onboarding process from DHR, commission secretaries, and Deputy City Attorneys.
- b) Work with DHR to identify the city-wide required DHR/department training modules for commissioners to complete. In addition, develop specific training modules for commissioners to complete throughout the year.
- c) Work with DHR to develop standard city-wide onboarding for commission secretaries. Also work with departmental staff to ensure there is appropriate onboarding of departmental information.
- d) Create standards for SF commission agendas and possibly a range of options for minutes due to the differing regulatory requirements of some commissions.
- e) Create standards for commission webpages.
- f) Work with City Attorney's Office to develop legal information that can be standardized for every commission.
- g) This person could serve as back-up for commission secretaries in emergencies and/or help find other commission secretaries who work in the same hearing rooms to be back up as needed. This person would also maintain an updated list of commission secretary contact information.
- h) Lead a committee to develop commissioner evaluations. Evaluations could include tracking whether commissioners completed their required citywide DHR and departmental training modules, feedback from departmental leaders and staff, feedback from other commissioners, and feedback from community members.
- i) Serve as advisor on commissions to the City-as needed.
- j) Assist the Mayor's Office and BOS in vetting possible commissioners.
- k) (This position would not supervise commission secretaries. Instead, it would serve as a resource and provide guidance.)

Thanks for reviewing and providing any feedback on whether these are relevant suggestions.

Mark Morewitz, MSW
Health Commission Executive Secretary



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ORIENTATION FOR COMMISSIONERS/BOARD MEMBERS

- 1. City-Wide Commission/Board Roles and Responsibilities**
 - a. City Charter Sections
 - b. Public Comment Procedures
 - c. Commission/Board Tips
 - d. Commonly Used Parliamentary Language/Actions
- 2. Commission/Board Specific Structure and Culture**
 - a. Bylaws/Rules of Order
 - b. Attendance Policy
 - c. Current Commission/Board Meeting Schedules
 - d. Current Commission/Board Committee Assignments
 - e. Other relevant materials
- 3. Commissioner/Board Member Information**
 - a. Biographies
 - b. Contact information
 - c. Secretary Resume
- 4. Director Information**
 - a. Biography
 - b. Contact information.
- 5. Current Department Documents**
 - a. Most recent annual report
 - b. Most recent budget
 - c. Department organization chart
 - d. Other relevant materials
- 6. Department Human Resource Information**
 - a. Processing paperwork for hire
 - b. Payroll schedule
 - c. Information regarding obtaining badges/keys
- 7. Required City Forms & Trainings**
 - Sunshine Ordinance Training
 - Ethics Training
 - Statement of Incompatible Activities
 - SEI Forms
 - Sexual Harassment Training

8. Logistics Information

- Parking
- Restroom codes
- Miscellaneous

9. Department Staff Meetings/Tours

List Department Staff/Sections to assist with scheduling meetings/tours