

City Administrator's Justifications to the Streamlining Task Force for Eliminating or Combining Five to Six Advisory and Governance Bodies on September 17, 2025

Public Works Commission

The Public Works Commission (PWC) was created by Proposition B (2020) to oversee the Department of Public Works after the planned spin-off of its Operations Division into the Department of Sanitation and Streets. Proposition B (2022) ended the spin-off, consolidating all Public Works contract and budget approvals under the Public Works Commission. The Streamlining Task Force will consider on September 17 eliminating both the “*Public Works Commission*” (estimated cost of \$715,570) annually, and the “*Sanitation and Streets Commission*” (estimated cost of \$251,839 annually), or potentially combining the two commissions.

The BLA analysis shows in Appendix 7 only that the cost of consolidating the Public Works Commission with another, unnamed Commission would result in a paltry \$87,535 in savings (just 0.0005505% of the \$15.9 *billion* City budget). It's another example of being penny wise, pound foolish. No costs were presented for *combining* the “*Sanitation and Streets Commission*” with another body. And the BLA's Appendix 6 on cost savings from *eliminating* boards and commissions listed neither of the Public Works commissions.

By way of justifying combining or eliminating either Commission overseeing the Department of Public Works, the Streamlining Task Force lamely asserts that since public participation (apparently during Commission meetings) has significantly waned over time — in the first two years, 107 and 54 comments were made, respectively, and in the most recent year, only a handful of comments have been made, largely from the same two individuals — it suggests limited community reliance on having the two Commissions as forums. The Task Force brazenly claims subjectively that public trust has been restored since the corruption scandal that led to the creation of the two commissions, so eliminating both Commissions might not pose any opposition.

Commission on Environment

The Task Force asserts that because the Commission on the Environment (CoE) has a broader mandate than other bodies it overlaps with, there may be potential for consolidation, and suggests potentially eliminating the Urban Forestry Council (UFC), and having the CoE take on some urban canopy advisory functions. Otherwise, the Task Force may alternatively decide to eliminate the UFC altogether. The BLA's Appendix 4 shows that both the CoE and UFC have no full-time staff “*hard costs*,” so it is unlikely their part-time “*soft costs*” staff would disappear and would be retained for their other job functions, in effect saving City governance not one red cent. Neither body is listed in Appendix 6 (estimates for *elimination*) or in Appendix 7 (estimates for *consolidation*).

The Task Force also brazenly claims subjectively that because the Environment Department conducts public outreach and engagement as part of its normal department operations to, gathers feedback on specific topics or projects, there are other pathways for public input outside of the commission structure apparently to justify eliminating both the CoE and the UFC.

Port Commission

Under Charter Section B3.581(h), the Commission nominates and the Mayor appoints the Port Authority's Executive Director, who serves at the pleasure of the Commission. The Task Force will likely vote to change the “*hiring authority*” to only the Mayor, stripping the Port Commission from nominating a director, and putting the Port Commission in a “*consultative responsibilities*” role only, as the Task Force is dead set on doing to all other Boards and Commissions that have historically been granted the ability to nominate their Department Heads from a short list of three candidates, by enforcing “*alignment*” of the Port Commission to the Task Force's standard *governance template*.

For the hell of it, City Administrator staff supporting the Streamlining Task Force has also recommended the Task Force forcibly “*align*” the Port Commission to the largely subjective and inflexible “*governance template*” to allow Port Commission members to be removed by the Mayor *at will*, and remove the Charter provision that allows Port Commissioners to be recalled by voters.

Public Utilities Commission

The Public Utilities Citizens' Advisory Committee's scope of recommendations is limited to the long-term strategic, financial and capital improvement plans of the SFPUC. Whereas the Advisory Committee — with part-time employee “*soft costs*” of just \$58,307 that likely won't disappear — may only provide recommendations, the SFPUC Commission itself oversees the same topics, and more, and holds approval authority for various departmental functions, such as budget and contracts. The public may continue to engage with the SFPUC department via the SFPUC Commission on such topics. Currently, the Advisory Committee's members are appointed by the Board of Supervisors, including one from each Supervisorial District.

The staff recommendation to the Streamlining Task Force is to change the larger Public Utility Commission's current role to nominate a candidate for the PUC General Manager, or enter into an individual contract with a General Manager, also to a “*consultative role*” only role and eliminate the Commission's sole authority to fire the General Manager as a department head, and also change the City Charter §15.105 provision that SFPUC Commission members can only be removed “*for cause*” to removing Commissioners “*at will*.” But the staff recommendation also creatively suggests that the Task Force “*may wish to partially deviate from the Governance Commission template*” and perhaps allow **only** the Port Commission to continue nominating a department head.

The Task Force's recommendation is to “*consider keeping*” the “*Public Utilities Rate Fairness Board*,” which assists the SFPUC with maintaining transparency and accountability on utility rates set for both residential and retail customers. The BLA report notes the Rate Fairness Board has a scant \$9,824 in part-time employee *soft costs*. Staff have recommended “*aligning*” the Fairness Board to the arbitrary template by moving the establishing authority from the City Charter to the Administrative Code

Recreation and Parks Commission and PROSAC

The “Parks, Recreation and Open Spaces Committee” (PROSAC) provides written comments to the Parks Department on the Department's proposed plans (strategic, capital, operational), provides input on departmental acquisitions, conducts two public hearings related to the budget, liaises between the Recreation and Park Commission and residents, and reports quarterly to the Recreation and Park Commission on issues heard at PROSAC. These two bodies reportedly overlap substantially in terms of topics that they review (according to the Streamlining Task Force), but they play different roles — with PROSAC providing initial community input and feedback, and the Recreation and Park Commission acting as the Department's governing body.

Staff advising the Streamlining Task Force assert advisory committees should bring outside expertise that would otherwise be missing from government, or create pathways for public involvement on an issue. City Administrator staff assert Rec and Park has numerous pathways for the public to get involved in departmental decision-making, with the department conducting extensive engagement around all capital projects and holds two or three public budget meetings for San Francisco residents to weigh in on department priorities before the budget goes to the Recreation and Park Commission. City Administrator staff also claim that because Rec and Park is also a field organization with over 1,000 employees working in parks, playgrounds, and open spaces throughout San Francisco, and its employees interact with residents each and every day listening to feedback and implementing changes and improvements on the spot, perhaps PROSAC can be eliminated or combined with the larger Parks Commission. Staff assert that because San Franciscans interact with the Parks Department through their local gardener, recreation center staff, or maintenance worker, and by contrast there are typically few, or no, public comments raised during PROSAC meetings, perhaps it would be OK to eliminate or combine PROSAC with the larger Parks Commission.

The BLA report acknowledges PROSAC costs just \$25,110 annually — all of which are “*soft costs*” of part-time Park Department staff who will still keep their jobs performing other duties, which won't save the City another red cen. That's laughably small, 0.000157925% of the \$15.9 billion City Budget. That's a miserly one-and-a-half *ten-thousandths* of one percent! It's also chump change in the scheme of things. This isn't just sheer nonsense; it's plainly completely bonkers to eliminate PROSAC.

My former *Westside Observer* columnist, Nancy Wuerfel, who worked so hard advocating for PROSAC, must be rolling over in her grave in a fit of laughter in the great beyond! Is this what the “*Prop. D*” Astroturf backers though would bring “*efficiency*” to City governance?

Are the five members of this Streamlining Task Force that hell bent on saving the City a mere \$25K as part of their legacy?

Finally, the larger Rec and Park Commission has traditionally nominated candidates for General Manager (GM) of the Recreation and Park Department to the Mayor, and may remove the GM by the Commission's own initiative. That's recommended to also be changed to a "*consultative*" role only. Again, City Administrator staff supporting the Streamlining Task Force has also recommended the Task Force forcibly "*align*" the Rec and Park Commission to the largely inflexible "*governance template*" to change Park Commission members from can only be removed "*for cause*," to allowing Commissioner removal by the Mayor "*at will*."