

October 8, 2024

\$8.5 Million Raised Through Sep. 21 to Reduce Citizen Oversight Reject “Prop. D” Eliminating Transparent Oversight

Vote “No” on “Prop. D” and “Yes” on “Prop. E” on November 5

**“Prop. D” Is a Power Grab to Hand Any Mayor Too Much Power
Proponent Kanishka Cheng Wants Health Commission Eliminated
Seven Former Elected Officials Call for Criminal Investigation**

**“Prop. D” Eliminates Health Commission and
Oversight of Laguna Honda Hospital**

Supervisor Melgar Wrongly Opposed Placing “Prop. E” on the Ballot

by Patrick Monette-Shaw



Kanishka Cheng — once a legislative aide to former Supervisor Mark Farrell and *Founder of Together SF* — is the mastermind culprit and official proponent of “Prop. D”.

Late-Breaking News October 18:

In response to an e-mail I sent today to City Supervisors forwarding my attached article questioning whether Supervisor Melgar was OK with eliminating the Health Commission and its oversight of Laguna Honda Hospital, she belatedly responded saying that she is not, writing: “*What Kanishka and her husband [Jay Cheng] are doing to our City sucks.*” Melgar’s private correspondence response was a day late and a dollar short. Voters won’t know that!

If “*Prop. D*” passes and the Health Commission is abolished in the process, we’ll have Melgar and Supervisors Dorsey, Engardio, and Stefani to blame for 1) Not having signed on to Supervisor Peskin’s measure to place “*Prop. E*” on the ballot, 2) Not having stated in the Voter Guide that “*Prop. D*” sucks (as Melgar now belatedly says) or that the four Supervisors support “*Prop. E*,” and 3) Melgar’s response to a *Westside Observer* D-7 candidate questionnaire saying she didn’t support “*Prop. E*.”

In response to the October 9 *Observer* candidate- questionnaire asking which of the two ballot measures candidates supported, Melgar’s skimpy 30-word response stated: “*I support neither. I voted no on E at the Board and did not vote on D, as they gathered signatures. I support Mayor Breed's proposal for comprehensive Charter reform.*” There’s her true colors, in her own words!

Unfortunately, Breed’s Charter reform isn’t on our November ballot. Only “*Prop. D*” and “*Prop. E*” are on the ballot. Asked which ballot measure she supports, Melgar whiffed. After all, silence = complicity. Let’s hope the Health Commission isn’t abolished!

Earlier Late-Breaking News:

On Monday, October 7 an e-mail from the “*Mark Farrell for Mayor*” committee announced three former San Francisco mayors had accused Farrell of campaign finance violations involving “*Prop. D*”. That’s a strong reason to **vote “No” on “Prop. D”!**

Farrell downplayed the severity of the complaint. He neglected to include in his e-mail that the “*accusation*” involves his alleged criminal conduct, and that the three mayors had requested a criminal investigation be expedited prior to the November 5 election.

The “*accusation*” was actually an undated formal letter to California Attorney General Rob Bonta and San Francisco District Attorney Brooke Jenkins, signed by former Mayor’s Art Agnos, Willie Brown, and Frank Jordan, and co-signed by former City Attorney Louise Renne, former San Francisco Supervisor Angela Alioto, former State Senator Mark Leno, Former Superior Court Judge and former Ethics Commissioner Quentin Kopp, and by founding partner John Kecker of the Kecker, Van Nest, and Peters, LLP law firm. The letter was reportedly sent or delivered on Monday,

October 7.

The letter alleges there is a *prima facie* case against Farrell involving funneling hundreds of thousands of dollars from the “*Mayor Mark Farrell for Yes on Prop D*” committee into his separate campaign for mayor. That criminal investigation could prove Farrell was the head of a private criminal plot as a candidate for mayor.

Proponents and their supporters of “*Prop. D*” on the November 5 ballot have poured \$8.5 million into two campaign committees backing former interim Mayor Mark Farrell’s misguided ballot measure. They’re desperate to buy passage of “*Prop. D*”.

It’s a clear trojan horse, because despite “*Prop. D*’s” claim it would rid excessive bureaucracy in San Francisco government, it’s actually a wolf-in-sheep’s-clothing disguise designed to prevent voters from understanding it’s a ballot measure to hand Farrell additional “*strong mayor*” powers, and simultaneously eviscerate citizen-involved oversight of City government should he win his race to replace Mayor Breed as mayor in City Hall Room 200.

“*Prop. D*” will take a sledgehammer to decades of government reform initiated and approved by San Francisco voters. It will foster special-interest influence. “*Prop. D*’s” backers are thirsty for this!

To the extent Farrell downplayed the severity of the three mayor’s letter to Attorney General Bonta calling for a criminal investigation of Farrell’s ballot committee, it illustrates Farrell is incapable of shame!

You can bet venture capitalist Mark Moritz (who has donated \$500,000), and Farrell’s well-healed millionaire and billionaire friends like Thomas Coates (\$250,000) and Linda Coates (\$250,000), John Pritzker (\$200,000), Bill Oberndorf (\$195,000 to perhaps \$345,000), and other donors to Farrell’s candidate-controlled committee, will probably contribute another one or two million dollars before November 5. Moritz also dropped at least another \$2.5 million into a separate so-called “*independent expenditure committee*” supporting “*Prop. D*.” With \$8.5 million donated so far through September 21, what’s another couple of million dollars between billionaire and millionaire friends when they are trying to buy City Hall?

“*Prop. D*” creates a breeding ground for more corruption in City government, eliminating accountability, transparency, and oversight. Don’t be fooled!

As Steve Bennen recently noted in an MSNBC article, “*Every good heist story invariably involves a crew.*” Some of the worst heists involve politics and politicians. Heist crews set out to essentially steal, because they fear they might not win on the merits alone. So, they assemble a team or two to pull off the political robbery. Nixon had his Watergate plumbers. Convicted felon Trump assembled his mob to attack the nation’s capitol on January 6, 2021.

Former interim mayor Mark Farrell — who served just five months and 18 days as interim mayor in 2018 — assembled his heist team: Kanishka Cheng, Margaux Kelly, *TogetherSF*, another entity named, *TogetherSF Action*, and most of all billionaire venture capitalist Michael Mortiz. This heist team’s purpose involves a scheme to rob the City of important citizen-assisted oversight of, and participation in, the City’s boards and commissions system.

Their broader goal is to hand Farrell a “*strong-mayor system*” coup, should he win election as San Francisco’s mayor on November 5. We’ve been warned “*Prop. D*” would create an “*all-powerful mayor.*” Don’t fall for it!

Kanishka and Margaux — both of whom were former legislative aides to then-supervisor Farrell — and their teams have been very busy getting the heist plans on track, hoping to deliver the loot to Farrell — with exorbitant funding from Moritz.

That brings us to the deceptive November 2024 “*Prop. D*” placed on the ballot after collecting almost 80,000 petition signatures.

“*Prop. D*” City Commissions and Mayoral Authority

The proposed heist embedded in “*Prop. D*” struggled in December 2023 to even clearly and accurately name itself. It had a terrible self-inflicted identity crisis.

In December 2023, *TogetherSF* announced two ballot measures for the November 2024 election to reform San Francisco’s City Charter. One was titled “*Cut the Dysfunctional Bureaucracy Initiative.*” It was written to cut the number of city

boards, commissions, and other advisory bodies in half. But it had a fatal flaw: Eliminating certain commissions would kick oversight responsibilities over to the Board of Supervisors, not to the Mayor. *The San Francisco Standard* noted it was an “*embarrassing blunder*,” which *TogetherSF* pulled from the Elections Department within two weeks of having submitted it.

The San Francisco Standard [reported](#) that *TogetherSF*’s other proposed ballot measure — “*We Need SF To Work Initiative*” — would have given the mayor sole discretion to hire and fire department heads, strengthen the mayor’s ability to control commissions, and allow for the creation of deputy mayor positions. “*Prop. D*” was written to hand the mayor more power under a “*strong mayor*” system of governance. Voter’s aren’t particularly fond of strong mayors usurping legislative and citizen-involved oversight.

For his part, *Mission Local* star investigative reporter Joe Eskenazi [reported](#) on May 27 that *TogetherSF* announced on May 1, 2024 *TogetherSF* had apparently pulled the “*We Need SF To Work Initiative*” off the ballot (after obtaining the necessary number of petition signatures to place it on the ballot, probably at great signature-gathering expense), “*because it looked like it was going to lose*.”

That’s because (as Eskenazi noted) while voters bristle at the message behind “*make San Francisco’s strong mayor even stronger*,” voters like the idea of reducing this City’s clutter of commissions.

TogetherSF eventually managed to place a revised version of the “*Cut the Dysfunctional Bureaucracy Initiative*” on the November ballot after re-collecting the required number of signatures, but the City Attorney’s Office creatively gave the final, single ballot measure a shiny new name of “*City Commissions and Mayoral Authority*.” That measure, commonly called “*Prop. D*,” contains much of the same stuff voters didn’t like in the strong mayor “*We Need SF To Work Initiative*.” *TogetherSF*’s two initial measures were just rinsed off, dressed up, and given a single new name.

But it wasn’t just *TogetherSF* that had an identity crisis with what to name it’s ballot measure. Indeed, Mark Farrell’s candidate-controlled expenditure committee first named itself on March 18 “*Mark Farrell for the Cut the Dysfunctional Bureaucracy Initiative*.” That initial baptismal name was rapidly changed to the “*Mark Farrell for the We Need SF to Work Initiative*.” Which was then rechristened with a combination of the two, embarrassingly named the long-winded “*Mark Farrell for the We Need SF to Work Initiative and the Cut the Dysfunctional Bureaucracy Initiative*.”

Wow! Most birth certificates contain a first, middle, and last name (perhaps incorporating a hyphenated last name), followed by a “Junior” or “Senior.” How do you even fit a 17-word name onto a campaign donation check, before or after baptism? *What was Farrell and his heist-team thinking?*

Realizing it had a way-too-long committee name, Farrell eventually renamed his committee for a fourth time to the “*Mayor Mark Farrell for Yes on Prop D*” committee. That at least can fit on a campaign donation check, or not cause *ActBlue* to choke processing contribution transactions. All four committees have all along shared the same Committee ID #1467847.

TogetherSF’s final version of “*Prop. D*” pulls the wool over voter’s eyes: Voters may not realize that if they pass “*Prop. D*” thinking they are voting for the latter to reduce the number of boards and commissions, they’ll actually be doing the former, including enacting “*strong mayor*” enhancements.

“*Prop. D*’s” Chopping Block

The Ballot Simplification Committee official [Digest](#) in the voter guide summarizes what “*Prop. D*” proposes.

The digest notes “*Prop. D*” will limit the City to a total of 65 commissions, boards, task forces and other advisory bodies, essentially calling to remove 50 of the 115 current advisory bodies, absent any **cost-benefit analysis** at all beforehand. “*Prop. D*” will retain 20 Charter commissions, including Police, Fire, Recreation and Park, Municipal Transportation Agency, Public Utilities, and Ethics, and those overseeing City employee health benefits and retirement, along with commissions required by federal or state law.

But it would remove 24 Charter commissions, including the Public Health Commission, Library Commission, Human Rights Commission, Human Services Commission, Arts Commission, and the Commission on the Environment, among other commissions. Those 24 named Commissions face the immediate chopping block.

That also means of the other potential 45 advisory bodies that *might* be re-authorized to fit in the artificial cap of just 65 bodies, the 24 Charter commissions being removed along with the other 71 current advisory bodies — for a total of 95 advisory bodies — will be pitted against one another for the 45 “seats” remaining in the 65 bodies artificial limit.

Since “Prop. D” leaves it up to a five-member temporary task force to determine which advisory bodies will survive, voters will have no educated and informed guidance before voting for or against “Prop. D”. Voters will have no way of divining which of the 95 other advisory bodies will survive the chopping block.

That includes eliminating such bodies as the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force (regarding disputes over access to public records), the Urban Forestry Council, the Citizens’ General Obligation Bond Oversight Committee, the Small Business Commission (which is set for repeal), Juvenile Probation Commission, Health Commission, Children and Families Commission, Disability and Aging Commission, Mayor’s Disability Council, Veterans’ Affairs Commission, Open Space Advisory Committee, Capital Planning Committee, Behavioral Health Commission, Mayor’s Disaster Council, and the Commission on the Status of Women. They’ll all be pitted against one another for one of the 45 remaining seats.

And to the extent these bodies conduct open public meetings and take testimony from members of the public, that venue will be closed off, forcing the public to deal with unresponsive City departments.

On July 8, the *Mission Local* [noted](#):

“Farrell did not start the effort; it was initiated by TogetherSF, the big-money group that shares extensive ties with the Farrell campaign. TogetherSF is led by a former Farrell aide, and three members of his campaign team are former or current TogetherSF staff.”

An earlier *Mission Local* [article](#) on May 9 cited a text message from Farrell’s paid campaign consultant Margaux Kelly saying that Kanishka Cheng, was “guiding the ship.” *Mission Local* mentioned the term “guiding the ship” may lead to legal scrutiny about illegal campaign coordination between a candidate’s election committee and an “independent expenditure committee.” Hopefully, Attorney General Bonta will take notice!

From my perspective, Cheng is more like guiding the heist crew, with Farrell bowing to her lead.

Before getting to what’s actually in the “Prop. D” legal text, it’s instructive to look at the official “Proponent Argument” posted on the San Francisco Department of Elections web site and available [here](#). It was authored and signed by Farrell’s former Legislative Aide and now CEO of “TogetherSF Action,” Kanishka Cheng. Importantly, it was date-time stamped as submitted to the Elections Department on August 15, 2024 at 10:11 a.m.

Her paid 289-word Proponent argument — which cost \$778 to have printed and included in San Francisco’s Voter Guide — falsely claimed the City had “approximately” 130 Board and commissions, and other advisory bodies. That was absolute bunk. Complete nonsense. Kanishka appears to have taken that 130 number from the cover sheet accompanying her petition seeking Elections Department approval to begin collecting signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot. The document was submitted on January 22 and date-time stamped as approved on January 25, 2024.

But between January 25 and August 15, San Francisco’s Civil Grand Jury released its report “[Commission Impossible?: Getting the Most From San Francisco’s Commissions](#)” released on June 20, 2024. The Grand Jury report listed only 115 boards and commissions in the City, and actually recommended abolishing just 15 and retaining the other 100 bodies.

So, when Kanishka repeated in her official Proponent argument dated August 15, she was lying claiming there were 130 advisory bodies and commissions. That was not so. There were 115. She just repeated her January lie there were 130.

And rather than recommending eliminating only 15 of the policy bodies, Cheng wielded her meat cleaver tightly, demanding voters axe 65 of the 130 bodies.

The 74-page legal [text](#) of the “Prop. D” measure states “*sixteen months after [passage of “Prop. D”] there shall be no more than 65 appointive boards or commissions in the City and County government.*” So, what’s on the chopping block? We don’t know for certain. The legal text of “Prop. D” **only** lists which of the Commissions listed in the Charter are on the chopping block, not other advisory bodies that may be enumerated in the City’s Administrative Code.

In addition, “*Prop. D’s*” legal text specifies:

- The powers, duties, and functions of any appointive board or commission that is dissolved shall be transferred to the head of the department subject to the authority of that appointive board or commission, or potentially to another executive agency. If the department head cannot legally assume those duties or functions, the Mayor, in consultation with the City Attorney, may transfer or eliminate an appointive board or commission’s powers, duties, or functions.
- Currently, the Mayor’s appointments to boards and commissions are generally subject to Board of Supervisors confirmation or rejection. But “*Prop. D*” would allow all of the Mayor’s appointments without Board review.
- All adjudicatory functions exercised by appointive boards or commissions shall be performed by a hearing officer or Administrative Law Judges instead. The City Administrator shall coordinate the hiring or contracting for hearing officers or ALJ’s. “*Prop. D*” makes no mention of what these new hires might cost annually. Why weren’t they mentioned?
- All references in the Charter to an appointive board or commission that is not created or otherwise renewed shall hereafter be transferred to the department having responsibility for the subject matter in question.
- No less than two-thirds of members appointed to any appointive board or commission shall be appointed by the Mayor. The Board of Supervisors would have authority to only appoint up to one-third of the members of those commissions. All appointees to boards or commissions shall be subject to removal by their appointing officer without cause. This is the largest part of the “*power grab*” lurking in the “*Prop. D*” Trojan Horse, designed to massively increase “*strong mayor*” power by the heist crew.

The idea of being able to remove Commissioners and/or Department Heads, ***without*** just cause, is alarming!

- Give the Mayor sole authority to appoint and remove most City department heads. That’s a recipe for disaster! Currently, some commissions that oversee and set policy for City departments generally nominate three candidates to the mayor to serve as their department head, and the Mayor has authority to appoint the department head only from the candidates the commission nominates.

“*Prop D*” appears to remove the provision that some Commissions can nominate three candidates that the mayor would be required to choose from.

Worse, currently only a Commission has authority to remove their department head, and only for official misconduct. “*Prop. D*” may get rid of the “*official misconduct*” provision, allowing any mayor to remove a department head without cause. The “*Prop. D*” Trojan Horse heisters are hell bent on this “*strong mayor*” approach to City government.

- Except where required to comply with federal or state law, all appointive boards and commissions established by ordinance shall only be **advisory** to the Board of Supervisors and Mayor, and may not exercise any administrative, governmental, or management powers, and have no decision-making authority. This is more of the “*strong mayor*” Trojan Horse heist.

The City Controller’s statement in the voter guide claims that by eliminating 27 of just Commissions, it could yield savings of \$85,000 in operating costs annually for each Commission, for a combined savings of \$2.3 million annually. That estimate appears to be low-balled, since the Health Commission’s Executive Secretary Mark Morewitz alone was paid \$188,146 in the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2024, excluding fringe benefits.

Unfortunately, the City Controller attempted to hide the increase in City costs of adding Administrative Law Judges or hearing officers, low-balling that could cost between \$450 and \$2,000 per hearing. The Controller creatively didn’t include the denominator for the other half of the equation: How many hearings are held annually across those 27 Commissions? For all we know, the hearing officers and Administrative Law judges may end up costing the city more than the dubious projected savings of \$2.3 million!

In addition, the Ballot Simplification Digest in the voter guide notes “*Prop. D*” would remove 24 Charter commissions, but the Board of Supervisors could later reestablish these bodies by ordinance, but only as **advisory** commissions ***without*** any decision-making authority.

“*Prop. D*” is clearly a Mayoral power grab, and would be disastrous for the City, handing far too much power over City affairs to whoever becomes the Mayor of San Francisco.

It’s disguised as a good government measure to rid the City of waste in government, but it will undo vital community oversight of what the City is doing in our names, placing decisions behind closed backroom deals.

Madeline Matz in her *48 Hills* web site [article](#) noted, “*Proposition D would scrap the City’s system of oversight boards, commissions, and committees, [and] is antithetical to our local democracy.*”

Crime Eliminating the Health Commission

“*Prop. D*” involves the crime of eliminating the Health Commission entirely, apparently with Mark Farrell’s and billionaire Moritz’s express approval. And apparently, Supervisor Melgar’s vote on July 23 at the Board of Supervisors **opposing** placing “*Prop. E*” on the ballot signaled that she, too, might be OK with eliminating the Health Commission!

The “*Prop. D*” heist:

- Wrongly claims there are six “*commissions*” related to the Public Health Department. That’s a lie. The “Health Service Board” does **not** advise the Department of Public Health, it advises the Health Service System department about City employee and City retiree health benefits. The Civil Grand Jury made a major mistake asserting the Health Services Board is part of the “Public Health” category. It is not. The CGJ should have listed the HSS Board in the “Government Employees” category.
- In actuality, there are only two “*Commissions*” in the “Public Health” category: The Behavioral Health Commission created in 1957 and the Health Commission created in 1984 — not the “*six commissions related to the Public Health Department*” Kanishka falsely alleged in her “*Proponent Argument*” for the Voter Guide. Both Commissions were created due to state and Federal laws in order for the City to access and receive federal funds, such as Medicare and Medi-Cal reimbursement. Does *TogetherSF Action* and Mark Farrell want to risk losing federal funding without proper Health Commission oversight? I’m shocked. But not surprised.
- Disturbingly, when Kanishka filed her “*Proponent Argument*” with the Elections Department on August 15, she neglected to tell voters “*Prop. D*” would eliminate the Health Commission entirely. She and Farrell (if not billionaire Moritz) must know that the Health Commission is the governing and policy-making body of the Department of Public Health, and is charged with managing and controlling our City’s two public hospitals (San Francisco General Hospital and Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center); oversees 15 primary care and behavioral health centers in the San Francisco Health Network for adults, children and families; regulates emergency medical services; and oversees all matters pertaining to the preservation, promotion, and protection of the lives, health, and mental health of San Francisco residents. A Commission must provide oversight over all of that.

In addition, this Commission oversees the Department of Public Health’s \$2.2 *billion* budget for FY 2024–2025, including overseeing over \$600 million in contracts awarded to provide healthcare-related contracts and services, and is responsible for SFDPH’s 5,700 employees.

It’s irresponsible to think that those oversight functions could simply be transferred to and assumed by the Director of Public Health. Kanishka appears not to have bothered to stop and think about the cost to the City budget for an increase in hiring additional SFDPH employees to assist the Director of Public Health in assuming the duties of the unpaid Health Commissioners, which might cost millions more annually.

- Recklessly, Kanishka performed a massive leap of logic asserting that despite having six “*commissions*” related to the Department of Public Health, San Francisco still has a “*raging fentanyl crisis.*” This is just shameless intellectual dishonesty on her part and the part of *TogetherSF*.

Eliminating the Department of Public Health won’t end the City’s “*fentanyl crisis.*” It would just **worsen** the fentanyl crisis. But it’s not just the fentanyl crisis.

- At the point Ms. Cheng paid for her “*Proponent Argument*” in mid-August, she ridiculed the Behavioral Health Commission and the Health Commission. Of interest, the Civil Grand Jury recommended retaining — not abolishing — both Commissions. She wants them both abolished. More proof of her intellectual dishonesty.

Follow the Money: Two Committees Raised \$8.5 Million So Far

The San Francisco’s campaign finance disclosure rules require candidates and ballot measure committees report their contributions received and expenditures made at periodic intervals using on-line electronic submission forms. Revenue and expenses year-to-date reports due on September 26, 2024 were shockers.

The [Form 460](#) for the “*Mayor Mark Farrell for Yes on D*” committee supporting “*Prop. D*” (ID Number 1467847) reported it raised a staggering \$2,262,251 in contributions received year-to-date between January 1 and September 21, 2024. (On October 6, that total appears to have climbed with an additional \$158,500, to \$2,420,751).

For its part, the [Form 460](#) for the long-winded independent expenditure committee named “*Committee to Fix SF Government, Yes On D, No On E, A Coalition of Civic Organizations Dedicated to Improving the City’s Future*” (ID #1464767) raised an even more staggering \$6,301,720 in contributions.

That’s a combined total of \$8.56 million contributed to get “*Prop. D*” passed by voters!

Voters need to ask: “*Show me the money*”: What has that money been spent on? Here’s a brief recap gleaned from the eight Ethics Commission Form 460 campaign finance reports filed on-line through September 26:

- Of the \$2.26 million Farrell’s “*Mayor Mark Farrell for Yes on D*” committee has raised, it has spent just \$1.15 million through September 21 — just 50.7% of funds raised.
- Of the \$1.15 million in Farrell’s candidate-controlled committee expenses, his committee tried to creatively claim it had spent \$439,811 on “*shared expenses*” between his “*Prop. D*” ballot committee and his official candidate committee for his candidate race to be re-elected Mayor (Committee ID # 1466726), ostensibly for shared office space and shared staff. That \$439,811 in “*creative accounting*” translates to a whopping 38.4% of his total \$1.15 million in spending through September 21.
- On August 16, the *Mission Local* [reported](#) Farrell’s team has drawn scrutiny for commingling his ballot committee’s expenses with those from his own campaign for his race for Mayor racking up the so-called “*shared expenses*” for office occupancy. Because it was unclear the ballot measure is sharing office space with Farrell’s mayoral run committee in actual practice, the *San Francisco Chronicle* paid a surprise visit to Farrell’s campaign headquarters because sharing expenses between a candidate committee and a ballot measure committee opens up a murky legal area ripe for exploitation and abuse.

During the *Chronicle*’s surprise visit to Farrell’s campaign headquarters in West Portal, the reporter asked Farrell’s mayoral campaign manager, Jade Tu, if she had any “*Prop. D*” ballot measure campaign literature she could share with her. Tu reportedly asked, “*What ballot measure?*” When the *Chronicle* reporter pressed, Tu said there wasn’t any ballot measure-related material at the office and it may be “*stored elsewhere.*” When the astute reporter pressed again and asked if the office was used primarily for Farrell’s mayoral campaign, Jade apparently responded, “*Pretty much.*” It was a damning admission the “*shared expenses*” were largely a myth.

If Farrell were to be using money from his ballot measure committee to subsidize his campaign for mayor, that’s illegal — and could result in another hefty fine from San Francisco’s Ethics Commission. The *Chronicle* [reported](#) also on August 16 that the breakdown of shared costs was suspicious.

- For its part KQED [reported](#) on September 16 that San Francisco’s democratic party (known as the DCCC) had accused Farrell of potentially misleading voters in “*Proposition D*” ads and mailers by wrongly using the DCCC’s logo that had **not** been authorized to mislead voters the DCCC had endorsed “*Prop. D*”. The DCCC’s complaint added to a growing list of ethics concerns raised about connections between Farrell’s mayoral campaign and his candidate-backed “*Prop. D*” ballot measure committee. KQED also provided a link to another September 13 *Mission Local* [article](#) that noted Farrell’s ads violate campaign law.

Three weeks earlier, the DCCC — on a stacked two-thirds vote — had voted to support ‘*Proposition D*’ on August 28.

Seems to me like Farrell is just itching to be slapped with another Ethic’s Commission fine, like his \$191,000 fine for a 0campaign finance violation in 2010, later reduced and eventually settled as a \$25,0000 penalty. After all, Farrell has a long, long record dating back over a decade-and-a-half of end-run dealings around campaign finance law, ethics experts have said. He’s doing it again, but it may take well into 2025 or 2026 before he’s held accountable and fined again for his current probable campaign finance violations.

- Given the volume of negative media reporting in the *Mission Local, Chronicle*, and other media outlets Farrell’s “*Yes on D*” committee turned around and subtracted \$131,718 in so-called “*shared expenses*.” As far as the Form 460’s show (without having training in forensic accounting) it appears that Farrell’s “*Yes on D*” committee finally settled on asserting it has **only** spent \$308,093 on “*shared expenses*” — essentially “*refunding*” or converting back to “*cash on hand*” \$131,718 of the \$439,811 it had claimed were “*shared expenses*.” Nonetheless, the \$308,093 sill represents 26.9% of the “*Yes on D*” \$1.15 million expenditures through September 21. It remains a shocking percentage.

Hopefully Attorney General Bonta will launch the requested criminal investigation of Farrell’s so-called “*shared expenses*” much sooner.

- Of Farrell’s “*Yes on D*” committee, another \$284,079 of the \$1.5 million in expenses to date has been spent on campaign mailers. That may explain why I’ve received eight mailers in the mail through October 8 from the “*Yes on D*” committee, two of which probably contain Ethics Commission violations for not mentioning “*Prop. D*” on both sides of the mailers. Four of them may not have listed the three-highest campaign contributors on the mailers (which may hinge on what date billionaire Moritz actually donated \$500,000 to Farrell’s “*Yes on D*” committee).

As for following the money, there are oddities in *TogetherSF*’s IRS Form 990 tax returns linked below.

“*TogetherSF Action*” funded 22 paid arguments in support of “*Prop. D*” and 10 paid arguments **against** “*Prop. E*” in our voter guides, at an estimated expense of approximately \$16,000 just for Voter Guide paid arguments. But campaign expenses about how much *TogetherSF Action* spent to collect the 78,063 signatures turned in to San Francisco’s Election Department to qualify the measure for the ballot had involved paid signature gatherers is cleverly hidden. At a couple of dollars at a pop for each paid signature gathered, those paid signatures could have easily cost another \$150,000, if not more. That’s not chump change. It’s an agenda to elect Mark Farrel as our next Mayor!

Many of the paid arguments supporting “*Prop. D*” assert it will stop public corruption. But corruption cases in recent years largely involved Mayoral appointments of Department Heads, not policy body Commissioners.

The “*throughline*” of Kanishka’s and Farrell’s “*Prop. D*” ballot measure is hellbent deceit. Period.

All In the Family

TogetherSF claims it is a “volunteer” organization dedicated to “*making it easier to understand what’s going on in San Francisco*,” believing it “*can change the way this city works*.” According to the IRS Form 990’s for 2022 for both of the purportedly separate *TogetherSF* entities, *TogetherSF* and its sister entity *TogetherSF Action*, billionaire Moritz is an unpaid director/trustee of both entities.

It’s not yet known if Michael Morwitz is also a significant donor to, or principal benefactor of, either *TogetherSF* or *TogetherSF Action*, but to think he’s **not**, is probably naïve since he’s a Board Director of both organizations. according to their IRS Form 990 reports.

Of great interest, *TogetherSF*’s [Form 990](#) statement shows Mark Farrell’s wife, Liz Farrell, is an unpaid director of *TogetherSF*, while *TogetherSF Action*’s [Form 990](#) statement reports Tony Winnicker — former Director of Communications for both former Mayor Gavin Newsom and former Mayor Ed Lee — is an unpaid director of *TogetherSF Action*.

The Form 990's reveal *TogetherSF's* Kanishka Cheng earned \$201,636 and Margaux Kelly earned \$168,702 in compensation in 2022. Kelly is reportedly on leave from *TogetherSF*, now serving as a consultant to Farrell's mayoral election campaign.

Talk about "*The City Family*"! Sounds a bit incestuous, to this reporter. Both organizations, under Kanishka's leadership, have done everything they could to hide from San Francisco voters just who the heck they are. That's the polar opposite of helping San Franciscans learn what's going on in the City.

As for their finances, in 2022 *TogetherSF* reported \$1.56 million in total revenue, while *TogetherSF Action* separately reported \$1.74 million in total revenue. That's a combined \$3.3 million in total revenue. But between the two organizations, they had combined expenses of \$2.68 million, a difference of \$614,359 in net revenue after total expenses.

Most shockingly, their Form 990's for 2022 reports a total of \$5,028,479 in combined net assets or fund balances at the end of the year. Not a bad gig, if you can get it. And they continue to operate largely in secret, with little if any public transparency.

Not only is politics too important, but *transparency* about politics is too important to be left to politicians who openly admit they want *less* public oversight of, and fewer, boards and commissions. This is far too important to leave to politicians like Farrell, his former legislative aides Kanishka Cheng and Margaux Kelly, and billionaires like Moritz and John Pritzker.

"Prop. E's" More Sensible Reform

You can read "*Prop. E's*" [legal text](#) on-line, or in your Voter Guide.

Shockingly, Supervisors Matt Dorsey (D-6), Joel Engardio (D-4), Myrna Melgar (D-7), and Catherine Stefani (D-2) voted **against** the Board of Supervisors placing it on the November ballot. Apparently, they're comfortable with handing more powers to a "*strong mayor*" or are in *TogetherSF's* back pocket. Fortunately, they were overruled by the other seven saner Supervisors who placed it on the ballot in spite of the dissenters.

Again, Supervisor Melgar's vote on July 23 at the Board of Supervisors **opposing** placing "*Prop. E*" was shocking, because eliminating the Health Commission, as "*Prop. D*" calls for, is so misguided!

The preamble ("*Findings*") of "*Prop. E*" notes San Francisco has long been a place that values public service and civic engagement as part of our City's system of participatory government. Hundreds of City residents volunteer their time to serve on City boards and commissions. San Francisco's commissions leverage the perspectives and expertise of the City's residents to ensure important policy decisions are not made behind closed doors by a powerful few, but through a public and participatory process that is informed by the very people whom those decisions will impact.

By contrast, "*Prop. D's*" backers — Kanishka, Farrell, and Moritz — want policy decisions made behind closed doors by a powerful few, and a so-called "*strong mayor.*" The answer to the question of the contrast between the two ballot measures is an emphatic "**No**"!

According to the Ballot Simplification Committee's "[Digest](#)" in the Voter Guide, "*Prop. E*" will establish a temporary five-member "*Commission Streamlining Task Force*" charged with making recommendations to the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors about ways to modify, eliminate, or combine the City's appointive boards and commissions to improve the administration of City government. This is a much more democratic way of commission reform than the "*Prop. D*" nonsense billionaire Moritz, Mark Farrell, and *TogetherSF's* Kanishka Cheng are unilaterally trying to shove down our throats.

"*Prop. E*" requires the Board of Supervisors independent Budget and Legislative Analyst to prepare a cost-benefit report no later than September 1, 2025 analyzing the cost of the City's current system of boards and commissions, as well as the projected financial impact of eliminating or consolidating commissions. By contrast, "*Prop. D*" simply ignores any financial impact by taking their bulldozer Trojan Horse heist of citizen involvement in municipal affairs.

"*Prop. E*" requires the City Attorney prepare a Charter Amendment to implement the Task Force's recommendations relating to commissions established in the Charter. The Board of Supervisors would be required to **hold a public hearing**

no later than April 1, 2026 on the Task Force’s recommendations and the draft Charter Amendment to be presented at a future municipal election.

That hearing would provide a venue for San Franciscans and voters to add their voices to how they want oversight and advisory bodies to the City and City Departments preserved.

“*Prop. E*” is supported by Supervisors Aaron Peskin, Shamann Walton, Dean Preston, and Connie Chan, and perhaps other Supervisors. It is also supported by the San Francisco Labor Council, Coalition of San Francisco Neighborhoods, United Educators of San Francisco, former mayor Art Agnos, former City Controller Ed Harrington, the Bar Association of San Francisco (the lawyers organization), the ACLU, various merchant’s associations, former Health Commissioner Sonia Melara, the National Union of Healthcare Workers (NUHW), former Supervisor Norman Yee, and many former Commissioners of a variety of City Commissions.

Importantly, “*Prop. E*” does **not** hand San Francisco’s future mayor more unbridled “*strong mayor*” baseball bats. Indeed, “*Prop. E*” may just save us from more “*strong mayor*” flagrant violations if “*Prop. D*” passes, removing checks and balances over the Legislative and Executive branches of City government.

Don’t let “*Prop. D*’s” \$8.5 million war chest buy elimination of the Health Commission!

“*Prop. D*” claims transferring oversight duties from commissioners to **elected** politicians, will make government more directly accountable to voters! It will not. That’s gaslighting. Indeed, those oversight duties will be transferred to even more inscrutable department heads and City employees, not transferred to elected officials!

Instead, it will make City government *less* accountable to voters by removing citizen oversight of governance processes out of public view — back behind closed doors.

“*Prop. D*” invites, and will ultimately lead to, **more** corruption, not less — especially by elected officials — by taking away checks and balances, transparency, and civic engagement. It would gut our local democracy, like electing Trump!

Vote “No” on “Prop D” and “Yes” on “Prop. E”!

And while you’re at it, vote for anybody for San Francisco’s mayor, but **not** for Mark Farrell. The best ranked choice voting strategy option is *not* to list Farrell in any ranked choice position!

Farrell had his shot while filling in as interim Mayor in 2018. Don’t give him another shot. Voting for Farrell in any ranked choice spot is the very definition of insanity.

Another definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, and expecting different results. You’re not going to get different results from Mark Farrell, other than perhaps more all-time-high Ethics Commission violation fines and penalties. After all, it’s completely probable that *TogetherSF*, *TogetherSF Action*, and Mark Farrell may face FPPC and/or San Francisco Ethics Commission close examination scrutiny of potential campaign violations, again, involving “*guiding the ship*” text messages. Watch this space.

Rather than handing so much more “*strong mayor*” power grabs to Mark Farrell and *TogetherSF*, vote for “*Prop. E*” instead.

Also, see the *Westside Observer*’s accompanying article in this issue for the District 7 candidates’ ridiculous positions on “*Prop. D*” and “*Prop. E*”. All of their responses are irresponsible, and all fail to mention that: 1) “*Prop. D*” scandalously calls to eliminate the Health Commission completely; 2) Over the past 30 years, many of these boards, commissions, and advisory bodies were created and approved at the ballot box by we, the voters; and 3) “*Prop. E*” will essentially perform a cost-benefit analysis, whereas “*Prop. D*” calls for wholesale elimination of oversight without any cost-benefit analysis. And Martin-Pinto believes “*Prop. D*” doesn’t go far enough. He recommends wielding the meat cleaver even more brutally, by having **25 fewer** commissions (recommending just 40) than the 65 maximum “*Prop. D*” calls for!

Melgar, Boschetto, and Martin-Pinto don’t mention why they **support** “*Prop. D*” eliminating Board of Supervisor approval over Department Head hiring decisions, and Board involvement in appointments to Commission seats. Are they willing to

hand all of that to, say, a Mayor Daniel Lurie? Or, say, a department head named Kanishka Cheng, if she's so rewarded by a Mayor Farrell?

I for one, don't want to hand over oversight duties to elected politicians like Melgar, Boschetto, or Martin-Pinto — let alone to Mark Farrell or London Breed, or department heads and City employees! Melgar's claim she "*supports*" Breed's Charter reform ignores Breed pulled her support of "*Prop. D*"!

D-7 Voter Update: Given that Myrna Melgar voted against placing "*Prop. E*" on the ballot, and voted during the Board of Supervisor's September 30 Land Use Committee against expanding rent control to the extent authorized if the Costa-Hawkins Rental Housing Act is repealed by Proposition 33 on November 5, D-7 voters — especially D-7 renters — should **not** vote for Melgar's re-election as Supervisor. Don't rank her or Martin-Pinto in any ranked position.

As well, Supervisor Ahsha Safai introduced a stalling tactic to delay the Board's vote to strengthen San Francisco's Rent Control Ordinance during the Board of Supervisors October 8 meeting after he was lobbied at the last minute that morning by the Building and Construction Trades unions to create a new committee including organized labor as so-called "*technical advisors*" in developing rent control legislation. Ironically, Safai called for creating another **new** advisory committee after *TogetherSF's* "*Prop. D*" call to slash the number of City advisory committees! Safai's irony didn't go unnoticed.

Rather than supporting the 65% of San Franciscans who are renters (hundreds of thousands of people), Safai was trying to gain influence for a couple of *thousand* construction workers represented by labor unions. Don't cast any ranked choice vote for Safai in the mayoral election on November 5 ballot, either.

Melgar and Safai don't get it: "***You either support rent control, or you don't!***"

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