

May 26, 2026

Commission Reform Gut Punch Advances

## Commission “**Streamlining**” Charter Amendment Introduced

### Mandelman’s Continued Happy Talk

by Patrick Monette-Shaw

The initiative to drastically alter San Francisco’s City Charter inched forward on May 19 when Board of Supervisors president Rafael Mandelman formally introduced a revised board and commission reform Charter Amendment for the November 2026 ballot.

There has been no public debate about to whom San Francisco’s Charter actually belongs. It’s worrisome the 11 members of the Board of Supervisors may be fully in lockstep to deliver the Mayor an act of self-dealing that may overwhelm the very people our Charter was written to protect: “*We the People*”!

The revised Charter Amendment remains a threat to democracy in our fair City, with the powers-who-be still hell-bent on handing expanded “*strong-mayor*” powers to Mayor Lurie.

With apologies to the U.S. Supreme Court’s 1819 Chief Justice, John Marshall, like corporations, our entire democracy is largely an invisible, artificial construct, existing only in contemplation of law. Being a creature of law, our democracy possesses only those characteristics which our various charters — Federal, State, and Municipal — confer.

Recent federal actions, together with current City Hall “*streamlining*” efforts, affect our local democracy and key opportunities for public participation in determining local policies. The newly revised proposed Charter Amendment continues to strip away provisions of citizen oversight of City government previously conferred in our City Charter.

I’m going to go out on a limb and suggest there’s little fluidity remaining in the process, and the barest of opportunities for members of the public to influence their District Supervisors by requesting additional changes to the proposed Charter Amendment Mandelman has now formally introduced. It may come down to voters in November rejecting the commission reform Charter Amendment at the ballot box, and not subsidize efforts by the Mayor’s cartel to drastically alter our City’s governance!

## The Ordinance

On March 2, 2026 the Commission Streamlining Task Force submitted its proposed first 308-page [Ordinance](#) for reform of the City’s boards, commissions, and advisory bodies to the Board of Supervisors. The next day, the proposed Ordinance was assigned under the Board of Supervisors “*30-Day Rule*” to its Rules Committee, where it languished for fully two months until it was finally heard at a Rules meeting chaired by Supervisor Shamann Walton on May 4.

Seven members of the public spoke during public comment on May 4 supporting the proposed Ordinance, including one person who represented themselves as a member of the Astroturf Network group, *Abundant San Francisco*. Another five members of the public spoke in opposition to the Ordinance.

After precious little discussion by Rules Committee members Walton, Stephen Sherrill, and Rafael Mandelman, Walton made a motion to submit the Ordinance as submitted, without any amendments to the full Board of Supervisors, but **without** any recommendation (meaning it was not submitted with a positive recommendation for approval). Walton’s motion passed unanimously. It was the **only** hearing that offered any debate or public comment by members of the public about the proposed Ordinance, before the full Board of Supervisors considered and took action on the merits.

Note that the Streamlining Task Force is allowed to submit additional Ordinances regarding commission reforms at any point in time before the Task Force is disbanded and sunsetted at the end of January 2027.



**San Francisco's** commission “*streamlining*” effort would significantly reshape the balance of power between City Hall, oversight commissions, and the public, casting public oversight into the darkness. “***Sunlight is the Best of Disinfectants!***”

The Ordinance was then advanced to its “*First Reading*” at the full Board of Supervisors on May 12, fully 71 days after it was introduced in March. It received scant oral debate or comments from any of the District Supervisors on May 12, and wasn’t open for general public comment. It passed First Reading by a vote of 6 “*Ayes*” to 4 “*No’s*,” the “*No’s*” being cast by Supervisors Connie Chen, Chyanne Chen, Myrna Melgar, and Shamann Walton, (with Supervisor Jackie Fielder excused). Mandelman announced during discussion of the Ordinance on May 12 that he would introduce the companion Charter Amendment “*next week*.”

A week later, the Ordinance received its second “*Final Reading*” on May 19. It again passed with the same vote margin. On both readings, Supervisors Matt Dorsey, Bilal Mahmood, Rafael Mandelman, Danny Sauter, Stephen Sherrill, and Alan Wong all voted “*Aye*,” dutifully playing along, to get along with the Mayor.

The Ordinance, as passed, will become effective 90 days after it finally passed. although some of its provisions are thought to be tied to whether the companion board and commission reform Charter Amendment is passed by voters on November 3, 2026.

## The Charter Amendment

On February 27, 2026 the Commission Streamlining Task Force submitted its proposed 166-page [Charter Amendment](#) for reform of the City’s Boards, Commissions, and advisory bodies to the Board of Supervisors. It was not initially assigned under the Board of Supervisors “*30-Day Rule*” to the Rules Committee, but has been delayed, ostensibly stuck in a process of revisions. Board President Rafael Mandelman has been essentially revising it in secret with an unknown number of the Board of Supervisors and other interested parties. There have been no public meetings open to the public about how the language is being developed or drastically changed.

During the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday May 19, Mandelman introduced a replacement commission reform Charter Amendment during the Supervisors “*Roll Call for Introductions*” portion of its meeting agenda. The Charter Amendment languished for 81 days, fully two months and 22 days while being revised. It has also now been assigned to the Rules Committee under the Board of Supervisors “*30-Day Rule*” to the Rules Committee.

The [caption notes](#) of Mandelman’s opening remarks during the May 19 “*Roll Call for Introductions*” reveals he introduced the revised Charter Amendment with Supervisors Bilal Mahmood and Myrna Melgar as co-sponsors. Inexplicably, that’s the same Melgar who minutes earlier that day had voted “*No*” to passing the Streamlining Ordinance on second reading. Mandelman asserted the Charter Amendment changes fall into three broad categories: 1) Modernization and cleanup, 2) Changes to address department-specific “*pain points*,” and 3) Recommendations from the Streamlining Task Force.

The Clerk of the Board’s Legislative Deputy Director, Alisa Somera indicated the first date the Charter Amendment can be scheduled for a public hearing under the 30-day hold is for the June 22 Rules Committee meeting. At that point, it will have languished for 115 days since it was received from the Streamlining Task Force, fully three months and 26 days, excluding June 22.

The Board of Supervisors are pushing their luck, since the last date to approve ballot measures for the November ballot is July 21, and Charter Amendments require two appearances before the full Board. That leaves the Board with just five dates to spare — June 23 and 30, and July 7, 14, and 21 — on which to hold the two “*appearances*” to place it on the November ballot.

The Municipal Elections Code does allow the Board to submit “*one late*” Charter Amendment or General Obligation Bond. The last date for the full Board to do that would be July 28, 2026.

Ms. Somera and Deputy Director of Operations, Wilson Ng, kindly provided a hyperlink to the [revised](#) 132-page Charter Amendment on May 22. An accompanying four-page [Legislative Digest](#) provides a high-level summary of the Charter Amendment, but it’s by no means an accurate summary. For instance, the Digest says the Charter Amendment merely “*simplifies*” the standard that the SFMTA Board of Directors uses in determining “*on-time performance*,” when in fact the Charter Amendment allows MUNI to adopt other performance measures, such as “*wait time*” assessments. Assessing on-time performance may simply vanish.

To help readers navigate the Board of Supervisors still unwieldy revised Charter Amendment, the *Westside Observer* created a three-page [Table of Contents](#).

## Mandelman's Prelude

As a reminder, the *Westside Observer* previously [reported](#) that during the full Board of Supervisors March 17 “Committee of the Whole” inaugural hearing on the Streamlining Task Force report and recommendations, Mandelman said:

*“The Task Force’s mandate was to identify opportunities to modify, consolidate, or eliminate public bodies to improve the administration of City government, while preserving meaningful opportunities for public engagement.”*

*“It is highly unlikely that I, or any other member of proposed the Board of Supervisors, will introduce that particular Charter Amendment, or that this Board would send that particular Charter Amendment on to the voters in November.”*

Mandelman was being disingenuous, because a partial verbatim [transcript](#) of his full opening remarks on March 17 shows he had already asked the City Attorney’s Office to begin working with the Board of Supervisors only on drafting an alternative version of a Commission Streamlining Charter Amendment to implement only **some** of the Streamlining Task Force’s recommendations.

He neglected to enumerate which “*some*” of the recommendations the City Attorney would keep vs. eliminate. Worse, Mandelman then claimed there are “**a host of recommendations that are non-controversial**” in the Task Force’s final report and proposed Charter Amendment. He alluded to there being “*consensus support* [on the Board of Supervisors] **for a whole bunch of the work**” the Task Force had proposed. Mandelman failed to define or quantify on both March 17 and again on May 19 “*some*,” “*a host of*,” “*non-controversial*,” or how much “*consensus*.” We’re left to figuring that out, ourselves.

It’s clear Mandelman is a stand-in avatar for Mayor Lurie, or former-Supervisor Scott “*The Giraffe*” Wiener’s *mini-me*.

## Records Request to Supervisor Mandelman

On May 13, the *Westside Observer* placed a records request to Supervisor Mandelman, following a *San Francisco Chronicle* [article](#) published the same day, entitled “*SF to cut down on commissions in bid to streamline City Hall.*” The *Chronicle* was reporting on the Board of Supervisor’s May 12 meeting during which the proposed **Ordinance** was passed on First Reading.

The *Chronicle* reported controversial proposals to streamline City operations by eliminating dozens of commissions and advisory groups, part of an effort to make City government more efficient, had finally moved forward. The *Chronicle* asserted Mandelman said the Charter Amendment he planned to put forward the following week would shy away from some of the Commission Streamlining Task Force’s most **controversial** recommendations, including proposed changes to the Police Commission and Sheriff’s Department Oversight Board.

*“Most of the items and issues that have provoked the greatest concerns have been addressed and removed”* from the charter amendment, Mandelman told the *Chronicle* the day before, apparently on Monday, May 11. The current draft includes roughly “*150 changes to the charter, but I think they’re going to be consensus, proper-functioning-of-government changes that shouldn’t send anyone into the stratosphere,*” Mandelman added.

The [records request](#) to Mandelman sought five items, including: 1) A list of the Streamlining Task Force’s recommendations that had been deemed by the Board of Supervisors to be “**non-controversial**”; 2) A list of Board of Supervisor members, their staff, and any other City employees who were involved in drafting an alternative Charter Amendment measure; 3) A list of the roughly “*150 changes to the charter included in the current draft*” Mandelman intends to introduce next week; 4) A redline (mark-up) version of the Charter Amendment submitted by the Streamlining Task Force showing items being eliminated, or in the alternative a list showing the precise recommendations proposed by the Task Force being eliminated from the replacement Charter Amendment as too “*controversial*” or too “*stratospheric*”; and 5) The draft version replacement Charter Amendment that Mandelman intended to introduce.

After struggling for over a week with Mandelman’s Legislative Aide, Renil Bejoy, to comply with the Sunshine Ordinance’s provision to provide records on a “*rolling basis*” as they are found and located, on May 21 Bejoy finally provided on behalf of Mandelman only two of the requested documents, including a 21-page “[crosswalk](#)” document (with the 21 pages **not** correctly numbered sequentially that ended with page number 19) listing and summarizing each of only **107** items that will

be included in Mandelman’s revised Charter Amendment (item #3 in the records request], and the planned 132-page Charter Amendment, curiously titled “*Charter Amendment DRAFT 5.07.26 - sponsor review.docx*” that was last modified and edited by Mandelman’s Aide Maeve Skelly at 5:52 p.m. on May 7. It may have been a version submitted only to the two Supervisors (Melgar and Mahmood) who apparently agreed to be the sole co-sponsors of the Charter Amendment Mandelman introduced on May 19.

The 150 changes Mandelman had claimed were magically shrank to just 107.

Of note, Maeve Skelly’s LinkedIn [profile](#) shows she is a September 2024 transplant from Washington, D.C. and had worked at SPUR for just one year as its “*Governance and Economy Policy Manager*” before joining Mandelman’s staff as a Legislative Aide in April. While at SPUR, Skelly co-authored SPUR’s “*Charter for Change*” [report](#) about reforming San Francisco’s Charter in November 2025. That Mandelman and Lurie are kowtowing to SPUR couldn’t be any clearer.

Bejoy also indicated that, “*For item #2, while no such formal list exists, President Mandelman and Maeve Skelly from our office were involved in the drafting.*” What? Are we to seriously believe that Mandelman and Skelly had no working list of Board of Supervisor members, or their respective Legislative Aides, working on a revised Charter Amendment? What about Mandelman’s previous Legislative Aide, Melanie Mathewson, whom he had previously credited with helping craft the Charter Amendment revisions?

Bejoy indicated on 5:24 p.m. on May 21 that he was still reviewing the records request for further responsive records for the missing two items: A redline markup of proposed changes (or list of items that were too controversial and were eliminated), and a list of Streamlining Task Force’s recommendations deemed by the Board of Supervisors to be “*non-controversial.*”

## Records Request to Four Supervisors

For this article, the *Westside Observer* placed records requests to each of the four Supervisors — Melgar, Chen, Walton, and Chan — who had voted *against* passing the Commission Streamlining Force’s first Ordinance.

The records request sought the same five items in the records request to Mandelman, plus 6) All e-mails or communications from Supervisor Mandelman to City Supervisors to meet and discuss proposed additions, deletions, or amendments to the initial proposed “Charter Amendment”; and 7) Any other written documents they may have submitted as a member of the Board of Supervisors to Mandelman’s drafting team for consideration as additions, deletions, or amendments to the alternative Charter Amendment.

The four Supervisors have been voices on the Board in the past advocating for transparency in City government, and are grateful for the dedicated San Franciscans who are willing to volunteer their time as appointed members of boards, commissions, task forces, and advisory bodies to provide citizen oversight of operations of our City Departments.

Collectively, the four Supervisors know both things can be true: Having government efficiency, while simultaneously having accountability, transparency, and oversight.

One of the four Supervisors (who was granted confidentiality), admirably wants to further review Board President Mandelman’s commission reform Charter Amendment legislation for the November ballot to better understand whether the proposed measure is a push for government efficiency, or simply a way to consolidate decision-making power for the executive branch (under a stronger, “*strong-mayor*” form of government). It’s refreshing and encouraging at least some of our District Supervisors want to fully review what impact, if any, the Charter Amendment ballot measure might have on removing or reducing transparent oversight by San Francisco residents.

Sadly, staff for three of the four Supervisors (Walton, Chen, and Chan) all responded saying their offices had no responsive records at all to any of the seven items requested. None of the three provided the Charter Amendment titled for “*sponsor review*” that Bejoy provided.

Only Supervisor Melgar’s office produced just two of the requested seven records: A ***different*** 19-page “*crosswalk*” [summary](#) of 119 specific items that the Charter Amendment addresses, with the 19 pages correctly numbered sequentially), essentially a response to Item #4, and the proposed 132-page Charter Amendment Mandelman planned to submit on May 19 for the November ballot titled “*Charter Amendment for 5.21.26 Introduction - FINAL.docx,*” last modified and edited by

Deputy City Attorney staff Sara Crowley at 6:54 p.m. on May 19. [It's not known why the next day Mandelman's Aide Bejoy provided a Word document version edited 12 days earlier that had likely undergone significant, subsequent edits.] To be fair, Ms. Low **did** provide a handful of [e-mails](#) exchanged between Melgar's Aide Jen Low and Mandelman's Aide Skelly regarding scheduling meetings, but it wasn't even vaguely responsive to Item #2.

But none of the four Supervisors provided any list summarizing the potential "*controversial*" or "*stratospheric*" recommendations that may have been removed, an actual list of Board of Supervisors members or staff that Mandelman had solicited input from to draft an alternative Charter Amendment, or any "*redline*" (mark up) of the original 166-page Charter Amendment the Streamlining Task Force submitted 81 days ago on February 27. Excluding the two documents from Melgar's office, there were "*no responsive records*" to five of the seven items requested.

That leaves it up to individual citizens with the task of trying to figure out which, if any, of the Streamlining Task Force's recommended changes to its initial 166-page Charter Amendment Mandelman eliminated or changed in the 132-page Charter Amendment he introduced on May 19.

## Concerning Items Remain

There are a number of concerns remaining. In no particular order, they include, but aren't limited to:

- **Sunshine Ordinance Task Force:** In the 21-page "*crosswalk*" document Mandelman's Aide Bejoy provided, it specifically states on the last page that item # 106 regarding the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force will "*update language to mitigate legal risk and comply with State Law,*" but there is nothing in the 132-page Charter Amendment Mandelman introduced on May 19 that described what this purported change to the SOTF involves, or what legal risk was feared. There was no mention during the Streamlining Task Force's year-long meetings about what this issue may entail, which wasn't even mentioned in the Streamlining Task Force's "*Final Report.*"
- **Sunshine Ordinance Task Force:** Page 67 of the revised Charter Amendment provides that although the Society of Professional Journalists and the League of Women Voters will still be able to nominate some members to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, the Board of Supervisors will "*not be bound*" to specific seat-specific qualifications criteria in appointing members to the SOTF **not** nominated by either outside professional organizations, and the Supervisors will only be required to take into account desired body-level qualifications, together with other factors Supervisors deems relevant.
- **Commission Streamlining Task Force:** Although the Streamlining Task Force had specifically recommended in its "*Final Report*" recommending it sunset itself in January 2027, the Charter Amendment Mandelman introduced requires that a Streamlining Task Force be resurrected and reconvened every ten years, largely composed of the same five categories of appointees, beginning on January 1, 2035 to further review potentially eliminating other boards and commissions, but without requiring another analysis of the costs of City boards and commissions be performed by the Budget and Legislative analyst and without an automatic Charter amendment be prepared by the City Attorney's Office. This was a SPUR "*Charter for Change*" recommendation that Mandelman and his Aide Skelly restored to the Charter Amendment to appease the Mayor and SPUR's Executive Director, former Supervisor Sean Elsbernd.
- **Department Head and Commissioner Removal:** It's unclear whether the recommendations the Streamlining Task Force made about granting the Mayor sole authority to hire and fire 21 City Department Heads, or change appointments to 24 Board and Commissions members from "*for cause only*" to "*at will*" removal, have simply been transferred to the other three Charter Amendments Mayor Lurie and Supervisor Mandelman introduced.

It is not clear how many of the remaining provisions in the commission streamlining Charter Amendment submitted by the Streamlining Task Force submitted on February 27 may have been deleted from Mandelman's revised Charter Amendment, or were simply moved into the three other Charter Amendments — titled "*Strengthening Executive Branch Accountability,*" "*Modernizing City Contracting,*" and "*Fix Our Broken Ballot Process*" — Lurie and Mandelman announced six days later on March 5 they are gathering signatures to qualify for the November ballot, which would expand the power of the City's executive branch, handing enhanced powers of the Mayor and City Administrator. The three additional measures would take away power from City oversight commissions and the Board of Supervisors, and hand those powers to the Mayor.

Mandelman's streamlining Charter Amendment states if voters enact that measure and the other three ballot measures, it would be the intent of voters that all provisions in all four measures would be read to harmonize with one another, regardless of which measure receives more votes.

If the Board of Supervisors place the revised Charter Amendment on the November ballot without any more amendments during the Rules Committee meeting on June 22 after the 30-day hold, or amendments during the Board's two subsequent hearings, San Franciscans may well get a "Long Live the King" City Charter.

Voters need to stand up for what we believe in. Continue urging the Board of Supervisors to reject the commission streamlining Charter amendment in November. **No Kings in San Francisco!**



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