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Sunshine Ordinance Task Force Singled Out For Retribution Mayor Lurie Kills Open Government Records Watchdog

Mayor Is Again Misleading San Franciscans

New “Holdover” Ban Violates, Usurps, Countermands Four State Laws

The Sunshine Task Force Needed Just Four Appointments to Stay Open;
It Received 17 Applications. What Went Wrong?

SOTF Was the Only City Body Deliberately and Vindictively Shut Down!

by Patrick Monette-Shaw



Mayor Lurie and Supervisor Mandelman tragically turned off the lights of Sunshine, forcing a loss of quorum for the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, right when the Task Force was focusing on the Mayor. This “*democracy dies in darkness*” was preventable.

The *Westside Observer* is pleased to be reporting exclusively that a *single* City regulatory or advisory body — the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force (SOTF) — has vindictively been shut down as a result of passage of Board of Supervisors commission streamlining reform Ordinance #99-26 on June 19, 2026. No other media outlet in San Francisco has covered this in detail, and why it’s illegal.

At best, it’s petty, political payback, retribution. At worst, it’s an attack undermining our local democracy!

The Ordinance mandated — believed illegally — eliminating appointees to Boards, Commissions and advisory bodies who remained in their appointments for 60 or more days past the end of their terms. Kicking off eight members who were serving on the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force in a “*holdover*” capacity resulted in a lack of quorum required for SOTF to convene and hold meetings and legally conduct business. It was forced to close shop on June 29. SOTF hadn’t just “*gone fishing*.”

During the Commission Streamlining Task Force’s “*efficient government*” deliberations throughout 2025, it identified, repeatedly discussed, and recommended imposing staggered membership terms of service for several Boards, Commissions, and policy bodies — to safeguard against the potential loss of quorum on any body and preempt disruption of conduct of the People’s business. The Streamlining Task Force failed to apply that concept uniformly to other bodies, and may have deliberately chosen not to make the same recommendation for the SOTF.

The Board of Supervisors had an opportunity to correct that oversight, by adding staggered terms of service for the SOTF before they passed Ordinance #99-26. Again, perhaps the Board, its Rules Committee, the City Attorney’s Office, and Mayor Lurie — who signed the Ordinance into law — all deliberately chose to overlook for months common-sense staggered-terms standardization. It may have been the design, not a flaw.

Closure of the SOTF could also have been prevented entirely, had the Supervisors’ Rules Committee acted on the 11 applications it had already received by June 17, including 7 incumbents in holdover seats, plus applications from four new people. Unfortunately, the Rules Committee negligently failed to act in a timely manner to prevent the loss of quorum and killing of the SOTF.

According to the *Westside Observer*’s review, the Board could have, and should have, restored the Task Force’s quorum by reappointing a combination of incumbents and new applicants well before the holdover rule took effect on June 29. The Board’s delay and failure to do so did not result from mere oversight; it appears to have been a deliberate policy choice, along with the Board’s choice made to **not** stagger terms of service.

The SOTF was forced to cancel at least four of its meetings so far, and it now looks like it will be at least three *months* before the SOTF can reconvene — if then. No other media outlet has reported either that this is the **second** time inside a dozen years the SOTF was shut down by members of the Board of Supervisors, the City Attorney’s Office, and the Mayor.

At least five other Boards, Commissions, and advisory bodies at potential risk of losing quorum and ability to hold meetings had new appointees, or holdover re-appointments approved rapidly, before the Board’s month-long August recess.

Essentially in a fit of pique, Mayor Lurie got his henchmen at City Hall to sideline San Francisco’s SOTF by creating a manufactured — and entirely preventable — crisis: Creating a lack of quorum preventing the SOTF from continuing to hold

its meetings.

Lurie and his allies appear to have done so because the SOTF ruled twice recently that Lurie violated access to public records required by the City's 30-year-old Sunshine Ordinance that was strengthened by voters at the ballot box in 1999.

First the *San Francisco Public Press* [reported](#) on Wednesday January 8, 2026 the SOTF had ruled *“that the mayor’s office violated the city’s Sunshine Ordinance by refusing to release basic records about Mayor Daniel Lurie’s phone call with President Trump on October 22, [2025].”* The Task Force eventually determined by an 8–1 vote on April 1 that records related to the phone call were **not** attorney-client privileged as the Mayor had claimed, and referred the Sunshine violation to the Ethics Commission, as a potentially willful violation.

“Are .”

Second, *The San Francisco Standard* [reported](#) on June 5 that *“SF’s public records watchdog [the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force] ruled 8–1 that Mayor Lurie’s office violated records law by withholding texts with PG&E during December’s citywide blackout. He’s been ordered to hand them over.”*

Heirs to a billionaire inheritance like Lurie don’t like it when they’re caught with their hands in the cookie jar involving laws other elected government officials, all City employees, and assorted politicians are required to follow. Reportedly the Mayor was not amused by being adjudicated **twice** for open records transparency violations.

“Holdover” Prohibition Origin

On March 2, the Commission Streamlining Task Force forwarded its proposed 308-page Ordinance to the full Board of Supervisors, where it was assigned the next day to the Supervisor’s Rules Committee under the 30-Day Rule for hearing and consideration. On May 5, the three members of the Rules Committee — Chairperson Shamann Walton and members Supervisor Sherill and Supervisor Mandelman — unanimously passed a motion to forward the proposed Ordinance to the Board of Supervisors — but without an explicit recommendation on what action the full Board should consider.

The full Board of Supervisors heard the Ordinance and passed it on First Reading on May 12 and Final Reading on May 19 on a 6–4 vote, which then became known as Ordinance #99-26. Supervisors Connie Chan, Cheyanne Chen, Myrna Melgar, and Shamann Walton voted against passing the legislation. Mayor Lurie signed Ordinance #99-26 into law on May 29, and it became effective 31 days later on June 29.

The principal problem is the Ordinance explicitly states in §5.1-5, **Hold-Over Service**, that the *“tenure of a member of any Commission or Advisory Body shall terminate no later than 60 days after the expiration of the member’s term.”* The SOTF is **not** an advisory body or commission.

“Holdover” Problem Bursts Wide Open

On July 8, the *Westside Observer* had coincidentally filed a Sunshine Ordinance complaint about improper withholding of records by the San Francisco Department of Public Health. Within seven minutes of filing the complaint, the SOTF’s Administrator responded, writing,

“Please be advised that the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force does not have a quorum, we do not have an estimate of when a quorum will be established, and matters (complaints) cannot be heard then.”

It was the first any San Franciscan had heard there were suddenly quorum problems with the SOTF, or with any other Board, Commission or policy body. So, we dug in our investigative toes and started digging around.

The Plot Thickens

From a records request placed on July 10 with the Board of Supervisors Clerk of the Board's Office, we learned on July 13 that 22 bodies, including the SOTF, had members sitting in a holdover status and were **removed** as a result of Ordinance #99-26 taking effect on June 29. From a follow-up records request, the Clerk of the Board's Office provided a second list of 19 bodies itemizing the specific seat numbers of each body identified as having holdover members seats expired.

No explanation was offered about why the "*Office of Early Childhood Education*," the "*Shelter Monitoring Committee and Treasure Oversight Committee*," had been removed overnight from the second list.

The *Westside Observer* conducted a quick-and-dirty **analysis** of the two lists. It showed that of the 19 Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Bodies, they had a combined membership of 247 appointees, only 94 of which involved holdovers. Across the 19 bodies, just 5 faced a *potential* lack of quorum problem, but on closer inspection, one of the 6 bodies had already been "*sunsetting*" (allowed to expire on schedule) by the Board of Supervisors, and another body involved an error in the Board of Supervisors data, since the terms of its members actually ran through December 2027. Three other bodies had had new appointees very rapidly sworn in by the Mayor and Board of Supervisors.

That left just two bodies facing potential quorum problems and ability to continue meeting: The *Sunshine Ordinance Task Force*, and the *Cannabis Advisory Committee* (the latter that we decided not to waste time on investigating).

Another *Westside Observer* review of Board of Supervisors and its Rules Committee meeting agendas revealed that across the Board of Supervisors' five meetings held between June 30 and July 28, a total of 34 people were appointed to 13 different Boards, Commissions and policy bodies. None of the appointments were made to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, and just four appointments were made to the single body that had faced a valid potential quorum problem — the Port Commission. The Port Commission's business quorum was saved. The People's business — SOTF's quorum — was cut.

Selective Application, Vindictive Persecution

That suggests, as does other evidence, that the SOTF has been singled out for selective application of the new holdover rule and vindictive persecution by being forced to suspend its meetings, that no other bodies were forced to do.

The Clerk of the Board's Office asserted it was "*not aware the 'holdover' prohibition would apply to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force until June 26th.*" The Clerk's Office claimed it previously reached out to the City Attorney's office to get clarification on how the Streamlining Task Force's proposed Ordinance might affect the SOTF, but the City Attorney's office could not initially confirm any impact, had to confer about it, and didn't get back to the Clerk of the Board's Office with advice until Friday, June 26 — just three days **before** the holdover provision would kick in following the Mayor's signature on Ordinance #99-26 on June 29.

The Clerk's Office also asserted that Supervisor Shamann Walton, Chairperson of the Board's Rules Committee was also "*not aware*" that the "*holdover prohibition*" might apply to the SOTF. That's spurious, because Supervisor Walton had been one of four Supervisors who had first voted **against** passing Ordinance #99-26 on first reading when it was considered by the full Board of Supervisors on May 12, nearly six weeks earlier.

The *Westside Observer* finds the Clerk Office's rationale entirely unavailing. The Commission Streamlining Task Force's proposed Ordinance containing the "*holdover*" poison pill had languished in the Clerk's Office files since March 2. Everybody knew it was a ticking time-bomb for over four months. The Clerk had as much foreknowledge as anyone else the holdover poison pill buried in the legislation was poised to wreak havoc on any number of bodies, including chaos on the SOTF.

What's more, records provided by the Clerk of the Board's Office revealed that by June 16, the Clerk's Office had received 12 applications for 6 seats on the SOTF — 8 applications from incumbents who re-applied, and four from new interested people, noted at the top of this article. Of the 12 applications, 1 was submitted in February, 2 in March, 4 in April, 4 in May, and 1 in June — all **prior** to Ordinance #99-26 becoming effective June 29.

When Rules Committee chairperson Shamann Walton was asked on July 14 for an explanation under a records request why the 12 applications weren't calendared for consideration during any of the 13 scheduled Rules Committee's meetings held between February 23 and June 29, and weren't scheduled for the two additional Rules Committee meetings held in July, Walton failed to respond to the records request.

A follow-up request to the Clerk of the Board revealed an additional three [applications](#) had been submitted after June 16, to fill a total of 8 seats. Several of the 15 total applicants applied for multiple seats, so there were plenty of candidates to spread around to fill the 8 open seats due to holdovers having been forced off. One seat did not have a qualified candidate apply, and two seats had incumbents serving the balance of their terms but are now unable to meet, lacking quorum.

Because of the delay in the Rules Committee considering appointments, a 16th and 17th applicant were eliminated because applications are valid for only 12 months, and one applicant withdrew, leaving 14 still “warm” bodies to fill the four seats necessary to reach quorum. The *Westside Observer* created a [facsimile](#) of the 17 SOTF applications received, following consultation with the Clerk of the Board on July 28.

Had the Board of Supervisors acted on those remaining 14 pending applications, the SOTF’s shortage of four members to reach quorum could have easily been prevented as early as April 2 by granting four incumbents (Maxine Anderon, Matthew Yankee, Chris Hyland, and Laura Stein) new term lengths. Alternatively, the four seats preventing reaching quorum could have been filled using a combination of incumbent reappointments and new applicants between April 2 and June 17 — far ahead of the holdover rule becoming operational when the Ordinance became effective on June 29 — putting aside the three additional applications received on July 22.

There was no reason whatsoever for the SOTF to have lost quorum at all, because there had been plenty of time to have prevented it! Even with the sloppy tracking of applications.

Provisions in Ordinance # 99-26 Appear Illegal

There are a number of problems with Ordinance # 99-26 that appear to invalidate application of “holdover” restrictions on members of the SOTF.

Four Violations of State Law

First, the imposition of “holdover” restrictions appears to violate four sections of California law, and related matters:

1. California Government Code § 1302 (**Public Officers and Employees, Appointments, Nominations, Commissions, and Oaths**); “Every officer whose term has expired shall continue to discharge the duties of his office until his successor has qualified.”

The common law “holdover doctrine,” well established in California jurisprudence, provides that a public officer whose term has expired continues to hold office as a *de jure* officer until a successor is appointed and qualified. [*“A de jure officer refers to an individual who holds a position or office legitimately, meaning they have been appointed, elected, or otherwise obtained their role in full compliance with all applicable laws, rules, and procedures.”*] This doctrine exists to prevent vacancies in public office and ensure continuity of government. Neither San Francisco’s City Charter nor the Sunshine Ordinance displaces this default rule for non-Charter bodies like the SOTF.

2. California Government Code § 82048 (**Political Reform Act**): “A ‘Public official’ means every member, officer, employee, or consultant of a state or local government agency.” This is broad and clearly includes SOTF members.
3. California Government Code § 7522.70 (**Public Pension/Retirement** context): “Public officer” means an officer of the state, or an officer of a county, city, city and county, district, or authority, or any department, division, bureau, board, commission, or agency thereof.” Again, an SOTF member serving on a City board or commission would qualify.
4. The California Supreme Court’s common law definition (from *Coulter v. Pool* and other cases) is often cited: “A public office is the right, authority, and duty, created and conferred by law, the tenure of which is not transient, occasional, or incidental, by which for a given period an individual is invested with power to perform a public function for the benefit of the public.”

A San Diego City Attorney memo cites the same line of cases: “Where the legislature creates the position, prescribes the duties, and fixes the compensation, and these duties pertain to the public and are continuing and permanent, not occasional or temporary, such position or employment is an office and he who occupies it is an officer.” In the SOTF’s case, it was

originally created by the Board of Supervisors (San Francisco's local "*legislature*," and subsequently passed by San Francisco voters as an "*Imitative Ordinance*," making it a legislative Ordinance approved by "*We the People*.").

For purposes here, an SOTF member is a public officer under all of these definitions. They hold a position created by law (the Sunshine Ordinance), with prescribed duties (adjudicating Sunshine Ordinance complaints (and by extension, California Public Records Act complaints as part of local Sunshine complaints), issue orders of determination (*quasi-judicial* rulings on whether a given record wrongly withheld was, in fact, a public record, for example), have a fixed tenure (two-year terms), and perform a public function for the benefit of the public (ensuring government transparency). The fact SOTF appointees are unpaid does not change the legal classification. Clearly, the SOTF deserves *holdover* protections, given state laws.

Do Mayor Lurie and the Board of Supervisors really expect San Franciscans will now believe local City law — by the stroke of Ordinance #99-26 — can magically violate, usurp, and countermand four State laws?

Improper Ordinance #99-26 Provisions

Second, testimony [submitted](#) to the Board of Supervisors Rules Committee on July 13 details how provisions in Ordinance #99-26 were also improper, include:

1. Board of Supervisors Lack Authority to Change Previous Voter-Approved Ordinances

On November 8, 2011 San Francisco voters rejected the then-Proposition E on the ballot that proposed allowing the Board of Supervisors authority to amend or repeal voter initiatives and voter-initiated Ordinances that voters had previously passed. Because the Sunshine Ordinance is a voter-approved initiative Ordinance, the Board of Supervisors have **no** authority to amend functionality of the SOTF by Ordinance — including "*holdover*" provisions — **without** approval by the voters.

Ordinance #99-26 **cannot** simply change the SOTF holdover requirements via Ordinance.

2. No Authority for "Retroactive" Application

There is no language in Ordinance #99-26 that allows the change in holdover provisions to be applied **retroactively** to members of Boards and Commission who were appointed to governance or policy bodies **before** Ordinance #99-26 became effective.

3. The SOTF Is NOT An "Advisory Body" Subject to the Holdover Determination — It's a "Regulatory Body"

The SOTF was deemed by the Commission Streamlining Task Force's own internal [assessment](#) to be a "*Regulatory Body*," not an "*Advisory Body*." (See page 94 in the Streamlining Task Force's evaluation of what type of a body the SOTF is.)

The 308-page Ordinance submitted by the Streamlining Task Force and passed by the Board of Supervisors as [Ordinance #99-26](#) explicitly states in §5.1-5, ***Hold-Over Service***, that the "*tenure of a member of any Commission or Advisory Body shall terminate no later than 60 days after the expiration of the member's term.*"

Because the Streamlining Task Force determined the SOTF is neither an advisory body nor a commission as defined by Ordinance #99-26, there should be no question that the holdover provision was not intended to apply to the SOTF. After all, the black-letter text of §5.1-5 clearly states it was **not** intended by the drafters to apply to **regulatory** bodies!

Since the SOTF is **not** an "*Advisory Body*," but is a "*Regulatory Body*" instead, it's crystal clear §5.1-5 on holdover service in Ordinance #99-26 does **not** apply to the SOTF. It would be wrong to assert that there's any valid question of whether the holdover issue that forced the SOTF to shut down applies, given that it is a **regulatory** body. End of discussion.

As well, the City's current Charter clearly states in Charter §4.101.5, ***Holdover Service by Board and Commission Members***, the holdover restriction in the Charter applies **only** to members of Board Commissions, other bodies in the **executive branch**, or otherwise created in the Charter. The SOTF is a **Legislative Branch** body created by Ordinance.

4. California Elections Code §9217 Supersedes and Precludes Ordinance #99-26:

State Elections Code disallows any local or municipal agency from making amendments to any voter-approved ordinance.

Elections Code §9217 states:

“No ordinance ... adopted by the voters, shall be repealed or amended, except by a vote of the people, unless provision is otherwise made in the original ordinance.”

Therefore, the Board of Supervisors and Rules Committee’s imposition of Ordinance #99-26 §5.1-5, **Hold-Over Service** provisions must be overturned, and holdover protections for SOTF members restored immediately, because voters haven’t approved amending the Sunshine Ordinance at the ballot box yet!

5. **Sunshine Ordinance §67.36 Supersedes and Precludes Ordinance #99-26**

It is indisputable that Sunshine Ordinance §67.36, *Supersedes Other Local Laws* — which has been continuously in effect for just shy of three decades — clearly supersedes the newly enacted Ordinance #99-26. The Sunshine Ordinance — as a voter-initiated Ordinance that can **only be changed by voters**, not by Ordinance enacted by the Board of Supervisors — clearly states in §67.36:

“The provisions of this Sunshine Ordinance supersede other local laws. Whenever a conflict in local law is identified, the requirement which would result in greater or more expedited public access to public information shall apply.” (Added by Proposition G, 11/2/99)

Ms. Kittler, and the full the Streamlining Task Force’s should all have known that the Ordinance they submitted to the Board of Supervisors on March 2, 2026 could not simply change the holdover provisions for the SOTF via an Ordinance!

Indeed, on May 20, 2014 during a Board of Supervisors meeting discussing appointments to the SOTF, Supervisor Jane Kim asked about quorum regarding holdovers. Then Deputy City Attorney Jon Givner who was advising the Board of Supervisors — and who is now the City Attorney’s Chief Assistant City Attorney, and the principal author of Ordinance #99-26 — replied to Supervisor Kim that the SOTF is not governed under the Charter. The [audiotape](#) of that meeting indicates Givner replied (at 2:46:00 on tape counter):

*“I believe there are several [Sunshine Ordinance Task Force] members whose, whose terms have, have ended who are holding over, which is **allowed under the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force**, but not under certain charter created committees ... commissions.”*

Similarly, on May 27, 2014 Givner replied to then-Supervisor Wiener without hesitation that the Task Force did not come under any laws under the Charter with regard to holdovers.

6. **Ordinance #99-26 Wrongly Altered Streamlining Task Force’s Decision on Holdover Provision**

The Commission Streamlining Task Force’s November 19, 2025 [meeting minutes](#) document that during an agenda item discussing **“Applying Certain Charter Provisions to Additional Bodies,”** Streamlining Task Force member Sophia Kittler introduced a motion to:

“Apply a standard 60-day holdover provision (Charter Section 4.101.5) to all bodies for which the Task Force has defined member terms.”

Separately, the Streamlining Task Force’s [“Decision Log”](#) specifically includes an entry dated November 19, 2025 that states **“Apply the 60-day holdover provision to apply to all decision-making and advisory bodies.”**

So, the **“Decision Log”** did not accurately and faithfully record the motion Kittler had introduced, and instead the **“Decision Log”** entry specifically states it does not apply to **“all bodies”** the Task Force had defined member terms for, but applies only to **“decision-making and advisory bodies.”** The **“Decision Log”** **supersedes** the meeting minutes!

Further, §5.1-5, **Hold-Over Service** further deviated from the motion Kittler had introduced; the actual language in Ordinance #99-26 used **“the tenure of a member of any Commission or Advisory Body shall terminate no later than 60 days after the expiration of the member’s term.”** The SOTF is a **“Regulatory Body”** **not** an **“Advisory Body,”** so the SOTF appears to be **exempt** from §5.1-5, **Hold-Over Service**.

7. Exception for One Body Not Applied Equitably to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force

Finally, the Streamlining Task Force's December 12, 2025 [meeting minutes](#) carved out an exception to the holdover rule, but only for the Refuse Rate Board (RRB). Streamlining Task Force Vice Chair Bruss stated that for the RRB it made sense to add "*an exception to the holdover provision to **prevent gaps in service**. She explained that the holdover exception is important given the timing of [refuse] rate cycles.*" That exception was also memorialized in the "*Decision Log*."

Given the variable timing involved when San Franciscans may file Sunshine Ordinance complaints regarding potential violations of San Francisco's Sunshine Ordinance or the California Brown Act to the SOTF for adjudication, the Streamlining Task Force could have — and should have — created a similar exception for holdover service on the SOTF as it had for the RRB! After all, given that one body (the RRB) was granted an exemption should also apply to SOTF for the exact same reason as intent in common law and §1302: That public officer's seats should never be vacated that disrupt the People's business, which is what the SOTF was empowered to perform.

SOTF Shutdown Déjà Vu

We're now facing *déjà vu*, because members of the Board of Supervisors have interfered at least twice previously quibbling over appointing members to seats on the SOTF. Now they're quibbling anew, for a third time.

The first time was in July 2012. One article [published](#) in July 2012, "*Who Killed Sunshine*," examined how then-Supervisor Scott Wiener almost single-handedly shut down the SOTF for six months with help from his then colleagues on the Board of Supervisors. It was three then-Supervisors — Wiener, David Chiu, and Mark Farrell — who engineered throwing off the only disabled member on the Sunshine Task Force, Bruce Wolfe, in clear retaliation.

That occurred because on September 27, 2011 the Sunshine Task Force heard a complaint from Park Merced resident Pastor Lynn Gavin that Board of Supervisors President David Chiu and the board's Land Use and Economic Development Committee — composed by Supervisors Eric Mar, Malia Cohen, and Scott Wiener — had violated local and state open-meeting laws by sneaking in 14 pages of amendments to the Park Merced development deal only minutes before approving it. Pastor Gavin asserted the amendments were so drastic that the Board's agenda didn't accurately reflect the real deal under consideration, and that voting to approve it without sufficient time for review by members of the public violated open-meeting laws.

The Sunshine Task Force ruled in Gavin's favor, finding Wiener and the other three supervisors had committed official misconduct, and referred the four Supervisors to the Ethics Commission for enforcement. Wiener pinned most of the blame on the SOTF's then-Vice Chair Bruce Wolfe, asserting Wolfe's "*crime*" that warranted being removed from the Task Force was because Wolfe "*been part of the Task Force when all of these things have happened*," ostensibly including when it found Wiener guilty of official misconduct on September 27, 2011. Wiener presented no specific charges against Wolfe, just that Wolfe had "*been around*."

Then Wiener went further, wildly alleging without any evidence that not only had the Task Force itself engaged in official misconduct, but also that "*the current Sunshine Ordinance Task Force ... frankly, has undermined both the Ordinance and transparency in government ... in several ways*." He said it with a straight face and no self-awareness, ignoring the irony that his vote on the secret Park Merced development amendments was a far greater breach in government transparency!

As payback, Mr. Wolfe was thrown off. Since Wolfe was the only "*physically disabled*" member on the SOTF (which was required by the seat he held), the Task Force was unable to meet for six months, between May 2, 2012 and November 6, 2012, because lacking a disabled appointee, the SOTF would have violated the Sunshine Ordinance itself, had it continued to meet to conduct its conduct business. That created the "*Great Purge*" of 2012 that lasted six months — the SOTF's first, complete shutdown. Then-Supervisor Mark Farrell lamely asserted he was looking for "*fresh blood*" to be appointed to the SOTF to justify his vote. "*Fresh-blood*" wasn't among the stated seat-level qualifications for picking SOTF appointees!

Removing Wolfe smacked of vindictive political payback.

A second instance involving SOTF déjà vu was [published](#) two years later in June 2014, "*Board of Supervisors Continue Sunshine Retaliation*." Hand-picked toadies appointed to SOTF following the six-month shutdown of the SOTF set out, but were unable, to quell 31 additional complaints against the Board of Supervisors, its various subcommittees, or individually

named Supervisors lodged against the Board between 2012 and 2014 during the two-year terms of SOTF applicants appointed in 2012. That represented at least 16% of complaints filed with the Task Force over the intervening three-year period. Farrell and the Board weren't happy Sunshine complaints against them had kept rolling right in.

In 2012, the City Hall Family also wanted to quell complaints against then-Mayor Ed Lee's office, which racked up 10 complaints between 2012 and 2014, for 5.1% of complaints following installation of the toadies — including Alice B. Toklas Democratic Club members Louise Fischer and Todd David, Supervisor Wiener's "yes-men" appointed to the SOTF.

As an [analysis](#) at the time showed, the 41 complaints between the legislative and executive branches comprised 21% of the 195 total complaints. No small wonder Scott Wiener and David Chiu remain pissed off, and in search of toadies, just as now Board President Mandelman has set out to do in 2026.

The City Attorney's Office had 18 Sunshine complaints filed against it during the same timeframe, for 9.2% of the total. MUNI faced 8 complaints. And the Arts Commission gobbled fully 20.5% of all Sunshine complaints, with a staggering 40 complaints. These three city departments, plus the legislative and executive branches, had a combined total of 107 complaints, representing 55% of the 195 complaints, and of the 107 complaints, nearly 40% of them were against the executive and legislative branches of City government.



Then-District 4 **Supervisor Katy Tang** appeared to selectively have one "litmus test" of undying loyalty to City Attorney "advice" for SOTF applicants in May 2014, but hypocritically held Ethics Commissioners Paul Renne and Peter Keane to a separate standard, allowing lawyers appointed as Ethics Commissioners to ignore City Attorney advice. What was up with that?

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On June 10, 2014 San Francisco's Board of Supervisors were scheduled to consider six appointees to the SOTF, after the Board of Supervisors left three appointments to the Task Force vacant for over two years, also in a fit of pique. Of 11 seats on the Task Force, as of June 4, 2014 there were still three vacant seats and three other members' terms were ending.

When the Rules Committee met on May 15, 2014 to consider new appointments to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, there were then 13 applicants for open SOTF seats. That's when then-Supervisor Katy Tang took up the drumbeat asking for more "diversity" on the Task Force. Her facial expression spoke volumes.

Fast forward to May 27, 2014 when once again Wiener raised bogus allegations to the full Board of Supervisors, and raised a question about "hold-over" appointments of SOTF members who were not re-appointed, but continue to serve until replacements are appointed. Then-Deputy City Attorney Jon Givner, who advises both the Board's Rules Committee and the full Board, replied to Wiener without hesitation that the Task Force did not come under any laws under the Charter with regard to holdovers. Thus, if the SOTF is not governed by the holdover rules, then the same may apply for all other rules including the voting threshold, which the Task Force may have been fully within its legal rights to change in 2011, but which was also used against them to justify the 2012 purge. That was the basis for Tang's then-new litmus test for Task Force applicants.

Since the SOTF had rejected City Attorney advice on a specific case, then-Supervisor Tang deployed a new litmus test and seat qualifications for applicants to the SOTF at the May 15, 2014 Rules Committee meeting: Namely, a new test and loyalty oath to what she apparently believes is inviolate City Attorney "advice," **not** an SOTF appointee who forms any independent, critical-thinking legal interpretations.

Tang appeared to selectively hold one "litmus test" of undying loyalty to City Attorney "advice" for applicants to the SOTF, but hypocritically tried to hold her lawyer friends — then-Ethics Commissioner's Paul Renne and Peter Keane — to a separate standard, allowing lawyers appointed as Ethics Commissioners to ignore City Attorney advice.

Tang asserted she would personally "have liked to see stronger applicants" because she claimed that 10 of the 13 applicants in 2014 "didn't seem to have a good understanding of the Sunshine Ordinance."

Of note, two current SOTF applicants in 2026 — Supervisor Mandelman's former campaign staffer MacKenzie Ewing, and Mayor Lurie's former aide Andrea Gallardo Lopez — both indicated on their applications they have not so much as *attended*

an SOTF meeting. What that bodes for their understanding of the highly technical 29-page Sunshine Ordinance that has a steep learning curve, or familiarity with the California Public Records Act, isn't known.

Triumvirate's New Qualification Specs

Mayor Lurie formed a triumvirate with Board of Supervisors president Rafael Mandelman, and Rules Committee chairperson Shamann Walton, apparently to prematurely overhaul seat qualification requirements for appointments to the SOTF. It can only be seen as a bald attempt to stack the SOTF with toady appointees who will follow orders and do the triumvirate's bidding.

Another *Westside Observer* [comparison](#) illustrates the differences between the current SOTF membership qualifications vs. changes that will become effective if voters pass the Charter Amendment proposed by the Streamlining Task Force that the Board of Supervisors just passed to place on the November 3 ballot.

Assuming voters pass it, the four seats requiring appointees with specific qualifications and experience in citizen access and participation in local government, the two seats requiring experience in consumer advocacy, and the one appointee having a physical disability and has demonstrated interest in citizen access and participation in local government will vanish.

In their place, qualifications for those seven seats will be deemed to be merely “*desirable*,” with the Board of Supervisors **not bound** to specific criteria in appointing Task Force members, along with any so-called “*other factors*” the Board of Supervisors may deem relevant — in their sole discretion (or whims)!

Ex-commissioners, current and former members of the SOTF, and open government advocates fear and are crying foul over what they suspect, with good reason, is an effort to pack the SOTF — essentially a *transparency* watchdog group — with appointee loyalists sympathetic to City Hall interests. After all, two of the current applicants are political supplicants to Mandelman and Lurie.

As [reported](#) by our colleagues at *The San Francisco Standard* on July 19, Supervisor Mandelman brayed:

*“It’s important that there be people on there who understand the burden that particularly repeat [public records] users can place on departments and the functioning of city government. I’m here to see **pragmatic** people on there. The sunshine laws definitely get misused and move into the realm of harassment. We need folks on the Task Force who are sensitive to that.”*

The Standard also reported that for his part, Supervisor Walton, who chairs the Rules Committee that votes on appointments to the SOTF, said a hearing on new appointees has not been scheduled because,

“[He is] keeping the window open to allow more interested individuals to apply. [He added that the Committee] has expressed interest in considering new individuals for this body, since most of the incumbents have sat for numerous terms.”

Without putting too fine a point on this, Mandelman's wish for more *pragmatic* appointees may fit the nebulous “*other factors*” the Board could consider **after** the November election, but it isn't even much as a “*desired*” qualification and isn't a current required qualification. Mandelman ignores that every San Franciscan is allowed to submit as many public records requests and associated Sunshine complaints, when necessary, as they want to.

As for Walton's desire for “*new blood*,” buried in the Ordinance just passed, current members of all Boards and Commissions, and the SOTF, will be allowed to serve a total of 12 years, whether they are on two-year, three-year, or four-year terms, if voters pass November's planned Charter Amendment. All of their previous terms and years on any single body will count as a **single** term. [For example, Health Commissioner Ed Chow's 30 years serving on the Health Commission will count as a **single** four-year term.]

A desire for “*new blood*” can't supplant 12-year tenures.

Lurie, Mandelman, and Walton may be stalling so the seat qualifications are passed in November, allowing them to then stack the SOTF with anybody they want. But at that point, the SOTF might well have been shuttered for 128 days (4 months

and 5 days) between June 29 and November 3, or longer, until the Rules Committee holds hearings to make appointments. That may be the Triumvirate's end game.

Dr. Derek Kerr, a member of the Society of Professional Journalist's Freedom of Information Committee, observed,

"When the Board of Supervisors returns from its August recess, the voter approved Sunshine Task Force will have been shut down for two months. It will likely take an additional month for applications for appointment already submitted to advance for consideration, stretching the closure to three months."

Kerr added, *"Additional delays are likely, amounting to a flagrant disrespect of voters, folks seeking public records, task force members, journalists — and good government practices."*

Other observers think the shutdown will last longer. They worry it may take until after the November 3 election counting on voters approving proposed changes to SOTF membership qualifications, to then seek additional applicants. That could take until late December, resulting in the SOTF being closed for five months — or longer.

At this point, Mandelman and Lurie have zero credibility regarding the SOTF. It's clear both men just don't want the public to know about what they're up to behind closed doors at City Hall.

Why the Quorum Disput 4Matters

What is not in dispute is the consequence.

Without a quorum, the Task Force cannot hear complaints, determine whether City agencies violated the Sunshine Ordinance, issue findings, or refer potential violations to the Ethics Commission.

For as long as the Task Force remains unable to meet, those protections are effectively suspended.

The issue extends far beyond one commission or one political dispute. It goes to whether San Franciscans retain an independent forum where they can challenge government secrecy and seek enforcement of one of the City's most important open-government laws.

How the SOTF lost its quorum is one question. Whether the shutdown itself was lawful is another.

And whether this episode is part of a longer pattern of political interference with the City's transparency watchdog remains to be examined.

Palpable Irony

Ironically, Mandelman's efforts to transform the SOTF, a body mandated to bolster open government, is doing the exact **opposite**. And for his part, during the week of July 22, KGO ABC TV Channel 7 broadcast a segment during which Mayor Lurie more ironically claimed, *"Iran [for Mayor] on accountability and change."* Yet when the SOTF sought accountability for transparent public records from Lurie, the SOTF ended up finding Lurie violated the Sunshine Ordinance at **least** twice.

Some change! And no accountability.

Mandelman is essentially seeking to assist the Mayor's Office and various City Departments curtail public access to public records. He's seeking more latitude to help City Departments hide public information, and is making no secret of doing so. Mandelman is just one part of also part of a coordinated campaign to shield the Lurie administration from embarrassment and accountability by keeping public records beyond the reach of taxpayers for as long as possible.

The SOTF is a vital counterweight to the greatest threat posed by agency obfuscation and wrongdoing: Public scrutiny of insidious secrecy.

Secrecy is already a dangerous problem at City Hall, because if public officials succeed at bypassing our local and state public records transparency laws, our system of government and “*We the People*” lose the most.

For a City with a now \$16.9 billion budget, it’s unconscionable that departments funded so substantially with our tax dollars should be allowed to hide how they are conducting business performed in our names. It is fundamentally undemocratic to chill members of the public from exposing potential waste of City funds and agency abuse.

When it comes to public oversight, City Hall’s attempts to hide unclassified public records, amounts to an insidious threat.

The SOTF’s June 3, 2026 Staff Report noted it had 82 pending and follow-up matters on its docket. At least 15 more complaints have been added, at minimum, since then. Each day of delay reconvening meetings of the SOTF adds to its backlog of citizen complaints. If the SOTF isn’t allowed to meet “*until sometime after the November election*,” how large will the backlog be then?

Since history is littered with ironies, there can be no greater irony than Mandelman and Lurie sidelining the SOTF’s mandate to facilitate open government transparency and access to local government public records and meetings.

This has been wrought, in large part, by Mandelman and Lurie’s affiliation with *Abundant SF*, *GrowSF*, and other billionaire backed Astroturf Network groups that are backing the pair, and also backing so-called “*moderate*” Supervisors like Bilal Mahmood, Matt Dorsey, Steven Sherrill, David Wong, Danny Sauter, and others. We get — not what we pay for — but who we vote for.

The Sunshine Ordinance Task Force needed just four appointments to stay open. It received 17 applications, of which one withdrew and two were deemed no longer valid, leaving 14 candidates to choose from. What went wrong?

It was the City’s only board, commission, or regulatory or advisory body vindictively shut down completely. Deliberately!

Why? Nobody voted for this!

Turning off the lights at the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force turned off the best disinfectant against the scourge of City Hall’s secrecy: Sunlight. Without Sunshine, “*democracy dies in darkness*,” undisinfected!



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