

## SF Standard - Racial Equity Plan

Jonah Lamb <[jonah@sfstandard.com](mailto:jonah@sfstandard.com)>

Fri 12/9/2022 2:35 PM

To: Jerdonek, Chris (REG) <[chris.jerdonek@sfgov.org](mailto:chris.jerdonek@sfgov.org)>

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

Good afternoon,

I am a reporter with the San Francisco Standard working on a story about citywide Racial Equity Plans. I saw in the latest update earlier this year notes that the commission has yet to start any of its efforts toward racial equity.

Could you comment on the commission's lack of movement on the topic versus the department's relatively healthy track record on meeting their benchmarks for racial equity.

Jonah

Jonah Owen Lamb

Senior Reporter

SF Standard

415-302-7416

[jonah@sfstandard.com](mailto:jonah@sfstandard.com)

**Re: SF Standard - racial equity**

Jerdonek, Chris (REG) <chris.jerdonek@sfgov.org>

Mon 12/12/2022 11:07 AM

To: Jonah Lamb <jonah@sfstandard.com>

Cc: Stone, Robin (REG) <robin.stone@sfgov.org>

Hi Jonah,

A few more things to follow up since we weren't able to connect by phone this morning:

The information about the Commission in the document you sent is a copy of what was originally submitted in Dec. 31, 2020, so it doesn't reflect the Commission's progress since then. It seems like the Commission wasn't given an opportunity to discuss updating that section before it was posted.

The email I sent you below provides progress updates on a number of those items. At today's Commission meeting, I'm going to be suggesting that the Commission discuss updating that section properly at a future meeting, if it's not too late.

Finally, the Commission's Redistricting Process Initiative is another major racial equity initiative that we have prioritized this year, as it's about ensuring that different communities are heard and represented. This is a topic we've spent considerable time on and have discussed at every meeting since May 2022, including inviting a diverse group of speakers at a number of meetings.

Thank you,  
--Chris

---

**From:** Stone, Robin (REG) <robin.stone@sfgov.org>

**Sent:** Saturday, December 10, 2022 2:38 PM

**To:** Jerdonek, Chris (REG) <chris.jerdonek@sfgov.org>; Jonah Lamb <jonah@sfstandard.com>

**Subject:** Re: SF Standard - racial equity

Thanks for looping me in, President Jerdonek, and for providing Jonah with this background.

Jonah,

I am actually unfamiliar with the link you shared, though I am glad to have been made aware of it now. I joined the Commission in March 2022 and as both President Jerdonek and Commissioner Dai have mentioned, I have been pushing for more discussions around racial equity since then. As a result, our Budget & Oversight Committee spent about an hour brainstorming Commission initiatives we could start to prioritize, which you can reference in the youtube link shared below. You can see the exact documents I was aware of as it pertained to racial equity for the Commission based on the oversight committee meeting's [agenda & packet](#). Notwithstanding our lack of knowledge with the document, the Commission has prioritized several equity initiatives over the last several months. Here is a brief snapshot:

- Forged new relationship with the Ramaytush Ohlone Association and American Indian Cultural District, which led to us partnering on a custom land acknowledgment specific to elections. We received approval from the Ramaytush Ohlone earlier this fall and the Commission passed a resolution to recite it every meeting (general, special, and committees). We began the new recitation in our last Commission meeting, and President Jerdonek also cited its importance in honoring Native American Heritage Month. Separately, I have remained in touch with the AICD on how we can continue to work together.

- One of the other focus areas we've been prioritizing is community outreach, especially with communities that have been historically marginalized from the democratic process. For example:
  - I've partnered with groups who work with San Franciscans who are currently incarcerated. Ahead of the midterms, we discussed plans for registration and voting. I also spent a day in a San Francisco jail handing out voter information packets, registering people to vote, and offering information about voting eligibility. Despite representing ~5% of the county's population, Black San Franciscans constitute ~43% of current inmates.
    - Data here: <https://www.sfsheriff.com/services/jail-services/current-and-historical-jail-data/current-jail-data-and-trends>
  - Separately, I've also partnered with local community groups who support formerly incarcerated folks, including discussing community priorities, hearing feedback, and distributing voter information packets. Importantly, the laws around voting for currently and formerly incarcerated individuals changes often and there are many nuances. Working with community groups is an imperative way to understand needs and deliver necessary support. These are ongoing relationships.
  - To support these two aforementioned efforts, the Director will be offering a report on voter turnout within current and formerly incarcerated communities compared with previous elections. We will be evaluating this for every election moving forward.
  - Redistricting is also a crucial component of this similar equity work. Specifically, the Commission has met with several community groups to understand community-based needs and strategize reform that is more representative. Community groups were also invited as guest speakers on the topic during general Commission meetings over the last several months.
  - I've also collaborated with organizations such as Urban Habitat to bridge the divide between communities of color and city commission appointments. The Commission had several vacant seats at the time, and we reached out to appointing authorities encouraging them to consider representation in appointment decisions.
    - More data on this topic that informed some of this discussion can be found here: <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/indicators/diversity-of-electeds#/?geo=05000000000000017>
- As President Jerdonek mentioned, pronouns have now been added to our about page, and we will be including more self-disclosing demographic information on the website as soon as we transition. We discussed and agreed to this in our oversight meeting linked below.
- I have also done a ton of research around voter participation and registration patterns in San Francisco, and have discussed this at length with Director Arntz. Interestingly, voting rate for citizens of legal voting age is quite low compared with neighboring counties (#8 out of 9 Bay Area counties), which the Director and I have discussed is due to low registration rates in specific neighborhoods. We are in the process of digging deeper into this data; earlier this fall I spoke with a democracy expert / thought leader who created a tool to look at voter participation by neighborhood, which has helped inform some of our discovery.

I am sure I am missing some things, but I hope this helps in the meantime.

Sincerely,

Robin

---

**From:** Jerdonek, Chris (REG) <chris.jerdonek@sfgov.org>

**Date:** Friday, December 9, 2022 at 9:00 PM

**To:** Jonah Lamb <jonah@sfstandard.com>

**Cc:** Stone, Robin (REG) <robin.stone@sfgov.org>

**Subject:** Re: SF Standard - racial equity

Hi Jonah,

Thank you for your call earlier. I was outside in the middle of something so wasn't sure what document you were referring to until I got back home.

I'm also CC'ing Vice President Stone, who was occupied this evening. She may be able to share more thoughts tomorrow before 5pm or so. In the meantime, below is some info and thoughts in response to your questions.

The Commission has been prioritizing and making progress on racial equity in recent months, as well as in the months prior.

In August, the Commission's Budget and Oversight of Public Elections Committee (BOPEC) met and had an agenda item about racial equity in which we discussed and brainstormed ideas and initiatives for over an hour (see agenda item #5):

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMT-6\\_cnUaU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMT-6_cnUaU)

One of the threads of that discussion was how to make the Commission membership itself more representative and inclusive. For example, we discussed adding our preferred pronouns and other identifying information to our "About" page to bring more transparency to the Commission's makeup -- both for the benefit of the public as well as for the appointing authorities when they make their appointments. We also discussed how serving on the Commission could be made easier or more attractive for people that aren't as well off financially. See, for example, the memo on Commissioner compensation I wrote and included in the agenda packet of the October meeting under agenda item #7, which I volunteered to do at the BOPEC meeting:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/commission-agenda-packet-october-19-2022>

We also had agenda items dedicated to Racial Equity / Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, Justice (DEIBJ) Initiatives at the full Commission's September and October meetings (see agenda item #7 of both meetings). At the September meeting, we voted to add Commissioners' preferred pronouns to the Commission's About page, which can now be seen. At the October meeting, the Commission unanimously adopted its "Resolution on Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgment," which can be seen at the top of this page:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/motions-and-resolutions>

It was recited for the first time at the November meeting.

Commissioners have expressed interest in adding more information about the Commission's makeup to the Commission's About page, but the plan for that was to wait until after the Commission's website is migrated to the new SF.gov platform maintained by SF's Digital Services Team. This is something that we were planning to have happen sometime after the November election. I have had a few conversations with Digital Services about migrating the Commission's website, and I took a couple training classes on how to do that. One of the things I asked them about was support for multiple languages (aka internationalization), which you were asking about, so that's definitely something the Commission will be looking into once the migration happens.

At the October meeting, I gave an update on the SF.gov transition. See the agenda packet document under agenda item #9 here:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/commission-agenda-packet-october-19-2022>

You can see on page 2 of that document that it says, "Departments and commissions must make plans to evolve their websites to meet the Digital Accessibility and Inclusion Standard," so inclusivity is definitely a main driver. At the October meeting, I told the Commission I was hoping to have a representative of Digital Services present at a meeting early next year so we could talk about the migration and these types of issues (for both the Commission's and the Department's website). Note also that historically, (1) the Commission has only had the resources of a single half-time Commission Secretary who isn't necessarily tech-savvy, (2) the Commission doesn't have its own budget, and (3) Commissioners are all volunteers, so we have been a bit more limited in what we can do with our website.

Regarding the actions on pages 55 through 57 of the document you linked to, I will say a few things about those:

For 7.1.1. (reviewing the bylaws, etc.), the Commission did revise the Bylaws with this in mind in April 2021:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/sites/default/files/Documents/misc/bylaws/SF%20Elections%20Commission%20Bylaws%20%28April%202021%2C%202021%29.pdf>

If you look at these amended bylaws, you will see inclusive language throughout, e.g. "the Commission President may, at their discretion"; "the presiding officer, at their sole discretion"; "Public commentators who do not sign or do not wish to give their name"; "through the Director of Elections, or their designees;" and "Committee meeting of which they are a member." You can confirm these changes were made then by looking at the notice of amendments of the April 2021 meeting:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/sites/default/files/Documents/meetings/2021/2021-04-21-commission/Notice%20of%20bylaws%20amendments.pdf>

For 7.1.2, this was the impetus for adding members' preferred pronouns to our website and considering adding more demographic information after the website migration.

For 7.1.4, we are making an effort to include Racial Equity / Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging, Justice (DEIBJ) Initiatives as a standing agenda item so we can make steady progress on these issues. Vice President Stone and I were elected President and Vice President at the July meeting and have discussed this be a standing item (and agree it should be).

For 7.1.6, we did pass a Land Acknowledgement Resolution at the October meeting (see above).

For 7.1.7, the Commission was deliberate in not listing citizenship and voter registration as a requirement for serving on the Redistricting Task Force. You can confirm this by looking at the "Application & Announcement" inviting people to apply on this page:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/past-announcements>

Note also that we provided the application in 5 languages (including Arabic), and the Commission's selections were relatively diverse in the end.

Finally, under 7.1.4, you will see that it says "# of policies and issues related to racial equity that are heard, reviewed and/or implemented" in the "Indicators" column. Our decision in November to open up a competitive selection process can be viewed as one of these policies and issues that we were hoping to implement, as it's consistent with many of the principles listed in, for example, the following document that was included in the agenda packet of the August 2022 BOPEC meeting:

<https://sfgov.org/electionscommission/sites/default/files/Documents/meetings/2022/2022-08-10-bopec/Citywide%2BExecutive%2BSummary%2B-%2BRacial%2BEquity%2BAction%2BPlans%2B-%2B2021.pdf>

Vice President Stone may have more to add tomorrow.

Thank you,  
--Chris

---

**From:** Jonah Lamb <jonah@sfstandard.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, December 9, 2022 4:22 PM  
**To:** Jerdonek, Chris (REG) <chris.jerdonek@sfgov.org>  
**Subject:** SF Standard - racial equity

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

[https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Racial\\_Equity\\_Action\\_Plan\\_Elections\\_April\\_18\\_2022.pdf](https://sfelections.sfgov.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Racial_Equity_Action_Plan_Elections_April_18_2022.pdf)

Jonah Owen Lamb  
Senior Reporter  
SF Standard  
415-302-7416  
[jonah@sfstandard.com](mailto:jonah@sfstandard.com)