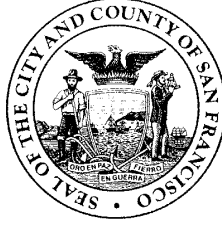


ELECTIONS COMMISSION
City and County of San Francisco



**FAIR, INDEPENDENT, & EFFECTIVE
REDISTRICTING FOR COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT (FIERCE)
COMMITTEE**

Cynthia Dai, Chair
Renita LiVolsi
Michelle Parker

John Arntz, Director of Elections
Marisa Davis, Commission Secretary

SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES (FINAL 10-30-23 Dai)

**Fair, Independent, & Effective Redistricting for Community Engagement (FIERCE)
Committee of the San Francisco Elections Commission**

Thursday, August 24, 2023

6:00 p.m.

City Hall, Room 416

**1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, California 94102
& Remote via WebEx**

Order of Business

1. Call to Order & Roll Call

Chair Dai called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

Present: Chair Cynthia Dai, Commissioner Renita LiVolsi, and Commissioner Michelle Parker.

The Chair has excused the Director of Elections from attending the meeting, which is permitted by Article VI of the Commission's Bylaws.

Commissioner Parker stated the Commission's land acknowledgment.

2. General Public Comment

- Alan Burradell said that considering redistricting reform is an overreach by the committee and the Elections Commission.

- Lauren Girardin, League of Women Voters of San Francisco, thanked the committee for its commitment to meet in August and affirmed that this is the right body to consider reform recommendations.
- Russia Chavis Cardenas, Voting Rights and Redistricting Program Manager, California Common Cause, said that they appreciate the time taken by the committee to judiciously study redistricting and that the organization is available as a resource to help San Francisco with a truly independent redistricting commission.

3. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

Commissioners reviewed minutes from the July 31, 2023 meeting. With no objections, it was approved by general consensus.

There was no public comment.

4. Redistricting Initiative

Chair Dai made some opening remarks on the purpose of the FIERCE Committee, recapped prior committee meetings and reminded the public that videos from those prior committee meetings were posted on the website. She then reviewed items in the agenda packet, the first of which was Dr. Sadhwani's slides from the July 31st meeting.

The second item were the talking points Chair Dai drafted from previous discussion. There were no changes suggested. Chair Dai noted that she had relied on these when interviewed for a recent San Francisco Chronicle article which also included interviews with Assemblyman Bryan, the lead author of the state bills, and Supervisor Melgar. She also mentioned that the state bills are both in the Senate Appropriations Committee and that a recent amendment is not relevant to San Francisco.

The third item was a report from California Common Cause with their recommendations for Los Angeles, which was included for background information.

Chair Dai then introduced the main item, a deck prepared by Commissioner Parker that synthesizes past educational materials, including good government reports and recommendations, alongside state legislation, to allow us to walk through each of the major reforms. The goal is to identify the ones which we largely agree vs those that might require more discussion or information to come to consensus. This could provide the basis for preliminary recommendations, as well as areas where we might decline to make specific recommendations.

Commissioner Parker provided an overview of the deck structure, then began with historical context for the benefit of those who have not followed the Commission's Redistricting Initiative. She noted that the committee was not considering changing the type of commission, as an independent citizens' body is already in line with best practices. However, San Francisco's Redistricting Task Force (RDTF) is considered a "political" commission due to its political appointees, which was the motivation for including charter cities in the state legislation. She referenced another recent report commissioned by TogetherSF and published by the Rose Institute which also recommended non-political appointments. Commissioners then began discussing each of the 7 areas of reform:

1. **Composition**—The committee generally concurred with the proposed default composition in AB 1248: 14 members plus 2 non-voting alternates, with 8 chosen by random draw and 6 chosen by the first 8 from the same vetted pool-- *except* that the first 8 should not be based on previous districts but should be "geographically diverse" from different neighborhoods or "regions" of the City.
 - a. **Alternates**—Commissioners quickly agreed that this was a practical feature similar to juries, and all the newer Independent Redistricting Commissions (IRCs) have alternates. Commissioner Parker noted that this was also requested by former RDTF members.
 - b. **Type of Composition**—Chair Dai noted that most other IRCs have 13-14 members. The committee agreed that 14 is a large enough number to achieve adequate diversity without being too large for the IRC to work effectively. Chair Dai explained that randomization causes problems with diversity so the 8+6 approach was a compromise to both limit political influence and balance diversity. Commissioner Parker said she likes the idea of different methods of selecting the first 8 and final 6, ensuring geographic diversity and filling in with additional members. All agreed that IRC members should represent the entire city rather than just the district they happen to live in.
 - c. **Representation**—Commissioners agreed on same 4 diversity factors used to select the California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CCRC), noting that districts were an imperfect proxy for the "geography" diversity factor. (Socioeconomic status was missing from the discussion table.) Commissioner LiVolsi commented that while 14 members could not represent every kind of diversity, it's important to allow for as many varied experiences as possible. The committee also agreed some type of stipend is important.

- d. **Voting threshold**—Agreement on 14 members, noting this would increase the number of members who form a majority and supermajority.

2. Selection & Removal

- a. **Outreach & Recruitment**—The committee agreed that the City must create a comprehensive outreach plan supported by adequate funding for both general and targeted outreach to build a large, diverse pool. This should include an educational plan to address why people should apply. It must regularly report on its recruitment progress and demographics of the pool in an online dashboard for accountability.
 - i. **Large, representative pool**—Commissioner Parker highlighted creative outreach conducted by Long Beach and Sacramento IRCs, including utility bill inserts as well as partnering with community organizations. She did raise concerns about organizations that have “c4” political arms. Commissioner LiVolsi said it would be important to consider ways to reach online bill payers. Other ideas included piggybacking on voter mailings, advertising on Muni, at bus stops, in the libraries. Commissioner LiVolsi emphasized the importance of targeting underrepresented communities.
 - ii. **City agencies**—Chair Dai suggested that it was not necessary name particular agencies, as those who specialize in outreach, such as the Department of Elections or Public Health know who they are. The key point is to leverage existing city infrastructure.
 - iii. **Languages**—Adhere to the standard list already established by Department of Elections.
 - iv. **Reducing barriers**—Commissioners discussed the importance of encouraging applicants and making it easy and accessible, especially to build the initial pool. Chair Dai shared her experience on the CCRC where filing Form 700 was not required until late in the process where concerns were raised that financial disclosures might have suppressed AAPI applicants.
 - v. **Reporting**—All agreed that transparency is important during the process. Chair Dai noted Michigan’s Secretary of State reporting during their process, which provided focus for recruiting in underrepresented areas.
- b. **Qualifications and Restrictions**—The committee generally concurred with the proposed objective and subjective qualifications and standards in AB 1248, including pre-, during, and post-service restrictions to limit

political influence, but had some questions about the length of the look-back period. Commissioners agreed on a minimum of 5-8 years.

- i. **Standard but not overly restrictive criteria**—Discussion immediately focused on voter registration vs. residency (see below), as well as the length of certain pre- and post-service restrictions. Commissioner LiVolsi noted that a 10-year term would be burden for most people, and suggested instead that it is clearly stipulated that IRC members cannot run for Supervisor or citywide office. She noted that these restrictions are designed to filter out applicants with a political agenda or potential candidates for elected office. Commissioner Parker agreed that pre-service restrictions make sense but had questions about whether an 8-year look-back period was necessary. Chair Dai suggested that it might correspond to two 4-year terms, and even if someone was less politically involved more recently, it doesn't change the fact that they have insider relationships.
 - ii. **Objective**—Chair Dai said she likes the term “disqualifying conflicts of interest” used in the California Common Cause report, which tend to be objective and can be verified or self-certified.
 - iii. **Subjective**—Chair Dai provided examples of how CCRC candidates demonstrated subjective criteria like the appreciation of diversity and geography through written essays, though she did not necessarily advocate for essays.
 - iv. **Residency**—Commissioner Parker pointed out that San Francisco has relatively low voter registration rates. LiVolsi likes the idea of residency over voter registration and doesn't want it to be too long, as one year seems common for other jurisdictions. The committee agreed that there should be a minimum of one year, another objective criterion.
 - v. **DEI considerations**—Diversity factors were discussed in the previous section.
- c. **Vetting & Selection**—The committee affirmed the importance of trusted agency(ies) to run these processes, leveraging existing city skillsets, processes and systems—and adequately resourcing them. It also strongly recommends that the Board of Supervisors consider community input to determine which bodies are trusted.

- i. **Building public trust**—Commissioner Parker highlighted RDTF recommendations to follow CCRC vetting and selection processes to insulate them from political influence.
 - ii. **Selection Authority**—Chair Dai raised the idea of splitting the responsibility of the outreach and recruitment phase vs. the vetting and selection phase among two different agencies best suited to each. Possible candidate agencies based on other jurisdictions might include the City Controller, Department of Elections (also for outreach/recruitment), City Clerk’s office, or a panel of representatives (like Long Beach). The committee also noted the need for an investigative capability for vetting.
 - iii. **Selection requirements**—Any selection authority would need to follow the requirements discussed previously.
- d. **Removal and Replacement**—The committee concurred with AB 1248 reforms.
- i. **Causes for removal**—Commissioner LiVolsi stated that requiring people to serve beyond their ability to was not reasonable, so she agrees with the addition in AB 1248 to the list of reasons to remove/resign.
 - ii. **Who should remove**—Commissioner Parker notes that alternates should have been listed in this section as well and that it’s appropriate for a truly independent body to make its own decisions.

The committee agreed to continue the meeting at a future date to allow for public to absorb the information and comment on the items discussed thus far.

Public comment:

- Alan Burradell asked the committee to footnote where it is stated that RDTF members serve “at the pleasure of appointing authority” and that he opposes AB 1248.
- Lauren Girardin from the League of Women Voters San Francisco thanked the committee for being incredibly thorough and organized and encouraged the public to share its feedback with the committee.

5. Agenda Items for Future Meetings

The committee agreed to continue reviewing the remaining reforms at the next meeting. Chair Dai encouraged the public to think about the discussion and share written comments given the time limitation for verbal comments. Commissioner Parker

requested that any written comments be posted. Chair Dai will work offline with committee members to find a date and room for the second part of this meeting.

There was no public comment.

6. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:13pm.