

Rules of Order Strategic Project
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Historical Background & Context

In its first year, the inaugural San Francisco Elections Commission faced tremendous headwinds, including litigation, the removal of the incumbent Director of Elections, budget mismanagement, and Departmental operational failures. To overcome these challenges and carry out its new mandate as an oversight body, the inaugural Commission [focused its first year](#) on shaping a “strategic course for the Election’s Department’s future” and establishing an infrastructure that would transition the Department to an “autonomous agency capable of running elections in a fair, efficient, and effective manner.” The body prioritized passing policies, priorities, and bylaws that would cultivate an independent Department of elections, with three fundamental elements:

- 1) Space: The Elections Department must operate in one central location with the space necessary to perform the legally required activities to support its mandate.
- 2) Structure: The Elections Department must have an organizational framework that supports and carries out the legally mandated Department duties.
- 3) Staff: The Elections Department must have the requisite full time, civil service personnel to support the structure that carries out the Department's legally mandated duties.

In the two decades since this strategic effort, the Elections Commission has helped stabilize the Department of Elections and offered the public greater transparency, oversight, and accountability over San Francisco’s elections. Yet while the Department of Elections has become a best-in-class framework for election administration, the Elections Commission has had less investment in its own operating infrastructure.

With individual Commissioners serving five-year terms (and a two-term maximum), and annual elections of new officers to manage the body’s operations, business, staff, the volunteer body has been significantly more resource constrained and less operationally and organizationally systematized. What’s more, near-ongoing Commission vacancies, Secretary turnover, and annual leadership changes, have contributed to the body’s operational volatilities. Rather, the Commission’s bylaws have served as the primary “North Star” for structural consistency.

New Strategic Initiative

When I stepped into the role of Elections Commission President in early 2023, several concurring circumstances led to my recognition of the operational breakdowns facing our body, including but not limited to:

- The City's transition to a new website
- The Elections Commission's lengthy Secretary vacancy, confusing recruitment process, and onboarding
- Technical issues caused by the transition to hybrid remote meeting structure in the wake of special COVID-19 protocols
- Lack of clarity around comprehensive officer responsibilities, compliance, meeting facilitation, passwords, etc.
- Lack of transition between officers (i.e., a lame duck period)
- Lack of access to centralized templates, processes, and procedures
- Ongoing debate surrounding the Commission's authority and responsibilities to the Director of Elections, the Department, and general public
- General, ongoing Commissioner requests and transitions
- Unprecedented, lengthy meetings

Consequently, over the last year, as I have worked to fulfill my obligations as President, I have simultaneously worked to untangle and rebuild a systematized operating infrastructure for the Commission.

First, I have undergone a discovery process to uncover and compile pre-existing materials and processes established by this body over its tenure. Specifically, I have researched, read, and organized historical documents; documented existing processes, materials, and templates; and identified outstanding gaps and new processes that require development – with the ultimate goal of building a centralized book of resources, procedures, and materials that can empower future Commissions with an infrastructural framework to focus solely on its mandate.

I have already developed or begun developing (with support from colleagues) many new templates, processes, and procedures. Here is a snapshot of my progress to date:

COMMISSION(ers)

- Process for Requesting Agenda Items
- Process for Forming Advisory Committees
- Updated Process for Requesting Bylaw Amendments
- Process for Requesting Guest Speakers
- Process for Rescheduling Requests
- Process for Evaluations
 - Elections Commission Secretary
 - Director of Elections
- Process for Reviewing Annual Department Budget
- Process for Supporting State Legislation
- Process for Requesting Website Updates & Changes

OFFICERS

- Comprehensive Officer Responsibilities Guide & Checklist
- Process for Commission & Committee Meeting Facilitation Guide
- Process for Developing Monthly Agendas
- Process for Developing Annual Reports

SECRETARY

- New Secretary Onboarding
- Comprehensive Secretary Responsibilities Checklist
- Process for Setting Up Hearing Rooms
- Process for Meeting Administration & Facilitation
 - Tech Support
- Commissioner Support
- Onboarding, Offboarding, & Reappointment Processes
 - Securing Equipment, an ID Badge, etc.
 - Training Compliance
- Correspondence with members of the public

Should you be interested in viewing some of these working templates and/or processes, please reach out to me directly.

Phase Two: Centralize & Digitize

The final output of this initiative shall include an organized, centralized Rules of Order document that will be accessible on our website and made available to all individual Commissioners. The following pages of this document outline a working table of contents to date. Please note this is a *working version* and non-exhaustive.

Additionally, Secretary Davis and I have also begun to parse through hundreds of old Elections Commission records and documents in file cabinets stored at the Department of Elections. We hope to present the Commission with a proposal for digitizing these materials in the coming year.

**SAN FRANCISCO ELECTIONS COMMISSION
RULES OF ORDER
TABLE OF CONTENTS
WORKING DRAFT – DECEMBER 2023**

Section 1. Commission Overview.

1. Charter Mandate
 - a. Authority & Oversight
 - b. Powers & Duties
2. Organization
 - a. Appointments
 - b. Officers
3. Commission History
 - a. City Attorney Memo on Commission History
 - b. Inaugural Elections Commission Annual Report
 - c. November 2001 Proposition E (Pages 51 & 52)
4. Other Relevant Resources – *Accessible in the Appendix.*
 - a. Bylaws
 - b. Elections Commission Robert’s Rules Reference Guide
 - c. Good Government Guide
 - d. Statement of Incompatible Activities

Section 2. Meetings.

1. Operations & Cadence
 - a. Regular Meetings
 - i. Holiday Schedule
 - ii. Rescheduling Requests
 - b. Special Meetings
 - c. Committees
 - d. Staffing
2. Administration
 - a. Parliamentary Procedure: Robert’s Rules
 - b. Structure & Contents
 - i. Call to Order & Roll Call
 - ii. Land Acknowledgment
 - iii. General Public Comment & Agenda Items for Future Meetings
 - iv. Approval of Meeting Minutes
 - v. Director’s Report

1. List of Regularly Requested Information
 - vi. Commissioner's Reports
 1. Letters
 - vii. Committee Reports
 - viii. Old Business
 - ix. New Business
 - c. Closed Sessions
 - d. Participants
 - i. Quorum
 - ii. Secretary
 - iii. Deputy City Attorney
 - iv. Director of Elections
 - v. Guest Speakers
-
3. Accessibility, Transparency, & Public Participation
 - a. Open Meetings
 - i. Conduct
 - b. Public Participation
 - i. Written Comments
 - ii. Remote Public Comment
 - iii. In-Person Testimony
 - iv. Prohibited Actions
 - c. Website Notices
-
4. Commission Actions & Deliberative Process
 - a. Authority, Methods
 - i. Motions, Resolutions, Ordinances
 - ii. Policies, Priorities
 - b. New Committees
 - i. Process to Establish
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 - ii. Committee Types
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 - c. Bylaw Amendments

Section 3. Responsibilities & Privileges.

1. Commission At-Large
 - a. Annual
 - i. Policies & Priorities
 - ii. Officer Elections
 - iii. Director & Secretary Evaluations
 - iv. Budget Review
 - b. 5-Year Director Appointment Review
2. Committees
 - a. Overview, Structure, Processes
 - i. Appointments & Service
 - ii. Assignments
 - iii. Size
 - iv. Committee Scope & Authority
 - b. Regular Committees
 - i. Budget & Oversight Committee (BOPEC)
 1. Annual Budget
 - c. Responsibilities to the Public
3. Individual Commissioners
 - a. Meeting Attendance
 - i. Absences
 - b. Agenda Requests
 - c. Trainings & Compliance
 - i. Implicit Bias
 - ii. Sunshine Ordinance
 - iii. Brown Act
 - iv. Form 700
 - d. Access to City-Provided Healthcare Benefits
4. Officers
 - a. Annual Report
 - b. Monthly Meetings
 - i. Preparation
 - ii. Facilitation
5. Secretary
 - a. Meetings
 - i. Preparation
 1. Formal Notices
 2. Agenda
 3. Public outreach
 - ii. Facilitation
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- iii. Post-Meetings
 - 1. Minutes
 - 2. Video Recording to YouTube
- b. Commissioner Support
 - i. Onboarding, Offboarding, Reappointment
 - ii. ID Badges
- c. Technical
 - i. Website
 - ii. Commission Mailbox, OneDrive
- d. General Compliance & Administration
 - i. Record of Meeting Attendance
 - 1. Commissioner Absences Notification
 - ii. Maintain Timely Records
 - 1. Appointment Updates - with City Administrator
- e. Written Communications with the Public