

Statement of Purpose and Jurisdiction

San Francisco Police Commission

Who We Are and What We Do

The San Francisco Police Commission (Commission) is a seven-member volunteer citizen agency tasked with overseeing the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) and the Department of Police Accountability (DPA). As to SFPD, the Commission has three main powers. The first is to promulgate regulations, known as Department General Orders (DGOs), that set forth policies governing the conduct of officers in the field as well as SFPD's institutional obligations. Second, it adjudicates cases of officer discipline. Third, it assess the performance of the Chief of Police. As to this last power, the Commission may remove the Chief by majority vote (the Mayor, acting unilaterally, may also remove the Chief). In the case of a Chief of Police vacancy, the Commission proposes three potential candidates from which the Mayor may select a nominee for the job. The Commission does not have power over hiring decisions, officer deployment, or other day-to-day departmental operations. Those powers reside with the Chief of Police.

Four of the Commission's seven members are nominated by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Board of Supervisors, while three are selected by the Board of Supervisors. Commission meetings are open to the public and are generally held the first three Wednesdays of the month at City Hall.

Our Goals & Principles

1. To enhance the quality of life and level of public safety in San Francisco.
2. To enact policies that reflect evidence-based best practices as well as input from the community at large and the officers who will be tasked with carrying out the policy in question.
3. To promote accountability and transparency at SFPD, including by holding hearings on matters of public interest, and by requesting and reviewing documents and data from SFPD and DPA.
4. To ensure that DPA has access to the documents and data necessary to provide policy recommendations and to conduct audits of SFPD.
5. To educate the public about matters of public safety and police oversight, and to solicit public feedback and criticism.
6. To interpret the meaning of any DGO in the event that there is a need for clarity.
7. To serve the public interest with integrity, transparency, and independence.

8. To understand and balance the purported benefits of rules and policies against the cost of implementation.

Jurisdiction and Authority

The Commission's general authority is set forth in Sec. 4.102, 4.104, and 4.109 of the City Charter. There, the Commission is authorized to set policies consistent with the overall objectives of the City and County (Sec. 4.102); and to adopt rules consistent with the City Charter (4.104) and rules necessary to provide for the efficiency of the Department (Sec.4.109). Sec. 4.136 of the City Charter establishes the Department of Police Accountability under the authority of the Police Commission.