

Commission Impossible?

Getting the Most from San Francisco's Commissions



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CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

2023–2024 CIVIL GRAND JURY

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Contacts: sfcgj2024@gmail.com
Michael Carboy, Foreperson, +1 415 551-3635

Civil Grand Jury: Commission Impossible

2023–2024 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury Report Provides a Comprehensive List of San Francisco Commissions, Recommends the Creation of a Commission Oversight Board and the Abolishment of 15 Commissions.

SAN FRANCISCO (PR NEWSWIRE) June 20, 2024 — A new Grand Jury report shows the number of commissions in San Francisco government has swelled to 115, which is significantly more than the commission count in larger peer cities and counties in California. Commissions have been a core part of San Francisco’s unique city and county government structure since the first 21 were created in 1898. Their numbers grew dramatically in the 1970s, driven largely by the creation of advisory bodies.

During its investigation, the Jury found that most commissions provide important oversight of city departments, government transparency and community engagement, but shortcomings exist, specifically:

- No accurate and comprehensive list of commissions exists within city government.
- Fifteen commissions are redundant or unnecessary, and the Jury recommends that they be abolished.
- Twenty commissions are inactive but currently remain on at least one official city list and in the San Francisco Municipal Code.
- The entire commission system suffers from a lack of cohesion, transparency, and accountability.

“Our Jury concluded that San Francisco has too many commissions and that reducing their number and improving their effectiveness are of vital importance,” said John Monson and Niall Murphy, Investigation Committee Co-Chairs. “To address this matter, the Jury recommends that San Francisco create a new commission, the Commission Oversight Board, to track, evaluate and report on the efficacy of the city’s many commissions. The irony of creating another commission to address this pressing issue is not lost on us.” The Jury recommends that the responsibilities of the Commission Oversight Board include:

- Maintaining an up-to-date, accurate, and comprehensive list of all San Francisco commissions
- Creating performance standards for each commission
- Regular reviews of each commission, including an assessment of their annual reports
- Implementing a more rigorous commissioner training program and performance evaluation system

To read the full report, which includes the Jury’s recommendations, please visit <https://www.sf.gov/resource/2024/civil-grand-jury-reports-2023-2024>.

For more information, visit the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury website: <https://www.sf.gov/departments/civil-grand-jury>.