

Board of Supervisors

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Re Item #11: Proposal to discontinue remote public comment at meetings of the Board and its committees: **STRONGLY OPPOSE**

San Franciscans for Sunshine, a non-profit organization of citizens advocating for maximizing government transparency and public participation in government, strongly opposes this move to rescind the March 17, 2020 motion allowing remote public comment at BoS meetings.

Our review of the text of the Supervisor Mandelman's motion now before you (File No. 221008) found no compelling rationale for discontinuing this practice. The last WHEREAS states that "the significant costs associated with allowing all members of the public to participate in Board meetings remotely" and that "the public interest is served by restoring the Board's prior practice of limiting remote participation in Board and committee meetings both by Supervisors and by members of the public."

Just how much are these costs—what percentage of the BoS's budget?

And just how would the public interest be better served by limiting participation in public meetings?

Many San Franciscans spoke at the Rules Committee meeting on February 27th, offering thoughtful and passionate rationales for opposing Supervisor Mandelman's motion. They mentioned, for example, that many people who live and/or work in San Francisco have family or job obligations or personal challenges that prevent their in-person attendance at meetings of the city's public bodies. In addition, they reminded us that medical and epidemiological experts are warning that the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted the city to enable remote public comment, is not over; one caller shared that she was just diagnosed with her first case of COVID.

Democratic principles dictate that this channel remain permanently available. SF4S will continue to advocate for this and for other measures that increase our government's transparency and support public participation in our government for our common good.

Respectfully,

Dr. Allyson Washburn

Chair, Steering Committee of San Franciscans for Sunshine

Past President, League of Women Voters of San Francisco
Past member and Chair, Sunshine Ordinance Task Force