



PROFESSIONAL & TECHNICAL ENGINEERS, LOCAL 21, AFL-CIO
An Organization of Professional, Technical, and Administrative Employees

Monday, May 18, 2026

To: San Francisco Civil Service Commission

Local 21 Objection to Personal Services Contract DHRPSC0006234

Good afternoon, Civil Service Commissioners –

We are here today to speak to our objection on PSC 6234, which expands the scope and the cost of the City's contract with OpenGov.

On May 4th, we presented to the Commission the history behind the OpenGov procurement. We have significant concerns about the way this contract was awarded. OpenGov was unilaterally selected by a few high-level executives, a decision made in spite of the overwhelming consensus from the Department's subject matter experts.

There was no formal RFP process to objectively evaluate the OpenGov platform against its competitors, which is highly unusual for any contract, but especially for a contract of this size and scope.

Instead, the Mayor's Office solicited bids for this contract using an informal RFI process. It is undeniable that under the traditional RFP process, OpenGov would not have made the cut. OpenGov does not have a turnkey product, they are building our City's permit system from scratch. You don't have to take my word for it - former OpenGov employees admitted this to the Standard just last week, stating "we didn't have any of the stuff we promised the City."

As we outline our concerns with this PSC, we want to be clear that our objection is not about how OpenGov is an inferior permitting platform compared to its competitors. Our objection is also not anchored around the exceptionally high cost that OpenGov is charging us so they can build their inferior product. While these things are true, we are objecting to this PSC because this contract outsources Local 21 members' technical work, plain and simple.

The Department will tell you that our members can and will work hand-in-glove with the vendor, and that our concerns about the level of access and control we have within OpenGov's system are unfounded.

The Department will show you a product roadmap, an implementation timeline, and a knowledge transfer plan, and will work to convince you that once the platform is setup and established, our City's technical staff will be able to maintain the OpenGov system, in partnership with OpenGov's consultants.

The Department will attempt to convince you that OpenGov functions like any other software-as-a-service contract, where the vendor designs and configures the initial setup, and then City staff are trained to take over the ongoing administration, maintenance, and support of that system. The Department will tell you that City staff played a key role in the selection of OpenGov, and they will frame this as a collaborative decision that was based on real input from our in-house technical teams.

If these claims were true, understand that we would have no reason to be here today. We wouldn't have objected to this PSC. If OpenGov functioned like any other software-as-a-service provider, then the work of our bargaining unit would not be eroded, and we would have no objection over the extension of this contract. But these claims are simply not true.

Local 21 represents over 1,100 IT employees Citywide, and OpenGov is doing the work that our members were hired to do.

At first blush, OpenGov may not look so different from other software companies that do business with the City, but they are significantly different in structure. Unlike a mature software suite, OpenGov does not allow City employees or any outside 3rd party consultants to have access to major aspects of their system. This means OpenGov consultants are the only ones who can access the full database, build and support integrations with other systems, or deploy custom code. This is not standard software support that's routinely provided by vendors; this is our members' work that's being handed over to a sole source provider.

The Department will tell you there's nothing to see here, but look closely. The Department is asking the Commission to approve a PSC not because of a lack of staff **skill**, but because of a lack of staff **access**.

The Department procured a system that intentionally sidelines the City's own civil servants. If you allow this PSC to move forward, the City will be locked into a predatory economic arrangement forever, and our public's tax dollars will be paying for a workforce of consultants that it cannot control, manage, or replace.

Despite the stated justification, this PSC is not a result of OpenGov being proprietary. All technology is proprietary. All of OpenGov's competitors — Salesforce, Accela, Clariti — all of these platforms are proprietary, but they still allow our City's technical staff to access the system and make changes, design improvements, and ensure the system is configured to meet the needs of San Francisco's technical landscape. The limited administrative controls in OpenGov's platform are an artificial barrier, and the Department chose a product that prevents the civil service merit system from functioning.

If the work can be done in-house, your policy says it should be. When the only thing stopping civil service employees from doing this work is the insufficient administrative functionality of a software system, then the Department has failed to fulfill its obligation to use our civil service classifications to perform this work.

OpenGov is a trojan horse, and it is an existential threat to our bargaining unit's work. The Department hasn't just bought a tool, they've bought a service monopoly. By choosing a

product with such limited administrative functionality, the Department has effectively engineered a situation where day-to-day technical work is impossible for City staff to perform. This contract creates a black box, where the vendor has exclusive rights to perform the most critical and high-level technical functions that, for decades, have been performed by Local 21's 104x-series, 105x-series, 109x-series, and the 1070 classifications.

The Department will tell you they have no plans to eliminate in-house staff, but they most certainly will. They'll tell you they want to eventually hire even more staff, but they most certainly won't. Again, if the Department's claims were true, we wouldn't be here. Make no mistake, allowing this PSC to move forward will eliminate Local 21 positions. Department leadership wants you to believe that this isn't the case, but replacing our City's technical staff is what the contract with OpenGov is designed to do. This is why OpenGov was selected by the Mayor's Office of Innovation, and it is why we're here today.

When we objected to PSC 6234 on April 4th, we did not trigger a fact finding hearing. There are two reasons why we did not submit the current PSC to fact finding.

The first and most obvious reason is that we were deeply concerned that if we triggered fact finding, the Mayor's Office would simply rescind PSC 6234 the same way they did with PSC 5585, the original OpenGov PSC, and they'd cite the same proprietary technology exemption. This would enable them to bypass this Commission for a second time, and it would, once again, have eliminated any pathway we had to bring our objection forward for your review.

The second reason is that the fact-finding pilot process that Local 21 has in place with DHR is very specific in its scope. Under our fact-finding process, the arbitrator's role is to determine if "the circumstances described by the City as the basis for contracting out exist." In the case of PSC 6234, the circumstances described by the City are that these are "proprietary services such that [the] City is not authorized to perform them". This is technically, and unfortunately, true.

Local 21 triggered fact-finding over the original PSC, PSC 5585, because the stated justification for that PSC was "temporary services to respond to an urgent situation for which an emergency has not been declared." We knew this was not a justifiable or defensible reason to contract out our member's work to a sole source provider, but in the case of PSC 6234, we were concerned that the arbitrator would be penned in by the proprietary technology justification, and they would have no choice but to agree that the circumstances described by the City do currently exist.

We fully believe that a fact finder would determine that the scope of work being outsourced is work that's performed by Local 21's bargaining unit. This is undeniably true. But given our concerns that this PSC would be rescinded again, we decided not to trigger a fact-finding hearing for PSC 6234, so that we could bring our objection forward to this Commission.

Understand that your vote on this PSC will have long-lasting impacts on the City and County of San Francisco. If this contract is approved to continue, this work will never return to our in-house staff, and the ongoing work of building, maintaining, and supporting this technical infrastructure will be permanently handed over to a private company.

This is not hyperbole, and it's not a hypothetical concern; this is why OpenGov was selected.

This fact was made so explicit by Planning Department leadership during the selection of OpenGov that our members submitted whistleblower complaints to the Controller's Office about this deliberate attempt to erode our City's civil service functions. A former Local 21 member who was the Lead Technical Subject Matter Expert for PermitSF decided to leave his 10-year career with the City and County over this very fact. He submitted a letter to the Civil Service Commission last week detailing his experiences, and he urged you to deny this contract extension.

OpenGov has unquestionably stolen the IT work of our bargaining unit, and we are here today to ask you to deny this PSC from moving forward. Understand that there is no conditional approval that will address our member's concerns. No amount of mandatory report backs to this Commission and no amount of meetings between Local 21 and the Department will bring this scope of work back in house. The only way to prevent the privatization of PermitSF is for you to vote to deny this PSC.

No matter what you hear from Department leadership about how great they believe OpenGov will be for San Francisco, understand that the overwhelming majority of in-house City staff disagree. In just 4 days, Local 21 collected written statements from nearly 80 of our members who are directly impacted by the selection of OpenGov.

Due to fears of direct and indirect retaliation at the hands of Liz Watty and Planning Department leadership, our members are rightfully hesitant to deliver public comment here today. Instead, our members requested that Local 21 deliver their written statements to this Commission.

Local 21 set up a form to collect their statements last week, and members were required to submit their names, emails, classification number, and Department, so that we could verify and confirm everyone's identity. We wanted to make sure that we weren't receiving duplicate responses from the same members, and that all responses were coming from our impacted employees, so we verified the identity of all respondents, and we de-identified their statements before we submitted them to the Commission on Friday.

If you read our member's statements, you will find that City leadership has mischaracterized OpenGov's success, they've deliberately bypassed all established processes for contracting out, they've ignored the consensus from their testers and their technical staff, and they've attempted to intimidate and silence any amount of dissent.

You are the authority with the power to stop this. You have our requests before you. We request that you deny PSC 6234 from moving forward, because this work can and should be done by City workers. We also request that you eliminate the proprietary technology exemption from the Civil Service Commission's contracting out policy.

These are our asks, but this isn't the question. The real question before you today is: will this Commission allow our public tax dollars to be used for private profit? Or will you defend the civil service merit system?

On behalf of all City workers, and especially the workers Local 21 represents in CPC, DBI, ADM, DPW, PUC, the Port, DPH, and the Fire Department, we urge you to do the right thing.

For our public servants, for the communities we serve, and for the good of San Francisco, vote it down.

For the Union,

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IFPTE Local 21 PermitSF - Responses collected from Local 21 members between May 11-May 14, 2026

Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
1 The application is insufficient in function (current system we have has more functions) and cannot be accessed by city IT staff	It is so inadequate; we spent millions on this?
2 City staff, especially those who have been dedicated to the city for many years, have years of expertise and experience working with San Francisco residents to get their permits approved - whether over the counter or in house review. Opengov in essence overrides or replaces city staff roles. In partnering with opengov, we are trusting an outside consulting partner with some of our most critical work, versus placing it in the hands of our incredibly capable staff.	<p>I have concerns about OpenGov replacing our IT and intake staff. As it stands, our IT and intake staff play a crucial role in the plan review process. As someone engaged in development review, I am often in frequent communication with IT and intake throughout a plan check. Outsourcing their work would create barriers in the plan review process.</p> <p>In addition, at a recent all staff meeting we were introduced to the idea of an upcoming AI plan review pilot. I can understand that this is in alignment with opengov adoption. I have immense concern about this, as it would threaten roles across my department, and place us even more reliant on opengov.</p>
3 City staff would not be able to access the information	As a planner, I have worked with Opengov and my experiences have been disappointing. One of my biggest concerns is that city staff cannot access opengov. Additionally, where does the information live? I'm not sure either staff or embers of the public know what is/ will happen with this information.
4 The OpenGov project not only moves public information and work into a proprietary system, but also prevents any public staff from working on the system to configure and maintain on a base level, meaning that using the product locks in an ongoing exclusive contract AND devalues the years of knowledge and technical expertise possessed by existing City staff. The lack of sophistication of the OpenGov platform is also wholly inadequate to the City's needs, and major requirements go unfulfilled because to make those changes would require a change to the entire OpenGov platform (affecting all their clients, not just CCSF). This lack of ability to customize central parts of their model to the needs of their individual clients should have disqualified them outright, and should now cause the end of this contract.	Their product is not scalable. Their forms look good to the customer, but are a mess to maintain. Data reporting inside the product is limited and potentially messy. It all seems like something that is great and usable for a very small deployment, but is already showing it's limits for our small use cases now; the system will collapse well before it gets close to the stated goals without significant changes.
5 Technical staff need the ability to quickly respond to business user needs and ensure security and compliance in systems of record. The administrative features on the OpenGov platform are so limited they will not be able to meet user needs or ensure that standard business practices are followed. Business staff are reporting that they feel like they are working for the system rather than the system is working for them. City technical staff can do very little to make things better. Instead, we must wait for and pay for OpenGov to make upgrades to their product, based on the failings we have discovered. We have lost a great deal of control and our technical staffs' capabilities will be underutilized. \$12M is too much money to waste on a glorified start-up in residence program.	This process bypassed all established checks and balances to prevent corruption. The fact is that PermitSF leadership specifically chose OpenGov because they wanted to block experienced technical staff from playing a meaningful role in the creation and maintenance of a new permitting platform. This intention was communicated directly to a number of staff by Liz Watty and follows a pattern of her sidelining technical staff at the Planning Department when they wanted to engage in best practices around requirement gathering and testing of features in the Accela system.
6 CCSF staff are dedicated to serving the needs of the citizens of San Francisco. Many of us are tax paying citizens of San Francisco, and are thus deeply dedicated to our government's success and delivery of services, unlike an external vendor who is only dedicated to their shareholders and bottom line.	OpenGov is not an open system. We have no access or ability to respond to either internal or external customer requests for assistance or error corrections. These customers would instead need to rely on someone who is not invested in their future for assistance. In addition, sensitive personal and proprietary information such as license information and plans would be held in their system outside of City security protocols.
<p>7 Planning staff should remain on the front line of permit intake and review. It affords a trustworthy relationship between trained staff and members of the public. Specifically, staff were hired because of specific expertise, experience and educational background (often a masters degree in a planning-related field is required). Outsourcing these intake, review and managing skills will undermine the trust the public has in the city, interfacing with an actual human planner, and receiving personalized service grounded in years of experience.</p> <p>The Planning Code is a complex and ever changing set of regulations that Planners are trained in implementing every day. If this function is outsourced, institutional knowledge will be lost and diminish the years of experience and training of permit review staff.</p>	<p>Privacy concerns around how documents are stored on the OpenGov platform is of paramount concern. Previously documents were stored internal to the City or on turnkey software, OpenGov has not demonstrated data privacy of our most crucial asset...the public. This proprietary software is both expensive, underdeveloped and concerns of staff in regards to the public's privacy has been disregarded.</p> <p>OpenGov will also lock the City into contracted lifetime support for this platform, adding time, complexity and cost to the City.</p>
8 City should always retain ownership and access of its data and have the ability to understand first hand how data is being utilized and analyzed. City should be able to access and analyze city data at all time currently in perpetuity.	City data should be maintained and owned by the City and not turned over to a private company.
9 The 104x and 105x series have several classifications which explicitly contain required skills and abilities to perform tasks exactly for platforms like OpenGov. These processes need to be handled and made smooth by those employees that are familiar with the process. This is an opportunity for our IT members to demonstrate their advanced skill sets in creating processes that streamline city needs.	Lack of oversight, unapproved use of AI to circumvent job functions
10 No outside contracting without union approval.	Replacement of city employees

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<p>11 As with any leveraged software implementation, there will necessarily be work that initially, the vendor of the product can most efficiently do. To be sustainable in the long run, such projects require strong planning so that internal staff are identified, trained and work alongside the vendor throughout the implementation, so that internal staff are able to handle ongoing maintenance of the product, and eventually, the ongoing implementation needs can be met by internal staff at lower cost than remaining beholden to vendor staff for everything.</p> <p>This requires both vendor and City staff to engage and CONTRACT for such staffing/transition plans, and requires that the vendor have in place a robust & standardized training program so that City staff learn.</p> <p>If you want to see an example of how this can be done successfully, look at the DPH Epic program planning that started prior to the beginning of Epic implementation in 2017. DPH continues to rely on services/hosting and regulatory upgrades/improvements from Epic, but has an entire team of internal IT resources who do implementations and changes to support the evolution of DPH needs. If the OpenGov request/contract does not have such a clear plan/program in place, it should be sent back to develop one.</p>	<p>OpenGov appears to be thought of as a "one size fits all" solution for anything "permit" related, city-wide. It's unclear whether there is a City-wide technical architectural strategy that lays out key components of City permit-related work and maps those to OpenGov current and planned capabilities/features, and identifies potential gaps in the OpenGov functionality or areas where OpenGov would have to implement significant new capabilities to meet City needs. (For example, handling complaints that may/may not be related to permitted entities requires very different data/workflows than workflows associated with permit applications; integration with CA CERS system is required for DPH CUPA program.)</p>
<p>12 This would be incredibly wasteful, corrupt, and morally wrong. City jobs are union protected and cannot be eroded by a Republican mayor like Daniel Lurie. All the research shows that replacing government jobs with private sector contractors is more expensive and less efficient. We shouldn't have to work with OpenGov just because their boss bribed the mayor.</p>	<p>privatizing public services is always a destructive and unintelligent idea. Once you start giving public systems over to the private sector the whole system collapses. The other options besides OpenGov were cheaper and way less problematic. OpenGov was founded by MAGA supporters who are anti-government.</p>
<p>13 It is a hand out to the rich of our tax dollars when cities contract out to the private sector rather than keeping the work with the city. Private companies are known to have one driver: their bottom line and they will give lesser service and worse jobs in order to achieve maximum profit. It is wrong to do this and it would not be happening if we didn't have a billionaire mayor.</p>	<p>worse service, service that puts much of the work on the client making it more difficult for anyone to get service, tax dollars going to private business</p>

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<p>14 I am directly involved in the rollout of this system and have firsthand knowledge of both its capabilities and its limitations. I am here to share my concerns about how this contract was awarded and what that means for public accountability in San Francisco.</p> <p>CPC leadership has claimed that City workers cannot perform the technical design or configuration of a modern permitting system. I want to directly challenge that assertion. City staff are already performing the technical work this contract is supposed to cover.</p> <p>We are in a moment of serious fiscal constraint. The City is claiming a structural budget deficit and laying off workers across departments. At the same time, the Mayor's office is proposing to spend \$5.9 million on a one-year contract with a private vendor, with Local 21 indicating the total could reach \$12.4 million if extended. That money should be going toward hiring and retaining the City staff who can do this work directly, not toward a consultant that does not answer to us.</p> <p>The argument that we lack the capacity to manage or build a modern permitting system is simply not supported by what is actually happening on the ground. What we lack is not skill or willingness. What we lack is investment. The money being spent on OpenGov is money that could instead fund the positions and the people who will show up every day to connect our multiple systems or hire another contractor who can do this. OpenGov does not work and was not the preferred and objective vendor that we scored higher on.</p> <p>We are actively losing staff to layoffs right now. Dedicating City resources to a private consultant instead of to our own workforce sends the wrong message at exactly the wrong time. It tells our staff that their expertise is not valued. It tells the public that government accountability is something we are willing to outsource.</p> <p>I respectfully urge the Commission to deny this contract and direct those resources toward retaining and investing in the City employees who are already doing this work.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>I am here to share my concerns about how this contract was awarded and what that means for public accountability in San Francisco.</p> <p>My core concern is this: the OpenGov contract was not the result of a fair, merit-based process. It was the result of a procurement system that was deliberately structured to bypass competitive review, and it produced an outcome that appears to have been shaped by political relationships rather than public interest.</p> <p>The Evaluation Results Were Clear and Were Ignored In July of last year, 16 technical City workers conducted a rigorous evaluation of competing permitting software vendors. Clariti, OpenGov's primary competitor, earned an average score of 4.42 out of 5 and was deemed the most suitable product. OpenGov scored 2.88. City staff did not merely rank OpenGov second. They wrote that its proposal had gaps so significant that it should not be considered for the task at all.</p> <p>One political appointee, Ned Segal, unilaterally overruled all of them.</p> <p>The Procurement Process Was Designed to Avoid Scrutiny Instead of a formal Request for Proposal, which would have required competitive and objective evaluation, the Mayor's Office of Innovation used a Request for Information, a less rigorous and less transparent mechanism, to sidestep standard procurement and finalize the contract. Reporting has confirmed that Ned Segal was in contact with OpenGov's CEO more than a month before the City's official vendor search even began. The process was not designed to find the best vendor. It appears it was designed to justify a vendor that had already been chosen.</p> <p>The Conflicts of Interest Are Documented Reporting by the SF Standard and Mission Local has established a documented web of financial relationships between the Mayor's office and OpenGov:</p> <p>OpenGov's CEO and co-founder both donated to Mayor Lurie's former nonprofit, Tipping Point Community OpenGov advisory board member Katherine August-deWilde and her husband donated \$60,000 to Lurie's 2024 mayoral campaign and \$100,000 to his inauguration, and she has contributed as much as \$2.85 million to Tipping Point over the last decade Mayor Lurie's family held indirect investments in OpenGov valued between \$110,000 and \$1.1 million through a family limited partnership Ned Segal was in contact with OpenGov's CEO more than a month before the City's official vendor search began</p> <p>These are not rumors. They are documented in financial disclosure records and email correspondence obtained through public records requests. The Board of Supervisors' Budget and Legislative Analyst has launched a formal inquiry into whether the selection followed City rules. The Civil Service Commission is itself investigating whether this contract should have come before this body for review.</p> <p>The Project Is Already in Trouble Internal status reports from October showed this project flagged red, meaning there were major issues with scope, schedule, and resources. By mid-November the status had only improved to yellow, indicating ongoing risk to project delivery. CPC leadership has called this implementation a success. The project's own internal documentation tells a different story.</p> <p>What This Means San Francisco's procurement process exists to protect the public from exactly this kind of outcome, where a vendor with political connections wins a contract over a more qualified, less expensive competitor based not on merit but on relationships with those in power. When that process is bypassed, it does not just harm City workers. It harms every resident and business owner who depends on a permit system that is accountable, transparent, and selected on the basis of what actually works.</p> <p>I respectfully urge the Commission to deny this contract and require a procurement process that the public can trust.</p>

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Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
<p>15 CCSF currently has existing contracts with more than one modern permit software solution (Salesforce, Clariti, Accela -- all have a track record with other large, complex jurisdictions) that can be leveraged and which in-house City staff is familiar with and has the expertise to implement.</p>	<p>Without a business needs analysis to identify business and system requirements, it is not clear how OpenGov software satisfies these needs/requirements. Separately, it has not been shared from the initial RFP process, why and how OpenGov was selected particularly when City staff who participated in the RFP process gave a higher rating to another solution (Clariti). To date, the current OpenGov implementation has excluded existing CCSF technical staff, so the knowledge and expertise of configuring and maintaining the system sits with the contractor.</p>
<p>16 The public's business should be carried out by public employees accountable to the public.</p>	<p>The advantages of privatizing public work and data are not obvious and have yet to be explained. The selection process for this vendor was less than transparent. Most of all, the new data system has serious defects that result from City Hall having done no serious needs assessment before fast-tracking the implementation.</p>
<p>17 The procurement process for the OpenGov contract was informal and resulted in a \$5.9 million award, despite City staff rating OpenGov poorly. As a user of the system, I believe that the platform is difficult to use, slows down work, and has not resulted in more efficient permit review. Staff experience and institutional knowledge have been overlooked during this decision-making process.</p> <p>Additionally, the contract structure does not allow City workers to operate directly within the OpenGov system. This will lead to a long-term dependency on an external vendor for our permitting system. Ensuring that City employees can maintain the tools they rely on is essential for service continuity, accountability, and institutional knowledge.</p> <p>Overall, the City should prioritize solutions that preserve staff capacity, maintain public-sector control over core permitting systems, and ensure that technology investments support permit review.</p>	<p>OpenGov is difficult to use and slows down permit review. The system is clunky, disorganized, and does not align with the workflow needs of staff.</p> <p>Despite repeated feedback from City staff regarding formatting and design issues, OpenGov representatives state that they do not have the capacity to implement requested changes. As a result, long-standing problems remain unaddressed.</p> <p>Additionally, the Director of Planning has indicated that City departments are expected to modify their permitting processes to fit the OpenGov system, rather than OpenGov adapting its platform to support City operations. This approach shifts the burden onto staff and creates inefficiencies that ultimately impact permit applicants and project timelines.</p>
<p>18 The problems we've experienced with Accela/PPTS and the Permit Tracking System/PTS have been vastly amplified by the tapering off of support from their parent companies. I understand that Oracle has simply stopped updating PTS because the program is so old--it is past being maintained. We can only get changes implemented in Accela by working with an enterprise agent. From what I have heard my colleagues involved in the OpenGov rollout, we are ALREADY HAVING ISSUES getting OpenGov staff to implement requested changes in to better fit our needs and existing workflows. If that is happening on day 0 of this trial, I am terrified to see how things go months, years, even decades from now. Hiring technical staff to design and maintain an in-house system, or even expanding the capacity of our Dept of Technology colleagues to do this, would ensure that we do not end up high and dry. We could provide excellent union jobs and create civil buy-in from the powerhouse bench of engineers that live and work in this city already, and instead we are paying overhead and fees to an outside company that has no stake in the City's long-term--and I mean LONG TERM--success.</p>	<p>I think the Civil Service Commission's surprise at our "last-minute" outrage is solid evidence of how poorly the selection, adoption, and expansion of OpenGov has been. There is nothing "open" about hiding this process and adoption from the employees who USE the software, let alone the members of the public that ostensibly benefit from it. If the company is so great and so well-equipped to support the future of permitting in this City, was there not a more public and more publicized process to select it, among competition from other programs? For example, the Planning Department has been experimenting with a custom-built plan check tool from another software company (Infilla). Was Infilla given a chance to compete with OpenGov for this contract? Maybe they would have liked to! I do believe that change to our basic permitting technology is past due, but I think we deserve a broad public process--involving the CSC and polling staff and trialing multiple products at various price points, including modelling the pricing and cost-saving of an in-house tool. Don't you? I am also extremely concerned about the data ownership and the privacy of information long-term. I am proud to know that all my communications with applicants the public are available at pretty short notice for any sunshine request. This is how it should be. Not only the results of our work, but the WAY we do our work, is owned by the people of the City & County. Signing this away to some for-profit company is never okay. We are already seeing this be an issue, as past change requests on a filed permit cannot be retrieved. That's nuts! Today, every plan check letter I issue is saved in a way the public can easily access, without even needing to contact me directly. And I genuinely spend a lot of time referencing those things to understand how a project got from shape A to shape B, in cases where it was ages back or lived with another planner first. We could lost that ability, and only because this goofy company can choose not prioritize making that change. We need to maintain the ability to prioritize what WE as both the City's staff and leaders, and its citizens, care about. Not be beholden to some VC's opinion. San Francisco is not a business, and should not bow down to private business interests.</p>

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<p>19 Putting aside the non-compliant awards process of contract, the argument from leadership that "our City workers can't do the technical design or configuration of a new permit system." is specious at best -- the intention was always to have a vendor provide the service, hence the staff testing of three systems.</p>	<p>I have the following concerns over the selection of OpenGov for the city's permitting needs:</p> <p>1) that the selection was made over the staff-evaluated first choice Clariti, "...consistently rated better by city staffers than OpenGov's technology." -- a contract that will be terminated in favor of OpenGov, see https://sfstandard.com/2025/10/15/san-francisco-daniel-lurie-ned-segal-opengov-technology-contract/</p> <p>2) that Clariti DOES have experience working with civic agencies such as Los Angeles and Phoenix, and is also able to integrate with existing systems such as Bluebeam (electronic plans) and ESRI (mapping), whereas OpenGov has yet to indicate compatibility.</p> <p>3) that Cox Enterprises, owner of OpenGov, was acquired two months ago for \$34.5 billion by Charter Communications, a media and communications conglomerate with no experience providing SaaS to civic agencies, who will likely concentrate its core focus on cable and broadband, see https://www.reuters.com/world/us-agency-approves-charter-communications-345-billion-deal-buy-cox-2026-02-27/</p> <p>4) that in the SF Standard article cited above "that Lurie, Segal, Simon, Watty, and the mayor's chief of staff, Staci Slaughter, all signed a form affirming they had no financial interest in any of the finalists considered for the PermitSF contract." -- but have not indicated whether they have shares in Charter Communications, the now-owner of OpenGov.</p>
<p>20 City departments have the required infrastructure to support the new permitting system and associated public requests. City employees have the necessary skills to create and maintain the new system. We are just as capable and competitive as any private sector workers.</p> <p>Given the same environment, City employees can deliver the same quality of work and keep the skills in-house with the city.</p>	<p>The city will loose control and access to the raw data and the analytics necessary for the city to benefit from trends surfaced in the data.</p>
<p>21 In house staff provides more knowledgeable help to our customers, and keeps SF revenue& taxes in San Francisco. OpenGov is financed by Andreessen Horowitz, and the city of SF is giving up control and oversight to a political entity in the name of "efficiency"</p>	<p>OpenGov claims to be apolitical, but the lead investor is very political</p>
<p>22 Mayor Lurie used the RFI process to enrich a company whose board contains donors to his mayoral campaign. That should be reason enough. City staff spent substantial time vetting the companies that responded to the RFI, and one of them - not Opengov - was the clear preferred option nearly across the board. That option wasn't chosen. As a user of Opengov, I am struck time and again at how unintuitive it is to use, and how our permitting system has been made to fit into their existing structure, and not the other way around. If our IT staff had been given the opportunity to collaborate with Opengov, maybe the product would serve us better. You'll receive testimony from individuals in the Department with loyalty to the Mayor who wax on and on about how efficient Opengov has been compared to our previous system. We hear this at every week at meetings. I want to state clearly that almost any system would have been more efficient than Permit Tracking, and the individuals speaking the loudest about the success of Opengov don't use it, ever. They oversee those of us forced to use it. Their testimony is completely, completely hypothetical. On top of all of this, citizens of San Francisco who are illiterate, digitally illiterate, lack access to a computer, or (heaven forbid) just want to interact with a human being, can no longer participate in the permitting process because Opengov does not allow people to file permits in paper. Not one member of city staff who submits testimony in opposition of Opengov has a fear of tech. Everyone is here because we believe in the importance of service and efficient government, and if new technologies advance those goals, then we are all succeeding at the broader mission of good government. Opengov leaves citizens and employees alike behind, all because some donors expected a return on their investment. I stand with my talented and dedicated IT colleagues who carry the important work of this city on their backs every day. It's unconscionable that each City employee goes through months of not years of interviews and vetting before they're hired, but all Opengov had to do was throw the Mayor some money. Please don't reward blatant corruption with a contract.</p>	<p>Despite its name, hardly anything about this product feels "open." Aside from the fact that everything related to Opengov and its rollout was orchestrated behind closed doors by Planning and PermitSF mayoral loyalists who do not actually work on permits or have any tech experience, and aside from the fact that our IT staff have no backend access to Opengov in the event of an emergency, and aside from the fact that this product is being considered for a \$12M contract when the mayor just fired 500 human beings in the name of budget cuts when we have plenty of staff capable of doing the work of the Opengov team better and more thoughtfully, the product itself is simply not that elegant or efficient. Opengov had only ever contracted with small towns prior to this contract. Their product isn't up to the challenge of handling a high volume of permits in a major city with complex codes and processes. Our extremely unique square pegs are being crammed into Opengov's round holes. Why? Why couldn't we find a developer willing to work with us to cultivate and customize a system that works? The system also appears to make permitting work less transparent to citizens, which is utterly antithetical to everything we do as civil servants. Customers have to wait longer for permits than they would if they just came to the Permit Center. If the customer doesn't have a computer or isn't very technologically literate, I guess they just can't get a permit. Isn't the whole point to make things faster, better, and easier? Or is the point to enrich people in the Mayor's inner circle? I will never forget the day the Mayor came to the Planning Department All-Staff Meeting after news of the corrupt RFI process hit the press. He said, "I am asking you to just go with me on this." Now, we're asking why we have to "go with" a product that alienates the public and City staff and does less at a higher cost than other, readily available options. I urge the Civil Service Commission to listen to my esteemed IT colleagues and vote against the Opengov contract.</p>
<p>23 City staff have the expertise to do the work and provide much better services to those who live and work in SF at less expense than private contractors. This is why there have always been public employees. The contractors will pay their people less, provide fewer benefits, and take a portion of their profits and operating expenses out of the Bay Area economies, causing their employees to need more assistance from local governments especially when the economy takes a turn for the worse.</p> <p>I also oppose paying contractors to gather data they will own with the right to use, sell, or give away for their own benefit. How is my life and personal finances affected by the data being sold? Even Open Gov won't know or care. Insurance companies are the biggest buyer of data and they could raise my personal auto rates for instance because they believe my city vehicle was going 55mph on a city street when in fact the vehicle was on the highway above. How would I know? How could I set the record straight? I may not have even been driving the vehicle. The data the city collects to serve the general public should not be used, sold, or given away, particularly for the personal benefit of private individuals or businesses.</p>	<p>See above by</p>

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<p>24 One of my biggest concerns with OpenGov is that the permitting workflow development appears to be driven almost entirely by outside contractors, without meaningful involvement from the City’s own permitting agency IT staff who actually support and maintain these systems every day.</p> <p>Consultants can absolutely help build and implement systems, but San Francisco is not a simple “plug-and-play” environment. Anyone who has worked in permitting here knows that nothing is ever truly off the shelf. Every department has its own processes, operational needs, legacy systems, compliance requirements, and interdepartmental dependencies that have been built over decades. The people who understand how these systems actually function are the City staff already doing the work.</p> <p>When departmental IT staff are excluded from the workflow development and backend system configuration, we create a long-term dependency on a single outside vendor to maintain and troubleshoot critical City operations. That’s a huge operational risk. If the system goes down, gets compromised, or needs immediate modifications, who internally will have the knowledge or access to respond quickly? AI agents and LLMs still won’t know yet.</p> <p>There’s also the public trust issue. These systems contain sensitive public information, permit records, project plans, addresses, and personally identifiable information. If City staff are not fully involved in understanding how the data is structured, secured, integrated, and maintained, how can we confidently assure the public that their information is protected and that the City still has proper oversight of its own systems?</p> <p>Technology modernization should strengthen internal City expertise, not sideline it. Our own permitting IT staff should be at the table helping design, configure, and govern the systems they’ll ultimately be expected to support long-term.</p>	<p>My other major concern is the procurement process itself and the lack of consistency in how this contract appears to have moved forward.</p> <p>This was presented as an “off-the-shelf” software solution, but anyone familiar with San Francisco permitting knows nothing here is ever truly off the shelf. Our processes are complicated, highly customized, and deeply bureaucratic across multiple agencies. If the City is spending millions on configuration, workflow development, integrations, and implementation services, then this clearly goes far beyond simply purchasing a standard software product.</p> <p>That’s why I think it’s fair to ask: why did a contract reportedly starting around \$5.9 million move forward through a Request for Information (RFI) process instead of a formal Request for Proposal (RFP)?</p> <p>Every City department is typically required to go through extensive procurement requirements, competitive bidding, evaluations, and approvals for contracts far smaller than this. Staff are expected to justify purchases over \$25,000, yet somehow a multi-million-dollar technology contract tied to core City infrastructure moved forward without the same level of public scrutiny and competition that other departments are routinely held to.</p> <p>It also raises concerns about transparency and accountability when OpenGov reportedly was not even the top-ranked respondent during the RFI process, yet still ended up being awarded the contract. If another vendor ranked higher, what additional criteria or decision-making process ultimately led to OpenGov being selected? https://sfstandard.com/2025/10/15/san-francisco-daniel-lurie-ned-segal-opengov-technology-contract/</p> <p>This isn’t about opposing modernization or technology improvements. Most City staff a streamlined permitting system that works together. The concern is whether we are applying the same contracting standards, oversight, and accountability consistently across the board.</p> <p>If we are willing to criticize prior individuals or administrations for bypassing contracting safeguards or procurement standards, then those same standards should apply here too, especially when we’re talking about millions of public dollars, sensitive public data, and long-term dependence on a proprietary vendor platform.</p>
<p>25 I urge that the PermitSF work, currently being outsourced to OpenGov, be returned to in-house City staff. While the stated goal of PermitSF is to modernize San Francisco’s “broken” permitting system, relying on a private, external vendor for this core government function presents SIGNIFICANT financial, operational, and procedural risks.</p>	<p>1. Concerns Regarding Contract Propriety and Cost. This is smelling like corruption! 2. Lack of In-Depth Local Knowledge. The current OpenGov interface makes no sense, and is worse than the old clunky PTS. 3. Data Security and PrivacyPermit applications contain sensitive, proprietary information. This also smells of corruption to serve the needs of the Big Data industry, not San Francisco residents and businesses. 4. Operational Flexibility and Accountability. OpenGov is a terrible choice for this reason. Do not privatize this crucial city service. 5. Retaining and Investing in Public Sector Expertise. Help San Francisco build its own beautiful future and DO NOT RELY ON PRIVATE PROPRIETARY DATA COMPANIES.</p>
<p>26 This relates to my concern below. We as technical staff don't have much control and knowledge over OpenGov as it seems like OpenGov is not transparent in sharing and knowing their platform, both with the limitation and possible malfunctions of the product. We as technical staff are ones that support the departments first hand when there is any issue with daily business. Just saying "we don't know and we'll let OpenGov know" is not enough.</p>	<p>I been to one of the trainings of OpenGov to Planning’s staff. What I saw was a very primitive software that looked like a intern project from a tech company. There was a very limited amount of functions from the platform. one feature where it shows a street view picture was not even provided in house from OpenGov but a copy from likely Google Street View. When asked about the source of the picture, the presenter (from OpenGov was not even sure and had to text back to the OpenGov team and asked. It feels to me that they themself don't even know how their product works and lack the technically expertise. It also raises the question of reliability. Does some of the functions rely of a third parties that is not in contract with the City? Is there any legal issue of OpenGov just scraping images from third parties?</p>
<p>27 The OpenGov platform currently lacks the level of configurability needed to implement permit intake, review, and reporting for a large and complex jurisdiction like San Francisco. As such, this and future contracts will require requests for new features just to meet basic needs. Effectively, the City will be subsidizing OpenGov’s product road map not just licensing their software. Both DBI and Planning have extensive expertise in system configuration for complex permitting. By procuring a more configurable software product, this configuration work can be managed entirely in-house. The current procurement commits us to years of outsourcing work that can and should be performed by City staff.</p>	<p>The OpenGov software is not yet a fully mature product. While it may work well for simple jurisdictions, it is missing the deep configurability options that products like Clariti and Accela offer by default and will be needed to satisfy the complex and sometimes unique configuration needs of our permitting departments. OpenGov’s reporting and data export capabilities are especially lacking. Near real-time read replica databases or batch download APIs are standard offerings for extracting data from enterprise permitting systems but are not yet available from OpenGov. Solution will need to be requested in this and future procurements and will in the meantime make reporting less timely and more challenging.</p>

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<p>28 I'm new to CPC but I did attend one OpenGov Reporting Training. I thought the OpenGov product is rudimentary and it should not be presented as a reporting feature. It was just a list of records where users can apply filters and export the results.</p>	<p>The fact that it is proprietary which means we do not own the code and customize it the best fit the City customers. Also that we have to pay maintenance and consulting fees too perpetuity just to keep the system running without any new features. Do we even own the data and have control over privacy and security of data?</p>
<p>29 It makes sense to keep the work in-house because a substantial portion of the work will necessarily be reliant on City staff given staff's deep knowledge of existing data systems, structure, definitions, and expert awareness of data reporting use cases. We have the talent and leadership ability in-house to streamline data processes, products, and experience for PermitSF given the scope, resources, and new mandate. Our in-house data staff is also knowledgeable of the various teams and experts who "own" and manage the various pieces of our permitting process and data reporting; we have working relationships and communication that would streamline development (i.e. we already know who to go to for what). Granting the project to a third party will burn through the budget just transferring basic subject-matter and institutional knowledge (we see this kind of bloat happen often with outside consultants). This custom-build architecture will be designed by the guiding hand of our city staff and stewarded by leaders of our in-house data teams to ensure a quality product. It makes sense that, in the end, the intellectual property and freedom to adapt this architecture nimbly in the future belong to the City, not OpenGov.</p>	
<p>30 The IT staff in DBI, CPC, and permit center currently manages, supports, and implements a permit platform that is flexible and able to be amended to meet the needs of business/planning staff. IT was kept out of the process for selecting a new platform that is not a turnkey software, making the departments reliant on contractor technology. The contractor has never built something for a city the size of San Francisco and is clumsily, and at a high cost, trying to turn their product into what they promised would be an improved, more efficient product. They are building this product such that any changes need to be made by OpenGov itself, which makes IT/ Planning not only reliant on the contractor which can be leveraged financially for the company to ask for more and more money, but means that configurations/enhancements have a time/information delay that could result in problems for users of the software, i.e. residents. The IT staff is certainly more than capable of configuring a data system that ensures we meet legal requirements and data retention for reporting on permits, instead of acting as the consultants to the consultant who is inexperienced in comparison.</p>	<p>IT staff have voiced that in the initial trial period, the majority found that OpenGov was not a suitable software for our permitting system, but the selection was made outside of a formal RFP. As a member of IT, I find it challenging to understand how this decision was made in spite of calls for concern from staff. It appears that OpenGov is scrambling to create a permit system for the needs of a city of this size, for the first time, and is not in good faith extorting the city by increasing cost of services due to their own shortfalls.</p>
<p>31 Why is San Francisco outsourcing work?</p>	<p>It was explained to me that OpenGov would be a faster, efficient process for the user & issuer. It is not.</p>
<p>32 Based on my years of experience, I have found that in-house City staff (MIS) are generally more familiar with internal operations and workflows, which can facilitate more effective collaboration and communication. In contrast, external vendor support may not always have the same level of operational context or understanding of local processes, which can sometimes create gaps in alignment and efficiency.</p>	<p>It is not providing the standard level of service our customers expect and deserve. At the same time, it is creating additional workload for City staff that would not otherwise be necessary simply to maintain minimum operational functionality.</p> <p>In addition, the integrity and clarity of records are not being consistently maintained. This makes it increasingly difficult for both internal and external customers to fully understand the scope, status, and history of permits, inspections, and related records when conducting research or reviewing the overall picture of a project or issue.</p>
<p>33 I feel the purchase of OpenGov was for personal financial gain. Seems there are investments with OpenGov. When clearly the Mayor says the City is in a deficit and spends millions on product that doesn't work. We Technicians are helping OpenGov build their database daily by manually adding and inputting information where we already have in another system that works. OpenGov can't even export our current data into their system and we are all forced to help consistently. In-House Staff should remain doing what we do, it's been working over 2 decades why change it. If the Mayor wants Transparency, OpenGov still isn't transparent. Take a look do a search you can't even see the scope of work for the permit and it's not easy to search if you're a customer. The interface is not customizable.</p>	<p>The millions spent is wasted and not working the way it should.</p>
<p>34 Computers are bad at accounting for human error in ways another human can. Permitting often requires a human touch and no matter how "smart" a computer tries to be, it can't account for everything and doesn't think for itself.</p>	<p>I have serious concerns about the security of OpenGov and the legitimacy of it's selection. Making it the only way for customers to pull some permits also closes the door for some customers to even pull those types of permits. We shouldn't be taking away options from people who are not computer savvy. It also often takes way longer for permits to be issued due to back and forth communication just taking time and requires the customer to be paying attention to their emails. It also charges less in/fewer fees than otc, decreasing our revenue. Because of the way it's set up, literally anyone can apply for a permit for any property and upload whatever documents or images they want. I have concerns that angry people will use this to install viruses on city computers or upload NSFW/NSFL images. I don't like this system and I wish OpenGov wasn't shoved down our collective throats because Lurie's cronies paid him off to get the contract (allegedly).</p>

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<p>35 I believe that PermitSF outsourced the building and implementation of OpenGov as a replacement system because city hall had a personal interest and investment in that 3rd party company. I believe our tech/MIS teams are very capable of building something that works for us and something that is better than our current platform/process. Our current systems and processes actually are more ideal than OpenGov because we are actually doing more work and it feels like we are working for this new system vs this new system working for us.</p>	<p>My concerns are how quickly this platform has been rolled out without proper build-up, testing, addressing needs of the staff and public who will use the systems, and lack of transparency about the personal connections city hall has to this company. There were other systems tested that actually were rated higher, performed much better, and had a lower cost bid and it seems odd it was not selected as a viable option given the numbers and facts. The frontline staff and public will take the greatest impact for the rollout of this system that is still too early in development to go live as a functioning city government permitting system. This platform cannot accommodate many of our needs, requests, creates more work, and fees are not being calculated correctly directly taking fees out of the departments. It seems unethical and unfair how this entire rollout has been handled.</p>
<p>36 Transparency, accessibility, keep public record public, universal access,</p>	<p>Closed record, no transparency, singular private entity taken hostage of public data, singular entity controlling the public sector, monopoly, exploit position due to no competition, will become like PG&E, For-Profit company owned by Cox Enterprises.</p>
<p>37 The budget shortfall is caused by the ill-management departments throughout the city. Managers and Department heads are to blame and elimination of positions are protected by the Union and City Charter. The private sector cannot grasp the knowledge built in the years of experience by the position staff.</p>	<p>OpenGov is just a database and a tool and not the human element to bridge policy between Govt and the Public Citizen.</p>
<p>38</p>	
<p>39 The OpenGov platform is very limited in terms of customization, and there is a significant gap between what the system can do and what the permitting departments need in order to effectively and efficiently provide services to the public. Technical staff have little to no control over addressing these gaps. As a result, we will be forced into continuous negotiations with OpenGov for additional contracts to resolve these issues. And OG is not even obligated to implement the requested changes.</p> <p>Alternatively, we would need to build piecemeal solutions outside of OpenGov to bridge these gaps, which could further complicate and fragment our permitting system rather than improve the status quo. In some cases, this would also create additional manual work for staff to ensure the public continues to receive the permitting services they need.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. OpenGov (OG) was contracted without any formal gap analysis, likely in an effort to move forward as quickly as possible. As implementation has progressed, OG limitations have become more apparent, even though we have only rolled out a handful of over-the-counter permits. 2. It is now clear that the idea of “moving all permitting agencies to the same platform” was unrealistic. OG is simply becoming an additional software platform alongside the City’s existing permitting systems, which begs the question of why we’re doing this in the first place and what we hope to achieve from OG’s implementation. 3. Not only has OG failed to resolve the known issues in PTS that we hoped a new permitting platform would address, but it is also creating additional problems, particularly with inspection scheduling and fee collection. Again, it’s unclear what we hope to achieve from OG’s implementation. 4. Access to our own data (including public data) is another major concern. OG plans to deprecate its reporting database and limit data access to APIs with rate limits. While APIs are useful for looking up individual records, they are not well suited for transferring large volumes of data or for building analytics and reporting dashboards. 5. We also don’t have control over the configuration of information displayed to the public. Only certain attributes predetermined by OG can be shown, which limits transparency. 6. OG has a very limited permissions model, and we cannot adequately control who can modify specific records or attributes. Without a well-defined permission and access-control model, the system could become vulnerable to misuse, conflicts of interest, or governance issues. Given DBI’s history with serious misconduct investigations, it’s important that we design the system with strong accountability and auditability from the outset. 7. The plan to move forward with OG as a replacement for the Planning Department’s system, Accela, is also concerning because no formal gap analysis has been conducted to date. As I learn more about OG’s functionality, I am increasingly convinced that many of the features offered by Accela — and currently relied upon by the department — are not available in OG. Additionally, OG does not provide the same level of customization as Accela. As a result, we would likely need to maintain Accela in parallel with OG, creating additional costs for the City. 8. Apart from the issues with OpenGov itself, the way the system has been implemented by PermitSF and staff from the Mayor’s Offices is also concerning. There has not been an overall roadmap or long-term implementation strategy in place. Instead, the approach has been piecemeal, focused primarily on releasing a small number of permits as quickly as possible without considering the broader permitting ecosystem. Leading the effort with staff who are not sufficiently familiar with DBI’s operations, combined with minimal engagement with DBI staff and excluding technical staff from the process, has resulted in the rollout of a problematic solution. The inaccurate or misleading representation of UAT results has created distrust among DBI staff.
<p>40 Plain and simple: Planning, DBI, and Permit Center staff (particularly IT staff from these departments) have the institutional knowledge and technical capability of developing a functioning online permitting system for the City and County of San Francisco either completely on their own or with very little outside technical assistance from a contractor.</p>	<p>My biggest concern with OpenGov is the fact permit data exists in a CLOSED system and would remove City staff’s ability to see previously reviewed permits and their details. This lack of context may result projects being approved that could have negative impacts to communities. Additionally, relying on OpenGov to address all technical issues with the platform would likely cause delays in service and price gouging in the long-term.</p>

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<p>41 The decision to outsource PermitSF functions to OpenGov warrants careful reconsideration by the Civil Service Commission because in-house City staff possess a depth of institutional knowledge and specialized technical expertise that an external platform cannot replicate. As Permit Technicians, our work goes beyond data entry; it involves navigating the unique complexities of San Francisco's building codes, neighborhood-specific zoning ordinances, and intricate address resolution protocols that require human discretion and local context. While software can provide a framework for modernization, the actual administration of these workflows—particularly the integration of GIS spatial analysis and the management of sensitive permit revisions—is most effectively handled by staff who are directly accountable to the City's regulatory standards and public interest. Retaining this work in-house ensures that process guidance remains user-centric and adaptable to the evolving needs of our departments, whereas reliance on a third-party vendor can lead to "procedural fog," system rigidity, and a loss of the specialized oversight necessary to maintain the integrity of the City's permitting infrastructure. Furthermore, investing in the professional development of City staff to manage these modernized systems, rather than outsourcing the core functionality, preserves essential public service roles and ensures that the City maintains full sovereignty over its critical data and public record workflows.</p>	<p>The transition to OpenGov represents a significant modernization of our municipal permitting infrastructure, and it is natural for concerns to arise during such a substantial shift in workflow. As we move away from legacy systems, the focus is on creating a more user-centric environment that replaces fragmented processes with structured technical documentation and clear process guidance. By better integrating GIS layers and spatial data directly into the platform, we can automate complex zoning and address resolutions, which significantly reduces the need for manual verification and back-and-forth application revisions. While the initial migration and system configuration present real technical hurdles, the move to a cloud-based environment ultimately provides more resilient data tracking and transparent reporting. Our priority remains streamlining the permit lifecycle through intuitive checklists and troubleshooting guides, ensuring that we reduce procedural delays and provide a more efficient, predictable experience for both staff and the public.</p>
<p>42 So contractors, architects, homeowners, laborers, trades people can get permits in a day and start working and employing the workforce of SF.</p>	<p>Open Gov is an email chain of beauracracy. Much like during Covid, we dont issue many permits because we are busy answering hundreds of email. The applications are stuck in days/weeks of process when we currently provide a permit orocess of same day oermits and revenue to our department is immediate. Online might be desirable as to not have to come to the city, but getting held up for weeks leaves everyones jobs at risk, including the people we serve.</p>
<p>43 Because knowledge matters: Permit techs hold operational memory by processing common issues daily, handle local code nuances hands, intense training that takes a very skilled person to learn within time you can't buy experience. It should remain with the in-house City staff because by "Outsourcing" increases the chance of configuration errors, missed requirements, and long delays while a vendor learns our city's unique needs.</p>	<p>Losing our input our status and skilled employees less jobs or work will result in slower turnaround, more errors, and worse customer service for residents and contractors. Contracting out skilled Local 21 work displaces experienced public servants and reduces accountability to residents. Spending too much money on a system (OpenGov) that does not work instead of investing in training City employees to run and improve PermitSF. use what we are already have instead on a system that doesn't work.</p>
<p>44 1.In-house city staffs are knowledgable and better understanding San Francisco building code, department workflows, regulations. 2. In-house staff are accountable to public and city's mission. Outsourcing create conflict between profit & high quality service. 3. In-house staff can directly adapt existing systems to new regulations based on current workflow, rather than spent time to develop new process to fit OpenGov's limited platform.</p>	<p>1. Inefficient data searching & high manual workload. OpenGov lacks consolidated overview for property address. No glance overview of permit history. 2. OpenGov slow down approval process. Minor design or correction ends up new submission and return back to processing queue, instead of making correction on plans OTC directly. 3. Mandating the use of OpenGov creates barrier for seniors & blue-collar contractors those are not tech-savy, or not having a smart phone or computer at all.</p>
<p>45</p>	
<p>46 I believe that the Permit SF work should remain with in house staff because we know the work, and we understand the complexities of the permit. So far I don't see how the benefit of OpenGov.</p>	<p>I'm concerned that the City will lose money. And I am concerned that people will eventually lose there jobs.</p>
<p>47 Quality control is done by in-house staff to ensure minimal errors. Also, several information regarding active notice of violations, open applications, duplicate application needs to be verified prior to assigning an application number. In addition, property information needs to be verified - parcel #, # of units, construction type, occupancy class, owner information and whether a building has historical significance.</p>	<p>I have both internal and external concerns about OpenGov. One of my main concern is that permits take longer to issue due to the back and forth of email whereas in person, any instructions can be given verbally. Security can also be another issue where anyone can apply for a permit and claim they are the contractor. Permit Techs are being pulled to work on Opengov and the wait time to obtain a permit in person is taking longer. I also found out that Fire permits cost less when obtain via Opengov and the plan checker can not revised the construction cost.</p>
<p>48 OpenGov lacks the ability to identify permit statuses that are used in the San Francisco Building Code. The City is paying for a system that does not work for the users, and instead the users have to perform workarounds and more manual work. This Mayor said this system would allow for more transparency, however, that is not the case, OpenGov lacks transparency compared to our existing permitting system. The people benefitting from a contract with a private company is the ones who have a financial interest, which we all know who benefits most from OpenGov. A third party (private company) now has access to a lot of data and information housed in the City's databases, who knows what they will do with all our information. OpenGov charged the City over 5 million dollars to contract with a company that is just copying and pasting their existing system and "sell" it as a product to the City that was undeveloped and incomplete product. As one of the testers for the for a new permitting system last summer, OpenGov was the worst out of all three, andit came as complete shocked that OpenGov was chosen since the feedback from the testing ranked this lower than the rest.</p>	<p>OpenGov lack many features, functions, and the flexibility to accommodate the use cases and scenarios for permit processing. Steps have become more manual and less automated, even though we have some automated processes in place. OpenGov lacks the ability to identify flags on addresses to block permit issuance. Current permitting system allows staff to send tickets for fixed and get immediate or quick turnarounds for a resolution. With OpenGov, there is no direct support from the vendor or quick turnarounds for fixes in the system, if they can even fix it. A new permitting system is supposed to create more efficiency, transparency, and less manual work; this system does not do that. We also are getting comments from applicants that they do like using OpenGov.</p>
<p>49 the opengov platform is too basic. It only meet basic task when filing permits. The City MIS Team or a better software can created with better features and make the process easier.</p>	<p>Slow, lack features, the contractor validation and the process will not be able sustain high volumes.</p>

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Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
<p>50 The configuration and management of the city's permitting solution is a fundamental and ongoing workload that requires constant upkeep to maintain system functions to support the latest developments in policy and legislation, as supported through data tracking requirements, system administration and process automation by skilled city technology staff. From the onset, PermitSF executive leadership appears to have intentionally circumvented the RFI and RFP procurement process when selecting OpenGov against the advice of city technology experts who had conducted thorough evaluations of potential permitting solutions. Concerns regarding OpenGov's inadequacies were expressed by department subject matter experts to PermitSF leadership but were dismissed as issues that would be addressed by the OpenGov development roadmap, instead of acknowledging that these were critical features missing from their product. After the rushed RFI, a piecemeal OpenGov implementation was initiated by PermitSF leadership without conducting a proper business needs analysis or further consulting department subject matter experts. Instead, PermitSF leadership opted to appoint underqualified business leads, without experience in software implementations or system infrastructure, to work out of class as Business Analysts coordinating with technology counterpoints at OpenGov to configure their no-bid permit solution. They then hired newly created "exempt" technology roles under the pseudo PermitSF program that report outside the purview of existing IT department structures without duly notifying union representatives. By outsourcing configuration and ongoing administration tasks, PermitSF's OpenGov project forces the city and applicants to be reliant on a private SaaS solution that requires additional service agreements to complete routine work that could previously be accomplished by city staff in existing permit systems in a more cost effective and timely manner. It is in the best interest of San Francisco to allow experienced city technology professionals the capacity to analyze specifications, define requirements, and implement appropriate software solutions. Rather than perpetually outsource standard configuration work to OpenGov, which lacks self-service features routinely found in other products, the city should initiate an RFP to evaluate more comprehensive enterprise permitting platforms that can be managed and maintained by in-house system administrators. A more logical approach to implementation would be to review permitting software that is already in use by the city's departments to reduce the risk of untested vendors, provide built-in expertise, and eliminate system conversion for at least one department during the merger of permitting functions. Current permitting systems such as Clariti, Accela, and Salesforce all offer more robust features and are successfully used by neighboring jurisdictions and existing city staff.</p>	<p>Initial concerns with the OpenGov project were raised when it became apparent that the product was fundamentally limited at an enterprise level, lacking more advanced permitting features that are otherwise standard in the industry. These functional gaps would make it difficult for OpenGov to support core business processes without significant development or business process quality concessions. The scale of these issues includes limited or missing critical functionality such as: no granular security (i.e. read, edit, delete, create permissions cannot replicate business policies), limited audit trail (i.e. limited change log history), restricted data analytics (i.e. no reporting database access for ad hoc SQL queries), billing limitations (i.e. no financial admin tools for fee schedule updates), no bulk data updates (i.e. no scripting engine and restricted API to batch update records), no time accounting module (i.e. no time log hours or user billing rates), no transactional address/parcel history, limited customer management and system scalability. The conclusion of this analysis was that OpenGov lacked the basic features necessary to accommodate core business functions when compared to other products. This has already resulted in impacts to project scope, milestone deadlines, and the attrition of requirements. Due to the insufficient OpenGov product, the PermitSF project had no choice but to pivot from their initial project scope and timeline because critical business processes could not be supported and a roadmap of unavailable features needed to be built out by OpenGov and paid for by San Francisco residents in in the form of an expanded contract. To date, the handful of features that have been produced by PermitSF's OpenGov team have caused increases in the time and resources needed for members of the public to submit applications and for staff to process even the most basic permits. Further migration to OpenGov could destabilize departmental data, restrict system access and self-sufficiency, disrupt workflow processes, prevent compliance (sunshine requests, environmental monitoring notification requirements, etc.), introduce billing inefficiencies, increase system maintenance costs, impede accountability, proliferate security risks, and jeopardize the existing permitting capabilities of San Francisco.</p>
<p>51 In our current intake process at Planning, a dedicated intake person is assigned to work with applicants to answer any questions related to Planning policies, procedures, and any initial plan review comments. More importantly, we're here to meet with members of the public in-person should they have any questions or concerns. That can't be replaced with AI bot, as proposed by senior management at multiple meetings.</p> <p>Many hours are spent meeting with members of the public explaining complex procedures and walking them through how best to navigate the Planning process. AI customer service won't work in a City and County of San Francisco setting where members of the public are entitled to access to a live person.</p>	<p>During OpenGov training, trainers noted applicants were signing multiple affidavits that may potentially waive their rights. Most members of the public may skip reading the finer details in the terms and agreements to bypass prompts to speed up their application submittal and that was extraordinarily concerning.</p>
<p>52 Civil service work should never be contracted out to a private company. The data and workflow will eventually be controlled by a private company if that is the case.</p>	<p>There are too many unknowns. If human workers are being replaced by AI, then what are humans for eventually? Yes, there may be new jobs created but the net number of jobs will be less and with fewer jobs, there will be less spending, and the overall economy will be worse.</p>
<p>53 Over the years, in- house MIS has been doing a great job upgrading and maintaining the in-house Permit Application and Inspection Tracking System, even with the limited resources provided to the unit. Given the MIS unit properly funded, the Permitting system can be successfully kept in-house, instead of out sourcing. The opportunity to add AI adaptation in-house is now, rather than outsourcing to become a runaway train at this critical juncture.</p>	<p>Long term dependency to a proprietary system which is not easily replaced competitively, and give away the opportunity for the City government to take control at the start up of the AI era. The control of the ownership of the private company and its data is a serious concern on the privacy of all the constituents of the City and the entities having business with permitting in the City.</p>
<p>54</p>	<p>Too less functions, hard to adjust.</p>
<p>55 After the recent round of layoffs, it is more important than ever that work be done by in-house staff rather than being outsourced. This helps to bolster job security and allows for greater ownership over work and systems that we use every day.</p>	<p>Public data becoming privatized and conflicts of interest with Mayor Lurie's former nonprofit</p>

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Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
<p>56 There are several reasons why this work is more appropriately performed by City employees.</p> <p>1. Permitting operations are fundamentally governmental functions that require institutional knowledge, regulatory interpretation, and accountability to the public. Permit workflows are not simply technical processes; they embody municipal code requirements, departmental policies, interagency coordination, fee administration, inspection sequencing, environmental review triggers, and legal compliance obligations. City staff possess years of operational experience navigating these requirements across departments such as the Department of Building Inspection, Planning, Public Works, Fire, and Public Health. This expertise cannot be easily replicated by outside contractors who may not fully understand the operational history, local amendments, policy intent, or practical impacts of workflow decisions.</p> <p>2. Maintaining this work in-house preserves transparency and public accountability. City employees operate under civil service rules, ethics regulations, public records requirements, and direct oversight by elected officials and commissions. When critical permitting logic, workflow routing, fee structures, and operational decisions are controlled externally, the City risks losing visibility into how those decisions are implemented and maintained. Residents, contractors, and permit applicants rely on predictable and equitable administration of permitting services, and those responsibilities should remain directly accountable to the public through City staff.</p> <p>3. Outsourcing critical operational knowledge creates long-term dependency risks. As more workflow configuration, business logic, and system administration functions are transferred to vendors, the City may lose the internal expertise necessary to independently manage or improve its own permitting system. Over time, this can reduce the City's negotiating leverage, increase future contract costs, and limit operational flexibility. Retaining knowledgeable in-house analysts, permit specialists, and technical staff ensures continuity of operations and protects the City from becoming overly dependent on proprietary vendor-controlled processes.</p> <p>4. City employees are better positioned to respond to evolving policy priorities and emergency operational needs. PermitSF workflows frequently require rapid adjustments due to ordinance changes, state mandates, mayoral directives, departmental reorganizations, disaster recovery efforts, or new housing and infrastructure initiatives. In-house staff can coordinate directly with department leadership, inspectors, engineers, planners, and frontline permit personnel to implement changes quickly and with full understanding of operational impacts. Outsourced personnel may not have the same responsiveness, continuity, or cross-departmental relationships necessary to support those adjustments effectively.</p> <p>5. Retaining this work internally supports workforce development and preserves specialized public-sector expertise. The City has invested substantial time and resources training employees on permitting operations, regulatory compliance, fee administration, workflow analysis, and enterprise system management. Continuing to outsource these functions risks eroding career pathways for civil service employees and diminishing the City's long-term institutional capacity. Public-sector technology modernization efforts should strengthen internal capability rather than replace it.</p> <p>6. PermitSF leadership is discouraging employees from raising real operational, technical, compliance, or public-interest concerns.</p> <p>Finally, while vendors can provide valuable software tools and implementation assistance, there is an important distinction between purchasing technology and outsourcing governmental operations. The City may appropriately contract for software hosting, platform development, or specialized technical support, but the governance, configuration oversight, workflow administration, business process analysis, and operational decision-making functions tied to PermitSF should remain under City control and be performed by accountable civil service staff.</p> <p>For these reasons, the PermitSF work currently outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City employees who possess the institutional knowledge, operational expertise, public accountability, and long-term commitment necessary to administer the City's permitting functions effectively and in the public interest.</p>	<p>1. Limits in modeling complex business rules</p> <p>a. Many permitting environments (like building, fire, planning, public works) involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> layered conditional logic cross-department dependencies discretionary reviewer decisions exceptions that don't follow linear workflows <p>b. Concern raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Systems can struggle when rules become highly nested or exception-heavy. Agencies may end up simplifying rules to fit the platform rather than fully digitizing existing policy logic. <p>c. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> potential loss of nuance in permit processing increased manual handling for edge cases <p>2. Workflow rigidity vs. real-world variability</p> <p>a. Concern raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Configured workflows may not easily reflect "how work actually happens" in practice. Edge cases often require off-system decisions or manual routing. <p>b. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> inconsistent handling of similar cases increased reliance on staff interpretation outside the system <p>3. Configuration dependency and vendor reliance</p> <p>a. Concern raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant workflow changes may require specialized configuration knowledge. Internal staff may not always have full autonomy over deep workflow logic. <p>b. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> slower adaptation to policy changes dependence on vendor or certified administrators potential knowledge bottlenecks <p>4. Transparency of workflow logic</p> <p>a. Concern raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business logic may be embedded in configuration layers that are not easily readable to operational staff. <p>b. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> harder troubleshooting difficulty auditing "why" a decision occurred increased training burden for new staff <p>5. Data and reporting alignment issues</p> <p>a. Concern raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operational reporting needs (legacy KPIs, audit categories, internal metrics) may not align cleanly with system data structures. <p>b. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> manual reconciliation parallel reporting systems risk of inconsistent performance measurement <p>6. Integration complexity in large jurisdictions</p> <p>a. Concern raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large cities typically have many connected systems (GIS, payment, records, inspection systems, legacy databases). <p>b. Impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> integration gaps or delays

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Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
<p>57 Please review this article for any corruption. As a public servant, I am scared of retaliation from planning department leadership: https://sfstandard.com/2026/05/13/daniel-lurie-opengov-permitting-permitsf-san-francisco/.</p> <p>I am an active City and County of SF IFPTE Local 21 employee who wishes to remain anonymous that this bidding process was not in good faith. I urge you to vote no on expanding this contract with open gov.</p>	<p>Please review this article for any corruption. As a public servant, I am scared of retaliation from planning department leadership: https://sfstandard.com/2026/05/13/daniel-lurie-opengov-permitting-permitsf-san-francisco/.</p> <p>I am a City and County of SF IFPTE Local 21 employee who wishes to remain anonymous that this bidding process was not good. I urge you to vote no on expanding this contract with open gov.</p>
<p>58 I honestly believe we needed a new program that we couldn't create internally but our budgets shouldn't be dinged by the costs, meaning we shouldn't have to do layoffs because of it. PTS is archaic and needs to go. However there are ways to balance the budget without doing layoffs and we need to go through the proper process to procure outside programs instead of what was done behind closed doors as in the case of procuring OpenGov.</p>	<p>Only if it takes away jobs internally such as with AI doing the work now.</p>
<p>59 The future of public data and workflow improvements shall reside in-house with the City. The City recently accomplished the digital transformation of building permit and plan check information, under the strategic planning of the previous Mayor administration. This is a big milestone accomplishment that most people said could not be done. By comparison, the City can easily continue to modernize the Permit Center, in-house.</p>	<p>I have concerns about the response of the private business, OpenGov, in times of crisis. Will their infrastructure and customer service operate during earthquake, flood, or other natural disaster? What guarantees are there for the interests and solvency of the private company? In-house public data will be directly available, and will contribute to the survival and resiliency of San Francisco.</p>
<p>60 My concerns around privatizing PermitSF include issues around ownership, access, and transparency. Who will own and have access to permit information/data? Will there be a gatekeeper and will data pulled from PermitsSF be used/sold for purposes that do not benefit the city? Privatizing critical government functions will reduce transparency. Additionally, the city's existing workforce should be trained and used to perform government functions.</p>	<p>This product does not have the capabilities necessary for us to do our work. Specifically, OpenGov does not appear to have a way for us to document, track, etc. complaints and enforcement cases.</p>
<p>61 I am a planner that regularly uses OpenGov in my permit approval workflow. It is important for our in-house City staff to have access to the system to troubleshoot any user issues. For example, I mistakenly approved a permit by clicking the wrong button in the software. My supervisor had to reach out to OpenGov staff to resolve this issue. Typically, when there are user errors when using the software systems we use, i.e. Accela and M-Files, our own in-house IT staff are able to fix these mistakes. Additionally, when customers have issues using the OpenGov software, I have seen that OpenGov staff are tagged to assist with the issue instead of our in-house staff.</p>	<p>I am concerned about the accessibility controls. We have been told in trainings that OpenGov does not have the functionality to lock other Departments from doing our Department's approvals. This is a huge issue as other Departments could intentionally or mistakenly approve permits on our behalf. Additionally, we have been told we can edit customer's scopes of work on the OpenGov system. This is a huge liability on staff, as we do not write on the scope of work for physical permits ourselves, so that customers do not feel that the City is coercing them into their Project. Secondly, my concerns are around usability and interface. The OpenGov system is difficult to read, hard to navigate to see what I am reviewing, and difficult to find previous revisions that my colleagues have requested. I have to scroll down to three different sections on a long page to review the material I am approving, click through three different tabs for my approval and to see the property location and to see property photos. I have made numerous simple requests to improve user interface and design and have been told that these are not aspects the OpenGov system is able to change. Given this, I would say that approving paper permits for the same scopes of work that are available on OpenGov (siding and windows) takes, on average, the same amount of staff time as on OpenGov. Thirdly, I am concerned about the transparency to the public. Our paper permits (their building permit number and scope of work, along with comments and approvals from each department) are accessible online as soon as they are filed. OpenGov permits are also accessible online but do not state a scope of work nor what the Department has approved. The Planning Department relies on a complaint based enforcement system — and many members of the public use publicly accessible building permit information to understand if work is being done with or without the benefit of a permit and who to contact. All of that information is hidden from the public-facing OpenGov system.</p>
<p>62</p>	<p>Another concern I have is that OpenGov is not ready to fulfill their promises. It seems like the system is being built around our needs instead of being a turnkey software that we can use. As City staff, we have been solicited by OpenGov staffers on our ideas for their AI permit software. I am here to be a planner, not a product designer or tester for an unbuilt system.</p>

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<p>63 Maintaining PermitSF functions within City departments rather than outsourcing them to OpenGov is essential for preserving operational stability, accountability, and workforce security. Relying on independent contractors effectively places these externally employed individuals in roles that parallel City staff responsibilities. This creates a scenario in which the work can be shifted away from existing, highly capable City employees, potentially undermining long-term staff retention and the City's ability to maintain consistent institutional knowledge.</p> <p>In-house staff possess an understanding of City codes, permitting processes, departmental coordination requirements, and local context that external vendors cannot readily replicate. Retaining this work internally ensures that technical expertise and decision-making authority remain within the public sector, where they are subject to established civil service standards, oversight practices, and public accountability requirements.</p> <p>Additionally, it is important to note concerns regarding OpenGov's corporate structure and affiliations. OpenGov's business ties to Palantir—a company known for its extensive data-analytics operations and partnerships in sensitive government sectors—raise legitimate questions about data governance, transparency, and long-term vendor influence. Keeping critical permitting functions within City departments reduces reliance on external platforms with complex or opaque data-sharing relationships and helps safeguard public data under City control.</p> <p>For these reasons, continuing to perform PermitSF work with in-house City staff supports greater continuity, institutional stewardship, data security, and accountability to the public.</p>	<p>I have serious and unequivocal concerns about OpenGov due to its ties to Palantir. Palantir Technologies develops AI-driven data-analysis systems used by military and law enforcement agencies to aggregate and analyze personal information, including social media activity, personal data, and physical characteristics, for the purpose of identifying and monitoring individuals. The capabilities of these tools raise substantial questions about data privacy, civil liberties, and the appropriateness of partnering with companies connected to this ecosystem. Given these issues, the City and County of San Francisco should be extremely cautious—and, in my view, should avoid any association with such entities.</p>
<p>64</p>	<p>Not user friendly.</p>
<p>65 In House city staff should have the ability to fix mistakes and keep track of data that is provided by customers. Currently, OpenGov does not allow City staff to make any changes. If there are any issues, it gets escalated back to OpenGov. This solution is not sustainable because the entire system is completely reliant on an outside contractor to maintain.</p>	<p>My concerns about OpenGov include how the system is going to be maintained as more permits be processed. Currently, questions and issues get sent back to OpenGov. Can they handle the volume of tickets in the future?</p>
<p>66</p>	
<p>67 We are silenced at work. I've heard of several colleagues who had spoken poorly about the program be asked into a manager's office. Managers are more concerned over "making it work" for public perception rather than making it work predictably and consistently. We are not being trained well, and we are expected to do more with less.</p> <p>Consultations that normally take 5-10 minutes of conversation, with maybe 5-10 minutes completing my work on the project, has become several day back and forth experiences for the customers. Just because a perfect project can be done in 5 minutes on opengov... does not mean it has made this more efficiently when we look at the bigger picture.</p> <p>1) Command over evolving the program to meet our needs. Our work is not stagnant and it is important that the program can evolve as our work evolves. 2) It is important that help desk tickets can be addressed and collaborated on. It is hard for a third party to understand issued on the user side when so detached from the work itself. If a third party is in charge of managing these, we have no control over what the fix is, or even how quickly it is addressed. 3) We cannot continue the narrative that this will not create layoffs. If the existing programs are no longer needed to be managed, we suddenly have employees with no work to do. It is inevitably easier to lay them off to meet budget crisis, than to train and transition them to other scopes. 4) WE CANNOT AFFORD OPENGOV. We cannot afford it as it is, and we for sure cannot afford this relationship into the future. Every helpdesk ticket will cost us money. Not if, but when our job evolves, we will pay the cost. We will either settle with a bad program that does not meet our needs, like we do now; or we will dig ourselves further into the deficit. 5) The UX is really quite bad, and it seems like us asking for features to be fixed are met with refusals from opengov.</p>	<p>Lack of autonomy, which leads into 1) inability to conform the program to our needs 2) ability to fix problems in-house 3) obsolescence of our existing staff 4) it is very clearly financially infeasible. 4) Corruption 5) providing inconsistent service 6) providing service that is actually longer than in person</p>

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<p>68 There has not been sufficient justification provided by City leaders as to why this work could not be done in-house. The policies adopted by the Civil Service Commission regarding Personal Service Contracts are clear and explicit, and to date, no reasoning has been provided that would sufficiently warrant the actions taken by the City.</p>	<p>OpenGov was touted as a product ready to meet the needs of San Francisco, but this could not be further from the truth. Beyond struggles with basic operability, on numerous occasions OpenGov's limitations have grinded against progress made in permitting. Staff have worked for years to get permitting back on track, with reasonable timelines, and with understandable expectations for customers. Processes and rules have been put in place to effectuate these changes, and have been lauded by City leaders. However, now that OpenGov is being implemented, City staff are asked to review these processes and rules to potentially offer alternatives, short-cuts, or removal altogether due to OpenGov's lack of functionality. This is not a holistic review of existing policies to ensure the best experience during permitting, as promised by PermitSF, but is instead a piecemeal negotiation over every rule, process and legal requirement, with staff and customers alike getting worse outcomes. OpenGov was supposed to be built for San Francisco, not the other way around with San Francisco contorting and breaking our permitting system just so OpenGov is able to meet completely arbitrary deadlines.</p> <p>The anonymous staffer quoted in the recent SF Standard article put it best: "I think San Francisco is funding the research and development work of OpenGov".</p> <p>While I realize the Civil Service Commission is tasked with reviewing the procurement and contract specifically, as a City employee, I implore the Commission and other elected officials to hear what City staff are saying before this system gets further entrenched and wastes more money. OpenGov wasn't the right choice, and doubling down with additional money is not the correct path forward.</p>
<p>69 As a Local 21 member in the Current Planning Division of the San Francisco Planning Department, I believe City staff is uniquely positioned to lead the development and implementation of a new permitting solution. As the individuals closest to both the permitting workflow and the underlying technology, staff possess the institutional knowledge necessary to navigate San Francisco's exceptionally complex local, state, and federal regulatory requirements. Outsourcing this work to external consultants, who lack foundational knowledge of San Francisco's permitting system, is counterintuitive and inefficient. It requires an extensive "ramp-up" period funded by taxpayers to teach consultants what internal staff already knows. Leveraging in-house expertise is the only way to develop a system that is truly functional and responsive to San Franciscan's needs. Current feedback loops for OpenGov are restricted to a small group of testers, creating a narrow perspective that does not reflect the daily realities of the broader workforce or permit applicants. The suggestion that staff resistance stems from a fear of change is a mischaracterization. Instead, staff seeks a solution that incorporates decades of technical experience to avoid systemic failures. The current OpenGov implementation lacks essential administrative guardrails. Presently, there is no mechanism to prevent or track the unauthorized editing, deletion, or approval of records. This creates a significant gap in auditability and accountability. The proposed workflow for correcting errors is a step backward in efficiency: staff must alert Permit SF leadership, who then contacts third-party OpenGov employees to request restoration or modification. Internal IT administrators do not have access to the system, when previously they could correct errors, and make changes or updates in a matter of minutes. This dependency on an external vendor for basic administrative tasks is unproductive, increases the risk of data loss, and removes the City's direct control over its own public records. We urge the Commission to retain this work in-house to ensure a more secure, efficient, and transparent permitting process.</p>	<p>The current implementation of OpenGov by the Permit SF leadership team has resulted in delays, lack of transparency, and significant legal risk to the City.</p> <p>The transition to OpenGov has not improved speed or transparency; instead, it has created bottlenecks. A standard window permit, which previously yielded same-day approval for over-the-counter customers, now takes 8+ days in the OpenGov system. This data is based on a window permit that I reviewed in Open Gov this week.</p> <p>Additionally, staff have been directed by Permit SF leadership to prioritize online OpenGov applications during the first and last hours of their Permit Center shifts, forcing in-person applicants to wait. This contradicts the City's customer service training and de-prioritizes the public who utilize the Permit Center in person.</p> <p>The OpenGov system currently lacks a visible change history. There is no mechanism to track who modified a scope of work or who granted an approval. This lack of an audit trail invites potential abuse, both internally and externally, by allowing individuals to circumvent established approval processes without detection. The system fails to incorporate essential "blocks" that protect the City from errors. To cite a few direct examples: There are no guardrails to prevent the approval of permits on properties with active enforcement complaints. The system allows filings on historic buildings without triggering the required specialized review by preservation planners. These systemic gaps expose the City to litigation, complicates enforcement cases, and creates false hope for applicants who may pay for filings that are legally non-viable.</p> <p>Feedback from the experienced City staff who process permits daily is being systematically dismissed, beyond the small group of subject matter experts identified by Permit SF leadership. Development is currently driven by a small, siloed team; many of whom lack recent or any direct experience in permit processing. Any positive feedback that is submitted regarding OpenGov and Permit SF is likely submitted by this small, siloed team. By ignoring the institutional knowledge of the broader workforce, PermitSF leadership is implementing a flawed product that requires constant, inefficient corrections. Many public servants want to work for city government to serve the public and support our city for years to come. OpenGov and PermitSF does not currently value the institutional knowledge of city employees, nor does this effort have the best interest of San Franciscans at heart.</p>

IFPTE Local 21 PermitSF - Responses collected from Local 21 members between May 11-May 14, 2026

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<p>70 City staff need to be self-sufficient in their capacity to automate, adjust, and directly report on CCSF operational data without reliance on a vendor. This will allow the city to respond to change much faster and at far lower cost, in perpetuity.</p> <p>The work that OpenGov prevents CCSF staff from executing would pose vast restrictions on the flexibility available to how CCSF runs its business. Much of that work would still need to be done in other systems anyway, and at a severe loss of efficiency. Also, considerable technical functionality which staff can currently leverage would no longer be available for the City to benefit from (which will be mentioned in “concerns”, below).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> OpenGov simply is not scalable, enterprise grade software. Perhaps it is a good choice for much smaller cities, but even then the loss of control of data that OpenGov necessitates is something I don’t think is appropriate for any government operations. These systems and data belong to citizens, and certain types of infrastructure should remain in the public trust to ensure access and reliability, similar to traffic lights, sewer systems etc. OpenGov’s security controls are not granular enough to enforce correct role based access to business processes and data. It cannot prevent certain people from accessing or changing specific processes or data with nearly as much flexibility as drastically less expensive products. This will lead to waste and confusion from human error, as well as open us up to bad actors who could exercise malicious updates which would be easily preventable and trackable in a competitive enterprise system. OpenGov offers no way to effectively test, roll back, or track history on configuration changes. Even worse, it is often impossible to tell who made changes most recently, or if those changes were made live in the system. OpenGov does not offer TESTING or DEVELOPMENT environments. In enterprise computing, this refers to mostly identical copies, or clones of the software suite that staff uses to prototype and get feedback on new software configurations. It has been standard in the enterprise industry for decades to have such environments available, as well as a methodical, trackable method by which to safely and accurately migrate these changes to the PRODUCTION environment (meaning the changes are in effect for staff). In many systems these changes can be tracked, rolled back, and archived for future reference which can be important to understanding past data and operations. OpenGov provides none of the above, whereas far less expensive competitors absolutely do. OpenGov does not have 3rd party professional services partners. In enterprise computing, professional services firms are consultant companies that can implement or improve the vendor product for you. For most enterprise software suites, there is a competitive market of professional services partners with different prices and specialties to choose from. Because OpenGov is a “proprietary sole source,” CCSF cannot look to other potential professional services partners for better pricing, specialist skill sets, or additional capacity. Even worse, we are permanently subject to OpenGov’s monopolist pricing for their professional services, and do not have the option to simply find a more suitable professional services systems integrators on the open market. OpenGov’s limited, simple configurations do not allow for industry standard business application support which are available in both the far less expensive competitors and CCSF’s existing, aging systems. For instance, in OpenGov staff cannot: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Build complex business process automations * Customize database schemas to support more efficient operations and reporting * Design highly customized user interfaces (screens) to support a wide variety of business processes and users Technical and operational shortcomings aside: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * OpenGov is charging the city far, far more money for a solution that does far, far less than its competitors. * The Administration’s reasons for ignoring staff recommendations have never been sufficient or believable. * OpenGov does not have a track record with cities as large as San Francisco, and would never have made the short list in a normal, formal RFP process. *. Why would we pay >\$6.5M to extend the contract on an implementation that many believe is failing?

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Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
<p>71 The OpenGov contract will be argued as a normal course of action when engaging Software as a Service transition. Paired with a desire to cut head-count, IT Outsourcing will continue to increase. This is part of strategy specifically designed to shrink the City's workforce. At the same time, the sole-sourced vendor increases their power over The City which will no longer have the skilled workforce to pivot away from this vendor in the future. The City, without options, is stuck in a forever relationship with the Tax Payers bearing the cost burden - while also receiving less, and less efficient services from the City's permitting customers.</p> <p>What this really feels like, is a misrepresentation of the sole-source justifications used to bypass the normal procurement process.</p>	<p>The Tax Payers and customers will suffer. The City will be paying a software company a very large amount of taxpayer money to learn how to build a functional product. The goal is supposed to be a more efficient permitting process which is more convenient to the customer. The current services in production today are making the experience much more cumbersome for the customer and far more difficult for staff to operate. You will hear the staff say they feel they are working for the software, where the software should be working for the staff, the permitting departments, the customers and the tax payers. Right now, everyone loses - except OpenGov.</p> <p>While not a product or contract issue, I am concerned over the project leadership. Leadership made clear criticism (constructive, or not) is not welcome and will be punished. I don't see how this can be viewed as anything but blatant threats to the staff</p>
<p>72 I am concerned about the expanding scope of services being outsourced through the City's contract with OpenGov, particularly in two critical areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In-house plan review services currently performed by highly specialized and trained plan checkers, and 2. In-house IT and data services. <p>When OpenGov was introduced, staff were told the primary purpose of the platform was to address permit tracking issues caused by workflows being spread across multiple disconnected systems. I fully support the City pursuing a technology solution to solve that problem. However, it now appears that the scope of outsourced services is growing far beyond that original purpose, without sufficient transparency to staff or taxpayers.</p> <p>First, an AI Plan Review feature was included in an internal departmental presentation and is reportedly scheduled for rollout in June 2026. Leadership has not clearly explained what specific problem this tool is intended to solve, how it will function, or what safeguards will exist for quality control and professional oversight. This lack of transparency has created significant concern among staff that highly specialized plan review work may gradually be replaced by AI tools that have not demonstrated equivalent reliability, judgment, or accountability.</p> <p>Second, OpenGov was presented as a centralized permitting platform intended to streamline interdepartmental workflows currently spread across multiple systems. In practice, however, the system requires extensive customization and operational improvements that have not been adequately delivered. If the City is paying for what was marketed as an "out-of-the-box" solution, then we should also be investing in internal IT staff capable of building and managing the customizations necessary to make the platform function effectively for City operations, rather than effectively funding OpenGov's ongoing research and development process.</p> <p>Across departments, staff have compiled extensive lists of unresolved system issues and needed improvements, yet there has been very little communication regarding timelines, product updates, or accountability for delivering those fixes. The current deficiencies in the system have already contributed to overdue review deadlines, complaint violations slipping through the cracks, and significant staff time wasted simply trying to identify which projects require review.</p> <p>I am asking City leadership to clearly explain the terms and conditions of this contract with OpenGov. Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * What services is the City actually paying for? * What contractual commitments exist regarding customization, product iteration, and ongoing support? * What accountability measures are in place if promised improvements are not delivered? <p>I am concerned that approving another approximately \$6 million contract renewal without resolving these issues significantly reduces the City's leverage to demand meaningful product improvements and accountability. If even the simplest permit types currently operating in OpenGov are already experiencing major unresolved issues, there is serious reason to question whether the system is prepared to handle more complex permitting workflows in the future. Without stronger oversight and transparency, I worry the City will continue expanding a system whose foundational problems remain unresolved.</p>	
<p>73 The city is in a deficit, OpenGov is a very expensive program that is a conflict-of-interest and capital gain to some officials. Open Gov doesn't work, a lot of issues, not customer friendly.</p>	<p>Massive layoffs. Restricts staff from accessing, configuring and directly fixing issues, slows the response times and reduces transparency.</p>

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	Please describe to the Civil Service Commission why you believe the PermitSF work that was outsourced to OpenGov should remain with in-house City staff:	What are your concerns about OpenGov?
74		<p>“Overselling,” when a vendor is able to close an inappropriately sized or priced package to a customer, is a common problem in enterprise technology procurement. Especially considering how the recent article showing OpenGov staff believed they were overselling to CCSF corroborates staff concerns, we appear to have indeed been oversold.</p> <p>We may be in a situation where superb salespeople convinced non-technical people to pay too much for a product based on unrealistic portrayals of that product’s functionality. Unfortunately this is not an unusual situation in this industry, although the scale at which OpenGov appears to have done so is truly astonishing.</p> <p>The normal steps to rectify such situations are to cancel or renegotiate the contract in order to decrease or halt future spending. Not issue a second, even bigger contract to throw good money after bad.</p>
75	<p>City Staff have been tasked with building and maintaining technology solutions for permitting, complaints, inspections, and beyond for decades. Repeatedly over those decades, leadership has pushed “modernization” strategies that have failed for one key reason: they failed to properly include existing business and technical experts. The work to modernize the systems we built and understand in OpenGov has not included these experts, and the few city staff involved in the project are largely from DT, Administrator’s Office, and most confusingly OEWD. The few staff working on the product from permitting departments are either freshly hired or treated with disdain and disrespect. The goal of leadership is clearly to replace public experts with private entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>OpenGov lacks the functionality to properly onboard the permit types that are already in the system, let alone the far more complex and voluminous permit types they promise to deliver in the next year. Current permits are handled through a combination of the new system and existing systems, as OpenGov only JUST implemented inspections management, and still doesn’t handle complaints. Leaders at PermitSF have been systematically shutting down modernization projects at partner departments (particularly enterprise departments with money for projects like this), promising capabilities they know the system doesn’t have. The system lacks the proper auditing and permissioning capabilities needed to understand who makes important decisions, such as when to charge, remove, or modify fees. It cannot successfully locate a building yet, let alone work on utilities or the right of way. They continue to upcharge us for basic functionality in any of their competitor’s systems. And if City leaders didn’t know this, they were willfully incompetent, as the entire technical staff from multiple departments vocally warned them until they warned us that continuing this approach would result in blatant retaliation.</p>
76	<p>There is a fundamental lack of transparency and accountability built into the product.</p> <p>At the OpenGov hosted introductory training, I asked how users could rescind input errors, such as premature workflow closures or incorrectly issued comments. With our current systems, users are either able to update themselves, or can ask a City staff person to resolve. I recently experienced a workflow issue with Accela, and the problem was fixed by a City staff person almost immediately. With OpenGov, I was told City staff will not have the required permissions, and OpenGov staff would need to make the changes. To my knowledge, there is no way for regular front line staff to transmit requests or issues to OpenGov staff directly. Instead, we need to contact a "super user" within the Department, who then escalates to OG staff through some nebulous process. This basically removes City staff's ability to provide substantive assistance, instead placing them as middle men between the product's users and the developer.</p> <p>During the roll-out phase of OpenGov, I have encountered numerous user experience issues, e.g. unintuitive site design, confusing labeling, redundant informational features that are inferior to existing resources. When I have offered feedback on how the system could be improved, I have been told they would be added to a list of feedback sent to Opengov, with no clear understanding of when or how these comments would be received or addressed. Except in some cases, I was informed outright that the issues raised were known problems that Opengov has acknowledged the system cannot be customized to address.</p>	<p>Beyond just the fact that the product is ineffective and underwhelming: I think they are an untrustworthy company, founded by people whose mission is to undermine public sector workers and our advocacy for the public good. This is one small part of a much larger effort to chip away at collective bases of power that can resist their ideological agenda.</p>
77	<p>DBI has an Oracle system (known as Permit Tracking System or simply PTS), which was developed in-house and is currently used by various departments (DBI, DPW, PUC, CPC, DPH, SFFD) and maintained and updated by DBI IT staff. It has its share of problems but otherwise working. DBI was working to put together a comprehensive set of requirements to replace PTS with a turnkey system with some modifications to handle more complex building codes, City Ordinances and State Bills that came out in recent years; however, the contract with OpenGov put a stop to all of that. With a turnkey system, DBI IT staff would have been able to keep control of the system and make updates as necessary. With OpenGov, however, IT staff was shut out and lost the control and basically became another end user.</p>	<p>Since OpenGov was introduced with just a few simple permit types for customers to pull online, not only did it not help the permit process to be simplified but made it more complicated. Many current processes had to be changed to fit with OpenGov flow instead of OpenGov being configured to meet departments' needs. It doubled the time on a simple task or made departments do unnecessary tasks that they never had to do even when the process was manual. (e.g. incorrect or over payments on OpenGov have to be manually refunded and whenever a fee is refunded, it has to be "waived" right away otherwise customer would think that they need to pay for it. If there are already issues when OpenGov has just touched the tip of the iceberg of permit types and their processes, I am concerned that OpenGov will not be able to efficiently address all the challenges and complexities that come with permitting.</p>

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<p>78 The City shouldn't spend millions to pay outside contractors to do work that City staff are able to do. We have many skilled and experienced IT staff who are just as capable, and who have in-depth knowledge of the how the City actually works, what processes and workflows are like, and how they should be implemented to provide efficient service to the public.</p> <p>I previously worked a different government agency that spent years and millions of dollars on "modernizing" a software application, built by an outside contractor. They never met deadlines because the contractors didn't have the knowledge of what the software actually needed to do, and my team and I spent many hours going back and forth explaining to the contractors what the software needed, what the data infrastructure had to look like, etc. We spent months testing the software, only to find many functions missing, going back to the contractors, they would "fix" the issue, but would create new issues. The project ended up going maybe 2 years past the initial deadline, and it ended up costing over \$45 MILLION dollars. At every budget hearing, the department would request an additional \$5m, or another \$10m, to extend the contract each time. This WILL happen with OpenGov. However much they are estimating now, it will balloon, and balloon, multiple times over. The department I worked for was an elected official, so of course they touted it as "state of art, modern software" that will "save taxpayers millions of dollars", but neglected to mention they actually spent over \$45 million (possibly \$50m or more) on outside contractors. It would have cost a fraction of that amount if they had simply used existing employees to do that work.</p> <p>Additionally, I have seen OpenGov employees at my office, and heard them talking about their hotel. Why is the city spending the hard-earned tax dollars of San Franciscans on contractors who do not even live in the area? We are spending San Franciscan taxes on their hotels, their per diem allowances, and they are paying their taxes back to other localities and states.</p>	<p>I'm concerned OpenGov will lock the City into it's software and contractors for many years, and lock out City IT staff, forcing the City to continue exclusively using OpenGov contractors. The City will spend millions and millions, and receive nothing but headaches for its staff in return. I'm also very concerned about how the contract was awarded to OpenGov in the first place. Ned Segal and others in this administration come from C suite private sector companies, where they are used to conducting business in a certain way, not the way it should be conducted in a public agency. Contracts should be awarded based on how well the product actually serves the public, while also being fiscally responsible to the taxpayers. This is not how the OpenGov contract was awarded, and the word of everyone involved in pushing for that decision should be taken with a grain of salt. San Francisco public services should not be used as a playground for Silicon Valley executives and investors to network and increase their own profits.</p>
<p>79 In-house City staff has years of experience, skillsets, and business knowledge to effectively perform PermitSF work.</p>	<p>Lack of system flexibility and security controls.</p>
<p>80 CCSF has a team of talented technologists and should partner with the system integrator for a successful implementation.</p>	<p>Some of our CCSF business end users shared that there are some function gaps with OpenGov. I would suggest OpenGov revisit those gaps with the business users and align their business requirements with system functionality.</p>

To: **San Francisco Civil Service Commission**

From: **Michael Christensen**

Date: **May 7, 2026**

Subject: **OpenGov Personal Service Contract Hearing, May 18, 2026**

Members of the Civil Service Commission:

I am writing to provide written testimony for the Civil Service Commission's May 18, 2026 hearing on the PermitSF OpenGov Personal Service Contract.

I served the City and County of San Francisco as a civil service employee for ten years, leading the implementation of complex development and technology projects for SF Planning, the Department of Building Inspection, and the Permit Center. In early 2025, I was asked to join the PermitSF OpenGov Core Team as Lead Subject Matter Expert, a position I held until December 2025. My departure from City service was a direct result of my concerns about the project, having been asked by department leadership to report colleagues who might "cause problems for the project," and having experienced direct retaliation after I filed two formal whistleblower complaints with the SF City Controller's Office.

The following reflects my personal observations and recollections from my time as Lead Subject Matter Expert on the PermitSF OpenGov Core Team. These are my personal views alone.

1. OpenGov Was Deliberately Selected to Replace Civil Service Roles

When the selection of OpenGov was announced, I was called into a direct conversation with PermitSF leadership and told explicitly that OpenGov was chosen specifically because its ongoing service and support model differs materially from the alternative product, Clariti, and from other platforms currently in use by the City such as Accela and Salesforce.

Those other platforms follow a standard implementation model: the software vendor and implementation partners design and configure the system based on requirements

developed by City staff, then train City staff in its use and ongoing administration. Ongoing maintenance and support is then transferred to City employees, with the vendor consulted for unique cases or major changes to configuration. OpenGov's model is structurally different. OpenGov conducts all ongoing service, support, configuration, and system changes directly, on a permanent basis. City staff are not trained to perform these functions, by design.

This is not a consequence of the software being proprietary. Accela, Salesforce, and Clariti are all proprietary systems, yet all are designed to be administered by City staff after implementation. OpenGov is specifically designed in a manner that will preclude City staff from performing roles they have held for years. I was told directly that displacing these existing civil service functions was a deliberate reason for the selection. I reported this in my first whistleblower complaint to the Controller's Office.

The Planning Department, now merged with Building Inspection and the Permit Center, has more than 50 civil service employees in technology roles whose responsibilities include exactly the kind of system administration, configuration, and support work that OpenGov is being paid to perform. Under the Commission's PSC Policy, the existence of a civil service class capable of performing the work means contracting out requires a compelling justification. The record here does not support that finding.

2. OpenGov Personnel Were Used to Perform Civil Service Work Beyond System Configuration and Support

My second whistleblower complaint to the Controller's Office concerned the use of OpenGov staff, through the contract, to research and author a white paper on San Francisco's permitting process and to recommend operational and policy changes. This is not software support. It is substantive analytical and advisory work of the kind routinely performed by civil service staff (including Principal Planners and Business Analysts) within the merged department. Using contract personnel to perform this work is both a misuse of contract funds and a further displacement of civil service responsibilities that should have been subject to Commission review.

3. The Vendor Selection Process Raises Serious Concerns

During the vendor selection process, Florence Simon, then head of the Mayor's Office of Innovation, directly asked prospective vendors whether they could build backdoors into

the system to allow city leadership to override agency permitting determinations, bypassing staff judgment when leadership disagreed with a decision or believed it was taking too long. OpenGov agreed to this feature without qualification. Other vendors declined, stating they would only implement functionality consistent with the legal requirements governing permit processing.

This exchange is directly relevant to the Commission's review. A system designed to allow political override of civil service determinations is not merely a technology procurement; it is a structural threat to the independence of the civil service functions this Commission is charged with protecting.

4. Concerns About the Procurement Process and Retaliation

Staff who raised concerns about this project faced a climate in which criticism was not welcomed by department leadership. Employees in union-represented civil service roles expressed fear of retaliation for speaking up — concerns communicated formally through Local 21. I was personally asked to identify and report colleagues who might raise objections. When I instead filed whistleblower complaints, I experienced retaliation directly. These matters are documented in my complaints to the Controller's Office and in a formal HR complaint.

I raise this not to relitigate those matters before this body, but because the suppression of internal dissent is directly relevant to how a contract of this nature advanced without adequate scrutiny.

5. Department Leadership Has Actively Worked to Expand OpenGov's Footprint at the Expense of Other Departments

I can personally attest that department leadership has directly lobbied other City departments to abandon technology implementations already in progress; specifically, an Accela implementation by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission and a Clariti implementation by San Francisco Public Works, in favor of OpenGov. OpenGov has not delivered on or even commenced those projects. Steering other departments away from functioning implementations toward a vendor that has not demonstrated the capacity to serve their needs is not consistent with sound stewardship of City resources.

6. There Is No Emergency Justifying Expedited Approval

At the May 4 hearing, department leadership conveyed a sense of urgency based on the contract's impending expiration at the end of September and the need for Board of Supervisors approval. Commissioners appropriately questioned why the contract was submitted so late. I want to be direct: this is not an emergency. The expiration date has been known for the life of the contract. The appearance of urgency is a predictable consequence of delayed submission, not a genuine operational crisis that warrants bypassing normal oversight.

Moreover, the scope of services currently processed through OpenGov does not support any claim of emergency. The system handles only minor permits involving no meaningful plan review — such as replacing a window without altering its size, location, or operation. These use cases had existing, functional application pathways before OpenGov, both in-person and online. There is no basis for the claim that OpenGov is the only available solution for this work, and the Commission should not allow an artificially compressed timeline to substitute for the deliberate review this contract has always warranted.

7. Civil Service Expertise Was Deliberately Excluded from the Design Process, Producing Legal Deficiencies

During the system configuration and design phase, department leadership specifically excluded the civil service staff responsible for administering the City's existing permitting systems from all design discussions. The process was driven entirely by the PermitSF Chief of Staff, without meaningful input from the experienced staff whose institutional knowledge these systems depend upon.

The consequences of this exclusion are not merely operational — they are legal. San Francisco Administrative Code Section 31.08(d) requires that when the Environmental Review Officer delegates exemption determinations to other departments, those departments must inform the ERO of each determination and provide a copy containing the information specified in Section 31.08(e)(1). The ERO is then required under Section 31.08(e)(1)(A) to post that information publicly on the Planning Department website, including a project description, the type or class of exemption, supporting information, the applicable Approval Action, and the date of determination. This is not a technically complex requirement — the City's existing Accela implementation already supports this functionality. The OpenGov system as configured automatically issues categorical exemptions from CEQA without triggering either of these requirements — no

notification to the ERO, and no public posting on the Planning Department website. The system also fails to screen for circumstances where a categorical exemption is legally precluded, such as projects located on sites listed on the Cortese List under Government Code Section 65962.5, where more rigorous environmental review is required by state law. These are not minor technical oversights. They are failures to comply with binding procedural requirements that exist to protect the public's right to notice and to ensure the integrity of environmental review — requirements that experienced civil service staff would have identified and addressed in any properly conducted design process.

The Commission may wish to request meeting attendance logs from the design phase to independently verify that existing permitting system staff were excluded from these discussions. That documentation should be readily available.

8. The Contract Is Not Delivering on Its Stated Purpose

For the limited permit types the system has so far been capable of processing, customers previously submitted a single-page application and could often obtain permits the same day. Under the current system, the same permit requires responses to at least 70 distinct questions and asynchronous staff communication that routinely extends the process to days or weeks. This is not a growing pain. It reflects a fundamental mismatch between the product and the City's operational needs — one that was foreseeable, and that was raised internally before being suppressed.

I respectfully urge the Commission to deny approval of this contract as structured, and to require that the work currently being performed by OpenGov personnel be evaluated for reassignment to the civil service staff who are qualified, available, and whose roles this contract was designed to eliminate.

Thank you for your continued commitment to San Francisco's civil service merit system.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Christensen

Former Lead Subject Matter Expert, PermitSF OpenGov Core Team
Former Principal Planner, SF Permit Center & SF Planning
(Writing in individual capacity)

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May 2026

San Francisco Board of Supervisors

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place

City Hall, Room 244

San Francisco, Ca. 94102-4689

RE: Protecting SF Environment's General Fund Budget Allocation

Dear Supervisors,

On behalf of USGBC California (USGBC-CA), I write to urge you to restore the full budget for the San Francisco Environment Department (SFE). Maintaining the proposed cuts would have a devastating impact on San Francisco's climate programs at a critical moment.

USGBC California's members are designers, engineers, building owners, consultants, product manufacturers, and service providers. Our mission is to transform California through the built environment into a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable place for all. More specifically, our Bay Area Regional Leadership Advisory Board is composed of 16 industry leaders whose subject matter expertise includes engineering, construction, architecture, real estate, higher education, and utilities.

The transition to healthy, efficient, and climate smart buildings will suffer in the absence of strong leadership from SFE. The Climate Equity Hub provides building electrification projects for low-income residents and workforce training. SFE is also helping to prepare the region for implementation of the Bay Area Air District's zero emission water heating rule 9-6, which goes into effect next year, through its contractor training and its leadership role in the "Sprint to 9-6" coalition of Bay Area cities.

San Francisco Environment's talented staff are especially vital now, as the federal government has rolled back national climate policies and cut funding for climate work, targeting California in particular. USGBC California, like so many other organizations in the state, received a letter from the Department of Energy with

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the intention to terminate our grant on October 1, 2025. We continue to seek assistance encouraging DOE to reconsider this decision, which would support our building performance standards (BPS) work and make an important impact throughout the state.

SFE's leadership on building decarbonization and participation in our CalBPS Peer Learning Collaborative has provided valuable encouragement to our team to continue our BPS work despite the loss in funding.

Also worthy of mention is SFE staff's deep-seated and unique expertise supporting department teams across SF City government to implement the Climate Action Plan and enhance project outcomes. SFE has already been forced to cut 3 full-time-equivalent staff positions this fiscal year, with another 7.8 FTE positions slated for elimination in July. As the skills of SFE staff are not regularly found across existing City teams, these reductions will undoubtedly lead to a noticeable skills gap and possibly more costly operations to fulfill the City's programmatic requirements.

Lastly, at risk are millions in future grants as SF Environment brings in many times its budget in outside grants. I urge you to prevent these losses by restoring full funding to the department.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Ben Stapleton,
Chief Executive Officer