

**From:** [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** [nathanarch@earthlink.net](mailto:nathanarch@earthlink.net); [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Low, Jen \(BOS\)](#); [Chen, Chyanne \(BOS\)](#); [Sciammas, Charlie \(BOS\)](#); [Mahmood, Bilal \(BOS\)](#); [Cooper, Raynell \(BOS\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Yan, Calvin \(BOS\)](#); [ChanStaff \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** RE: BOS Land Use Committee Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design agenda item #6 - File #230824  
**Date:** Thursday, July 31, 2025 9:03:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [AWSS Firefighting in SF - BOS Hearing 7-28-2025.pdf](#)  
[image001.png](#)

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Thank you for your comment letter.

I am forwarding your comments to the members of the Land Use and Transportation committee, and I will include your comments in the file for this hearing matter.

I invite you to review the entire matter on our [Legislative Research Center](#) by following the link below:

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[Board of Supervisors File No. 230824](#)

**John Carroll**

**Assistant Clerk**

Board of Supervisors  
San Francisco City Hall, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415)554-4445



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**From:** nathanarch@earthlink.net <nathanarch@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 29, 2025 4:52 PM  
**To:** Carroll, John (BOS) <john.carroll@sfgov.org>  
**Cc:** Yan, Calvin (BOS) <calvin.yan@sfgov.org>; ChanStaff (BOS) <chanstaff@sfgov.org>  
**Subject:** BOS Land Use Committee Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design agenda item #6 - File #230824

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John,

Please find attached my written comments regarding the BOS Land Use Committee Hearing on July 28, 2025 agenda item #6, File #230824. I only read a portion of the comments during public testimony yesterday.

I would appreciate if you would distribute my comments to the full board.

Thank you.

Zachary

**Zachary Nathan, AIA, CASp**  
**Zachary Nathan Architect**

Telephone 415-701-0877

Email: [nathanarch@earthlink.net](mailto:nathanarch@earthlink.net)

## **BOS Land Use Committee Hearing 7-28-2025 Agenda Item #6, File #230824**

### **Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design**

Good afternoon members of the Board of Supervisors Land Use Committee.

My name is Zachary Nathan. I am an architect and a member of the board of directors of the Planning Association for the Richmond. After living for 25 years in the Marina District, I moved to the Richmond District where I have resided for the past 24 years.

A few months ago, we saw devastating unimaginable events in Southern California that caught firefighters off guard and resulted in catastrophic loss of life and homes. Is the Richmond District prepared?

When there is a major earthquake, it is possible that there will be multiple fires throughout the city as well as high winds. Sufficient water must be available for fighting multiple fires. I want to focus my remarks on adequate water supply.

The Auxiliary Water Supply System which uses sea water covers much of the city, but not most of the Richmond district because it ends at 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

As we have seen from recent unprecedented events in Southern California and Lahaina Hawaii, strong winds can spread fire quickly and overwhelm firefighting systems.

San Francisco proposes a potable water system that uses the Sunset Reservoir and Lake Merced to serve much of the Richmond and Sunset districts. This system would be separate from the Auxiliary Water Supply System and would have a limited supply of water. This would impact our supply of drinking water in an emergency. This solution has been criticized by former SFFD chiefs and deputy chiefs including Tom Doudiet who has given a presentation to the Planning Association for the Richmond.

Former SFFD leaders have advised that a salt water pump station at Ocean Beach could supply an unlimited amount of water to the Richmond.

Separate pipes for potable water and firefighting is essential so that sea water can be used for a major fire.

Not having sufficient water to fight a fire for cities that are adjacent to the ocean or bay is inexcusable.

Per a Richmond Review article, The City has labelled expansion of the high pressure water system as too costly. They have also described the pump station at Ocean Beach as too costly and too difficult to obtain permit approvals. I question this since it likely pales in comparison to replacing destroyed infrastructure of 100,000 residents. Imagine the impact on our lives and cost to rebuild the Richmond District if something like the Palisades fire occurred here.

We need to prepare for unprecedented weather and circumstances such as earthquakes and arson fires combined with high winds.

The Richmond and sunset districts should not be treated like unwanted step children. We need the same AWSS system as exists in the east side of the City.

I recommend extending the existing AWSS system with a pump station at Ocean Beach.

Contact: Zachary Nathan

Email: [nathanarch@earthlink.net](mailto:nathanarch@earthlink.net)

**From:** [aeboken](#)  
**To:** [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Written Submission for Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting July 28, 2025 Agenda Item #6 [Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design] File #230824  
**Date:** Monday, July 28, 2025 8:48:08 AM

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Hi John,

To be included in the public record.

Many thanks.

Best,

Eileen Boken

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

----- Original message -----

From: aeboken <aeboken@gmail.com>

Date: 7/28/25 8:06 AM (GMT-08:00)

To: Myrna Melgar <melgarstaff@sfgov.org>, Charlie Sciammas <charlie.sciammas@sfgov.org>, Raynell Cooper <raynell.cooper@sfgov.org>, connie.chan@sfgov.org, "Yan, Calvin (BOS)" <calvin.yan@sfgov.org>

Subject: Written Submission for Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting July 28, 2025 Agenda Item #6 [Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design] File #230824

TO: Land Use and Transportation Committee members

cc: Supervisor Chan

FR: Eileen Boken,  
State and Federal Legislative Liaison

Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods\*

\* For identification purposes only.

RE: Written Submission for Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting July 28, 2025 Agenda Item #6 [Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design] File

#230824

The following sections list a chronology of the Emergency Firefighting Water System and an opposition to the proposed potable (drinking) water Emergency Firefighting Water System variant for the Sunset-Parkside neighborhoods.

## CHRONOLOGY OF THE EMERGENCY FIREFIGHTING WATER SYSTEM

1850 - Incorporation of City and County of San Francisco. Water supplied by Spring Valley Water Company.

1906 - Earthquake destroyed most of San Francisco. Majority of damage caused by ensuing catastrophic fires not by the earthquake itself.

1913 - Completion of Auxiliary Water Supply System (AWSS) as an independent system of high pressure and high volume pipes/hydrants to fight catastrophic fires using salt water from San Francisco Bay. Water off Bayside San Francisco is roughly the same salinity (saltiness) as off of Ocean Beach. AWSS later rebranded to Emergency Firefighting Water System (EFWS).

1930 - Purchase of Spring Valley Water Company and creation of San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC).

2010 - Transfer of AWSS jurisdiction from SF Fire Department (General Fund Development) to SFPUC (Enterprise Department) solely to balance City's budget. Not related to SFPUC supposedly superior engineering.

2010 - Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response (ESER) General Obligation Bond #1.

2014 - ESER Bond #2

2018/2019 - Major policy revision by SFPUC from dedicated AWSS to implement potable (drinking) water AWSS on Westside.

2020 - ESER Bond #3 (Prop B). No specific projects listed in Prop B description so Prop B was basically a blank check.

2024 - Last AWSS presentation at Land Use and Transportation Committee on January 22.

2024/2025 - Meetings of Management Oversight Committee (MOC). Members of the public were intentionally excluded from the MOC meetings by the SFPUC. Public Records Request 25-5518 to SFPUC for documents related to MOC meetings responded to with no relevant records.

2028 - Proposed ESER Bond #4 on November ballot for \$310 million. Capital Planning Committee has been advised by member of the public not to propose another blank check as in 2020.

## WHY SUNSET-PARKSIDE NEIGHBORHOODS STRONGLY OPPOSE THE POTABLE (DRINKING) WATER AWSS VARIANT FOR THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS

- Main source of San Francisco's drinking water is from Hetch Hetchy in the Sierras which is 167 miles away.
- The water in Hetch Hetchy must pass through Mountain Tunnel on its way to San Francisco. Mountain Tunnel is 100 years old. There is no alternate route/redundancy if Mountain Tunnel should fail.
- There are three transmission tunnels from Hetch Hetchy to San Francisco which cross the Greenville, Calaveras and Hayward Fault lines.
- These three transmission tunnels then cross underneath San Francisco Bay.
- These three transmission tunnels then go northward up the Peninsula in parallel with the San Andreas Fault.
- Water from these three transmission tunnels is purified at the Harry Tracy Treatment Facility in San Bruno. The Harry Tracy Facility is located near the coast and is less than 1,000 feet from the San Andreas Fault. There is no backup/redundancy to the Harry Tracy Facility.
- The purified water then goes to San Francisco's terminal reservoirs at University Mound, Sutro and Sunset.
- Besides Sunset Reservoir, potable (drinking) water AWSS would use Lake Merced. Lake Merced is not potable water. Lake Merced is "raw" water. If raw water is introduced into drinking water pipes, the San Francisco Department of Public Health would be required to issue a "boil water alert". After the catastrophic fires have been extinguished, the City would need to flush out the drinking water pipes exposed to raw water which would take 1 1/2 to 2 days.
- The SFPUC rationale for the proposed potable (drinking) water AWSS is found in the SFPUC Commission packet for January 22, 2019 agenda item 5(i). Despite the header on the supporting document stating that it was presented at the SFPUC Commission meeting, it was not. On page 5 of 9 in paragraph #4, it states "...the single pipeline meets level of service goals and objectives for the potable system as well as AWSS, thus avoiding the capital and maintenance cost of two separate pipelines." Currently, 30% of SFPUC revenue goes to debt service. In five years, 50% of SFPUC revenue will go to debt service. In other words, follow the money.

###

Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** ["Richard Rothman"](#)  
**Cc:** [Yan, Calvin \(BOS\)](#); [Low, Jen \(BOS\)](#); [Zachary Nathan](#); [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Chen, Chyanne \(BOS\)](#); [Sciammas, Charlie \(BOS\)](#); [Mahmood, Bilal \(BOS\)](#); [Cooper, Raynell \(BOS\)](#); [Chan, Connie \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** RE: Today's land-use committee meeting item 6 emergency water for Richmond - BOS File No. 230824  
**Date:** Monday, July 28, 2025 10:07:00 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Thank you for your comment letter.

I am forwarding your comments to the members of the Land Use and Transportation committee, and I will include your comments in the file for this hearing matter.

I invite you to review the entire matter on our [Legislative Research Center](#) by following the link below:

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[Board of Supervisors File No. 230824](#)

**John Carroll**  
**Assistant Clerk**

Board of Supervisors  
San Francisco City Hall, Room 244  
San Francisco, CA 94102  
(415)554-4445



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-----Original Message-----

From: Richard Rothman <rrothman555@gmail.com>  
Sent: Monday, July 28, 2025 7:55 AM  
To: Carroll, John (BOS) <john.carroll@sfgov.org>; Yan, Calvin (BOS) <calvin.yan@sfgov.org>; Low, Jen (BOS) <jen.low@sfgov.org>; Zachary Nathan <nathanarch@earthlink.net>  
Subject: Today's land-use committee meeting item 6 emergency water for Richmond

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untrusted sources.

Hello,

As a Richmond District resident, the City needs to build an emergency water system, similar to the one at Aquatic Park. The Richmond District needs to have an emergency system in place in case of a major disaster. We are surrounded on two sides by water and the Golden Gate Park on the south side. With the closure of the Upper Great Highway, one emergency route out of the Richmond District is lost, making it imperative that we have an adequate water system to protect the Richmond District. This needs to happen soon.

Thank you for considering this issue.

Richard Rothman

**From:** [aeboken](#)  
**To:** [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [MelgarStaff \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [PrestonStaff \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#); [PeskinStaff \(BOS\)](#); [Anne Pearson](#); [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** Strongly Urging Continuance of Land Use and Transportation Committee Agenda Item #6 for January 22, 2024 Meeting [Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design] File #230824  
**Date:** Monday, January 22, 2024 12:11:33 AM

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**TO:** BOS Land Use and Transportation Committee members

**cc:** DCA Pearson  
Committee Clerk Carroll

**FR:** Eileen Boken, President  
Sunset-Parkside Education and Action Committee (SPEAK)

**RE:** January 22, 2024 BOS Land Use and Transportation Committee agenda item #6 [Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design] File #230824

**Position:** Strongly urging continuance of this item.

Two underlying issues still exist for AWSS.

The MOU for the transfer of AWSS from the Fire Department to the SFPUC was never fully executed as the approval never came before the Fire Commission.

The PUC is using ESER bond funds for potable water AWSS which appears to be inconsistent with Prop 218 and potentially illegal.

It's unclear why the PUC suddenly shifted from dedicated AWSS to potable water AWSS for the Westside.

This policy change does not appear to have been approved by the PUC Commission.

A public records request has been submitted regarding this policy change.

Last year, at the June 1st meeting of the GAO Committee, the PUC misrepresented AWSS configuration changes and funding changes in its documentation and presentation.

It took the GAO to force the PUC to acknowledge its misrepresentations.

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Sent from my Verizon, Samsung Galaxy smartphone

**From:** [aeboken](#)  
**To:** [Anne Pearson](#); [Carroll, John \(BOS\)](#); [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** Strongly Urging City Attorney to Make Determinations Prior to BOS Land Use and Transportation Committee Meeting on Monday January 22, 2024 re Agenda Item 6 Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design  
**Date:** Friday, January 19, 2024 11:11:41 AM

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TO: Anne Pearson,  
Deputy City Attorney for Land Use and Transportation Committee

cc: Land Use and Transportation Committee Chair Myrna Melgar, Committee Vice Chair Dean Preston and Committee Member Aaron Peskin

cc: John Carroll,  
Clerk for Land Use and Transportation Committee

FR: Eileen Boken, President  
Sunset-Parkside Education and Action Committee (SPEAK)

RE: Land Use and Transportation Committee January 22, 2024 agenda item #6 [Hearing - Emergency Firefighting Water System Funding and Design] File #230824

Greetings DCA Pearson,

Sunset-Parkside Education and Action Committee (SPEAK) is strongly urging the City Attorney to make the following determinations prior to the Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting on Monday January 22, 2024 re the Emergency Firefighting Water System.

1) The Auxiliary Water Supply System (AWSS) was brought into service in 1913. From 1913 until 2010, it was under the jurisdiction of the Fire Department with design and engineering by the Department of Public Works.

In 2010 AWSS was transferred from the Fire Department to the SF Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) in order to balance the City's budget.

The MOU which was drafted to formalize the transfer required the following:

- Approval of the transfer by the SFPUC Commission.
- Sign off by the SFPUC General Manager.
- Approval of the transfer by the SF Fire Department Commission.

- Sign off by the SF Fire Department Chief.

SPEAK's understanding is that only three of the four steps were completed.

The transfer was never agendized and approved by the SF Fire Commission.

If all four steps for the transfer as specified in the MOU were not completed, is the transfer null and void? If so, what are the implications?

2) When the AWSS system was originally transferred to the SFPUC, the SFPUC pursued a policy of retaining the AWSS system as it was originally designed as a system independent of the City's drinking water system.

When the SFPUC upgraded the AWSS system with Earthquake Safety and Emergency Response (ESER) General Obligation Bond funds in 2010 and 2014, it was for the independent/dedicated AWSS system as originally designed and was, therefore, consistent with Prop 218.

However, the SFPUC has changed its policy for the expansion of the AWSS system to the Westside of the City.

The SFPUC policy for the Westside is not to use an independent system as originally designed but rather to use potable (drinking) water AWSS. This potable water AWSS system would use a single pipe for both drinking water and emergency firefighting.

The SFPUC has even used ESER 2020 funds for potable water AWSS.

It's SPEAK's understanding that using General Obligation Bond funds for drinking water Infrastructure is inconsistent with State Proposition 218 and is, therefore, possibly illegal.

SPEAK has brought this issue to the attention of the SFPUC Commission as well as the Citizens General Obligation Bond Oversight Committee (GOBOC).

It's also SPEAK's understanding that this has never been brought to the attention of the City Attorney and that no determination has been made on the consistency or lack of consistency with Prop 218.

SPEAK respectfully urges the City Attorney to make these determinations prior to the Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting on Monday January 22, 2024 or to request that the Land Use and Transportation Committee continue this item until such time as these determinations have been made.

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