

File No. 221210

Committee Item No. _____

Board Item No. 45

COMMITTEE/BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

AGENDA PACKET CONTENTS LIST

Committee: _____

Date: _____

Board of Supervisors Meeting

Date: December 13, 2022

Cmte Board

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| ☐ | ☒ | Public Correspondence 112922 |
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| ☐ | ☐ | _____ |
| ☐ | ☐ | _____ |

Prepared by: Arthur Khoo
Prepared by: Lisa Lew

Date: December 1, 2022
Date: December 9, 2022

1 [Resolution of Intent to Not Appropriate Funding for Executive Recruitment Services and
2 Urging Reappointment of Incumbent Director of Elections]

3 **Resolution declaring the Board of Supervisors' intent to not appropriate funding for the**
4 **services of an executive recruitment firm to engage in a search for a new Director of**
5 **Elections, and urging the Elections Commission to reappoint the incumbent Director.**
6

7 WHEREAS, Charter, Section 13.104, authorizes the San Francisco Elections
8 Commission to appoint a Director of Elections from a list of qualified applicants; and

9 WHEREAS, On November 16, 2022, the Elections Commission, by a vote of 4-2,
10 moved to undertake a process to recruit a Director of the Department of Elections rather than
11 reappoint the incumbent Director for an additional term; and

12 WHEREAS, In a Mission Local article entitled "Elections Director John Arntz's term not
13 renewed by Elections Commission" and dated November 21, 2022, on file with the Clerk of
14 the Board of Supervisors in File No. 221210, which is hereby declared to be a part of this
15 Resolution as if set forth fully herein, Elections Commissioner Dai indicated that the Elections
16 Commission "would be looking to the Mayor and Board of Supervisors for (public) funds with
17 which to conduct a search for a new Elections Director; and

18 WHEREAS, Under the leadership of the current Director of Elections, John Arntz, the
19 Department of Elections has been recognized numerous times as a model for efficient,
20 inclusive, and transparent elections by the San Francisco Civil Grand Jury, the San Francisco
21 Board of Supervisors, the San Francisco Elections Commission, and members of the public;
22 and

23 WHEREAS, Under the management of Director Arntz, the Department's core functions
24 have been extremely well planned and implemented, resulting in over 30 successful elections,
25

1 including six elections since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, with an unprecedented four
2 separate elections in the 2022 calendar year alone and five elections in one year's time; and

3 WHEREAS, Under the leadership of Director Arntz, a cohesive team of Elections
4 Department staff have developed and implemented a wide range of programs to educate,
5 engage, and enfranchise the general public, including the City's most vulnerable residents;
6 those who do not speak English, those with disabilities, those involved with the justice system,
7 and those living in Single Room Occupancy (SRO) residential hotels without individual
8 mailboxes and those experiencing homelessness; now, therefore, be it

9 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco,
10 hereby declares its intent to not appropriate funding for the services of an executive
11 recruitment firm for the purpose of hiring a new Director of Elections prior to the May 21, 2023,
12 expiration of the incumbent Director of Elections' current term; and, be it

13 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors strongly urges the Elections
14 Commission to rescind or otherwise reverse its decision of November 16, 2022, to embark on
15 a search for a new Director, and instead reappoint the incumbent Director; and, be it

16 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors directs the Clerk of the Board
17 of Supervisors to transmit this Resolution to the Elections Commission and the Mayor.



TRENDING

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White House welcomes Mission's dynamic duo

Eskenazi: Competence doesn't matter in SF

People We Meet: Dolores Ruiz and Vanessa Porras

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GOVERNMENT

Elections director John Arntz's term not renewed by Elections Commission



by **JOE ESKENAZI**
NOVEMBER 21, 2022

By a vote of 4-2 after a lengthy Wednesday closed-session meeting, the commission opted to not re-up Arntz for the position he has held since 2002. The position will come open in May, 2023.

The vote to not renew Arntz's five-year term came not quite eight days after the city's fourth election in the calendar year, and fifth election in one year's time.

In 2021, the **Elections Commission wrote** to the mayor that "San Francisco runs one of the best elections in the country and we believe this transparent process has allowed us to continue to improve our elections." **In 2020, it wrote** Arntz a commendation "for his incredible leadership ... The Department successfully ran two elections this year while facing significant challenges, including national threats to election security, mandatory vote-by-mail operations to all registered voters, anticipated increase in voter participation, budget cuts, and the COVID-19 pandemic."

The reaction across the city's political spectrum has been one of disbelief — and anger.

"I think some folks have forgotten the history of this department," said City Attorney David Chiu. "Before Director Arntz, we had five directors in as many years, ballot boxes floating in the bay and an intense lack of confidence in city elections. Many of us are mystified."

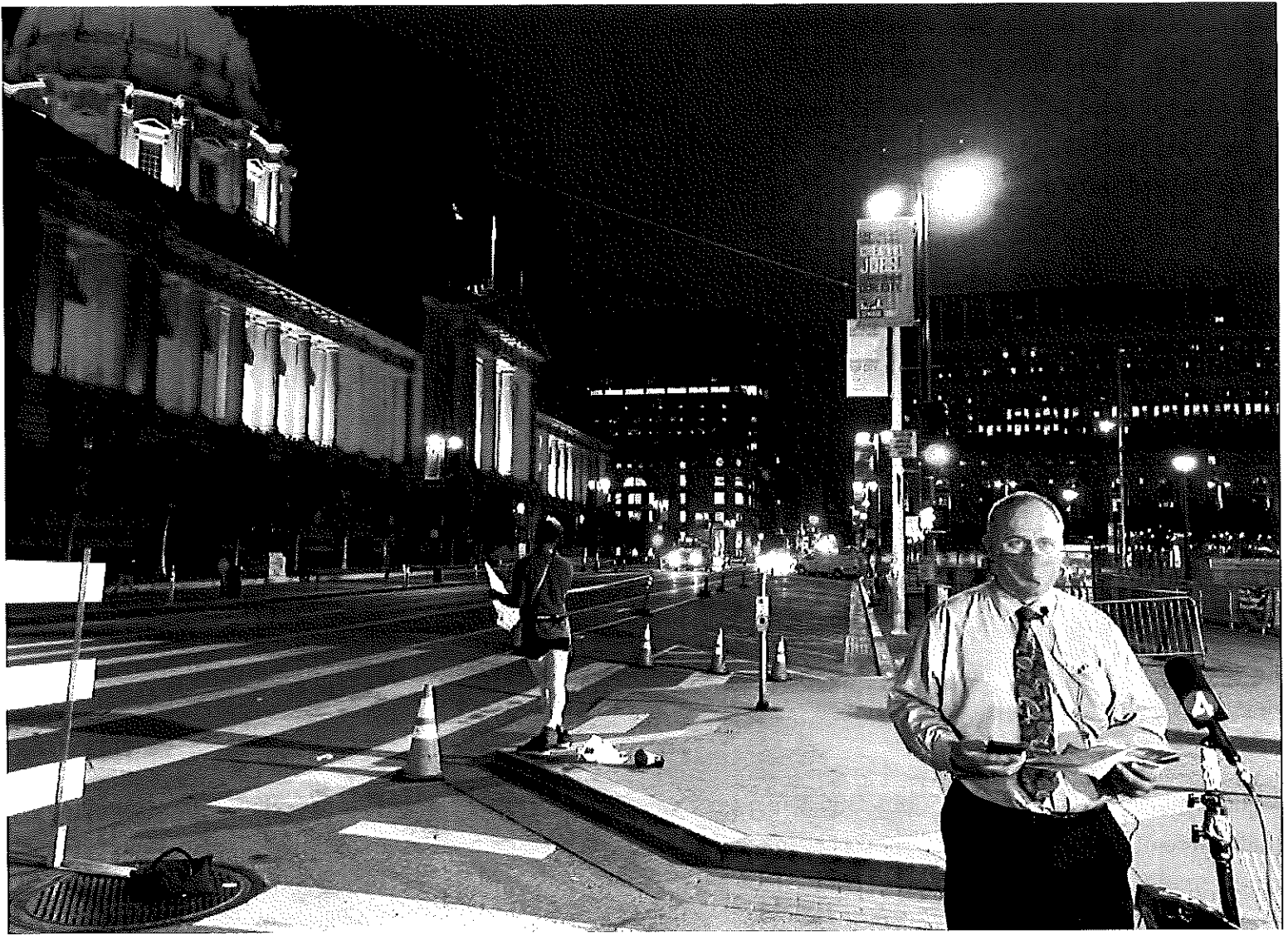
Supervisor Aaron Peskin added, "This is commission malfeasance. It almost becomes a justification for Mayor Breed to have **letters of resignation** from people who go do things that are completely insane."

Mayor London Breed did not go there, but did say that the Elections Commission's move was ill-advised.

"John Arntz has served San Francisco with integrity, professionalism and has stayed completely independent. He's remained impartial and has avoided getting caught up in the web of City politics, which is what we are seeing now as a result of this unnecessary vote," she wrote.

"Over the last year, John successfully ran four elections, while navigating a pandemic that thwarted San Francisco into crisis response — all without a single issue. Rather than working on key issues to recover and rebuild our City, this is a good example of unfair politicization of a key part of our government that is working well for the voters of this city."

Elections Commissioner Cynthia Dai, who voted to not renew Arntz's contract, said there was no performance-based reason for the commission's decision. She did not dispute that San Francisco has run **free** fair and functional elections for 20 years. Rather, she says, it was time to open up this position to a more



Elections boss John Arntz shows his cards tonight at City Hall. Early results are in. Photo by Annika Hom, November, 2020.

All 12 of the managers in Arntz's department, without his knowledge, wrote a letter to the commission ahead of time, **pleading with them** to re-appoint him. Their input was disregarded and, during Wednesday's meeting, their letter does not appear to have been acknowledged.

The rationale offered by the commission struck Elections staffers as bizarre.

"This all happened eight days after the Nov. 8 election," said deputy elections director Nataliya Kuzina. "They discarded the opinion of the very same people who have been conducting city elections, and discarded the director with a proven record to do his job. He has extensive election experience and knowledge. People whom he manages are supportive of Director Arntz. So, those are the facts in front of us. Considering all these facts, this decision seems to have been driven by something else."



John Arntz in 2018. Photo by Mallory Newman.

Peskin contrasted the “Wild West” behavior and distrust of the Elections Department two decades ago with the “smooth-running machine” under Arntz. In a nation where increasing portions of the populace voice ill-founded concerns about the sanctity of elections, no serious people in San Francisco are doing that.

“This is demoralizing and humiliating to John, and to the staff of the department,” Peskin said. “Rarely do you see employees of a department come together to champion their boss, and that is the case here.”

Dai said the Elections Commission would be looking to the mayor and Board of Supervisors for funds with which to conduct a search for Arntz’s potential replacement.

Peskin’s rejoinder: Good luck with that.

To: Members of the Elections Commission

From: Department of Elections Division Managers

Date: Monday, November 14, 2022

Re: Elections Commission Meeting, Wednesday, November 16, 2022
Agenda Item # 9. Possible Closed Session Regarding Public Employee
Appointment/Hiring: Director of Elections

Dear Elections Commission Members:

We, as division managers of the San Francisco Department of Elections, submit this letter in support of the Elections Commission reappointing the current Director of the Department of Elections, John Arntz, to serve another five-year term.

In this letter, we provide a brief overview of some of the challenges this Department has successfully overcome since Director Arntz was first appointed in April of 2002 as well as highlight the Department's ongoing success under Director Arntz's leadership.

The City faced a number of serious problems with administering elections before Director Arntz's tenure. This Department saw five different Directors in as many years, the Department's budget was in the red by millions of dollars, San Francisco's elections infrastructure was in disarray, the public lacked confidence in Department operations due to various election irregularities, and the Department's mission and standards were not clear.

The appointment of Director Arntz in April of 2002 brought order to this Department. Director Arntz effected immediate change as he worked with division managers to develop standardized procedures as well as staffing and expenditure plans. Under Director Arntz's leadership, the Department streamlined all of its operations and stabilized its budget in the few months leading up to the November 2002 election. Consequently, Director Arntz's early successes were promptly acknowledged by the Elections Commission in its 2002-2003 Annual Report:

"Notwithstanding its chronic lack of funding, the Department has grown and prospered under John Arntz. In spite of much adversity, Mr. Arntz and his dedicated staff have acted professionally, exemplifying industry and creativity. May the Department in years succeeding maintain the high level of achievement that the Department has now achieved."

The Elections Commission's sentiments were echoed in 2004 by the Board of Supervisors in its resolution commending Director Arntz and the Department for their outstanding accomplishments:

“WHEREAS, the San Francisco Department of Elections has had an unfortunate history of election-related irregularities which, over a period of years, undermined public confidence in the integrity and accuracy of our municipal elections; and

WHEREAS, under the capable leadership of the current Director, John Arntz, the Department of Elections has become an efficient, professional department, operating at the highest possible standards; and...

...WHEREAS, the Department of Elections has set a new standard of excellence that has helped to restore public confidence in our municipal elections; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That John Arntz and the Department of Elections are commended for their outstanding accomplishments.”

From these beginnings, we’ve never looked back. Under the steadfast and sound leadership of Director Arntz, the Department successfully conducted over thirty public elections and forty agency and district elections, implemented countless new election laws, adopted several new voting systems, created a proven record of fiscal responsibility, and continued to make election programs and services ever-more accessible and convenient for San Francisco voters.

These accomplishments were recognized by the Civil Grand Jury in its 2017-2018 report:

“We gained insight into how the Department of Elections operates through interviews and reams of internal documents. We approached each concern with a deeply skeptical eye, keen on making sure that the DoE was faithfully serving the interests of San Francisco citizens. This report omits these topics because the Department of Elections is doing a fabulous job. The problems that they face are challenging, and demand versatility and fluency in technological, logistical and interpersonal skills. Our inquiries into almost every element of their operations around elections administration consistently illuminated a department functioning effectively to fulfill the need of its citizens.”¹

As Department division managers, all of us have worked directly with Director Arntz to implement policies and procedures that meet – and often exceed – compliance with election law, and we have all witnessed firsthand the efforts that Director Arntz has put forth to ensure election transparency and integrity. We continue to work together as a cohesive team to ensure our voter rolls are accurate; our testing of voting equipment, ballot processing operations, and post-election canvass audit are fully open to public observation; our network

¹ Civil Grand Jury | 2017-2018 Open Source Voting in San Francisco, Appendix M: Unstated Excellence, page 46

and cybersecurity protocols are guided by best practices; and our physical security and chain-of-custody procedures are followed consistently throughout each election cycle.

Conducting a free, fair, and functional election is a complex process, one that requires expertise in election laws and regulations, operational and budgetary experience as it relates to the conduct of elections, the organizing of hundreds of employees and thousands of poll workers, the planning and delivery of programs and services aimed to enfranchise every eligible voter, and dedication to provide exemplary public service. Director Arntz has shown these skills time and time again.

Under Director Arntz, our Department has remained laser-focused on meeting the needs of San Francisco voters. More specifically, Director Arntz lead this Department to develop and provide a myriad of programs designed to serve the general public and city's most vulnerable residents – including those who do not speak English, those with disabilities, those involved with the justice system, and those experiencing homelessness. Year after year, our voter outreach programs, as well as our registration and voting services, continue to be recognized and acknowledged by members of the public in comments such as the following:

“You all do amazing work. Definitely the best run department in the entire city!” – Voter Feedback

“Continue what you are doing! Thanks for serving our community and protecting our right to vote!” – Voter Feedback

“Thank you for making voting easy and convenient. I have voted in cities in two other states, as well as the District of Columbia, and nowhere was it as easy to participate in the democratic process as in San Francisco. The ballot tracking was also amazing, and based upon the comments on our Cole Valley neighborhood facebook group (which has more than 7000 people), many, many people used the tracking and were excited when their votes were counted. Thank you!!!” – Voter Feedback

“I think the SF Department of Elections does amazing work! The images of endless lines in other places I see on TV are completely foreign to me. I have NEVER had to wait or struggle to vote.” – Voter Feedback

“SF runs the best and tightest election process!” – Poll Worker Feedback

“They (observers) were asked to observe voting locations for compliance with language access laws (under both Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act and Section 14201 of the California Elections Code), accessibility, and overall voting conditions. Overall, our volunteers found that election officials and poll workers in San Francisco served voters admirably and effectively.” – Asian Americans Advancing Justice, June 2022 Poll Observation Report

“Staff at the Department of Elections do an incredible job! Voting in four elections this year seemed a bit overwhelming at first, but the Department made it incredibly easy. I can breathe a sigh of relief knowing that our elections are in such competent hands. Keep doing what you’re doing, John Arntz and team!” – Voter Feedback

“I saw this thread on reddit:

https://www.reddit.com/r/sanfrancisco/comments/yp7mf/i_love_voting_in_sf/

and it rang really true to me. I moved here from Texas 10 years ago, and the thing is... when you do everything right no one tells you how great of a job you're doing.

You guys do a fantastic job, and I hope you know how much of a difference you make.” – Voter Feedback

The arrival of the COVID-19 global pandemic in early 2020 constituted a considerable test of Director Arntz’s leadership. The first set of logistical challenges appeared on March 16, 2020, when Mayor London N. Breed issued a stay at home order to protect public health in San Francisco, as the Department was in the midst of completing a myriad of time-sensitive tasks associated with certifying the March 3, 2020 Presidential Primary Election. Although the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic put the entire city into a state of uncertainty, under the leadership of Director Arntz, the Department continued to operate under the highest standards and, on March 31, 2020, Director Arntz certified the results of the March 3, 2020 Election. However, with the November 3, 2020 Presidential Election only a few months away, the Department was immediately faced with a second set of COVID-19 related logistical challenges.

In the context of complying with complex and rapidly changing health rules, laws, and emergency orders, Director Arntz immediately effectuated planning and preparation for the November 3, 2020 Presidential Election. His extraordinary diligence, in tandem with his dedication to finding practical solutions through collaboration with division managers and city leaders, is what kept our city’s election operations functioning and made the November 3, 2020 Election a success.

The temporary outdoor voting center in front of Bill Graham Civic Auditorium, with 75 ballot-issuing stations and 200 voting booths, all set up in compliance with health rules, offers a prime example of Director Arntz’s effective problem-solving during this time. This carefully-engineered voting space, organized in only a few months, provided a full array of election services for the November 3, 2020 Presidential Election and was open for the entire 29-day early voting period.

During this period, Department staff also worked under Director Arntz’s guidance to implement health and safety protocols at all polling places and Department work sites, including its warehouse and City Hall facilities; to deliver ballots to voters experiencing COVID-19 related illness or quarantine; to transition from in-person poll worker training classes to online training; to conduct extensive voter outreach about the many measures

the Department had adopted to ensure safe voting options for all San Francisco voters; and to process an unprecedented number of returned vote-by-mail ballots during the City's first "all-mail" election.

On December 1, 2020, Director Arntz certified the results of the November 3, 2020 Presidential Election. Final turnout was 86.33%, representing 449,866 ballots cast by San Francisco's 521,099 registered voters. This meant that more San Franciscans were registered for this election, and more had cast their ballots, than at any time in the city's history. In recognition of these successes, the Elections Commission commended Director Arntz in a December 2020 letter to Mayor London N. Breed:

"During such a challenging year, the Department and Director of Elections performed exceptionally in conducting free, secure, and fair elections. The Commission wants to commend Director Arntz for his incredible leadership, as well as all staff, including voting center staff and poll workers. We could not have done this without them. The Department quickly responded to requests for additional ballot drop-off sites and remained nimble and responsive to every voter."

"As a Commission, we are proud to show the public how a city agency can operate efficiently and effectively by having a strong partnership with the Department. We hope the City will continue to work with us to have San Francisco lead the way in running accessible and fair elections to all voters."

Under Director Arntz's leadership, the Department has administered over 30 elections, each of which was carefully planned and successfully conducted. For every election, Director Arntz submits an Election Plan detailing the policies and procedures to be used in that election and highlighting new practices and enhancements to existing programs and processes in effect.

In October 2021, the Elections Commission agreed that the Department's formal election planning process had contributed in a significant way to the transparency and fairness of San Francisco elections when it issued a resolution. In this resolution, the Elections Commission urged the city to encourage members of the U.S. Congress to enact federal legislation requiring all election agencies in the country to submit similar plans. In the cover letter sent with the October 2021 resolution, the Elections Commission again commended Director Arntz:

"As you may know, before any election, the Department of Elections submits an election plan for the Elections Commission to approve. The Commission and the Department work hand-in-hand to understand the details of the election to ensure a proper, safe, and fair election for all voters. As you may have witnessed, San Francisco runs one of the best elections in the country and we believe this transparent process has allowed us to continue to improve our elections."

We are seeking your support and leadership to work with your staff and our federal delegation to pursue a legislation to improve our elections across the country. We strongly believe San Francisco can lead the way on how preserve and uphold our voting rights across the country.”

In the last year, the Department conducted an unprecedented number of elections – the September 14, 2021 California Gubernatorial Recall Election, the February 15, 2022 Consolidated Special Municipal Election, the April 19, 2022 Special General Election, the June 7, 2022 Consolidated Statewide Direct Primary Election, and the November 8, 2022 Consolidated General Election – often performing tasks for two or more elections at the same time due to overlapping statutory and operational deadlines. Despite truncated timelines, COVID-19 imposed staffing challenges, many changes to election law, and evolving public health mandates, the Department fulfilled its obligations to San Francisco voters – each of these elections was administered successfully in a safe and fiscally prudent manner.

We, as division managers, take pride in the Department’s many accomplishments under the leadership of Director Arntz and are honored to have been recognized numerous times in recent years as a model for efficient, inclusive, and transparent elections. Going forward, we know that under the experienced and proven leadership of Director Arntz, we will continue to provide San Francisco voters with excellent service while adapting to legislative and technological changes and to fulfil the Department’s mission of providing equitable access to voting and election-related services and conducting free, fair, and functional elections for the City and County of San Francisco for many years to come.

For the reasons stated in this letter, we, the undersigned, wholeheartedly support the reappointment of John Arntz as the Director of the Department of Elections for another five-year term.

Sincerely,

Andy Pastalaniec
Catherine Lee
Crispin Tirso
Cuong Quach
Jennie Tran
Matthew Selby
Mayank Patel
Nataliya Kuzina
Shane Kealy
Tiff Lee
Valeri Shilov
Winter Patterson

From: [Board of Supervisors \(BOS\)](#)
To: [BOS-Supervisors](#); [BOS-Legislative Aides](#)
Cc: [Calvillo, Angela \(BOS\)](#); [Somera, Alisa \(BOS\)](#); [Ng, Wilson \(BOS\)](#); [De Asis, Edward \(BOS\)](#); [Mchugh, Eileen \(BOS\)](#); [BOS Legislation, \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: FW: Item 29 on December Agenda
Date: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 9:45:21 AM

Hello,

Please see below for communication from Betty Packard regarding File No. 221210, which is Item No. 29 on today's agenda.

File No. 221210 - Resolution of Intent to Not Appropriate Funding for Executive Recruitment Services and Urging Reappointment of Incumbent Director of Elections

Sincerely,

Joe Adkins
Office of the Clerk of the Board
San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102
Phone: (415) 554-5184 | Fax: (415) 554-5163
board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org | www.sfbos.org

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

From: Betty P. <bettypackard@comcast.net>
Sent: Tuesday, December 6, 2022 1:02 AM
To: Stefani, Catherine (BOS) <catherine.stefani@sfgov.org>; Board of Supervisors (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>
Subject: Item 29 on December Agenda

This message is from outside the City email system. Do not open links or attachments from untrusted sources.

To the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, I have served on the Ballot Simplification Committee since 1997 and as its chair since 2004. I also served for 22 years as a Federal Election Deputy, responsible for the performance of a number of precincts on election day.

The first years I served in both capacities were under three enormously incompetent Directors of Elections. The staff operated as best they could but, without leadership, it could only be described as chaotic.

Then John Arntz became director. First there was peace, then there was organization and professionalism among the staff. As John's expertise and vision grew, so did that of the staff. FEDs were supplied with wonderful teaching tools and reporting forms to make the election more transparent. During both elections and the remaining months of the year, the staff became more efficient and transparent. When it became time to replace the voting machines, our committee joined staff and members of the community to physically analyze and compare various brands of machines and give our opinion as to which would best serve the voting public. The highest-rated machines and company won the contract. In every circumstance, John has conducted himself with total professionalism and integrity throughout the years I have worked with him.

I thoroughly disagree with the Elections Commission's desire to replace John Arntz based solely on the need for diversity. The next scheduled elections are the 2024 presidential primary and general elections. The thought of a brand new director running this important year of elections conjures up nothing but nightmares. Now is not a time to replace John Arntz. I encourage you to vote yes on Supervisor Peskin's legislation to not fund the search for a new director and to extend John Arntz' contract.

Sincerely,

Betty J. Packard
Chair, Ballot Simplification Committee

From: [pmonette-shaw](#)
To: [Chan, Connie \(BOS\)](#); [Stefani, Catherine \(BOS\)](#); [Peskin, Aaron \(BOS\)](#); [Mar, Gordon \(BOS\)](#); [Preston, Dean \(BOS\)](#); [Dorsey, Matt \(BOS\)](#); [Melgar, Myrna \(BOS\)](#); [Mandelman, Rafael \(BOS\)](#); [Ronen, Hillary](#); [Walton, Shamann \(BOS\)](#); [Safai, Ahsha \(BOS\)](#); [ChanStaff \(BOS\)](#); [MelgarStaff \(BOS\)](#); [DorseyStaff \(BOS\)](#); [Calvillo, Angela \(BOS\)](#); [Somera, Alisa \(BOS\)](#)
Cc: [Hsieh, Frances \(BOS\)](#); [Groth, Kelly \(BOS\)](#); [Yu, Angelina \(BOS\)](#); [Burke, Robyn \(BOS\)](#); [Donovan, Dominica \(BOS\)](#); [Feinberg, Giles \(BOS\)](#); [Mick.DelRosario@sfgov.org](#); [Logan, Sam \(BOS\)](#); [Angulo, Sunny \(BOS\)](#); [Yan, Calvin \(BOS\)](#); [Souza, Sarah \(BOS\)](#); [Hsu, Melody \(BOS\)](#); [Wright, Edward \(BOS\)](#); [Wong, Alan \(BOS\)](#); [Chan, Karen \(BOS\)](#); [Rambo, Obai \(BOS\)](#); [Smeallie, Kyle \(BOS\)](#); [Kilgore, Preston \(BOS\)](#); [Hernandez, Melissa G \(BOS\)](#); [Bolen, Jennifer M.\(BOS\)](#); [Tam, Madison \(BOS\)](#); [Dahl, Bryan \(BOS\)](#); [Leo Alfaro \(BOS\)](#); [Ebadi, Mahanaz \(BOS\)](#); [Fieber, Jennifer \(BOS\)](#); [Heiken, Emma \(BOS\)](#); [Carrillo, Lila \(BOS\)](#); [Low, Jen \(BOS\)](#); [Mike.Farrah@sfgov.org](#); [Thornhill, Jackie \(BOS\)](#); [Prager, Jackie \(BOS\)](#); [Green, Ross \(BOS\)](#); [World, Heather \(BOS\)](#); [Lerma, Santiago \(BOS\)](#); [Saini, Nikita \(BOS\)](#); [Herrera, Ana \(BOS\)](#); [Ferrigno, Jennifer \(BOS\)](#); [Burch, Percy \(BOS\)](#); [Gallardo, Tracy \(BOS\)](#); [Gee, Natalie \(BOS\)](#); [Lopez-Weaver, Lindsey \(BOS\)](#); [Chung, Lauren \(BOS\)](#); [Jones, Ernest \(BOS\)](#); [Barnes, Bill \(BOS\)](#); [Buckley, Jeff \(BOS\)](#)
Subject: Agenda Item #29, Board File 221210: Resolution Urging Reappointment of Incumbent Director of Elections (John Arntz)
Date: Monday, December 5, 2022 2:06:44 PM

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Patrick Monette-Shaw

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San Francisco, CA 94109
Phone: (415) 292-6969 • e-mail:
pmonette-shaw@eartlink.net

December 6, 2022

San Francisco Board of Supervisors

The Honorable Shamann Walton, Board President
The Honorable Connie Chan, Supervisor, District 1
The Honorable Catherine Stefani, Supervisor, District 2
The Honorable Aaron Peskin, Supervisor, District 3
The Honorable Gordon Mar, Supervisor, District 4
The Honorable Dean Preston, Supervisor, District 5
The Honorable Matt Dorsey, Supervisor, District 6
The Honorable Myrna Melgar, Supervisor, District 7
The Honorable Rafael Mandelman, Supervisor, District 8
The Honorable Hillary Ronen, Supervisor, District 9
The Honorable Ahsha Safai, Supervisor, District 11

1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102

Agenda Item #29, Board File 221210: Resolution Urging Reappointment of Incumbent Director of Elections (John Arntz)

Dear President Walton and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

I fully support the Resolution urging the Elections Commission to re-appoint John Arntz as the Director of Elections.

Across the years, I have frequently e-mailed Mr. Arntz with questions involving various issues regarding multiple elections. He has always responded promptly and professionally. I have long believed that Mr. Arntz is one of the City's most approachable and most responsive Department Heads, and that he has done a commendable job running the Department of Elections. He is clearly the type of City employees we should be trying to retain!

I recommend that the Board of Supervisors ignore the November 29, 2022 letter from the National Voting Rights Task Force in the 11/29/2022 public correspondence file, which letter mentioned the San Francisco-based nonprofit VotingWorks. Of note, the Voting Rights Task Force did **not** mention that VotingWorks does not offer a system that can tabulate ranked-choice voting, nor has VotingWorks even developed a working prototype of a system that can handle ranked-choice voting.

By report, on November 16 a handful of individuals attended the Elections Commission's meeting and identified themselves as affiliated with advocacy groups for open-source voting, a topic Commission President Chris Jerdonek has championed for years. The individuals reportedly made bizarre and conspiracy-minded statements about the security and integrity of San Francisco elections and claimed that the results of previous elections had been influenced by compromised voting systems (apparently referring to Dominion Voting Systems, the same company that has filed defamation lawsuits against Fox News and Mike "MyPillow" Lindell, and is likely to win). The six members of the Elections Commission later entered a closed session, where they discussed holding a vote to select a new director to replace Mr. Arntz. The public comment about the closed session was also dominated by individuals from open-source advocacy groups or companies that criticized Director Arntz's hesitancy to adopt an open-source voting system.

The six members of the Elections Commission do not represent or speak for the 800,000 citizens of San Francisco, many of whom believe Mr. Arntz is doing a terrific job as Director of the Elections Department. Instead, members of the Elections Commission seem to listen only to lobbyists for open voting systems.

I urge the Board to pass this Resolution unanimously, and continue to advocate that Mr. Arntz be kept as Director of the Elections Department. And when it comes time for re-appointments to the Elections Commission, serious consideration should be given to whether the current Commissioners should be re-appointed.

Respectfully submitted,

Patrick Monette-Shaw

Columnist,

Westside Observer Newspaper

cc: Angela Calvillo, Clerk of the Board



NVRTF
NATIONAL VOTING RIGHTS TASK FORCE

November 29, 2022

VIA EMAIL

Hon. Shamann Walton, President of the Board of Supervisors
Hon. Connie Chan, Supervisor, First District
Hon. Catherine Stefani, Supervisor, Second District
Hon. Aaron Peskin, Supervisor, Third District
Hon. Gordon Mar, Supervisor, Fourth District
Hon. Dean Preston, Supervisor, Fifth District
Hon. Matt Dorsey, Supervisor, Sixth District
Hon. Myrna Melgar, Supervisor, Seventh District
Hon. Rafael Mandelman, Supervisor, Eighth District
Hon. Hillary Ronen, Supervisor, Ninth District
Hon. Ahsha Safai, Supervisor, Eleventh District

San Francisco Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102-4689

Re: Support for Elections Commission Decision to Conduct Candidate Search for New Director

Dear President Walton and Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors,

As organizations that have long engaged with the San Francisco Elections Commission, we are writing to strongly support its decision to conduct a competitive selection process for the next five-year term of the position of Director of the Department of Elections for the reasons detailed below, to correct gross mischaracterizations about the process thus far, and to respectfully ask the Board to provide the Commission with the funds it needs to complete a fair and equitable candidate search that the Director has been invited to participate in.

MISCHARACTERIZATIONS OF THE ELECTIONS COMMISSION'S ACTION

Outlets including Fox News and the National Review have been running headlines like *"San Francisco to boot election director after 20-year career so city can 'take action' on 'racial equity plan'"*¹, with other press saying the Director's contract *"wasn't renewed"*, he was *"fired"*, and even that he was *"sacked"*. The Washington Times said the Director *"could lose out on job for being white."*² These are all misunderstandings of the Elections Commission's action.

No Decision Has Been Made To Replace The Director Or Not Renew His Contract. The motion the Commission passed was to *"to open up a competitive selection process and to invite Director Arntz to participate."* The

¹ ["San Francisco to boot election director after 20-year career so city can 'take action' on 'racial equity plan'"](#), Fox News, November 23rd, 2022.

² ["San Francisco elections chief could lose out on job for being White"](#), Washington Times, November 24th, 2022.

Director's contract can still be renewed at any time before mid-April, or if he participates in the selection process and is deemed to be the best candidate.

This process permits a full and fair opportunity for the Director to respond to critics such as ourselves and to press controversies like those detailed below while the Commission weighs whether another candidate might better fill this uniquely sensitive role, which must of course be occupied by someone enjoying the highest degree of public faith; something especially true now.

The Director of the Department of Elections Does Not Have a Lifetime Term Like a Federal Judge. The Director position has a five-year term after which the Commission may in its discretion engage in a competitive selection process which the current Director may apply for.³ This was the Commission's decision. For twenty years, San Francisco has not even looked to see what other qualified candidates might be out there. A competitive selection process is long overdue to allow the Director to demonstrate he is the best candidate, as registrars who perform the same job in most other counties do every four years by facing the voters in an election.

The Commission Did Not Say They Would Hire Someone Other Than the Director Just Because He's White.

One Commissioner said that *"it is about taking action on the city's racial equity plan, which means at least holding out the possibility of a role that is in leadership and giving people an opportunity to compete for that."*

Observing that qualified candidates from communities of color applying for a job during an open selection process would be a welcome event does not mean that a job held by one person for two decades — more than two two-term presidencies — is being opened to competition only because the job incumbent is white. It means what it says: giving people an opportunity to compete. Regardless of color.

And, as we detail below, there are substantive reasons to see if other equally or more qualified candidates exist that have utterly nothing to do with the Director's race.

MAJOR UNANSWERED QUESTIONS REGARDING THE DIRECTOR'S TRANSPARENCY, TRUTHFULNESS, AND PERFORMANCE

1. The Director Participated in Drafting a \$1.5 Million RFP That Included Development of Internet Voting That Would be in Violation of Election Commission Policy, in Violation of State Law, and Contrary to Federal Warnings Against Such Systems. When His Actions Came to Light, He Was Untruthful to His Superiors — The Commissioners and Thus the Taxpayers — About It.

As the Director knows or should know (i) the Elections Commission has had a policy against Internet voting since the Commission adopted a resolution against it in 2017,⁴ (ii) it is barred by state law,⁵ and (iii) the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the federal government's top election security agency, warned against Internet voting, saying that "electronic ballot return is high risk" and "faces significant security risks to voted ballot integrity, voter privacy, and system availability."⁶

Despite this Commission policy and state law, and federal warning, the Director assisted with a \$1.5 million RFP for a Bay Area-wide project that included development of technology to "electronically submit the ballot to a county Election Department," i.e., Internet voting — all apparently without informing his superiors on the Commission.

The origin of this unwise project that would have spent taxpayer dollars to create an apparently unlawful — certainly unwise — voting system is unclear to us at this time. Even though the Director never brought the RFP

³ [San Francisco Civil Service Commission Rule 114.34.3.](#)

⁴ ["Resolution opposing internet and email voting in local, state, and federal elections,"](#) adopted by the San Francisco Elections Commission (6-0) on April 19, 2017.

⁵ California Government Code [Section 19205](#) and [Section 19295.](#)

⁶ [Risk Management for Electronic Ballot Delivery, Marking, and Return](#), Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency, 2020.

to the attention of the Commission, fortunately the Commission found out about it nevertheless and was able to get the Internet voting portion of the project canceled with the help of members of the Board of Supervisors. In the process, the project caused needless public controversy, uproar, and confusion.

A series of articles in the *San Francisco Examiner* illustrates the controversy it caused:

["Who's behind blockchain voting at San Francisco's City Hall?"](#), October 15, 2021.

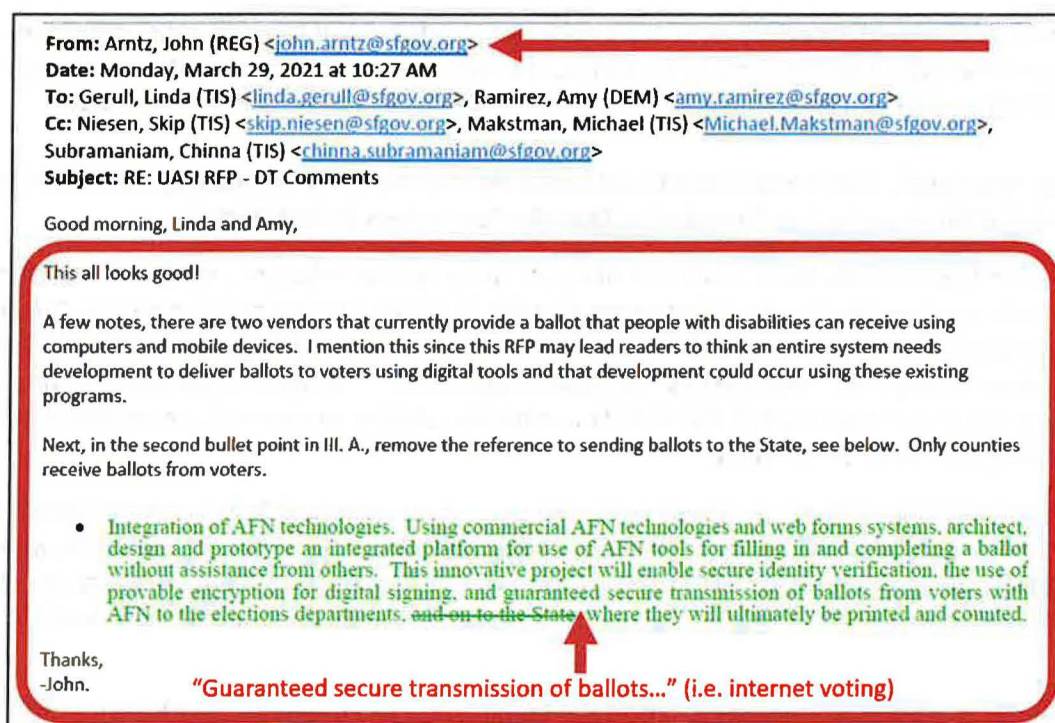
["SF received \\$1.5 million to explore online voting. Critics think it's a horrible idea."](#), November 17, 2021.

["Confusion swirls in San Francisco's mysterious, ill-advised Internet voting project."](#), December 31, 2021.

To reiterate, to our knowledge, the Director did not reveal this project that was of obvious interest to the Commission and to taxpayers and voters. Indeed, in the November 17th 2021 Elections Commission hearing, the Director claimed that the RFP was issued by the Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative *"without me doing anything, without our knowledge even"* and said that *"I haven't read the RFP, Commissioner Jerdonek, so I don't know what's in there."*⁸

However, a public records request by the National Voting Rights Task Force in December 2021 revealed that not only did the Director know about the RFP, not only did he *"read it,"* but that he sent emails providing edits to the text of the RFP involving Internet voting to the Department of Technology in March 2021.⁹

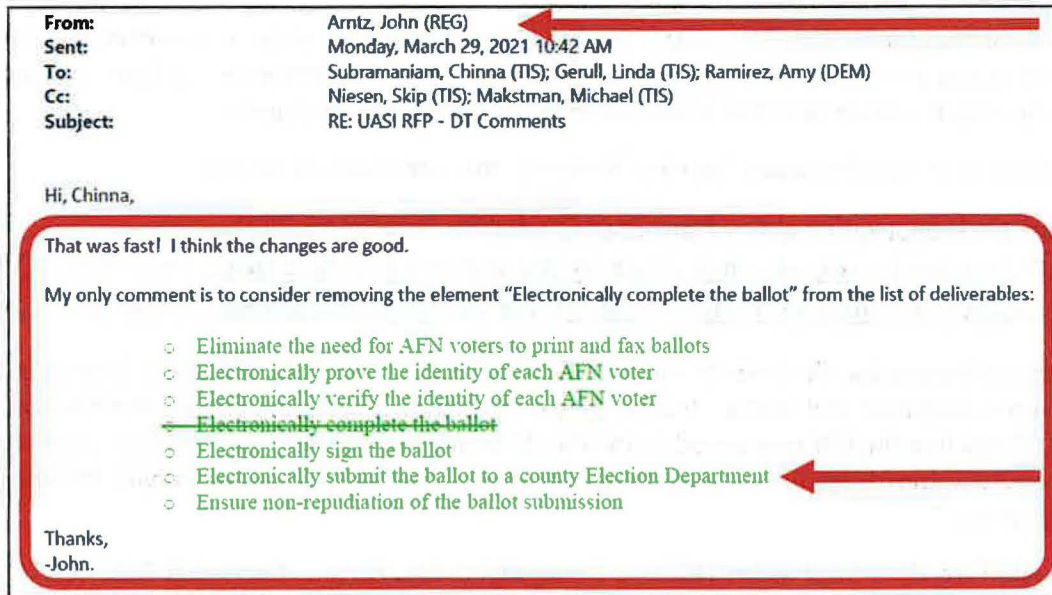
Here are screenshots of those public record emails (our highlights in red):



⁷ At 1:52:45 of the Elections Commission's November 17, 2021 hearing: <https://youtu.be/zZhUOFX3LFo?t=6765>

⁸ At 2:09:45 of the same November 17, 2021 hearing: <https://youtu.be/zZhUOFX3LFo?t=7785>

⁹ [Emails from the Director to Department of Technology Staff on March 29, 2021](#) obtained by a public records request from the National Voting Rights Task Force.



To our knowledge, the Director has not yet fully or satisfactorily explained the apparent discrepancy between his public comment to his superiors on November 17 and these emails.

We believe that this all alone, especially given the apparent unlawfulness of Internet voting, the insecurity of such systems, and the significant news coverage and public confusion and controversy it caused, requires, at a minimum, opening up a candidate competition that really should have been re-visited years ago.

2. The Director Apparently Didn't Inform the Commission He Was Personally Extending the Dominion Voting Systems Contract After Assuring the Commission That the Supervisors Would Decide.

When the Commission reviewed the Department of Elections budget on February 14th 2022, the Director wrote in his budget memo and testified to the Commission that the decision of whether to extend the Department's contract with Dominion for its voting system for one versus two years would be up to the Board of Supervisors, saying in his budget memo that *"With the City's current voting system contract with Dominion Voting Systems (DVS) expiring at the end of March 2023, the Board must decide whether to approve one or both of the one-year options to extend the term of the contract."*¹⁰

Subsequently, the Elections Commission passed a resolution at their June 15th 2022 meeting stating *"the Commission requests that the Board extend the contract only one year."*¹¹ Members of the public who had made comments on the issue at the February 14th meeting were waiting for the opportunity to weigh in with the Board of Supervisors based on the Director's budget memo and testimony that this decision would be the Board's.

Nevertheless, after these public representations to the Commission and the public, the Director himself began the process of extending the Dominion contract without the Board of Supervisors oversight he had written and testified would occur — and to our knowledge without first alerting the Commission or the Board.

¹⁰ [Department of Elections' Budget Proposals: Fiscal years 2022-23 and 2023-24](#), by John Arntz, Director, February 9, 2022.

¹¹ ["Resolution on Extending the City's Contract with Dominion Voting Systems"](#), adopted by the San Francisco Elections Commission (5-0) on June 15, 2022.

At the Elections Commission's October 19th 2022 hearing, the Director said that he learned about his ability to keep the Supervisors and the public out of the decision "*several months ago*," and he claimed he had told the Commission about that change at previous meetings.¹²

No record found affirms that the Director told the Commission about this significant and controversial change in contracting. The public record contradicts it. Even if the Director did, in his view, inform the Commission of his change in plans, the absence of any such indication in the public record demonstrates that he at a minimum failed to inform the public of this unilaterally imposed change in direction with the clarity proportional to its importance and public interest.

3. The Director Used a Term of 9 Years and 364 Days on a \$1.91 Million Sole-Source Elections Contract to Bypass Board of Supervisors Approval Required for 10-Year Contracts. This May Be Technically Legal. It is Certainly in Our View Poor Judgement and Unwise.

San Francisco's Charter requires Board of Supervisors approval for any contract with a term of 10 years or more.¹³ Yet, and to our knowledge without seeking approval from or even informing the Commission or the Board of Supervisors, the Director signed a \$1.91 million sole-source contract¹⁴ (i.e., lacking a competitive bidding process) with DFM Associates¹⁵ for their proprietary¹⁶ election management system for a term of 9 years and 364 days (October 21st 2021 to September 30th 2031), one day under the threshold that triggers Board oversight.

Such an effort denying this Board the ability to weigh in on a topic as fundamental as whether election management systems should be proprietary instead of open-source (as is the expressed Department policy preference set by the Elections Commission¹⁷) and with nearly a decade of consequences may be legal, but it certainly in our view skirts good governance and public accountability on an important topic.

4. The Director Impeded Department of Elections and Board of Supervisors Policy of Moving Toward More Open and Transparent Open-Source Voting Systems

The Elections Commission is responsible for setting policy for the Department of Elections, which the Director of the Department is in turn responsible for executing.¹⁸ Executing Department policies, or at least seriously attempting to execute them, is a core part of the Director's job.

One of the Department's major policies, established by the Elections Commission in 2015, is the "*policy of the Department of Elections to support and work towards the adoption of a fully open voting system, including supporting the development, testing, and certification of such a system.*"¹⁹ This Board has time and again passed resolutions establishing a similar policy during the last 15 years.²⁰ The value of open-source voting systems was described by a Civil Grand Jury convened by the City, citing the "*cost savings, increased election security, and*

¹² At 3:31:15 of the Elections Commission's October 19, 2022 hearing: <https://youtu.be/lqEz18xTHxA?t=12675> the Director said "I think I said at previous meetings, the way that the resolution is drafted, the extension does not go to the board." Which is not true. When asked by Commissioner Jerdonek when he learned that, he said "Several months ago."

¹³ [San Francisco Charter Section 9.118\(b\)](#).

¹⁴ [Sole-source waiver request from the Director](#), August 4th, 2021. Note that the waiver request says \$1.191 million instead of the actual contract amount of \$1.911 million in the [contract signed between DFM Associates and the City and County of San Francisco](#) on September 27, 2021.

¹⁵ [Contract signed between DFM Associates and the City and County of San Francisco](#) on September 27, 2021.

¹⁶ [Letter from DFM Associates to the Director](#) on July 30, 2021.

¹⁷ ["Open Source Voting Systems Resolution"](#), November 18, 2015.

¹⁸ [Memorandum from the City Attorney, Re: Powers and Duties of the San Francisco Elections Commission](#), July 1, 2005. P. 5 "Charter § 4.102... The commission sets policy and communicates that policy to the department head, who in turn is responsible for its execution."

¹⁹ ["Open Source Voting Systems Resolution"](#), November 18, 2015.

²⁰ ["Open Source Voting History in San Francisco 'At a Glance'"](#), Report by Commissioner Jerdonek, September 20, 2022.

public ownership over the critical infrastructure of democracy. It is likely to free the city from the constraints of vendor lock-in, and the accompanying risk of financial exploitation.”²¹ (Note more on the issue of vendor lock-in and risk of financial exploitation when reading concern # 5 below.)

Nevertheless, the Director has not only made no progress on this major Department of Elections policy since 2015, but he to our knowledge has actually impeded efforts to effectuate this Board-adopted policy by the Board of Supervisors itself and the State Legislature.

The Director’s lack of progress was highlighted in the press last year:

[“Is San Francisco’s elections Director impeding voting machine progress?”](#)

San Francisco Examiner, September 24, 2021

- In 2018 and 2019, Senator Scott Wiener and then-Assemblymember David Chiu requested \$8 million in state matching funds that could be used by San Francisco to advance the Department of Elections policy of developing an open-source voting system. Assembly Budget Chair Phil Ting declined to support the request, publicly telling supporters on multiple occasions that the Director was not supportive. Being supportive of efforts to implement policies adopted by the Commission, not to mention this Board, is in our view a significant part of the Director’s job. After all, respectfully, the Director was not elected by the voters.
- In 2018, this Board, under the leadership of then-Board President London Breed and then-Budget Chair Malia Cohen, allocated \$1.3 million to the Department of Elections to start development of an open-source voting system. Unfortunately, to our knowledge no significant deliverables towards open-source voting were completed, with the money allocated by the Board either spent or taken away.
- In 2021, when the San Francisco-based nonprofit VotingWorks made a serious offer to assist San Francisco with a pilot project for an open-source voting system at no cost (like ones they have successfully conducted with jurisdictions in other states), the Director told the Commission at the September 22th 2021 meeting “We’re not looking to do a pilot program” and said that he didn’t know “what the benefit from that is.” His statement directly contradicts Department of Elections policy as set by the Elections Commission, not to mention resolutions of this Board, calling for open-source voting.

5. The Director’s Relationship With Dominion Voting Systems Subject of San Francisco Examiner Investigation on “How One Company Came to Control San Francisco’s Elections”

The press and others have raised important and so far to our knowledge unanswered questions about the Director’s relationship with Dominion Voting Systems, including an investigation by the *San Francisco Examiner* published last November:

[“How one company came to control San Francisco’s elections”](#)

San Francisco Examiner, Nov 14, 2021

“For the past 13 years, San Francisco Elections Director John Arntz has cultivated a close relationship with a voting machine company that has become the sole bidder on The City’s business, while doubling its rates...”

Dominion has for years held an effective monopoly on bidding for San Francisco’s election systems, allowing them to charge whatever they want – and therefore being something that the Director should in our view have tried to address. The *Examiner* investigation raised questions about the Director’s relationship with Dominion, saying:

“Correspondence obtained by The Examiner through an open records request shows Arntz, over the course of his business relationship with Dominion, sent or forwarded more than 400 emails to a salesman at the

²¹ [“Open Source Voting in San Francisco”](#), Civil Grand Jury Report, June 9, 2018, p. 19.

firm, conferring with him on technology projects that could threaten the firm's business and going as far as forwarding a competitor's query about The City's voting machines needs."

Projects that "could threaten the firm's business" likely means projects or competitors that could break Dominion's exclusive hold on City elections. Although the primary reason Dominion Voting Systems is the only vendor available to the City is due to the City's ranked-choice voting system, the *Examiner* story highlighted that:

"While sticking close to Dominion, Arntz's department has failed to make progress with open-source technology, which Bennett has called "a threat to our business."

Of course, helping develop an open-source voting system isn't the only way to ensure San Francisco wouldn't be left with Dominion as its only provider. Encouraging bids from other competitors who might expand their system to be able to bid for San Francisco's elections would also help. However, the *Examiner* found:

"On another occasion, in August 2020, Arntz forwarded to Dominion a competitor's query asking when Arntz might be in the market for a new voting system. 'Hope you did not answer,' replied Bennett, the Dominion salesman."

The *Examiner's* investigation found no evidence of the Director answering the competitor's query. Thus to this day, without competitors or an open-source voting system, Dominion has exclusive bidding power on San Francisco's voting system — keeping San Francisco at the "risk of financial exploitation", as described by the Civil Grand Jury.²² The *Examiner* piece said:

"The correspondence shows Arntz, rather than working to find alternative election vendors, was comfortable with the ongoing arrangement with Dominion."

The *Examiner* piece summed it up with a quote from the Dominion salesman: "Dominion and Arntz's department have become a 'well-oiled machine.'"

In our view, this controversy in and of itself underscores the wisdom of the Commission's decision.

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS SHOULD NOT INTERFERE WITH THE CANDIDATE SEARCH, AND IN FACT ARE BARRED FROM DOING SO BY THE CITY CHARTER

It is apparent to us that there is no basis to question and every basis to support the modest and proportional candidate search the Elections Commission voted for. Indeed, even if there had been no litany of public controversies, twenty years of no competition for the powerful position of Director of Elections is reason enough to conduct a fair and equitable candidate search for the next Director.

This is why it's extremely troubling to read reports about proposals to pass Board resolutions asking the Commission to rescind its decision and even to refuse to allocate the funds the Commission needs to carry out its Charter-mandated option to conduct a candidate search.

Besides the reasons above why it is apparent to us that the Commission's planned competitive search is needed, it appears as though it would be unlawful for the Board at this stage to interfere with the Commission's process. Charter Section 2.114 ("Non-Interference in Administration") says:

²² ["Open Source Voting in San Francisco"](#), Civil Grand Jury Report, June 9, 2018, p. 19.

"... Neither the Board of Supervisors, its committees, nor any of its members, shall have any power or authority, nor shall they dictate, suggest or interfere with respect to any appointment, promotion, compensation, disciplinary action, contract or requisition for purchase or other administrative actions or recommendations of the City Administrator or of department heads under the City Administrator or under the respective boards and commissions...

*Violation of this section shall constitute official misconduct."*²³

CONCLUSION

For all these reasons, we respectfully ask the Board not to pass any resolutions commenting on the Elections Commission's candidate search and instead to provide it with the funds it needs to complete the fair and equitable search that the charter allows it to do and that the Director has been invited to participate in.

Sincerely,

Trent Lange, PhD.	Timothy B. Mayer	Jim Soper
President and Executive Director	President	Co-Chair
California Clean Money Campaign	California Association of Voting Officials	National Voting Rights Task Force

Cc: Hon. London Breed, Mayor, Hon. David Chiu, City Attorney, and Members of the Elections Commission

²³ [San Francisco Charter, SEC. 2.114. "NON-INTERFERENCE IN ADMINISTRATION."](#)

Introduction Form

By a Member of the Board of Supervisors or Mayor

Time stamp
or meeting date

I hereby submit the following item for introduction (select only one):

- ☐ 1. For reference to Committee. (An Ordinance, Resolution, Motion or Charter Amendment).
- ☒ 2. Request for next printed agenda Without Reference to Committee.
- ☐ 3. Request for hearing on a subject matter at Committee.
- ☐ 4. Request for letter beginning : "Supervisor [] inquiries"
- ☐ 5. City Attorney Request.
- ☐ 6. Call File No. [] from Committee.
- ☐ 7. Budget Analyst request (attached written motion).
- ☐ 8. Substitute Legislation File No. []
- ☐ 9. Reactivate File No. []
- ☐ 10. Topic submitted for Mayoral Appearance before the BOS on []

Please check the appropriate boxes. The proposed legislation should be forwarded to the following:

- ☐ Small Business Commission ☐ Youth Commission ☐ Ethics Commission
- ☐ Planning Commission ☐ Building Inspection Commission

Note: For the Imperative Agenda (a resolution not on the printed agenda), use the Imperative Form.

Sponsor(s):

Supervisor Peskin; Chan, Stefani, Mar, Preston, Dorsey, Melgar, Mandelman, Ronen, Walton and Safai

Subject:

[Resolution of Intent to Not Appropriate Funding for Executive Recruitment Services and Urging Reappointment of Incumbent Director of Elections]

The text is listed:

Resolution declaring the Board of Supervisors' intent to not appropriate funding for the services of an executive recruitment firm to engage in a search for a new Director of Elections, and urging the Elections Commission to reappoint the incumbent Director.

Signature of Sponsoring Supervisor: []

For Clerk's Use Only