

1 [Limiting Teleconferencing and Remote Public Comment at Meetings of the Board of
2 Supervisors and its Committees]

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3 **Motion discontinuing remote participation by members of the Board of Supervisors**
4 **(“Board”) at meetings of the Board and its committees for reasons related to COVID-19;**
5 **and discontinuing remote public comment by members of the public at meetings of the**
6 **Board and its committees, except as legally required to enable people with disabilities**
7 **to participate in such meetings.**

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9 WHEREAS, The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about enormous changes in the
10 way that public bodies meet; and

11 WHEREAS, Prior to the pandemic, members of the Board of Supervisors (“Board”) and
12 members of the public were required to participate in meetings of the Board and its
13 committees in person, except where federal or state law required the City to accommodate
14 people with disabilities by providing an opportunity for remote participation in such meetings;
15 and

16 WHEREAS, In March, 2020, the Governor of the State of California proclaimed a state
17 of emergency in California in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic; and

18 WHEREAS, On February 25, 2020, the Mayor of the City and County of San Francisco
19 (the “City”) declared a local emergency, and on March 6, 2020, the City’s Health Officer
20 declared a local health emergency; and

21 WHEREAS, On March 16, 2020, the Health Officer issued a Shelter-in-Place order, to
22 be operational at midnight the following day; and

23 WHEREAS, On March 17, 2020, just hours before the Health Officer’s Shelter-In-Place
24 Order went into effect, the Board unanimously approved a motion to allow remote
25 teleconferencing of future Board meetings and remote public comment; and

1 WHEREAS, At the outset of the COVID-19 emergency, allowing remote participation
2 by Supervisors at Board meetings was made possible by mayoral and gubernatorial
3 emergency orders suspending rules governing the conduct of open meetings; and

4 WHEREAS, The gubernatorial order ended on September 30, 2021, after the Governor
5 signed AB 361, which allows local policy bodies to continue to meet by teleconference during
6 a state of emergency, provided they permit remote public participation and make findings at
7 least once every 30 days that the body has considered the state of emergency, and that
8 public health officials continue to recommend physical distancing, or the state of emergency
9 continues to directly impact the ability of the members to meet safely in person; and

10 WHEREAS, Since September 2021, in light of numerous COVID-19 surges in San
11 Francisco that impacted the ability of individuals to attend crowded public meetings in person,
12 the Board has passed a series of motions making the required findings under AB 361, and
13 has allowed the public to provide remote public comment; and

14 WHEREAS, Maintaining an electronic system that allows every member of the public to
15 participate in Board meetings remotely requires the Clerk's office to staff Board and
16 committee meetings with at least four additional employees, which imposes significant
17 personnel costs on the City, and where Board meetings run long due to remote public
18 participation, meetings need to be double-staffed to ensure coverage for the entire duration of
19 the meeting; and

20 WHEREAS, As of June 15, 2021, the Governor lifted most limitations on indoor
21 gatherings in public settings; and

22 WHEREAS, As of September 7, 2021, the Board and its committees resumed in-
23 person hybrid meetings with remote public participation; and

24 WHEREAS, Effective March 1, 2022, the Health Officer updated the Safer Return
25 Together COVID-19 Order to lift indoor masking requirements for indoor public settings,

1 except for high-risk settings including public transportation, congregant living, and healthcare
2 facilities; and

3 WHEREAS, As of March 7, 2022, the Board and its committees have allowed in-person
4 public participation at public meetings; and

5 WHEREAS, As of March 18, 2022, the City Administrator lifted the indoor masking
6 requirement for City facilities, with the exception of hearing rooms while in session; and

7 WHEREAS, As of April 25, 2022, the City Administrator lifted indoor masking
8 requirements for City hearing rooms while in session; and

9 WHEREAS, The Office of the Clerk of the Board is responsible for facilitating the
10 Board's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and other laws that ensure full
11 access to Board meetings by people with disabilities, and the Clerk of the Board regularly
12 consults with the Mayor's Office on Disability regarding those matters; and

13 WHEREAS, Meetings of the Board and its committees are real-time captioned and
14 cablecast open-captioned on SFGovTV, the Government Channel 26; Board and committee
15 meeting agendas and minutes are available on the Board's website and adhere to web
16 development guidelines based upon the Federal Access Board's Section 508 Guidelines, and
17 members of the public may request sign language interpreters, readers, large print agendas
18 and other accommodations by contacting the Office of the Clerk of the Board; and

19 WHEREAS, The Office of the Clerk of the Board has consulted the Mayor's Office on
20 Disability, and will continue to accommodate requests for reasonable accommodations where
21 necessary to ensure participation by people with disabilities, including requests to participate
22 in Board meetings remotely, provided that the request for accommodation is submitted to the
23 Office of the Clerk of the Board 72 hours in advance of the meeting where the accommodation
24 is sought; and

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1 WHEREAS, In light of the improved health conditions, the significant costs associated
2 with allowing all members of the public to participate in Board meetings remotely, and the
3 Board's ongoing commitment to provide reasonable accommodations to people with
4 disabilities where their disabilities impair their ability to participate in Board meetings in-
5 person, the Board finds that the public interest is served by restoring the Board's prior practice
6 of limiting remote participation in Board and committee meetings both by Supervisors and by
7 members of the public; now, therefore, be it

8 MOVED, That the Board has considered the state of emergency, and finds that local
9 health orders and guidelines no longer limit indoor gatherings or require masking for indoor
10 public settings and that the state of emergency no longer precludes the ability of members
11 and the public to meet safely in person; and, be it

12 FURTHER MOVED, That the Board hereby rescinds its March 17, 2020 motion
13 allowing remote teleconferencing of Board meetings and remote public comment; and, be it

14 FURTHER MOVED, That effective immediately, members of the Board must
15 participate in Board meetings in person as required by Charter Section 2.104, except to the
16 extent remote participation is authorized by law; and, be it

17 FURTHER MOVED, That effective immediately, members of the public may comment
18 on items before the Board in writing for inclusion in the Board's files or by providing their
19 comment in-person at a meeting of the Board or a committee; and, be it

20 FURTHER MOVED, That the Board will continue to offer opportunities to provide
21 remote public comment to members of the public as necessary to enable the participation of
22 people with disabilities, to the extent required by law.

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