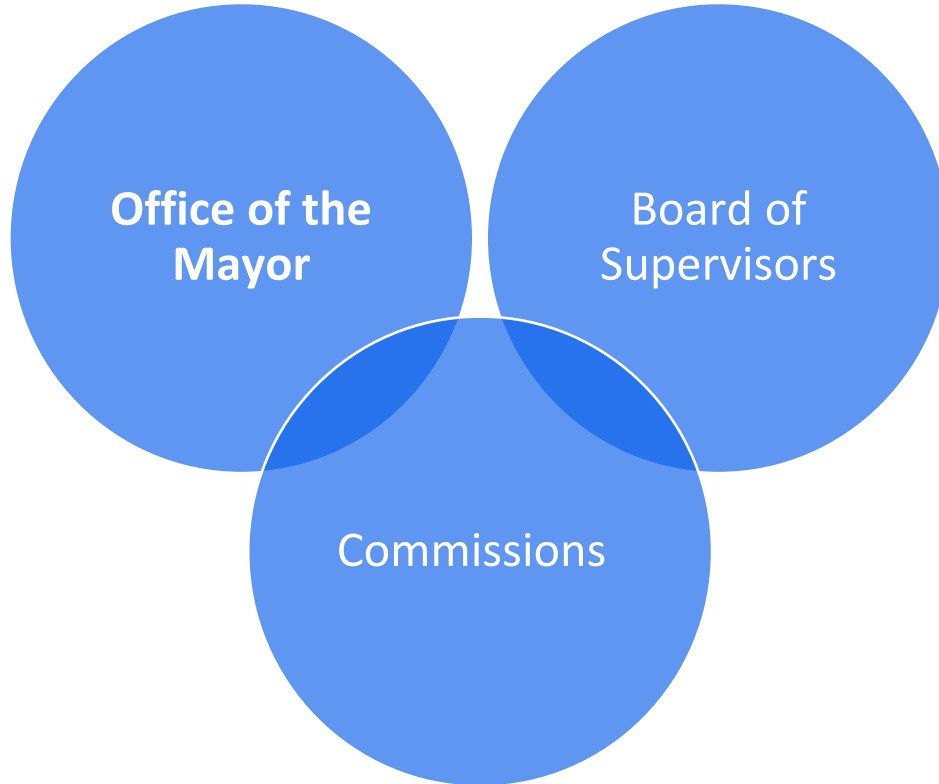


Commission Impossible?

Getting the Most from San Francisco's Commissions



Structure of San Francisco Government



Commission Impossible Report - Key Findings

- No *current* and *accurate* list of *active* commissions and other appointed bodies exists
- The consensus is there are too many commissions, especially advisory bodies
- Commissions are poorly managed
 - No authority reviews commission performance on a regular basis
 - Annual reports are either not prepared or difficult to locate
 - Commission seat vacancies lead to lack of quorums and cancelled meetings
 - Many commissions lack sunset dates
 - Appointment process lacks transparency

Commission Impossible Report - Key Recommendations

Publish an Accurate List of Commissions

- City Attorney to publish on an annual basis an accurate list of all active commissions and other appointed bodies

Improve the Management of Commissions

- Create a permanent Commissions Oversight Body (COB) to oversee and manage the commission system:
 - Annual report evaluating commission performance
 - Recommend which commissions should be retained, abolished or merged
 - Develop guidelines for simplifying the criteria for new commission members
- Limit decision-making bodies to 7 members and advisory bodies to 11 members
- Require all commissions to prepare an annual report which includes the information prescribed in the Commission Impossible report
- Provide more transparency on the commission appointment process
- Improve commissioner training
- Require a sunset date of 3 years for *all* advisory bodies

Mayor and City Attorney Responses* to the Key Finding: “No Current and Accurate List of Active Commissions and Other Appointed Bodies Exists”

➤ Mayor’s response

○ Disagree wholly

- *“The City Attorney’s Office maintains a list of boards and commissions, which has been updated to be comprehensive.”*

➤ City Attorney’s response

○ Disagree

- *“The City Attorney publishes and regularly updates a list of all City policy bodies established under state and local law.”*

* Responses are dated August 19, 2024

Civil Grand Jury Response to Mayor and City Attorney Responses

➤ **2014 Civil Grand Jury recommendation**

- *“The City Attorney should ensure that there is an annual list of active commissions that is complete and listed alphabetically.”*

➤ **2024 Civil Grand Jury recommendation**

- *“By October 1, 2024, the City Attorney’s Office shall prepare and publish an up-to-date, accurate list of active commissions and other appointed bodies each year.”*

➤ **City Attorney response 2024 Civil Grand Jury recommendation**

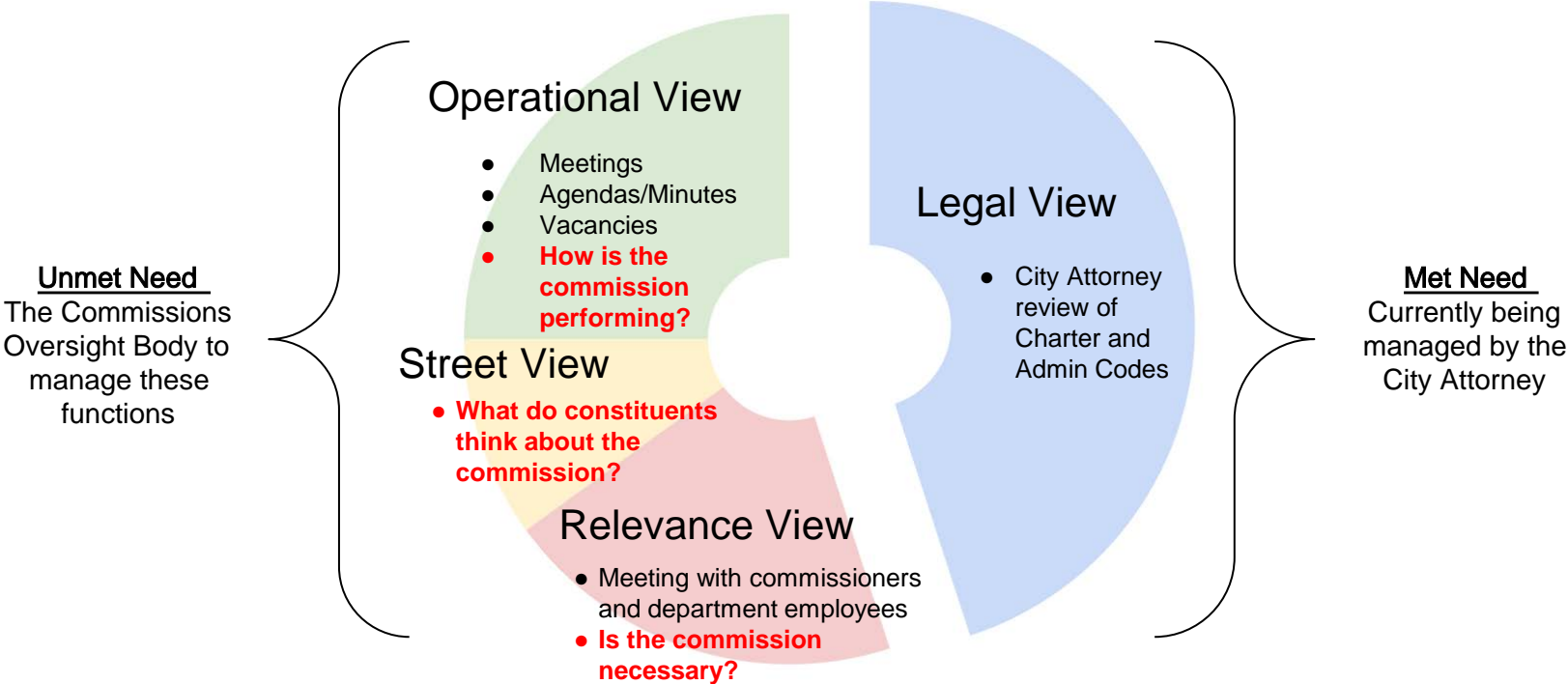
- *“The City Attorney publishes and regularly updates a list of all City policy bodies established under state and local law .”*

Civil Grand Jury Response to Mayor and City Attorney Response

- The latest City Attorney's list dated July 8, 2024 does not comply as follows:
 - The list has been published only 5 times since 2014; the 2014 grand jury recommended that it be published annually
 - The list improperly includes 20 **inactive** bodies; the 2014 and 2024 grand juries recommended that only active bodies be included
 - The list improperly excludes 5 passive meeting and other bodies; the 2024 grand jury recommended that commissions **and other appointed bodies** be included
 - The list improperly classifies 7 commissions as decision-making when they are, in fact, advisory and 2 commissions as advisory when they are, in fact, decision-making
- The City Attorney re-issued its 2024 list in response to the Commission Impossible report
 - The revised list includes only 3 corrections
 - This suggests that their process for maintaining the list is deficient

It is clear that the City Attorney's list does not comply with the 2014 and 2024 Civil Grand Jury recommendations

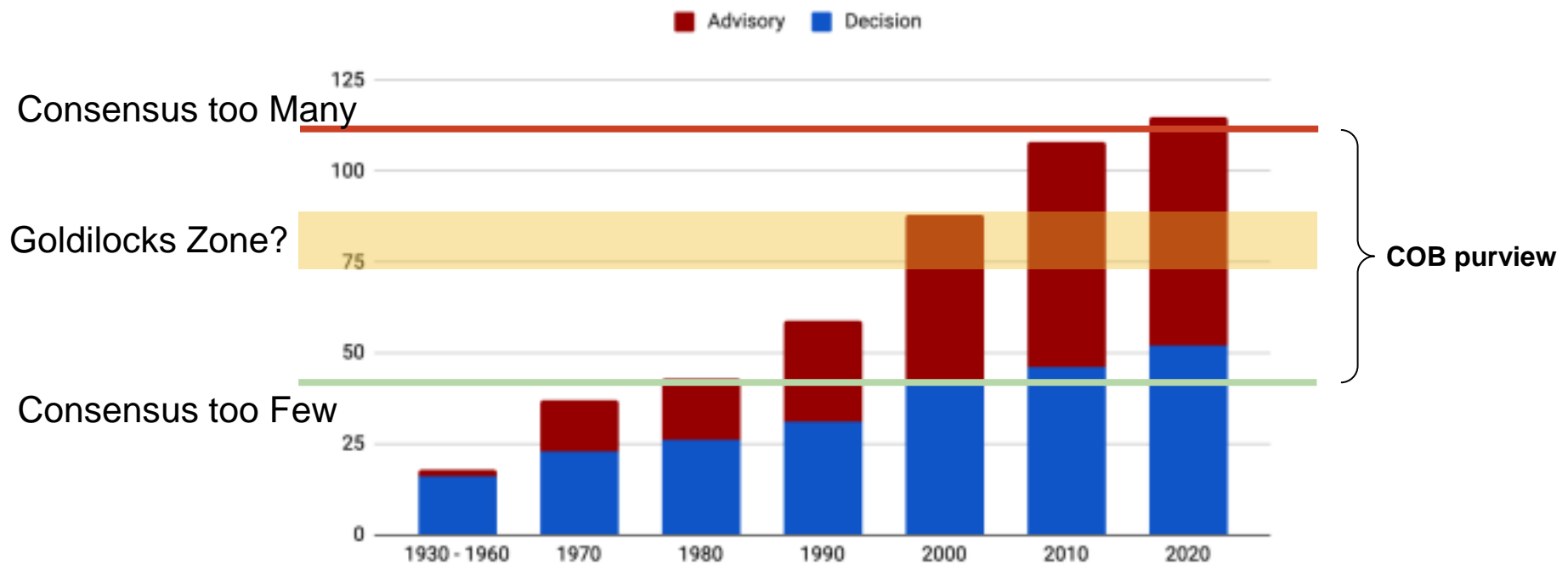
Managing Each Commission Requires Multiple Perspectives



Public Opinion

- **The public is concerned about the high number of commissions. There is a perception that:**
 - Commissions often impede the ability of the city to get things done
 - No one in city government knows how many there are. Who's minding the store?
 - Media, public policy bodies and even city employees reflect these concerns
 - Many lead stories in SF Chronicle, Examiner, SF Standard and more (see Appendix)
 - SPUR *Designed to Serve* report released in August 2024
 - Many city employees interviewed indicated frustration with the high number of commissions and believed that many are unnecessary

We Currently Have Too Many – What's the Right Number?



Commission Impossible Report - Key Takeaways

- **Produced the first ever accurate list of commissions**
 - Up-to-date list of active commissions grouped by function
- **Compared the list with peer cities and counties (benchmarking analysis)**
- **Identified 15 commissions whose functions could be integrated into other bodies or departments**
 - Recommend they be abolished
- **Further evaluations of commissions needs to be a public process with a minimum of politics**
 - Recommend the creation of the *Commissions Oversight Body*
- **Expect the COB will recommend the elimination of more commissions**
 - The optimal number of commissions expected to be in the “Goldilocks Zone”

Key Recommendation - Commissions Oversight Body is Needed for Management of Commissions

➤ The Mayor's response

- A Commissions Oversight Body “... *is not warranted or is not reasonable* ”
- Mayor's Office already monitors commissions
 - Grand jury response - The public, through a commission oversight body, should have a more direct role in monitoring commissions
- Requires policy alignment
 - Grand jury response - Our recommendations relate to process not policy
- Commissions vary too much for this to work
 - Grand jury response - The key to improving commissions are uniform performance standards and transparency
- Systemic improvement will be addressed in the Mayor's ED 24-03
 - Grand jury response - The Mayor's executive directive delays commission reform until November 2026 (kicks the can down the road)

Key Recommendation - Commissions Oversight Body is Needed to Manage Commissions

- Commissions are a critical component of San Francisco government structure
- The citizens of San Francisco need a structure that provides:
 - Better transparency
 - Clearer standards and accountability
 - An enduring commitment to improving the performance of commissions

The City needs a Commissions Oversight Body

A panoramic view of San Francisco at sunset. The sky is a mix of blue and orange, with soft clouds. In the foreground, there's a green field with a fence, possibly a sports field. In the middle ground, there are several large, white buildings with red roofs. The most prominent building is the San Francisco City Hall, with its tall, ornate tower. In the background, the city skyline is visible, including the Transamerica Pyramid and other skyscrapers.

San Francisco Civil Grand Jury 2023–2024

Thank you!

APPENDIX



Reconciliation of City Attorney List to Civil Grand Jury List

No. of Commissions per City Attorney *	129
Inactive Commissions	(20)
Additional Appointed Bodies	5
Assessment Appeal Boards	2
Board of Supervisors	(1)
No. of Commissions per 2023 - 2024 CGJ	115

* List published on July 8, 2024

City Attorney's New List of Commissions is Rife with Errors

LIST OF CITY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND ADVISORY BODIES CREATED BY CHARTER, ORDINANCE, OR STATUTE

Last updated July 8, 2024

This document lists all boards, commissions, and advisory bodies of the City and County of San Francisco (the "City") that have been created by the City Charter, City ordinance, or California statute. The City Attorney's Office prepared this list in response to the Civil Grand Jury's June 2014 report entitled "Survey of San Francisco Commission Websites," and has updated it periodically. The Civil Grand Jury's report found that "[t]here is no easy reference to all of the commissions in San Francisco," and recommended that "[t]he City Attorney should ensure that there is an annual list of active commissions that is complete and listed alphabetically."

- This new list was released in response to the Commission Impossible report, yet it still includes many errors:
 - Numerous inactive commissions (20 total) are *improperly included*
 - Numerous active commissions (5 total) are *improperly excluded*
 - Numerous commissions are *improperly* classified as decision-making when they should be advisory (7 total), while other commissions are classified as advisory when they should be decision-making (2 total)

City Attorney's List Includes Inactive Commissions

- The jury found **20 commissions** that appear to be inactive and yet they *continue to be included in the new City Attorney's list*. A few examples:
 - Adult Day Health Care Planning Council: Their last meeting was in 2000!
 - Pedestrian Safety Advisory Committee: This body sunset in 2020
 - Single Room Occupancy Task Force: This body sunset in 2021
 - Close Juvenile Hall Working Group: This body ceased activity in 2021
- The top of page 1 of the new City Attorney's list suggests they are following the 2014 Civil Grand Jury recommendation that they provide a list of only "active" commissions; however, at the bottom of very same page, they state their list includes bodies that may not currently hold regular meetings (i.e. inactive commissions):

Some of the bodies in the list below may not currently hold regular meetings, but the legislation authorizing them remains on the books. The list does not include bodies that the City Attorney has confirmed no longer exist.

- Because the new City Attorney list includes inactive commissions, it is NOT complying with the 2014 or 2024 Civil Grand Jury recommendations

City Attorney's List Excludes Active Commissions

Excerpt from the City Attorney's List:

The list below does not include the following types of bodies:

- City advisory bodies created by the Mayor or a City agency but not created or approved through legislation.

- Why are these bodies excluded when the 2024 civil grand jury report specifically recommended that the City Attorney's list include "*other appointed bodies*"?
- The jury found **5 active** other appointed bodies that *are excluded* from the City Attorney's List:
 - Citywide Affordable Housing Loan Committee (5 members; most recent meeting was on August 16th)
 - Advisory Council to the Disability and Aging Services Commission (22 members; most recent meeting was on August 21st)
 - Age and Disability Friendly SF Implementation Workgroup (Unknown number of members; most recent meeting was on September 6th)
 - Mayor's Disability Council (11 members; most recent meeting was on June 21st)
 - Paratransit Coordinating Council (38 members; most recent meeting was on August 14th)

City Attorney's List

Decision-Making or Advisory – Which Is It?

- The City Attorney's list is comprised of two sections: commissions that are decision-making and commissions that are advisory. Yet the list in each section is replete with misclassifications (9 total)

Commission	CA Classification	Jury Classification
Citizens' Committee on Community Development	Decision-making	Advisory
Immigrant Rights Commission	Decision-making	Advisory
Public Utilities Rate Fairness Board	Decision-making	Advisory
Public Utilities Revenue Bond Oversight Committee	Decision-making	Advisory
SOMA Community Stabilization Fund Community Advisory Committee	Decision-making	Advisory
Southeast Community Facility Commission	Decision-making	Advisory
Sunshine Ordinance Task Force	Decision-making	Advisory
Committee on Information Technology	Advisory	Decision-making
Relocation Appeals Board	Advisory	Decision-making

Press Covering the SF Commission “Mess”

Sampler

- SF Examiner, *“San Francisco’s commissions have become a breeding ground for bad behavior”*, Brad Kaplan, May 2024 ([link](#))
- SF Standard, *“The city needs to toss its pointless, do-nothing commissions. Start with this one first”* Adam Lashinsky, Mar 2024 ([link](#))
- SF Examiner, *“Why creating a homeless accountability commission is the epitome of what’s wrong with San Francisco”*, Adam Lashinsky, Oct 2022, Updated Nov 2023 ([link](#))
- SF Standard, *“Only 1 person at SF City Hall knows the answer to this simple question”*, Josh Koehn, Jul 2023 ([link](#))
- SF Chronicle, *“San Francisco has too many problem commissions. Will homeless oversight be different?”*, Chronicle Editorial Board, Dec 2022 ([link](#))
- SF Standard, *“Explainer: San Francisco has 100 boards and commissions. Why?”*, Mike Ege, Mar 2022 ([link](#))



Peer Cities and Counties - Commission Websites

Sampler

- [San Diego County](#)
- [City of San Diego](#)
- [City of Sacramento](#)
- [Los Angeles County](#)
- [City of Los Angeles](#)
- [City of San Jose](#)

