March 13, 2026

Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102
sfbos@sfgov.org

Re: File No. 260147
Opposition to the Proposed Elimination of the San Francisco Urban Forestry Council

Dear Supervisors:

On behalf of the San Francisco Bay Area Urban Canopy Collaborative (UCC), a regional organization of the California Urban Forests Council, and the California Urban Forests Council (CaUFC), we write to express our strong opposition to the proposal to eliminate the San Francisco Urban Forestry Council (SF UFC). UCC and CaUFC are dedicated to supporting resilient urban forests through education, outreach, and community engagement both locally and throughout the State of California. CaUFC was the first urban forest council in the nation, founded in 1968, with the vision of expanding and perpetuating sustainable urban and community forests to enhance the quality of life for all Californians.

For over three decades, the SF UFC has played an indispensable role in nurturing and safeguarding San Francisco's urban forest. As a uniquely positioned advisory body, it has provided:

- A **public forum** where residents and community stakeholders can bring forward concerns, ideas, and local knowledge pertaining to urban forestry—ensuring transparency and community participation in tree stewardship.
- **Cross-agency coordination** among City departments to align goals, share expertise, and integrate urban forestry priorities into citywide planning and implementation efforts.
- **Advisory guidance to this Board and other decision-makers** on critical issues related to tree preservation, public tree equity, wildfire risk, climate resilience, and habitat protection.

- The annual **Urban Forest Report** that compiles data and insight on the condition of the City's urban forest, helping inform strategies to enhance tree canopy health and equity across neighborhoods.
- Administration of the **Landmark Tree Program**, which recognizes and elevates trees of cultural, historical, environmental, and community significance throughout San Francisco. Through this program, the SF UFC reviews nominations and makes recommendations that reflect broad community values and ecological priorities.

Unlike many advisory bodies with narrow mandates, the SF UFC serves a systemic, citywide function. A substantial majority of San Francisco's trees—including those on private land, in parks, and in special jurisdictions—fall outside the authority of any single department, yet are essential elements of climate adaptation, public health, and environmental justice. The Council remains the only body with the specific charter to address these cross-jurisdictional challenges and to do so through consistent expertise and continuity.

We recognize and appreciate the City's interest in government efficiency through the Commission Streamlining Task Force process established pursuant to Proposition E. However, the proposed elimination of the SF UFC—one of San Francisco's few standing forums for focused public engagement on tree and forest issues—would constitute a loss of institutional memory, community voice, and specialized capacity that no other body currently replicates.

Urban trees are more than aesthetic assets. They are critical infrastructure that deliver quantifiable environmental and social benefits: cooling during extreme heat events, improved air quality, carbon sequestration, stormwater management, and enhanced neighborhood livability. The absence of a dedicated civic body to advise on these concerns would weaken San Francisco's ability to meet its climate commitments and to ensure equitable canopy growth throughout the City.

Considering the above, we respectfully urge the Board of Supervisors to **oppose any legislation or administrative action that would dissolve the Urban Forestry Council** or diminish its statutory standing. Instead, we recommend preserving and strengthening the Council's role so that San Francisco continues to benefit from thoughtful, informed, and community-centered stewardship of its urban forest.

Thank you for your consideration. We appreciate the Board's leadership on environmental resilience and remain available for further discussion.

Sincerely,

Gordon Matassa
Chair
Urban Canopy Collaborative

Nate Faris
Executive Director
California Urban Forests Council

March 11, 2026

President Rafael Mandelman and Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

Subject: Follow-up Letter re Veterans Affairs Commission's Concern with Proposed Name Change

Dear President Mandelman and Members of the Board,

The Veterans Affairs Commission appreciates the work recently completed by the Commission Streamlining Task Force. However, as we noted in our February 11, 2026 letter, we are concerned about the recommendation to rename the Commission as the "Veterans Affairs Council." With the Board of Supervisors now scheduled to review the Task Force's final recommendations at a Rules Committee hearing on Tuesday, March 17, we are submitting this follow-up letter to restate our concern and provide additional context for the Board's consideration.

The Veterans Affairs Commission was created by ordinance after a vote of the Board of Supervisors in 1994. That vote matters. It represents a legislative decision by the City to create a permanent advisory body for veterans in San Francisco and to elevate veteran issues to a level that receives consistent visibility and accountability within City government.

Renaming the Commission to a council would reverse that legislative decision and weaken the standing that the Board intentionally established three decades ago. A commission carries a recognized role in the City's governance structure. A council is often viewed as informal and easier to deprioritize.

Veteran issues also do not fit neatly into the template used by the Commission Streamlining Task Force to evaluate advisory bodies. Veteran needs are not temporary. Housing stability, healthcare access, benefits navigation, and justice-involved veteran services are long-term responsibilities that continue across generations.

For this reason, the structure created in 1994 remains relevant today. Preserving the Veterans Affairs Commission maintains the formal channel through which veterans' concerns are elevated to City leadership.

San Francisco made a deliberate legislative decision to establish a Veterans Affairs Commission so that veterans would have a permanent voice within City government. When institutions turn away from veterans, cities must remain steadfast in their commitments.

We respectfully ask that the Board of Supervisors uphold the legislation it passed and preserve the Commission that was created to represent those who served.

We hope this additional context is helpful as the Board considers the Task Force's recommendations. Should further information about the Commission's history, structure, or operations be useful for the March 17 hearing, we remain available to provide it.

Respectfully,

William Barnickel
President
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission
On behalf of the full Commission

Attachment: February 11, 2026 Letter from the Veterans Affairs Commission

Veterans Affairs Commission

City and County of San Francisco

February 11, 2026

President Rafael Mandelman and Honorable Members of the Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
City Hall, Room 244
San Francisco, CA 94102

Subject: Preserve the Name “San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission”

Dear President Mandelman and Members of the Board,

The Veterans Affairs Commission appreciates the work accomplished by the Streamlining Task Force on behalf of San Francisco voters. We are grateful for its recommendation to retain our body as a policy advisory group and for most of the other recommendations put forth for our commission. However, we respectfully express concern regarding the recommendation to remove “Commission” from our name and urge the Board to reject this change.

Since 1982, the name “San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission” has represented continuity, accountability, and respect for veterans’ service. Renaming the body would sever that legacy and create confusion for veterans and families who rely on clear signals of advocacy and support. The term “Veterans Affairs Commission” is widely recognized, and it also aligns with other regional veterans commissions such as those in San Mateo, Santa Clara, and Alameda counties, reinforcing consistency across the Bay Area.

San Francisco values institutions that honor service and uphold public accountability. Preserving the name “San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission” is a simple, meaningful way to maintain that trust and respect. We ask the Board to maintain the official name and affirm its historical continuity dating to 1982.

For any questions about this matter, Commission Vice-President Hanley Chan is available to further explain our concerns regarding the proposed name change and its implications for preserving the commission’s legacy.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Respectfully,

William Barnickel
President
San Francisco Veterans Affairs Commission