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San Francisco Charter

SEC. 4.105. PLANNING COMMISSION.

GENERAL. The Planning Commission shall consist of seven members nominated and appointed pursuant to this section. Four of the members shall be nominated by the Mayor, and three of the members shall be nominated by the President of the Board of Supervisors. Charter Section 4.101 shall apply to these appointments, with particular emphasis on the geographic diversity of City neighborhoods. Vacancies shall be filled by the appointing officer.

Each nomination of the Mayor and the President of the Board of Supervisors is subject to approval by the Board of Supervisors, and shall be the subject of a public hearing and vote within 60 days. If the Board fails to act on the nomination within 60 days of the date the nomination is transmitted to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, the nominee shall be deemed approved. The appointment shall become effective on the date the Board adopts a motion approving the nomination or after 60 days of the date the nomination is transmitted to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors.

Members may be removed by the appointing officer only pursuant to Section 15.105.

In order to stagger the terms, three members shall initially serve two-year terms, and four members shall initially service four-year terms. The initial two and four-year terms of office shall be instituted as follows:

1. The respective terms of office of members of the Planning Commission who hold office on the first day of July, 2002, shall expire at 12 o'clock noon on that date, and the four members appointed by the Mayor and the three members appointed by the President of the Board of Supervisors shall succeed to said offices at that time.

2. The Clerk of the Board of Supervisors shall determine by lot which two of the four Mayoral appointees shall serve an initial two-year term, and which one of the three appointees of the President of the Board of Supervisors shall serve an initial two-year term. The remaining appointees shall serve four-year terms. All subsequent terms shall be four years.

The Commission shall provide the Mayor with at least three qualified candidates for Director of Planning, selected on the basis of administrative and technical qualifications, with special regard for experience, training and knowledge in the field of City planning.

The Commission may contract with consultants for such services as it may require subject to the fiscal provisions of this Charter.

GENERAL PLAN. The Commission shall periodically recommend to the Board of Supervisors for approval or rejection proposed amendments to the General Plan. If the Board of Supervisors fails to act within 90 days of receipt, the proposed General Plan or amendments shall be deemed approved. The General Plan which will initially consist of the Master Plan in effect immediately prior to the effective date of this Charter shall consist of goals, policies and programs for the future physical development of the City and County that take into

consideration social, economic and environmental factors. In developing their recommendations, the Commission shall consult with commissions and elected officials, and shall hold public hearings as part of a comprehensive planning process. The Planning Department, in consultation with other departments and the City Administrator, shall periodically prepare special area, neighborhood and other plans designed to carry out the General Plan, and periodically prepare implementation programs and schedules which link the General Plan to the allocation of local, state and federal resources. The Planning Department may make such other reports and recommendations to the Mayor, Board of Supervisors and other offices and governmental units as it may deem necessary to secure understanding and a systematic effectuation of the General Plan.

In preparing any plans, the Planning Department may include plans for systems and areas within the Bay Region which have a planning relationship with the City and County.

REFERRAL OF CERTAIN MATTERS. The following matters shall, prior to passage by the Board of Supervisors, be submitted for written report by the Planning Department regarding conformity with the General Plan:

1. Proposed ordinances and resolutions concerning the acquisition or vacation of property by, or a change in the use or title of property owned by, the City and County;
2. Subdivisions of land within the City and County;
3. Projects for the construction or improvement of public buildings or structures within the City and County;
4. Project plans for public housing, or publicly assisted private housing in the City and County;
5. Redevelopment project plans within the City and County; and
6. Such other matters as may be prescribed by ordinance.

The Commission shall disapprove any proposed action referred to it upon a finding that such action does not conform to the General Plan. Such a finding may be reversed by a vote of two-thirds of the Board of Supervisors.

All such reports and recommendations shall be issued in a manner and within a time period to be determined by ordinance.

PERMITS AND LICENSES. All permits and licenses dependent on, or affected by, the City Planning Code administered by the Planning Department shall be approved by the Commission prior to issuance. The Commission may delegate this approval function to the Planning Department. Notwithstanding the foregoing, certificates of appropriateness for work to designated landmarks and historic districts and applications for alterations to significant or contributory buildings or properties in designated conservation districts that have been approved, disapproved, or modified by the Historic Preservation Commission shall not require approval by the Commission prior to issuance.

ENFORCEMENT. The Planning Department shall administer and enforce the City Planning Code.

ZONING AMENDMENTS. The Commission may propose for consideration by the Board of Supervisors

ordinances regulating or controlling the height, area, bulk, set-back, location, use or related aspects of any building, structure or land. An ordinance proposed by the Board of Supervisors concerning zoning shall be reviewed by the Commission. Applications for the reclassification of property may be made by interested parties and must be reviewed by the Commission. Notwithstanding the foregoing, designation of a landmark, a significant or contributory building, an historic district, or a conservation district shall be reviewed by the Commission only as provided in Section 4.135.

Notwithstanding the Commission's disapproval of a proposal from the Board of Supervisors or the application of interested parties, the Board of Supervisors may adopt the proposed ordinance; however, in the case of any proposal made by the application of interested parties, any such adoption shall be by a vote of not less than two-thirds of the Board of Supervisors.

No application of interested parties proposing the same or substantially the same ordinance as that disapproved by the Commission or by the Board of Supervisors shall be resubmitted to or reconsidered by the Commission within a period of one year from the effective date of final action upon the earlier application.

ZONING ADMINISTRATOR. The Director of Planning shall appoint a Zoning Administrator from a list of qualified applicants provided pursuant to the Civil Service provisions of the Charter. The Zoning Administrator shall be responsible for the determination of all zoning variances. The administrator shall have the power to grant only those variances that are consistent with the general purpose and the intent of the zoning ordinance, and in accordance with the general and specific rules of the zoning ordinance, subject to such conditions and safeguards as the Zoning Administrator may impose. The power to grant variances shall be applied only when the plain and literal interpretation and enforcement of the zoning ordinance would result in practical difficulties, unnecessary hardships or where the results would be inconsistent with the general purpose of the zoning ordinance. Decisions of the Zoning Administrator regarding zoning variances may be appealed to the Board of Appeals.

Before any such variance may be granted, there shall appear, and the Zoning Administrator shall specify in his or her findings, the facts in each case which shall establish:

- (a) That there are exceptional or extraordinary circumstances or conditions applying to the property involved or to the intended use of the property that do not apply generally to the property or class of uses in the same district or zone;
- (b) That owing to such exceptional or extraordinary circumstances the literal enforcement of the zoning ordinance would result in practical difficulty or unnecessary hardship not created by or attributable to the applicant or the owner of the property;
- (c) That such variance is necessary for the preservation and enjoyment of a substantial property right of the applicant, possessed by other property in the same zone and vicinity;
- (d) That the granting of the variance will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property or improvements in such zone or district in which the property is located; and
- (e) That the granting of such variance will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the zoning ordinance and will not adversely affect the general plan.

The determination of the Zoning Administrator shall be final except that appeals therefrom may be taken, as

hereinafter provided, to the Board of Appeals, exclusively and notwithstanding any other provisions of this Charter, by any person aggrieved or by any office, agency, or department of the City and County. An appeal from a determination of the Zoning Administrator shall be filed with the Board of Appeals within ten days from the date of such determination. Upon making a ruling or determination upon any matter under his or her jurisdiction, the Zoning Administrator shall thereupon furnish a copy thereof to the applicant and to the Director of Planning. No variance granted by the Zoning Administrator shall become effective until ten days thereafter. An appeal shall stay all proceedings in furtherance of the action appealed from.

CONDITIONAL USE. The Commission shall have the power to hear and decide conditional use applications. An appeal may be taken to the Board of Supervisors from a decision of the Commission to grant or deny a conditional use application. The Board of Supervisors may disapprove the decision of the Commission by a vote of not less than two-thirds of the members of the Board.

(Amended March 2002; Amended by Proposition J, 11/4/2008)

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