

1 [Urging Mayor and City Departments to Prioritize Public Access and Transparency During
2 COVID-19 Emergency]

3 **Resolution urging the Mayor and City departments to prioritize implementation of key**
4 **strategies for public access and transparency during the COVID-19 emergency, by**
5 **publishing information about public meetings and policy decisions, and holding public**
6 **budget meetings for select departments.**

7

8 WHEREAS, On February 25, 2020, Mayor London Breed declared a State of
9 Emergency to ramp up San Francisco’s efforts to prepare for and respond to a surge of local
10 cases of COVID-19; and

11 WHEREAS, On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the novel
12 Coronavirus, COVID-19, a pandemic and urged countries to take urgent action to stop the
13 spread of the virus; and

14 WHEREAS, On March 16, 2020, the Health Officer issued Order No. C19-07, directing
15 all individuals living in the county to shelter at their place of residence except that they may
16 leave to provide certain essential services or engage in certain essential activities and work
17 for essential business and government services; and

18 WHEREAS, On March 19, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive
19 Order N-33-20 ordering residents to remain in their homes except for essential activities; and

20 WHEREAS, Mayor London Breed has issued several Mayoral Declarations, concurred
21 with by the Board of Supervisors, that were deemed to be necessary considering the
22 unprecedented conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic and immediate response
23 required from the City, and which also had an impact on government transparency; and

24 WHEREAS, The Second Supplemental Declaration from March 13, 2020, suspended
25 the “Immediate Disclosure Request” protocols, in Section 5; and

1 WHEREAS, The Third Supplemental Declaration from March 17, 2020, suspended
2 public meetings, in Section 5; and

3 WHEREAS, The Fifth Supplemental Declaration from March 23, 2020, suspended
4 provisions of the Brown Act, the California Public Records Act, and the Sunshine Ordinance,
5 in Sections 6 through 8; and

6 WHEREAS, The Seventh Supplemental Declaration from March 31, 2020, modified the
7 timeline for the budget process, delaying final approval of the budget by two months and
8 waiving other requirements; and

9 WHEREAS, The Mayor has granted the approval of certain public meetings, as
10 requested and in order to discuss urgent matters, including as of May 6, 2020, the
11 Assessment Appeals Boards 1, 2, and 3, the Board of Appeals, the Planning Commission, the
12 Port Commission, and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission on an ongoing basis,
13 and other bodies have received approval for date-certain meetings; and

14 WHEREAS, The League of Women Voters on May 4, 2020, submitted a letter to Mayor
15 Breed and the Board of Supervisors acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic has
16 stretched San Francisco government resources thin to an extent that requires different priority
17 levels be set, while also asserting that democracy and public transparency must continue to
18 be a priority; and

19 WHEREAS, The letter from the League of Women Voters included a recommendation
20 in the interest public access and transparency, namely to publish on the sfgov.org website a
21 chronological listing of the current week's meetings, a list of all city policy and advisory bodies
22 that have received permission from the Mayor or Board of Supervisors to meet, a list of all
23 offices completely closed to operations, a list of all offices open and remotely working,
24 including those making and implementing policy, and a list of all policy decisions related to the
25

1 current crisis and shelter-in-place orders including adjustments to all government operations
2 and public services; and

3 WHEREAS, The City & County of San Francisco (“the City”) is expecting revenue
4 losses for the general fund in the current fiscal year ranging from \$265 to \$386 million due to
5 the economic recession caused by COVID-19, amounting to a current year deficit in the range
6 of \$167-288 million; and

7 WHEREAS, As a result of this recession, the City projects, under the extended impact
8 scenario, to see \$1.7 billion in general fund revenue losses over the next two and a half years;
9 and

10 WHEREAS, The Board of Supervisors in 2019 unanimously voted to pass legislation
11 that modified the approval process for the City budget (File No. 191072), which created new
12 requirements for transparency and public input for city departments, the Mayor and the Board
13 of Supervisors; and

14 WHEREAS, Because of the changes in the budget calendar, this legislation passed by
15 the Board last year does not legally apply to the current year modified process; and

16 WHEREAS, The Mayor is expected to release budget instructions to city departments
17 for the next two fiscal years, by May 20, 2020; and

18 WHEREAS, Because of the large projected deficit, pending budget instructions from
19 the Mayor, departments will need to consider possible reductions in their proposed budgets,
20 which could include service cuts and staffing changes; and

21 WHEREAS, Because of the deficit and possible reductions to services that the public
22 depends on, transparency and public access in this budget process is more important than
23 ever; now, therefore, be it

24 RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor to implement the public
25 transparency recommendation from the League of Women Voters, to publish on the sfgov.org

1 website information about public bodies authorized to meet, a weekly list of such meetings,
2 and information about city departments and offices open or closed to the public; and, be it

3 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor and, at
4 minimum, the following City departments to present their revised proposed budgets virtually
5 and allow the opportunity for public comment on these proposed budgets, prior to submission
6 to the Mayor’s Office—the Department of Public Health, the Department of Children, Youth
7 and their Families, the Human Services Agency, the Department of Homelessness and
8 Supportive Housing, the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development, the
9 Recreation and Parks Department, the Office of Economic and Workforce Development, and
10 the Department on the Status of Women; and, be it

11 FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Controller’s Office to
12 continue to maintain the newly launched budget website (<https://sf.gov/topics/budget>) and
13 publish department revised proposed budgets as required by the legislation passed by the
14 Board in 2019.

15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25