



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Memo to the Historic Preservation Commission and the Planning Commission

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Subject: **Commission Secretary Hiring and Commissions' Office
Manager Position**

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At the Joint Hearing of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and the Planning Commission (CPC) on April 4, 2012, a number of questions were raised regarding the role of the proposed Commissions' Office Manager position. This memorandum provides more detailed information on this proposed position and clarifies the selection process envisioned for the position. In addition, this memorandum provides information on the recruitment process which would be required were the Commissions to decide to make a determination regarding hiring one or two Commission Secretaries at the end of the recruitment process, rather than at the beginning of the recruitment process.

REASON FOR AND ROLE OF THE COMMISSIONS' OFFICE MANAGER POSITION

As discussed during the April 4, 2012 Joint Hearing, the Commissions' Office is currently staffed by a management-level Commission Secretary and two clerical positions. The Commission Secretary supports both Commissions. One clerical position supports the HPC and one supports the CPC. This staffing structure has been in place for many years, with some adjustments over time as needs have changed, such as with the introduction of the HPC. Generally speaking, the Commission Secretary is responsible for providing high-level support to the Commissions and the public, and the clerical staff are responsible for carrying out routine functions such as preparing meeting minutes and distributing Commission packets.

Over the course of time, the demands placed on the Commissions' Office have changed. Some examples of these changes include:

- The Commission Secretary provided oversight of the Operations and Personnel functions in the Department in past years. When a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) was hired in 2005, Personnel oversight shifted to the CAO (and now resides with the Chief of Staff).
- When the HPC was created, Operations was moved under the CAO, where it still resides, allowing the Commission Secretary adequate capacity to support the HPC.
- The Commission Secretary has also been the Department's Custodian of Records. While the Commission Secretary has retained this responsibility for ensuring compliance with the Department's Statement of Incompatible Activities, the Department's actual responses to public records requests was shifted to Operations, where it still resides.

- The Department now provides all hearing-related materials online through the Commissions' webpage, as well as in hard copy, which means there is more work associated with preparing for a hearing.
- The volume of cases, including legislative items, has increased over the years.
- The creation of the HPC has meant that now there are two Commissions to support, each with its particular needs and objectives.

Despite these shifts, the structural make-up of the Commissions' Office has remained relatively constant, and has not changed to reflect these needs. The Office has consistently been staffed by one management-level position (the Commission Secretary) and one or two clerical positions. This staffing structure has, in practice, meant that the Commission Secretary addresses high-level issues and concerns of the Commissions, as well as manages the day-to-day functioning of the Commissions' Office, including filling in for subordinate staff when they are out, with only a partial "back up" function provided for the Commission Secretary's responsibilities. It has also meant that, during the many hours each week that the Commission Secretary is out of the office attending hearings, there is not a professional-level staff person present with whom the public or staff can discuss issues which arise. Finally, in the Commission Secretary's absence due to vacation or illness, a professional staff person with full-time obligations elsewhere in the Department has needed to fill in for the Commission Secretary.

While Commission Secretary Avery has managed the Commissions' Office effectively for many years, there are a number of opportunities that the creation of a Commissions' Office Manager would make possible. Most of these items, noted below, are generally outside the bounds of what can be requested of clerical support. Because the Commissions' Office has only one professional-level staff person and because her prioritized workload is that developed by the Commissions, these items have not been addressed.

The Department therefore proposes adding a professional-level position to serve as the Manager of the Commissions' Office. We believe that this position would generally include the following responsibilities:

- Providing a consistent, day-to-day contact point for staff, the Commissions, and the public, and supervision of lower-level clerical staff not now possible because of the Commission Secretary's frequent, required attendance at hearings.
- Providing a more comprehensive, policy- and procedure-driven response to public records requests, and one which proactively considers changes in technology so that the Department has, for example, a policy on email records retention.
- Developing and implementing an interactive Commissions' webpage where project sponsors may schedule hearings, similar to that provided for Variance Hearings.
- Reviewing materials submitted to the Commissions for overall consistency, as a final sign-off. This is standard practice in most Commissions' Office functions.
- Implementing ongoing procedural improvements for the Commissions' Office.

- Acting as a back up for the Commission Secretary during his/her absences, so that a fully-trained staff person would be available to provide consistent support to the Commissions at their hearings.

Reporting Structure of the Commissions' Office

All of the Manager's work would occur under the direction of the Commission Secretary. Therefore, the Commission Secretary would supervise the development of policies and procedures pertaining to public records requests, for example. The Manager would carry out that direction and ensure that policies and procedures were prepared, documented, and adhered to by staff. Similarly, the allocation of responsibilities among Commissions' Office staff would be determined by the Commission Secretary. The Manager would ensure that this allocation was then implemented appropriately.

At the Joint Hearing on April 4, 2012, questions were raised regarding how employee performance management and any relevant disciplinary procedures would be carried out under a Commissions' Office structure which includes a Commissions' Office Manager. Currently, the Commission Secretary reports to the Commissions and the Commissions conduct performance appraisals and manage performance at their discretion. The two clerical positions in the Commissions' Office are under the Department's personnel management authority, pursuant to Civil Service rules. This would also be the case if a Commissions' Office Manager position were created. The Department would be responsible for ensuring performance management takes place and would be responsible if any disciplinary procedures became necessary. However, any employee administration and management issues pertaining to the Commissions' Office staff would necessarily require input and action by the Commission Secretary, because the Commission Secretary serves as the direct supervisor of the Commissions' Office function.

Role of the Manager with One or Two Commission Secretaries

As with any function, there are alternative ways to structure the Commissions' Office. If the Commissions decide to hire two independent Commission Secretaries, the Manager's duties could be parsed between the two positions if the Commissions prioritize those responsibilities. This would mean that the Secretaries would not manage a professional-level position. Under this scenario, the Secretaries would need to prioritize the ongoing operational work of the Commissions' Office, including the supervision of clerical staff. Alternatively, with two Commission Secretaries, the Manager position could be retained. This would provide the benefits of an additional professional-level position in the Commissions' Office, and could allow for more consistency in staff supervision and the carrying out of the Commissions' Offices duties.

COMMISSIONS' OFFICE MANAGER SELECTION PROCESS

The Department agrees with comments made by Commissioners at the April 4, 2012 Joint Hearing that it makes sense to fill the Commissions' Office Manager position after the Commission Secretary or Secretaries are hired. This allows the Commission Secretary or Secretaries to be part of the selection process. It also allows the Department to ensure that the positions are complementary, based on the Commission Secretary's or Secretaries' job descriptions.

As noted above, the Commissions' Office Manager would report to the Commission Secretary but would, per Civil Service regulations, fall under the Department's personnel management authority. Because of this dual reporting authority, Department staff believes that it is important for both the Department and the Commission Secretary to have a role in selecting the candidate for the Manager position. Therefore, the Commission Secretary or Secretaries would help to draft the job description for the Manager position, and would participate in the selection process for the position. This would include interviewing candidates for the position, and in discussion with relevant Department staff, making the final selection.

COMMISSION SECRETARY OR COMMISSION SECRETARIES HIRING PROCESS

Both the HPC and the CPC have the authority to select their own Commission Secretary at any point during the Commission Secretary hiring process. This decision has ramifications for the classification and recruitment process associated with hiring one or more positions. Specifically, if the Commissions decide to recruit for a shared position, the Department of Human Resources will classify that position based on the scope of responsibilities associated with supporting both Commissions. It is expected that DHR would classify that position at a relatively high level and in the management series of positions. If the Commissions decide to recruit for independent positions, each position will be classified separately; the two positions would have different classifications because the scope of responsibilities and volume of work associated with supporting the HPC is not commensurate with those of the CPC. These two Commission Secretary positions also would be classified differently from a shared Commission Secretary position.

Because the City's hiring process must always start with determining the appropriate classification for the position which is being filled, each classification would need to have its own recruitment process. That is, if the Commissions decided to recruit for a shared position and then later decided to select independent Commission Secretaries, the City would require that the independent positions be classified and that new recruitment processes be initiated for the independent positions. Thus, if the Commissions decide that having maximum flexibility to make a determination regarding shared or independent positions at any point in the process is desirable, and if the Commissions are concerned with the timeline of the recruitment(s), it would be advisable to scope the recruitment as three separate recruitments. Alternatively, the Commissions could decide later in the process to select independent or shared positions, but the City would need to restart the recruitment process at that time.