



2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Date: April 27, 2026
To: San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
From: 2026 San Mateo County Charter Review Committee

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Executive Summary

The San Mateo County Charter requires the County Board of Supervisors to convene a Charter review committee every eight years to review the Charter, and after conducting public hearings, to make appropriate recommendations for amendment or revision to the Board. In December 2025 and January 2026, the Board created and appointed members to the 2026 San Mateo County Charter Review Committee to conduct this public Charter review process.

Chaired by Rosanne Foust, the Committee initially considered over a dozen recommendations for the Committee to study potential Charter amendments spanning elections, governance, funding priorities, Board appointment and removal powers, equity, and environmental resilience. The Committee voted to create six subcommittees focusing on the following issues: Procedures for Board Appointments to Fill Vacancies in Elected Office; Annual Review of Board Governance Practices; Independent District Lines Commission; Row Officer Consolidation and Language Access & Equity; Human Rights Commission; Resilience to Extreme Weather & Annual Report.

The Committee ultimately recommends six Charter amendments to the Board of Supervisors: 1) extending the vacancy appointment window for elected offices other than the Board of Supervisors from 30 to 60 days with at least one required public meeting to receive public input; 2) requiring the adoption and periodic review of a Board governance handbook; 3) establishing an Independent Redistricting Commission; 4) designating extreme weather resilience as a County priority; 5) requiring an annual report on the County's resilience efforts in response to climate change impacts; and 6) affirming the County's commitment to human rights and equity.

Charter Committee Formation

The 2026 Charter Review Committee (the "Committee") met eight times between January 26, 2026 through April 27, 2026. Board President Noelia Corzo and County Executive Mike Callagy attended the first meeting on January 26, 2026 to welcome the appointed Committee Members.

At its January 26th meeting, the Committee elected Rosanne Foust as Chair of the Committee and Julie Lind as Vice Chair.

Potential Charter Amendments Considered

At its next two meetings, the Committee identified which potential Charter amendments to study. The Committee received a presentation on potential Charter amendments for the Committee’s consideration identified by individual members of the Board of Supervisors. Those potential amendments were as follows:

Procedures for Board Appointments to Fill Vacancies in Elected Office	Whether Section 415 of the County Charter should be amended to further specify Board procedures in the event that the Board makes an appointment to fill a vacancy in an elected office.
Board President Powers and Title	Whether to amend the Charter to give the Board President greater stature/influence when interacting with executive leaders of regional partners, e.g., County of Los Angeles’ practice of giving Board Chair the alternative title of “Mayor of Los Angeles”.
Annual Review of Board Governance Practices	Whether the County Charter should be amended to add a new Section requiring the Board of Supervisors to annually review the Board’s governance processes and practices, such as requiring the creation of a governance handbook, amending the handbook, and inclusion of a demographic report.
Elected vs. Appointed County Offices	Whether any currently elected County offices should be appointed rather than elected. (i.e., Controller, Coroner, Treasurer-Tax Collector).
Sunset of Board Authority to Remove an Elected Sheriff for Cause	Whether County Charter Section 412.5 (Removal of Elected Sheriff for Cause) should be amended to delete subsection e, which currently states that Section 412.5, which vests the Board with authority to remove a Sheriff for cause, shall sunset and be of no further force and effect as of December 31, 2028.
Procedures When an Elected Official May Be Incapacitated	Whether the County Charter should be amended to identify procedures in the event that the Board has cause to believe that an elected office has been or should be vacated because the incumbent official has become physically, mentally, or otherwise incapacitated. Any such procedures should bear in mind the confidentiality, dignity, and legal rights of the official.

The Committee also reviewed potential Charter amendments identified by members of the Charter Review Committee. Those potential amendments were as follows:

Accountability & Transparency of Public Funds	Whether the County Charter should be amended to require clear accountability and transparency standards for all public funds.
Senior Dignity & Economic Security	Whether the County Charter should explicitly recognize “Senior Dignity and Economic Security” as a County responsibility.
Independent District Lines Commission	Whether to amend the Charter to include an independent District Lines Commission to be formed of county citizens after each federal census. Such a commission would be tasked to create new supervisorial districts as specified by general state and local law. The new map would not be subject to supervisorial approval.
Row Officer Consolidation and Language Access & Equity	Whether to require a "professional qualifications audit" before any two unrelated offices (like Treasurer and Tax Collector) are consolidated; and whether to mandate linguistic rights by requiring all "essential public notices" and Charter-mandated hearings to be provided in the county's threshold languages (Spanish, Chinese, Tagalog).
Human Rights Commission	Whether to codify a Human Rights & Equity Commission directly into the Charter to provide "Constitutional" weight to the body overseeing DEI initiatives and equity in service delivery.
Charter Review Process and Framework	Whether to clarify and formally articulate the Charter Review Committee’s framework, including the overall timeline, meeting structure, approach to developing recommendations, and public outreach and engagement related to the review process. Providing transparency around how deadlines and the number of meetings is determined, including election-related considerations, to ensure clarity for committee members and the public. Establishing a clear framework at the outset would support transparency, consistency, and meaningful public participation throughout the Charter review process.
Dedicated Funding for Community Centers for Underserved Communities	Review funding allocation to provide Dedicated Funding for Community Centers serving the most vulnerable marginalized communities (i.e. LGBTQI+ communities, underserved communities, and marginalized groups). Establish a charter-recognized funding mechanism that allows funding and/or grants to have allocated dollars supporting Community Centers serving the LGBTQI+ community, underserved community and marginalized groups in the County.
Adopt Non-Discrimination & Gender Identity Protections	Explicitly add community members that identify with having a diverse sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression as protected classes in the County of San Mateo.

County Resilience to Extreme Weather Events	Add language to be determined to require the County to consider environmental impacts in its decision-making. Language could include for example building resilience for sea level rise and wildfire rise, the prevention of offshore oil and gas development and the designation of the Santa Cruz Mountains located in San Mateo County, as defined, as a landscape of county significance that requires special protection.
Dedicated Funding for County Parks	SMC Parks does not have a dedicated source of funding, unlike Santa Clara County and many others. Add language to the Charter dedicating direct funding for County Parks like what Santa Clara County has done in its Charter.
Veterans' Healthcare	No description provided.

In addition to the recommendations listed above, individual Committee members also provided some additional recommendations to staff prior to the meeting at which the full Committee approved which issues to study, but those were either formally withdrawn by the Committee member or were never moved to a vote.

Subcommittee Formation

After considering each of these recommendations, the Charter Committee initially voted to create five subcommittees to study the following potential Charter amendments and to bring a recommendation to the full Committee for consideration:

- 1. Procedures for Board Appointments to Fill Vacancies in Elected Office**
- 2. Annual Review of Board Governance Practices**
- 3. Independent District Lines Commission**
- 4. Row Officer Consolidation and Language Access & Equity**
- 5. Human Rights Commission**

At the April 2nd meeting, the Committee voted to add a sixth committee:

- 6. Resilience to Extreme Weather & Annual Report**

Final Recommendations

At the time the Committee voted on approving recommended Charter amendments, two Committee members had resigned, leaving 17 filled seats. Pursuant to the Board Resolution creating the Charter Review Committee, nine affirmative votes were required to recommend any Charter amendment to the Board of Supervisors.

After receiving the presentations and recommendations of the subcommittees, the Charter Review Committee voted to recommend that the Board of Supervisors pursue the following Charter amendments:

1. On the **Procedures for Board Appointments to Fill Vacancies in Elected Office**, whether the County Charter should be amended to further specify Board procedures in the event that the Board makes an appointment to fill a vacancy in an elected office: **The Committee voted 15-1, with 1 absent, to recommend that Section 415 of the County Charter be amended to the following:**

Section 415. Vacancies: “When a vacancy occurs in any elective county office, if the Board of Supervisors elects to fill the vacancy by appointment, the appointment shall be made within 60 days of the occurrence of the vacancy. Prior to making such appointment, the Board shall hold at least one publicly noticed meeting for the purpose of receiving public input regarding the appointment and qualifications of potential candidates.

If the Board does not make an appointment within sixty days, the County Election Officer shall call a special election to fill the vacancy in accordance with applicable law.”

2. On the **Annual Review of Board Governance Practices**, if the County Charter should be amended to add a new section requiring the Board of Supervisors to annually review the Board’s governance processes and practices, such as requiring the creation of a governance handbook, amending the handbook, and inclusion of a demographic report: **The Committee voted 16-0, with 1 absent, to recommend that Section 206(a)(6) of the County Charter be amended to the following:**

Section 206(a)(6) Powers and Duties: “Adopt a Governance Handbook specifying the powers, duties, procedures, rules of operation, code of conduct, and ethical policies of the Board and County employees, and that the

Governance Handbook shall be reviewed no less than every two years and appropriate amendments be adopted by the Board.”

3. On the **Independent District Lines Commission**, whether Section 202 should be added to the County Charter to create an Independent Redistricting Commission pursuant to California Elections Code Section 23003, which shall have the power to approve the reapportionment of supervisorial districts (i.e., set district boundaries) following each federal decennial census in a manner consistent with general law: **The Committee voted 15-1, with 1 absent, to recommend that Section 202 be added to the Charter and state the following:**

Section 202. Election: “Independent Redistricting Commission. After each federal decennial census, the supervisorial districts of the County shall be reapportioned in the manner specified by general law by an independent redistricting commission established pursuant to the California Elections code (23003).”

4. **The votes for the County Resilience to Extreme Weather Events recommendations were separated into two votes, shown below:**

- (A) On the **County Resilience to Extreme Weather Events**, whether to amend the Preamble of the County Charter making resilience to extreme weather a County priority: **The Committee voted 14-2, with 1 absent, to recommend that the Preamble of the Charter be amended to add language:**

Preamble: “designating long-term resilience against extreme weather events — including fire, flood, wind, rain, heat, drought, and sea level rise — as a County priority, to be undertaken collaboratively with cities, districts, and other public entities.”

- (B) On the **County Resilience to Extreme Weather Events**, whether to amend Section 206 of the County Charter to require that the County prepare an annual report monitoring progress on resilience programs and policies: **The Committee voted 9-7, with 1 absent, to recommend that Section 206 of the Charter be amended to include the following:**

Section 206. Powers and Duties: “An annual report to the Board of Supervisors shall be prepared on climate change impacts, emergency preparedness, the adequacy and effectiveness of resiliency policies and

actions, and the state of coordination on these matters among County departments, cities, and public districts”

5. On the **Human Rights Commission, the Committee voted 13-2, with 2 absent, to recommend that the preamble of the Charter be amended to state that:**

Preamble: “San Mateo County affirms its commitment to the dignity, civil rights, and equal participation of all residents in a manner that promotes equity, fairness, inclusion, belonging, accessibility, and opportunity.”

After discussion, the Charter Review subcommittee for “Row Officer Consolidation and Language Access & Equity” indicated that it did not wish to pursue these Charter amendments and withdrew them from consideration. The Charter Review subcommittee recommendation to create an independent Human Rights & Equity Commission did not receive enough votes (5-10, with 2 absent) to be recommended to the Board of Supervisors.

The reports from the subcommittees are attached hereto, which provide a more detailed account of the rationale of each subcommittee’s recommendations, as well as their research process.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

Subcommittee on Procedures for Board Appointments to Fill Vacancies in Elected Office

Iliana Rodriguez (Chair), Julie Lind, and Liliam Perez Avila

Subject: Recommendation to Amend Charter Section 415 – Vacancies in Elected Office

Background

The Subcommittee on Filling Vacancies in Elected Office conducted independent research and interviews to evaluate how vacancies in elected county offices are filled under the San Mateo County Charter and to assess practices used by other charter counties in California.

As part of its review, the subcommittee consulted with staff from the San Mateo County Human Resources Department and the San Mateo County Attorney's Office. These discussions included the most recent application of Charter Section 412.5 concerning removal of an elected sheriff for cause, and operational considerations related to the current procedures for filling vacancies.

Section 415 of the Charter currently requires the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to fill a vacancy in an elected office by appointment within 30 days, or the County Elections Officer must call a special election.

The subcommittee's review and discussions with staff suggest that the current timeframe may not allow sufficient time to conduct a transparent and inclusive appointment process when the Board elects to fill a vacancy by appointment.

Review of Other California Charter Counties

State law requires county charters to provide a method for filling vacancies in governing body offices and other elected positions. The subcommittee reviewed vacancy provisions in all fourteen charter counties in California.

Most charter counties authorize their governing bodies to fill vacancies by appointment, often combined with provisions that require a special election depending on the timing of the vacancy or if the governing body does not act within a specified timeframe.

Review included:

- Alameda County – Board appointment authority, with gubernatorial appointment if the Board fails to act within 60 days.
- El Dorado County – Vacancies on the Board of Supervisors are filled by election.
- Fresno County – Hybrid model requiring special elections in most cases, with limited appointment authority during the final year of a term.

- Los Angeles County – Board appointment authority for most countywide offices.
- Orange County – Vacancy procedures vary depending on the time remaining in the term.
- Sacramento County – Special election required early in a supervisor’s term; other county offices may be filled by appointment.
- San Bernardino County – Board must appoint within 60 days or call a special election.
- San Diego County – Board may appoint a replacement or call a special election.
- San Francisco – The Mayor appoints replacements for certain offices.
- Santa Clara County – Board may appoint a replacement or call a special election.
- Tehama County – Board must appoint a replacement within 90 days.

This review shows that many charter counties provide longer timeframes—typically 60 to 90 days—when appointments are used to fill vacancies.

Findings from Staff Consultation

County staff indicated that the current 30-day deadline in Section 415 may limit the Board’s ability to conduct a thorough appointment process when that option is selected.

Additional time would allow the County to more robustly:

- Publicly solicit applications from qualified residents
- Verify eligibility and qualifications of candidates
- Conduct public interviews
- Provide opportunities for meaningful public engagement

These steps are important to ensure transparency and public confidence in the selection process.

Subcommittee Recommendation

The subcommittee recommends that the San Mateo County Charter Review Committee consider proposing an amendment to Section 415 of the San Mateo County Charter to clarify the Board’s options when a vacancy occurs and to improve transparency in the appointment process.

Specifically, the subcommittee recommends:

1. Clarifying that the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors may choose either to call a special election or fill the vacancy by appointment; there is no hybrid option.
2. If the Board elects to fill the vacancy by appointment, extending the timeframe from 30 days to 60 days to allow for a more deliberate and transparent process.

3. Requiring the Board to hold at least one publicly noticed meeting dedicated to receiving community input before making an appointment.

Proposed Charter Language (Conceptual Amendment)

The subcommittee offers the following conceptual language for consideration:

Section 415 Vacancies: When a vacancy occurs in any elective county office, if the Board of Supervisors elects to fill the vacancy by appointment, the appointment shall be made within 60 days of the occurrence of the vacancy. Prior to making such appointment, the Board shall hold at least one publicly noticed meeting for the purpose of receiving public input regarding the appointment and qualifications of potential candidates.

If the Board does not make an appointment within sixty days, the County Election Officer shall call a special election to fill the vacancy in accordance with applicable law.

Conclusion

The subcommittee's research indicates that the current vacancy provisions in San Mateo County are generally consistent with practices in other charter counties, but the 30-day appointment window is shorter than that used in many comparable jurisdictions. Allowing the Board to choose between appointment or election, while extending the appointment timeframe to 60 days and requiring public input, would support transparency, strengthen public confidence, and allow a more thoughtful selection process when vacancies occur.

The subcommittee respectfully submits this recommendation to the San Mateo County Charter Review Committee for consideration.

Subcommittee on Annual Review of Board Governance Practices

Councilmember Eddie Flores (Chair), Daniela Jonguitud, Lynette Garcia, Talavou Aumavae, Mark Haesloop

Subject: Recommendation to Amend the County Charter to Require Periodic Review of Board Governance Processes and Practices

ISSUE(S) CONSIDERED:

Whether the County Charter should be amended to add a new section requiring the Board of Supervisors to review, on a regular basis, the Board's governance processes and practices — including the creation and maintenance of a governance handbook, processes for amending that handbook, and inclusion of a demographic report.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS:

Our subcommittee undertook the following steps to research and evaluate this issue:

- Met with Board President Noelia Corzo and her office to understand the existing governance framework and the draft Governance Handbook prepared by her office (February 2026).
- Analyzed the draft "San Mateo County Board of Supervisors Governance Handbook" (February 2026), which addresses Board roles, norms, protocols, and expectations and establishes a framework for periodic review.
- Reviewed best practices in local government governance, including the Institute for Local Government (ILG) compilation of sample governance handbooks from California counties and agencies.
- Assessed the legal and structural relationship between a potential Charter amendment and the Board's existing authorities, including the Brown Act, the Public Records Act, the Board's Code of Conduct (adopted January 2025), and the district-based leadership rotation policy adopted in 2023.

ARGUMENTS FOR AND AGAINST CHARTER AMENDMENT:

Arguments for:

1. Transparency and accountability. A formal, recurring governance review creates a predictable, public forum for evaluating how the Board operates. The draft handbook's emphasis on open meetings, clear roles, and defined norms directly supports these aims.
2. Continuity and onboarding. A governance handbook serves as a practical resource for new and sitting supervisors, clarifying roles, expectations, and protocols. Periodic review ensures the document stays current as laws, community expectations, and Board membership change.
3. Equity and data-informed decision making. Embedding a demographic report into the regular review cycle aligns with the County's equity commitments and helps the Board identify disparities, track progress, and make data-informed improvements.

4. Legal risk reduction. Regular review of governance protocols helps keep practices aligned with evolving laws and guidance, reduces confusion about roles, and promotes orderly meetings — reducing the risk of Brown Act violations and other compliance issues.
5. Foundation already exists. Board President Corzo and her office have already completed substantial groundwork, including the draft Governance Handbook, which provides a solid foundation for codifying these practices.

Arguments against:

6. Administrative burden. Some may view a periodic review requirement as adding staff workload or bureaucratic process. However, the County Executive's Office already collaborates on agenda-setting and training in ways consistent with this framework, minimizing additional burden.
7. Sufficiency of existing norms. One might argue that existing policies (the Brown Act, the Code of Conduct, and Board resolutions) already address governance adequately. The subcommittee finds, however, that a Charter-level requirement provides durability, visibility, and accountability that no single policy currently provides.

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION:

The subcommittee strongly recommends that the Charter Review Committee approve moving forward with a Charter amendment to require periodic review of Board governance processes and practices, including adoption and maintenance of a governance handbook and inclusion of a demographic report.

The subcommittee recommends that the governance handbook and any associated demographic report be reviewed at minimum every two years, or more frequently at the discretion of the Board by majority action. This practice supports transparent, accountable, and effective county governance without altering or diminishing the legal powers of the Board or the Board President.

This approach is practical, legally sound, and aligned with work already undertaken by Board President Corzo and her office. With the draft Governance Handbook in hand, San Mateo County is well positioned to formalize a practice that is common among high-functioning local governments and that will serve residents for years to come.

DRAFT CHARTER LANGUAGE:

The following draft language is proposed for inclusion in the County Charter (subject to review by County Counsel). Specifically, the subcommittee recommends amending Section 206(a)(6) to replace the existing provision with the following:

RESOLVED:

That the Board of Supervisors place an amendment to the County Charter before the voters to Amend Section 206(a)(6) to replace the existing provision with the following:

“Adopt a Governance Handbook specifying the powers, duties, procedures, rules of operation, code of conduct, and ethical policies of the Board and County employees, and that the Governance Handbook shall be reviewed no less than every two years and appropriate amendments be adopted by the Board.”

Additional proposed Charter language elements (Section [X]. Periodic Review of Board Governance Practices):

- A. The Board of Supervisors shall adopt and maintain a Governance Handbook that documents Board roles, norms, protocols, and operating procedures consistent with this Charter and applicable law.
- B. The Board shall conduct a public review of its governance processes and practices at least once every two years, or more frequently at the discretion of the Board by majority action. The review shall include consideration of amendments to the Governance Handbook.
- C. The Board shall receive and publish, as part of its review, a demographic report and other relevant data to inform equitable, transparent, and effective governance.
- D. Nothing in this Section alters the legislative, budgetary, oversight, or leadership powers of the Board or the Board President.

EXTERNAL PRACTICES AND EXAMPLES:

Many California agencies have adopted governance handbooks to improve board performance and public trust. The Institute for Local Government (ILG) hosts a collection of sample governance handbooks from agencies across the state, including California counties. These examples demonstrate that codified governance practices are widely recognized as good practice and support high-functioning boards.

While each organization tailors its handbook to local needs, common features include board roles, meeting protocols, norms of conduct, training, and mechanisms for periodic review. The draft BOS Governance Handbook reflects those same elements and is appropriate to San Mateo County's context.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT:

- Board President's Office: The subcommittee met with Board President Noelia Corzo. Her office has been a constructive partner and has already produced the

draft Governance Handbook, demonstrating leadership and momentum on this issue

- County Executive and County Attorney: The draft handbook clearly identifies implementation responsibilities for these offices, which will help operationalize the review and keep it aligned with legal requirements and best practices.

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS:

- Staff workload: The County Executive’s Office already collaborates with the Board President on agenda-setting and training. The draft handbook assigns roles consistent with existing practice, minimizing operational disruption while providing structure.
 - Training and orientation: A periodic review dovetails with existing orientation and professional development commitments, improving consistency without creating new mandates outside the Board’s control.
 - Public engagement: Regular review provides a predictable venue for residents and stakeholders to offer input on governance norms, transparency, and access. The draft handbook emphasizes respectful public comment and open communication, which this amendment reinforces.
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Attachment referenced:

- 2026 DRAFT BOS Governance Handbook (February 2026)

<https://sanmateocounty.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=15257765&GUID=544D56DB-B2F9-45B2-98B6-0CD5567D3CC8>

Subcommittee on Independent District Lines Commission

Kathleen Wheeler (Chair), Mark Haesloop, Nathan Healy, Kimberly Woo

Subject: Recommendation to Amend the County Charter to establish an Independent Redistricting Commission

ISSUE CONSIDERED:

Whether the County Charter should be amended to create an Independent Redistricting Commission to establish supervisorial district lines in accordance with state law following each decennial census.

BACKGROUND:

The task of defining districts is complex and somewhat subjective. California Law tries to make the selection criteria as OBJECTIVE as possible with the intention of preserving the Constitutional Mandate of “One Person, One Vote”. Districts should be equal in size (number of people), and representative without favor, prejudice or bias to any group, party, or special interests. Supervisorial districts (county level) must be evaluated every 10 years after the data from the decennial federal census becomes available.

To give the greatest confidence to the fair, unbiased definition of districts the process is intended to be devoid of political, economic or other undue pressures. Current California Law requires the Board of Supervisors to adopt by Resolution or Ordinance district maps. The question is how these maps are drafted and adopted.

A county, including a Charter County such as San Mateo County, may select and adopt maps which are drafted by a Redistricting Commission selected by the Board of Supervisors (Advisory Commission), a “Hybrid” Commission (The commission drafts and submits maps to the Board for their approval), an “Independent Redistricting Commission” (drafts a map which the Board must approve) or the Board of Supervisors (Election Code 2300(d)). The current San Mateo Districts were selected pursuant to an “Advisory Commission”.

In an Advisory Commission or a hybrid Commission the Board of Supervisors ultimately selects the Map which is “approved”. In an Independent Redistricting Commission (hereafter IRC) the Board has no input in the selection of the members of the Commission and enacts the Map selected by the IRC *ministerially*, in other words they cannot change or modify the Map approved by the IRC.

SUBCOMMITTEE RESEARCH AND BASIS FOR OUR RECOMMENDATION:

2021 SMC Advisory Redistricting Committee History and Postmortem

The committee interviewed Jim Lawrence, Chair of the 2021 Advisory Redistricting Committee and two of the Supervisors who ultimately approved the 2021 map, Dave Pine and David Canepa (Bill Silverfarb, Canepa's chief legislative aid, was interviewed). The purpose of the interviews was to understand why the maps presented by the Advisory Committee were not accepted by the BOS. One revelation from Jim Lawrence was that the census data for that year was made available much later than expected. The committee had a very aggressive schedule to submit a map before the end of the year. They could not come to consensus on one map and chose to present two maps to the BOS. The BOS then decided to draft their own map with help from consultants and that map was approved. The resultant map was not substantially different from the previous map. No formal postmortem or documentation of processes were done following the approval of the new map.

Existing Independent County Redistricting Commissions in California

Following the 2010 census and redistricting process, several counties created Independent Redistricting Commissions via state law. These counties included San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego. Consequently, in 2021, they all formed Independent Redistricting Commissions and produced new district maps for the current decade. Additionally, following the 2020 census, the following counties also created Independent Redistricting Commissions via the state law process: San Luis Obispo, Kern, Fresno and Riverside counties. Those commissions will be convened for the 2030 census results.

All three commissions felt the effort and cost was well justified and generated defensible maps. What is clear from the reading is that the process of redistricting is a serious and complicated endeavor and the Charter amendment is only the first step in creating an effective Independent County Redistricting Commission. Careful application of the ordinance process will be required to create an effective IRC for San Mateo County which is why adding an IRC to the County Charter needs to be done now as a first step.

Arguments FOR and AGAINST the Charter Amendment

Arguments FOR:

1. Precedent: San Diego County does have it in their County Charter
2. Precedent: Those counties that could not get it instituted via a Charter change or ordinance were forced to do it via state law change; a Bill instituted by their Assembly/Senate Representatives.
3. Removes the possible conflict of interest from the redistricting process when the map approval is in the hands of the Board of Supervisors (*"voters select their representatives; the representatives do not select their voters"*)

4. An Amendment to the County Charter allows the voters of San Mateo County to decide whether to make Redistricting independent of the BOS. Instituting an Independent Redistricting Commission can also be achieved via state law, but that removes the voters from the equation.
5. Empowering an IRC with autonomy and budget will result in an exacting and well considered Supervisorial District map. The BOS do not have the time to do the same job.
6. An IRC map is less subject to judicial review as the "Politics" is taken out of the process.
7. The state attempted to make this law for all Charter Counties with SB1108 and was vetoed by the Governor allegedly due to concerns about costs to counties.
8. Since 2021, the increase in high density housing in the county along the Cal Trans corridor and other issues for Communities of Interest and the integrity of City boundaries will require careful consideration. A non-partisan commission is in the best position to evaluate new criteria.
9. Leaving the vital job of drawing district lines to consultants disenfranchises the citizens and voters of the county. Consultants do not live and work here and do not have a frame of reference to understand the subtle issues of the population.
10. Given the 2021 map barely changed, district lines have not changed in 20 years while the county has changed. An IRC would objectively review those changes and produce a more relevant map.

Arguments AGAINST:

1. Why change something that is not broken?
2. This does not belong in the County Charter
 - a. This can be done by ordinance.
 - b. This can be done by lobbying for state law.
3. The cost of an IRC can be on the order of \$500K or more
4. An effective IRC will need dedicated county resources, like the Civil Grand Jury. The members of the IRC need to be paid a stipend for their service.
5. A careful process is required to make sure committee members are not partisan actors.
6. The committee members must be prepared for a significant time commitment. San Francisco noted that there was significant harassment of committee members.
7. It's likely that a majority of voters are happy with the current district lines and letting the BOS manage the redistricting process.

RECOMMENDATION AND JUSTIFICATION

The Charter Change Committee strongly recommends that the Board of Supervisors approve moving forward with a Charter amendment to establish an Independent Redistricting Commission.

Seven California Counties will have Independent Redistricting Commissions in 2031. A state law was passed by the legislature which would have required all counties to have independent commissions in 2031 (Newsom vetoed the measure).

Not only does it remove any perceived bias from the process of establishing supervisorial district lines in upcoming federal census years, but it also shows San Mateo County leading the way to empower its citizens to execute a critical part of the democratic process.

DRAFT CHARTER LANGUAGE

The following draft language is proposed for inclusion in the County Charter (subject to review by County Counsel). Specifically, the Committee recommends amending Article II, Section 202:

Section 202: Independent Redistricting Commission. After each federal decennial census, the supervisorial districts of the County shall be reapportioned in the manner specified by general law by an independent redistricting commission established pursuant to the California Elections code (23003).

If passed by the voters, the BOS must via ordinance define the commission and basic processes by which it will do the job of redistricting. This should include commission definition, assignment of members, budget, county resources.

LETTERS OF SUPPORT FOR THE IRC CHARTER CHANGE

The following individuals and organizations are in support of the SMC Charter amendment:

Jim Lawrence: Chair, 2021 SMC Redistricting Advisory Committee
League of Women Voters of San Mateo County
ACLU
Thrive
San Francisco Peninsula People Power
Belmont Neighbors Against Racism
Bell Haven Empowered

Subcommittee on Resilience to Extreme Weather & Annual Report

Karen Chapman, Tom Adams

ISSUES CONSIDERED:

1. Whether to amend the preamble of the County Charter making resilience to extreme weather a County priority.
2. Whether the Board should prepare an annual report monitoring progress on resilience programs and policies.

INVESTIGATIVE PROCESS:

We consulted source materials recommended by experts, interviewed key county officials and organizations including department directors and elected officials and staff. We listened to fellow Charter Commissioners during discussions on this topic.

RESOURCE MATERIALS AND PUBLICATIONS:

San Mateo County, *Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment* (2018)

San Mateo County 2018-2019 Civil Grand Jury, *Wildfire Risk and Response*

San Mateo County 2020-2021 Civil Grand Jury, *California's Ground Zero For Sea Level Rise*

San Mateo County, *South Coast Sea Level Rise Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Report* (2022)

San Mateo County, *Shared Vision 2025*

San Mateo County Parks, *Wildfire Mitigation Program* (2025)

Rising Seas, Rising Inequity? Communities at Risk in the San Francisco Bay Area and Implications for Adaptation Policy (Stanford University, 2021)

MTC. ABAG, MTC, *Sea Level Rise Adaptation Funding and Investment Framework Final Report*
(2023)

California Coastal Cliff Erosion Viewer

Early Childhood Climate Action Plan

(Draft <https://www.buildupsmc.org/climate-resiliency-action>)

What If We Get It Right, Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

Natural Catastrophes in 2025, Swiss Re

The 2025 LA Conflagrations, Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety (IBHS)

NOAA, National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service

CONSULTATIONS WITH COUNTY OFFICIALS AND ORGANIZATION LEADERS:

First 5 Director Kitty Lopez,

OneShoreline Executive Officer, Len Materman,

Sempervirens Fund Executive Director, Sara Barth

Sempervirens Fund Legislative Director, Rachel Dann

Green Foothills Senior Advisor, Lennie Roberts

former Supervisor, Dave Pine

former Supervisor and former State Senator, Jerry Hill

Assessor-County Clerk Recorder and former Supervisor, Mark Church

Director of Planning and Building, Steve Monowitz

Director of Sustainability Department, Jasneet Sharma

Redwood City Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, Amy Buckmaster

Deputy County Attorney, Brian Pettit

FEEDBACK IN SUPPORT OF THE AMENDMENTS.

- The Amendments are innovative and long overdue given the threats we face. Many we spoke to expressed gratitude to the Charter Committee for considering these amendments.
- The Amendments complement each other. Amending the Preamble elevates and confirms resiliency language is a County priority. Amending Section 206 complements the Preamble language by producing regular action reports on the progress made creating more accountability and engagement with the broader community.
- The Amendments are not redundant. The Charter lacks any reference to resiliency and there is no annual progress reporting being produced.
- Resiliency to climate threats is not a single interest issue. It impacts all of us including our seniors, veterans, students, underserved communities, youth and others. Len Materman, CEO of One Shoreline wrote in part in his letter to the

Charter Review Committee, "OneShoreline views climate threats and the need for resilience in broad terms. This means climate change is not just about uncomfortable temperatures, too little or too much water, or intense winds and wildfires. It is about the impact of these on our public health, public safety, housing, transportation, utilities, open space, and the other values and assets that make our county what it is today."

- Three former Members of the Board of Supervisors strongly support the Amendments. Assessor-County Clerk Recorder and former Supervisor Mark Church said in part in his support letter, "While broader national and international efforts remain essential, progress at those levels has not been sufficient to meet the urgency of the moment. Local governments therefore play a critical role in advancing practical, immediate, and coordinated responses. Counties are uniquely positioned to lead by aligning regional planning, strengthening emergency preparedness, and ensuring that climate resilience is integrated into all aspects of governance. Embedding this commitment within the County Charter is both meaningful and necessary. It elevates climate resilience from a policy preference to a governing principle, one that will guide decision-making not only today, but for future generations."

REPORT ON INVESTIGATION

Fire

According to *Natural Catastrophes In 2025*¹, a Swiss Re² report,

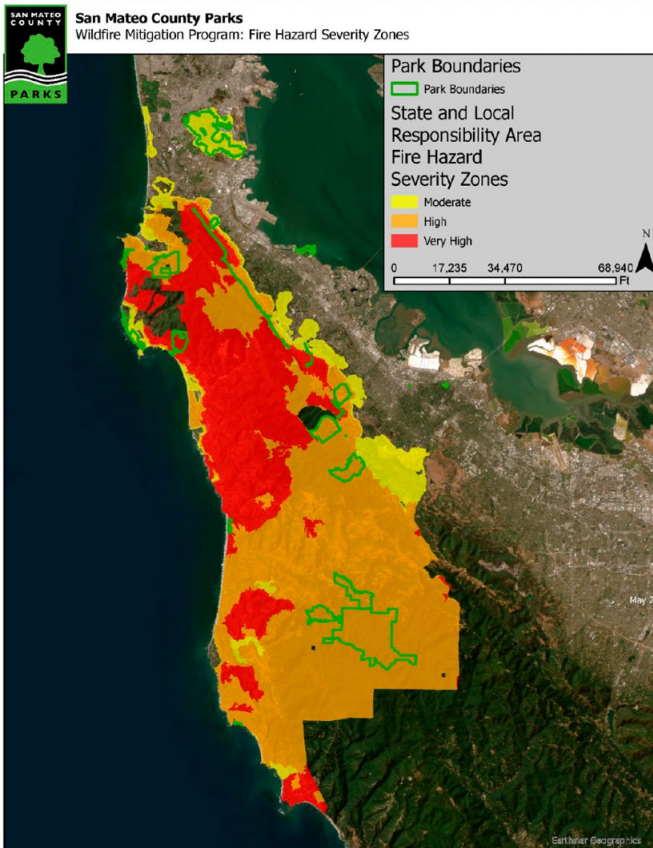
The USD 40 billion insured losses from the January wildfires in Southern California – also a record loss for this peril – were driven by the burning of some of the densest, highest-value wildland-urban interface (WUI) regions in the US. Windspeeds of nearly 100 mph (160kph) from the Santa Ana winter winds blew embers into tightly packed buildings, turning wildland fires rapidly into urban conflagrations. The biggest of the fire outbreaks burned close to 40 000 acres in Los Angeles County and destroyed more than 16 000 structures in the Palisades and Eaton neighborhoods. The January 2025 fires burned exclusively within Los Angeles' WUI.

The overall trendline identified by Swiss Re is more than alarming. Global peak losses could reach \$400 billion by 2030, more than double the level reached in 2025. Swiss Re does not predict beyond 2030.

¹ <https://www.swissre.com/dam/jcr:4b5669a3-b7e2-4682-bf96-a597085958a6/sigma-1-2026-natural-catastrophesreport.pdf>

² Swiss Re was ranked as the leading global reinsurance firm in 2025 by S&P Global Ratings. It is based in Zurich. Reinsurance firms provide insurance for insurance companies. Because of the obvious implications for the insurance industry, Swiss Re has prepared several very highly regarded reports on Climate Change.

San Mateo County recognizes the hazards of WUI zones. The San Mateo County Parks Department in its 2025 *Wildfire Mitigation Plan* prepared a Fire Hazard Severity Zone map. It includes the San Francisco watershed, large unincorporated rural areas and lands in Millbrae, Burlingame, Hillsborough, San Mateo, Belmont, San Carlos, Woodside, Redwood City, Portola Valley, and Menlo Park. Large areas are designated as Very High fire hazards.



The plan identifies several open space resilience measures that, if implemented, would reduce fire risks in County parks. These measures include: shaded and non-shaded fuel breaks, access route fuel breaks, fire road and infrastructure improvements, defensible space, forest health management, forest density reduction, and vegetation treatment.

Similar provisions could presumably be effective to reduce fire risk in the vast WUI area outside the County Parks. The largest Very High Hazard rating is in the SF watershed. We have not been able to find any published plan proposing fire resilience measures outside the parks.

The Insurance Institute of Business and Home Safety (IBHS) did a detailed, parcel by parcel examination of the 2025 Los Angeles Palisades and Eaton fires³. Its recommendations are unambiguous. Hardening of structures and creation of defensible space are essential but only as components of comprehensive resilience strategies.

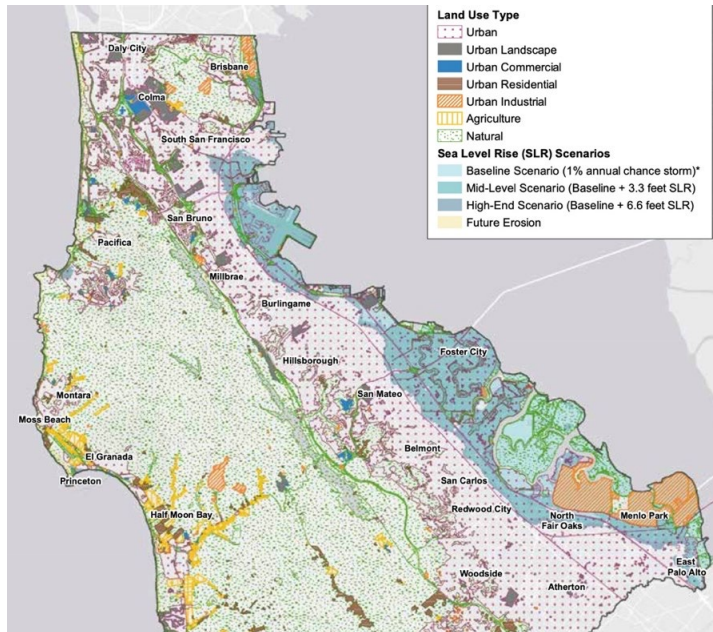
No individual mitigation measure—removing vegetation, upgrading windows, enclosing eaves, installing Class A roofs, etc.—was sufficient to determine structure outcomes when other vulnerabilities remained. Unless firefighters intervened, structures that endured multiple exposures without damage consistently exhibited two features: (1) defensible space that reduced near structure exposure, and (2) a suite of resilient components with no obvious weak link. The repeated failure mechanisms observed across hundreds of cases highlight clear gaps in current codes and standards, particularly how assemblies are evaluated under the types of ember, flame, and near-structure fuel interactions documented in the field. ... More importantly, the damage observations show that parcel-level resilience must be applied as a comprehensive system and paired with reductions in connective fuels at the neighborhood scale to meaningfully limit structure loss during wind-driven built-environment conflagrations.

FLOODING AND SEA LEVEL RISE

The County's risk of flooding begins with an extraordinarily long bay and ocean shoreline. In 2018 a County Sea Level Vulnerability Study found:

San Mateo County is one of the most vulnerable counties in California to sea level rise. Rising sea level on the Bay and Coast sides would affect a wide array of built and natural assets that every resident in the County relies on or utilizes on a daily basis. The impacts are potentially significant and far-reaching.

³ <https://ibhs1.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-compressed-The-2025-LA-Conflagrations-IBHS.pdf>



In *Adaptation Planning for Sea Level Rise in San Mateo County* (2018), the County Office of Sustainability found that the County was “ground zero” for sea level rise vulnerability.

The 2020-21 Grand Jury revisited these issues and found:

San Mateo County has been declared the California County most at risk from sea level rise (SLR). ***Its Bayside communities have billions of dollars of residential and commercial property at risk.*** Its five wastewater facilities and three airports, including San Francisco International, are all at risk for flooding from the rising sea. Transportation systems, schools, medical facilities, homes, and parks are all at risk. The Pacific coast communities are also vulnerable to flooding and erosion from higher seas. (Emphasis in original.)

San Mateo County and its twenty cities and towns have formed OneShoreline. It is perhaps the only countywide agency dedicated solely to sea level rise and flooding west of the Mississippi. OneShoreline was envisioned as the hub connecting multiple interested parties in combating sea level rise.

In late Dec. 2022 into Jan. 2023, nine back to back “atmospheric rivers” dumped a record amount of rain and mountain snow, hitting California particularly hard. More than 32 trillion gallons of water rained down across the state alone.⁴

⁴ National Environmental Satellite, Data, and Information Service, <https://www.nesdis.noaa.gov/news/atmosphericrivers-hit-west-coast>

Though the impacts of flooding and sea level rise are dangers for the whole County, the impacts will fall disproportionately on vulnerable communities.

The 2020 -21 Grand Jury report found:

Already half of East Palo Alto sits within a federally designated flood zone. According to projections, in 10 years or so up to two-thirds of the land within city limits may regularly experience flooding. Redwood City, Pacifica, and unincorporated areas of the County also have areas of affordable housing subject to flooding.

*Rising Seas, Rising Inequity*⁵ reported that the median household income in the San Mateo floodplain is about \$30,000 lower than the 2017 County median of \$115,300 for a family of four (San Mateo County Department of Housing, 2017) suggesting that lower-income census block groups in San Mateo County currently face disproportionate exposure to coastal flooding.

A 2025 Draft of the *Early Childhood Action Plan* for San Mateo County finds “Children under five are among the most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, yet they are often overlooked in climate action planning. In San Mateo County, where childcare providers have historically been excluded from most climate resilience efforts, our youngest and most at-risk populations remain unprotected.”⁶

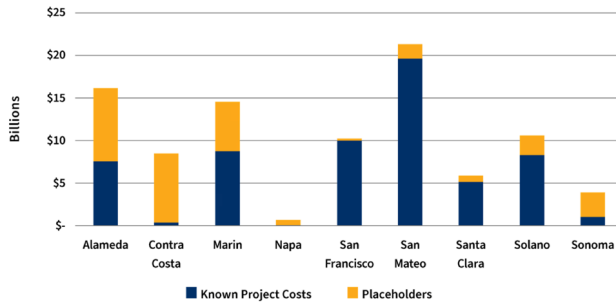
OneShoreline’s resilience project list includes: creek restoration, flood control, early warning systems, watershed improvements, shoreline protection, stormwater detention and others. It assists in local planning efforts. These and more resilience projects are needed in the face of more powerful atmospheric rivers and rising seas.

Finding adequate funding is no small matter for OneShoreline. The estimates for San Mateo County flooding costs are the highest in the Bay Area according to a report by MTC, ABAG, BCDC 2023.⁷

⁵ <https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1029/2020EF001963>

⁶ <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V-bXeBOR0e8Hbdbv010EZRPk-kOhdTak/view?pli=1>

⁷ https://mtc.ca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023-07/SLR_Framework_Final_Report.pdf?cb=73f67c8b



DECISION MAKING

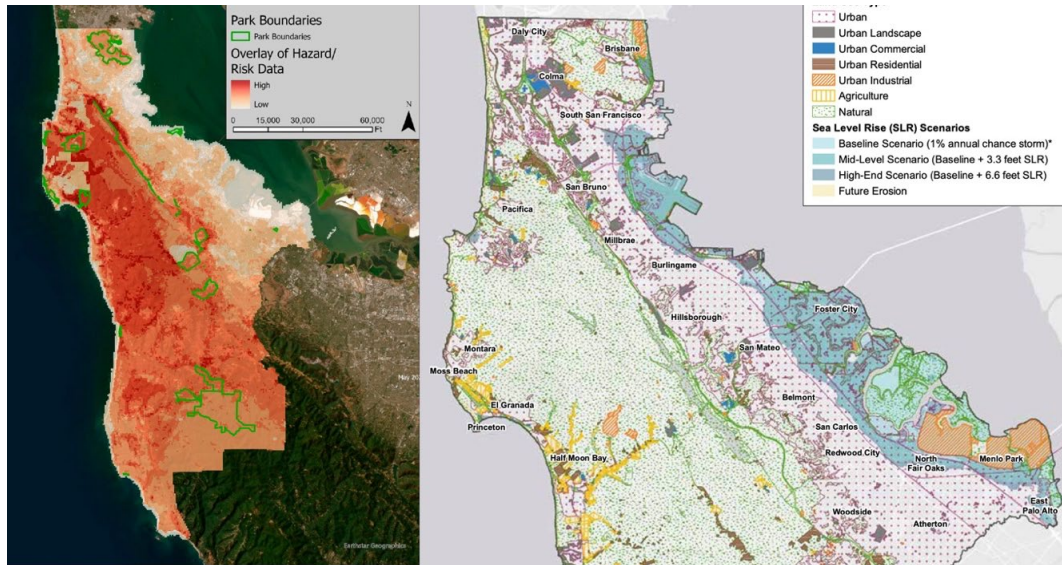
There are three key challenges for decision making on extreme weather resilience.

The first is that the factors of extreme weather should not be looked at in isolation. This report has focused on fire and flooding due to limitations of time. All forms of extreme weather are threats. Worse, they are multipliers of one another. The threat of wildfire is multiplied by drought and high winds. The risk from an atmospheric river is multiplied by high winds, king tides, and landscape scarred by fire. They are complex interwoven threats.

The second is planning complexity. Evaluating threats, achieving political consensus, locating funding and undertaking construction could easily reach forward by 10 years. During that time extreme weather will undoubtedly worsen. But in what way? The events of extreme weather do not move in detectable repetitions. They are erratic, with no real patterns between major events. There are trendlines, but not reliable trendlines. Resilience planning requires looking into the fog of an unknowable future.

Third, decision making is splintered. There is the County itself, 20 cities, various districts, joint powers authorities, and state and federal entities. Extreme weather does not care about political boundaries. Fires, wind, floods, storms act according to their own rules. They don't even notice so-called political realities. OneShoreline is an example of a governance solution. There are other options. Ways must be found. Despite the obstacles, planning must proceed and the best possible resilience measures are adopted. Sweeping problems of this magnitude under the rug invites tragic consequences

Two maps in this report display corridors of threat on both sides of the developed communities that line the County. The entire County is under threat.



ARGUMENTS FOR

The Wildlife Urban Interface has been repeatedly identified as high-risk for severe fire. The 2025 LA fires burned exclusively within Los Angeles' WUI. New Cal-Fire hazard designations show County WUI areas with elevated fire risk, including a large area with a Very High hazard designation. SF Watershed lands, unincorporated areas, several cities are included.

County Parks has identified open space resilience measures for its parks. We are not aware of any similar effort for the large remainder of the identified WUI areas.

Essential resilience measures for hardening of the structures and creating defensible space are known. No comprehensive effort to implement these resilience measures in the County has been identified.

No governmental body comparable to OneShoreline has been created to address the widespread, multi-jurisdictional WUI fire risk.

Report after report finds that San Mateo County has the greatest at risk from sea level rise in the Bay Area or even in the entire state of California. Two separate civil grand juries have raised alarms about these risks.

High wind driven back-to-back atmospheric rivers pose dramatic risks.

It is clear that these risks disproportionately impact vulnerable communities.

OneShoreline hopefully resolves the governance problems for the threats of flooding. Staffing and funding are major obstacles.

The risk from extreme weather is the single greatest public safety risk that the County faces. Housing and businesses are at risk, including major technology sites. Five

wastewater facilities and three airports, including San Francisco International, are at risk. Transportation systems, schools, and medical facilities, are all at risk

We are fortunate to live here. The County and the cities are already concerned about resilience and are taking steps. In many ways the County is a leader. However, Individuals in and out of government that we have spoken with unanimously agree that the current steps are not enough.

Explicitly making resilience a priority and conducting an annual transparent scorecard will add needed urgency to the existing process. A vote of the people endorsing these measures will give the County a wind at its back for badly needed, but undoubtedly difficult, next steps.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST:

This could be done by Ordinance rather than Charter.

This will add a new burden to County staff by requiring a coordinated update annually to the Board of Supervisors.

No amount of effort and resources will ever be enough to respond to what is already out of control.

The County and cities are already doing enough on this issue.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Subcommittee recommends that the Board of Supervisors call an election on measures to amend the County Charter as follows:

Add language to the County Charter Preamble, “designating long-term resilience against extreme weather events — including fire, flood, wind, rain, heat, drought, and sea level rise — as a County priority, to be undertaken collaboratively with cities, districts, and other public entities.”

Amend the Charter provision (Section 206) An annual report to the Board of Supervisors shall be prepared on climate change impacts, emergency preparedness, the adequacy and effectiveness of resiliency policies and actions, and the state of coordination on these matters among County departments, cities, and public districts.

Subcommittee on Human Rights, Equity, and Inclusive Governance

Monica Mejia (Chair), Dana Johnson, Kimberly Woo

Subject: Recommendation to codify a Human Rights & Equity Commission directly into the Charter to provide "Constitutional" weight to the body overseeing DEI initiatives and equity in service delivery.

OVERVIEW

This proposal advances a comprehensive set of Charter amendments to:

1. Establish equity and human rights as foundational County values
2. Embed equity considerations into policymaking
3. Create a **Human Rights & Equity Commission** as a permanent, independent oversight body

Together, these amendments ensure that **fair, accessible, and equitable governance is structurally embedded in County systems.**

Amendment 1: Charter Preamble

Section to Amend:

Charter Preamble

Proposed Addition:

Add the following paragraph at the end of the Preamble:

“San Mateo County affirms its commitment to the dignity, civil rights, and equal participation of all residents. The County recognizes the contributions and needs of groups that have been historically underrepresented or marginalized in government decision-making, such as, but not limited to: older adults; veterans; immigrants and refugees; Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities; and LGBTQI+ individuals. County governance and public services shall be administered in a manner that promotes equity, fairness, inclusion, belonging, accessibility, and opportunity for all residents.”

Purpose

- Establishes equity and human rights as **foundational Charter values**
- Provides a guiding framework for all County actions

Amendment 2: Board of Supervisors

Section to Amend:

Article II – Board of Supervisors

Proposed Adding to Section 206

Section 206. Powers and Duties

The Board of Supervisors shall have all the powers and shall perform all the duties vested in it by the Constitution, general law and this Charter.

b. The Board may

...

(8) Promote equitable access to County programs, services, and opportunities for all residents of San Mateo County across diverse communities, including but not limited to older adults; veterans; immigrants and refugees; Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) communities; and LGBTQI+ individuals; and communities that have historically experienced barriers to full participation in civic life.

(9) Adopt policies, programs, and advisory structures that advance inclusion, equal opportunity, and equitable service delivery.

Purpose

- Embeds equity into **decision-making duties**
- Ensures accountability at the highest level of County governance

Amendment 3: Human Rights & Equity Commission

Section to Amend:

ARTICLE IV - DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Proposed New Section:

Section 414.5 – Human Rights & Equity Commission

(a) Establishment

There is hereby established a Human Rights & Equity Commission (“Commission”) as a body of the County of San Mateo.

(b) Purpose

The purpose of the Commission is to provide independent oversight of County policies, practices, and services to ensure fair, equitable, and accessible treatment of all residents; to receive and review community concerns; to identify systemic inequities; and to promote accountability through public forums and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

(c) Powers and Duties

The Commission shall have all the powers and shall perform all the duties vested in it by the Constitution, general law and this Charter.

(1) The Commission may: (a) Review County policies, programs, and service delivery to provide equity-focused analysis and evaluate their impact on equity, accessibility, and fair treatment.

(b) Conduct studies and inquiries related to human rights and affairs, equity, and accessibility and develop findings identifying areas for improvement.

(c) Request information, data, and presentations from County departments and engage them in public discussions regarding findings and progress.

(d) Advise the Board of Supervisors on emerging human rights, civil rights, and equity issues affecting residents.

(e) Provide a public forum for input from the community regarding Human Rights Affairs;

(f) Fulfill other duties and engage in other activities as directed by the Board of Supervisors, which may include:

(i) Conveying to the Board of Supervisors community input and feedback regarding relevant County representatives, and, where appropriate, making recommendations; and

(ii) Providing a forum for community input on County priorities and requesting information from relevant County representatives related to community concerns about operations, practices, and activities

(d) Composition and Appointment

- The Commission shall consist of members appointed by the Board of Supervisors
- Membership shall reflect the diversity of the County
- Qualifications and terms shall be established by ordinance

(e) Independence

The Commission shall have the authority to set its agenda, initiate reviews, and issue reports and recommendations independently.

Purpose of Amendment 3

- Establishes a **permanent, voter-protected accountability mechanism**
- Creates a **countywide structure to identify and address systemic inequities**
- Enhances transparency and public trust



2026 CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

NAME	REPRESENTATIVE SEAT
Tom Adams	District 1
Jacquelyn Foust	District 1
Iliana Rodriguez	District 3
Rosanne Foust	District 4
Daniela Jongitud	District 5
Talavou Aumavae	At-Large/Intersectional
Mark Haesloop	Businesses
Eddie Flores	Cities
Karen Chapman	Environmental Groups
Kimberly Woo	Immigrants' Rights Groups
Kathleen Wheeler	League of Women Voters
Dana Johnson	LGBTQI+ Community
Julie Lind	Organized Labor
Lynette Garcia	Schools
Monica Mejia	Underserved Communities
Liliam Perez Avila	Voting Rights Organizations
Nathan Healy	Youth
Jim Lawrence <i>(resigned)</i>	Seniors
George Smith <i>(resigned)</i>	Veterans