Fire Code Technical Advisory Council (TAC) Regular Meeting

Minutes
Friday, October 16, 2026, 10:00 a.m.

City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 416, San Francisco, California 94102

The video of the Fire Code TAC Meeting, 10.16.26 is now available.

Supervisor Sherrill called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m.

1. Roll Call

Fire Code TAC Seat Number	Name	Seat Description	Attendance
1	Robert Eaton	Property owner or building manager of a building	Present
2	Gayle Geary	Non-owner tenant of an affected building	Present
3	Catherine Ann Miller	Duly authorized homeowners' association representative of an affected building	Present
4	Christopher Ingram	Person who holds an active C-16 fire protection contractor license issued by the California Contractors State License Board	Present
5	Brandon Bracamonte	Construction professional with experience in either general labor or skilled trade	Present
6	Nicholas Tsuk	Professional architect who holds an active license issued by the California Architects Board or a professional structural engineer who holds an active license issued by the California Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Geologists	Present
7	Ben Becker	Employee of the Controller's Office appointed by the Controller	Present
8	Captain Tracy O'Keeffe	Employee of the Fire Department appointed by the Fire Chief	Present
9	Mark Walls	Employee of the Department of Building Inspection, appointed by the Director of the Department of Building Inspection (DBI)	Present
10	Bill Teahan	Employee of the Public Utilities Commission, appointed by the General Manager of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC)	Present
11	Supervisor Stephen Sherrill	Member of the Board of Supervisors, appointed by the President of the Board of Supervisors	Present

Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgement
Supervisor Sherrill read the land acknowledgment.

Supervisor Sherrill made a motion to adjust public comment to one minute person, and Council Member Geary Seconded. Council Members Eaton, Geary, Miller, Ingram, Bracamonte, Tsuk, Becker, O'Keeffe, Walls, Teahan, and Sherrill voted in favor of the motion. The Motion passed.

2. Approval of the minutes [Discussion and possible action]
Discussion and possible action to approve meeting minutes.

- Minutes from Regular Meeting on October 2, 2026

Council Member Miller requested an amendment to agenda item three, paragraph three, second to last sentence to reflect the "recommendations are limited to defining the five categories."

Supervisor Sherrill made a motion to amend the minutes from October 2, 2026, and Council Member Ingram Seconded. Council Members Eaton, Geary, Miller, Ingram, Bracamonte, Tsuk, Becker, O'Keeffe, Walls, Teahan, and Sherrill voted in favor of the motion. The Motion passed.

Supervisor Sherrill made a motion to approve the amended minutes from October 2, 2026, and Council Member Teahan Seconded. Council Members Eaton, Geary, Miller, Ingram, Bracamonte, Tsuk, Becker, O'Keeffe, Walls, Teahan, and Sherrill voted in favor of the motion. The Motion passed.

There was no public comment.

3. Fire Code TAC Absences [Discussion and possible action]
Per Council Bylaws, discussion and possible action to excuse any upcoming absences.

Council Member Geary requested to be excused from the meeting on November 20, 2026.

Supervisor Sherrill made a motion to excuse Council Member Geary, and Council Member Ingram Seconded. Council Members Eaton, Geary, Miller, Ingram, Bracamonte, Tsuk, Becker, O'Keeffe, Walls, Teahan, and Sherrill voted in favor of the motion. The Motion passed.

There was no public comment.

Council Member Becker requested to be excused from the meeting on November 13, 2026.

Supervisor Sherrill made a motion to excuse Council Member Becker, and Council Member Ingram Seconded. Council Members Eaton, Geary, Miller, Ingram, Bracamonte, Tsuk, Becker, O'Keeffe, Walls, Teahan, and Sherrill voted in favor of the motion. The Motion passed.

There was no public comment.

4. Fire Code TAC Report [Discussion]

Report from the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD), regarding and the five terms Section 1103.5.4.4 of Ordinance No. 74-26: "reasonable degree of fire protection" "alternative protection"; "not physically possible"; "disproportionate effort"; and "undue hardship."

Supervisor Sherrill commented that Captain O'Keeffe would present, followed by Member Miller discussing possible financing options. Member Becker would be discussing possible City financing or funding.

Captain O'Keeffe commented that the Council would be discussing whether or not buildings could be sprinklered. She asked the Council to discuss the definition of "reasonable degree of fire protection" in terms of the existing infrastructure of a building and life-safety systems. Captain O'Keeffe defined this term as the presence of a fire alarm; smoke-detection system; fire-rated construction; two independent means of egress; standpipe systems, building height; occupancy relative to Fire Department access, and aerial ladder reach; the history of fire incidents; and notice of violations in the building.

Member Eaton inquired if building construction was considered. Captain O'Keeffe responded she had a list of criteria. Supervisor Sherrill inquired if construction material or methods were part of the list. Capt. O'Keeffe responded, "construction type." Member Eaton commented, "concrete, steel, and word frame." Captain O'Keeffe responded that construction type would be part of the building data.

Member Miller inquired if Captain O'Keeffe mentioned "fire history." Captain O'Keeffe responded yes.

Supervisor Sherrill inquired how many items on the list are required per the current code versus historical aspects of a building. Captain O'Keeffe responded that most items are required. She commented that the Council can look at the Fire and Building codes to help define "reasonable degree of fire protection." Supervisor Sherril inquired if those codes currently define "reasonable degree of fire protection."

Member Walls was unsure if building codes currently define "reasonable degree of fire protection," and that "reasonable" is a broad category.

Member Geary commented that the Fire Department annually inspects garages and common areas for potential fire hazards, and that this could be considered "reasonable degree of fire protection." Supervisor Sherrill suggested that Captain O'Keeffe segue into her presentation on Emerging Causes of Fires.

Member Tsuk questioned if retrofits should move forward, and was interested in data to support the retrofit.

Supervisor Sherrill asked to discuss "physically impossible," and commented that this term might be the easiest to define out of all the terms. He inquired if there were environmental factors like asbestos abatement would be a factor. Member Miller responded that all the buildings contain asbestos, and common areas in most of these buildings have not been mitigated. Supervisor Sherrill inquired if there were any records of whether a building has done asbestos mitigation.

Member Eaton commented that another issue would be lead paint. Member Geary commented that her building has been replacing/redoing ceilings which have asbestos and lead paint. The affected areas are sealed off from common areas to prevent asbestos from spreading. Apartments are completely emptied or belongings are covered/sealed.

Member Becker inquired if asbestos provided some degree of fire protection. Member Ingram Tsuk commented that asbestos was used for several purposes, including fire protection.

Member Ingram commented that there are different levels of asbestos abatement, and that DecoShield is designed specifically for retrofits, and is considered "spot abatement" because it involves drilling holes into a ceiling.

Supervisor Sherrill asked Member Ingram to describe the DecoShield process. Member Ingram responded that after wetting the surface, holes are slowly drilled into the surface. A screw is placed in the hole. The whole process takes about 40 hours total per unit, but it could be staggered, not continuous. Member Miller commented that the full range of asbestos abatement should be considered.

Member Eaton commented that ceilings need to be opened up during retrofits in order to inspect branch/main lines, and earthquake bracing.

Member Tsuk commented that these buildings were not built to have sprinklers in each unit, so the retrofit would involve mitigation in multiple parts of a building, and a significant amount of time. Member Ingram commented there is nothing above the ceiling in a DecoShield system. A box called a soffit is built around a pipe to conceal it. Supervisor Sherrill asked if a soffit is optional. Member Ingram responded yes, and that a soffit requires connection to a water source. Member Eaton commented that some people would not want a DecoShield system, and was concerned about ceiling inspections.

Member Geary commented that there are more topics to cover in addition to "reasonable degree of fire protection."

Emerging Causes of Fires

Supervisor Sherrill asked Captain O'Keeffe if she was compiling a list of options in terms of "reasonable degree of fire protection" and her research on emerging causes of fires. Captain O'Keeffe reported that lithium-ion battery fires are on an upward trend. In 2019, there were five documented lithium-ion battery fires. In 2026, there have been 36 lithium-ion battery fires due to the use of e-bikes and scooters; electronic motorcycles; electric vehicles; laptops; and phones. An overheated or damaged lithium-ion battery can experience thermal runaway, or a sudden explosive onset. San Francisco has banned the sale of non-certified lithium-ion batteries, and Fire Code Section 325 addresses safe use, charging, and storage of lithium-ion batteries. Captain O'Keeffe reported that there are other fire causes: cooking, open-flame, smoking, butane lighters, and electrical. Captain O'Keeffe's report is attached: 2024-2026 Emerging Causes of Fires.

Supervisor Sherrill commented that he has had numerous conversations with SFFD regarding lithium-ion batteries, and that the number of scooters and e-bikes is high.

Member Miller commented that her building was concerned with lithium-ion batteries, rather than not having sprinklers.

Member Becker commented that the City has partnered with local hardware stores to properly dispose of lithium-ion batteries. He inquired if Captain O'Keeffe's chart included fires within Recology vehicles and collection trucks, which may include lithium-ion batteries. Captain O'Keeffe responded that the chart takes information from the SFFD database, but it is not categorized. She would research if any of the fires were in response to Recology.

Supervisor Sherrill inquired if there were lithium-ion battery fires in buildings. Captain O'Keeffe responded yes, most of the fires were in buildings.

Member Geary inquired if SFFD has recommendations on lithium-ion battery storage. Captain O'Keeffe responded that SFFD does community outreach, and posted information on the SFFD website. Some buildings have bike rooms that are sprinklered.

Supervisor Sherrill inquired if buildings have any solutions for managing devices with lithium-ion batteries. Captain O'Keeffe responded that newer construction might be addressing this issue, and that fire inspectors are aware of lithium-ion batteries. Supervisor Sherrill commented that his recommendations would take lithium-ion battery devices into account.

Member Tsuk commented that a garage is a rated enclosure for mobility vehicles and that water should be over that area. He commented that a recommendation should include mitigating lithium-ion battery fires.

Supervisor Sherrill asked Council Members to email their thoughts on defining the five terms. He thanked Members Bracamonte and Tsuk for submitting their emails. Supervisor Sherrill asked Captain O'Keeffe about "emerging causes of fires." Captain O'Keeffe responded that a fully-sprinklered building helps contain lithium-ion battery fires.

Presentation From Residents Regarding Financing Options for Condominiums and Co-ops.

Council Member Miller reported that she represents individuals and families from different economic backgrounds that live in a communal environment and share homeowner expenses. She reported that they are regulated by State laws, and have three types of expenses: operating expenses; reserve fund contributions; and special assessments. Homeowners Association (HOA) dues are comprised of operating expenses and payments to reserve funds. Each unit is responsible for a percentage of HOA dues based on association bylaws. Reserve funds are for maintenance of existing items such as a roof. Special assessments are not funded, and are for unexpected events occur such as a collapsed roof. Member Miller reported that the sprinkler retrofit is a special assessment which every homeowner would pay. Few banks provide loans to co-ops, so financing is difficult. Member Miller reported that a couple of banks offered 15-year loans at 6-7% financing. Council Member Miller's report is attached: 10.16.26 Condo Co-op Finance Presentation.

Supervisor Sherrill inquired whether special assessments resulted in people selling their homes. Member Miller responded that this has not happened in her building, and their last special assessment was for $250K.

Member Geary inquired how the sale of co-ops and condominiums affects property value. Member Miller responded that several sales in her building did not go through because of the burden of the sprinkler retrofit.

Member Ingram inquired if there was any data from a past special assessment regarding a soft-story retrofit. Supervisor Sherrill commented that there was funding available for affordable housing. Member Miller commented that the City did provide some funding.

She inquired if fire-related issues were covered. Member Becker responded he would have to research if there was funding. He commented that the City did not provide funding for soft-story retrofits that were not affordable housing.

Report from City Administrator's Office Regarding Prior Building Standard Compliance Funding Measures.

Council Member Becker reported that the City does not currently have budgeted funds for sprinkler retrofits. Apart from affordable housing, the City does not fund privately owned buildings or infrastructure. The City could possibly work with the Mayor's office, BOS, and various departments to possibly create a budget for sprinkler retrofits. Member Becker commented that the Controller's office does not set the City budget, but functions as the City's auditor. Member Becker commented that it could be beneficial to have a presentation on the budgeting process. The City could potentially go through a Request for Information (RFI) process, where the City or a department looks for banks that could provide loans to condominium associations to fund sprinkler retrofits.

Supervisor Sherrill inquired if the RFI meant the City offers low/no interest loans. Member Becker responded no, and that the City partnering with a financial institution which in turn provides loans is different from the RFI process. An RFI process could provide more leverage than individual owners could when approaching financial institutions. Member Becker commented that the City itself does not provide loans. Rather it would give money to a financial institution to pay off interest on loans to fund sprinkler retrofits. This scenario would be similar to the City providing grant money. Supervisor Sherrill inquired how long the RFI process would take. Member Becker responded he has not been involved with RFIs of this magnitude, but he estimated it would take less than a year to gather a list of potential financial institutions. The process to set up subsidized loans or a grant program would then need to go through the budget process and could potentially be approved by July 2028.

Member Miller commented that few banks specialize in this type of lending, and that the loan process is more complicated for co-ops versus condominiums.

Member Bracamonte thanked Member Miller for her presentation, and inquired about the breakdown of 126 buildings in terms of co-ops, condominiums, apartments, etc. Member Miller responded that there are approximately 40-45 co-ops.

Member Ingram inquired if RFIs could request that loans be deferred until a unit is sold or vacated. Member Becker responded that he did not know if that was possible given his limited experience with this type of loan.

Member Tsuk inquired if Member Becker's presentation involved loans rather than grants. Member Becker responded that the City is not funding the mandate. Supervisor Sherrill commented that two options were put forth: 1) go through the RFI process, or 2) conduct an RFI, plus establish a loan or grant program with the City. Supervisor Sherrill commented that the second option could be difficult given the City's projected deficit.

Member Tsuk commented that no matter how sprinkler retrofits are funded, people have expressed concern over paying back the money.

Supervisor Sherrill asked Member Miller to clarify her presentation's reference to Bank of America. Member Miller responded that banks loans to condominiums and co-ops are very specialized, so financial institutions like Bank of America, Chase, and Wells Fargo do not offer these types of loans. She commented that there were two financial institutions that offer these types of loans to condominiums and co-ops, which leaves people with little options.

Member Geary commented that relocation should also be considered.

There was public comment from a male speaker regarding existing fire prevention measures.

There was public comment from a male speaker who inquired about lithium-ion batteries.

There was public comment from a male speaker regarding the 120 fires caused by lithium-ion batteries.

There was public comment from a male speaker regarding fire resistant buildings and displacement during the retrofit.

There was public comment from a male speaker regarding repealing the Ordinance.

5. Future Meeting Agendas [Discussion and possible action]
Council members to discuss and approve items for future meeting agendas.

Supervisor Sherill said that defining the five terms is important, and proposed an in-depth discussion at the next meeting.
Member Tsuk agreed with Supervisor Sherrill, and said that it was also important to understand how the five terms would impact the retrofit. Member Tsuk commented that the criteria could be subject to interpretation. A discussion about alternate means could signal making exemptions which would need to be defined. Member Tsuk was concerned that if there was a different Fire Marshal, the Ordinance could be interpreted differently.

Captain O'Keeffe commented that it was beneficial to have an in-depth discussion to define the five terms. She asked each Council Member to provide their feedback which would help the Council propose a final recommendation. Captain O'Keeffe commented that defining "disproportionate effort" would be complicated given the affordability issue.

Member Tsuk commented that the discussion is complicated, and looks forward to further discussions.

Member Ingram commented that he would like to better define the five terms at the next meeting.

Supervisor Sherrill asked Council Members to submit their feedback for the next meeting.

Member Tsuk proposed discussing fire-safety measures in terms of providing a reasonable degree of safety at the next meeting.

Member Geary commented that she would like to discuss the recommendation to the BOS at the next meeting.

Member Bracamonte inquired if there was a list of buildings that have fire protection. Captain O'Keeffe responded that SFFD has an internal list of what buildings have sprinklers. She commented that defining the five terms will help define the threshold of a reasonably safe building.

Member Miller commented that she would like to discuss a metric on cost benefit and data on adequate fire safety at a future meeting.

There was public comment from a female speaker regarding two fire incidents in 2020. She submitted documentation on these incidents to the Council.

6. General Public Comment

Members of the public may address the Council for up to three minutes on any matter within the Council's jurisdiction that does not appear on the agenda. Speakers shall address their remarks to the Council as a whole and not to individual Council members. Council members are not to enter into debate or discussion with a speaker. The lack of a response by the Council does not necessarily constitute agreement with or support of statements made during public comment. The Council may reasonably limit public comment on an item to less than three minutes per speaker based on such factors as the nature of the item, the number of anticipated speakers for the item, and the anticipated duration of other agenda items.

There was no public comment.

7. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 12:04 p.m.