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

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

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, The Second Supplemental Declaration from March 13, 2020, suspended the “Immediate Disclosure Request” protocols, in Section 5; and
WHEREAS, The Third Supplemental Declaration from March 17, 2020, suspended public meetings, in Section 5; and

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

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

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

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

WHEREAS, The letter from the League of Women Voters included a recommendation in the interest public access and transparency, namely to publish on the sfgov.org website a chronological listing of the current week's meetings, a list of all city policy and advisory bodies that have received permission from the Mayor or Board of Supervisors to meet, a list of all offices completely closed to operations, a list of all offices open and remotely working, including those making and implementing policy, and a list of all policy decisions related to the
current crisis and shelter-in-place orders including adjustments to all government operations and public services; and

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Mayor to implement the public transparency recommendation from the League of Women Voters, to publish on the sfgov.org
website information about public bodies authorized to meet, a weekly list of such meetings, and information about city departments and offices open or closed to the public; and, be it

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

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board of Supervisors urges the Controller’s Office to continue to maintain the newly launched budget website (https://sf.gov/topics/budget) and publish department revised proposed budgets as required by the legislation passed by the Board in 2019.
Resolution urging the Mayor and City departments to prioritize implementation of key strategies for public access and transparency during the COVID-19 emergency, by publishing information about public meetings and policy decisions, and holding public budget meetings for select departments.

Resolution was ADOPTED on 5/19/2020 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution was ADOPTED on 5/19/2020 by the Board of Supervisors of the City and County of San Francisco.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution, not being signed by the Mayor within the time limit as set forth in Section 3.103 of the Charter, or time waived pursuant to Board Rule 2.14.2, became effective without her approval in accordance with the provision of said Section 3.103 of the Charter or Board Rule 2.14.2.

Angela Calvillo
Clerk of the Board