



PUBLIC WORKS COMMISSION
CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

London N. Breed, Mayor

Correspondence Log

October 28, 2023, through November 22, 2023

Date Received	From	Subject
11-3-2023	Vahid Sattary	Public Works Commission Mtg 11/3/23 – Re. 650 24 th Ave

From: [Vahid Sattary](#)
To: [DPW-Public Works Commission](#)
Cc: [Anne Liang](#)
Subject: Public Works Commission Mtg 11/3/23 - Re. 650 24th Ave
Date: Sunday, October 29, 2023 9:34:38 PM

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Dear Mr. Fuller,

Pursuant to our phone conversation last Friday about the upcoming Public Works Commission (PWC) meeting of Nov. 3, 2023, I am writing to request that I am granted adequate time to present our grievance regarding SFDPW's unreasonable and biased requirements for our permit application to repair the sidewalk in front of our house at 650 24th Ave.

To provide a brief background, we originally filed an application for sidewalk improvement in November 2021 (application No. 21IE-00587). The work was to be done as part of our single-family home remodeling and was primarily intended to repair the existing concrete cracks, level the uneven surfaces, and provide an opening for tree planting. By all reasonable measures, this is a common and simple repair of a small flat slab in a residential area (see the following pictures of this sidewalk), similar to what is routinely done throughout the city. In any other jurisdiction these projects are encouraged, and permit applications are facilitated so that city residents participate in the maintenance and improvement of its streets. In fact, two of our immediate neighbors did the same exact repairs to their portion of the sidewalk within the last two years without any complications.





I would have guessed that any competent reviewer could have checked our permit application in half an hour and provided practical guidelines if it needed corrections. Yet, it took almost eight months for SFDPW to review our application, and when we finally got the review comments, unusual requirements were noted to alter the sidewalk and create uneven surfaces that were inconsistent with the neighborhood character and detrimental to having a safe path-of-travel. I tried to contact the plan reviewer to discuss our responses to her comments and submitted revisions to satisfy the department guidelines. However, after each submittal more onerous requirements were added. For example, the last set of comments that was received on October 6, 2023, required that we change the curb to double the normal height that exists in all Richmond district avenues, extend the sidewalk repair area beyond our property, and alter large sections of our neighbors' sidewalks on both sides and parts of their private property too. The plan reviewer claimed that these changes were needed to make the sidewalk accessible to disabled persons. However, even a cursory review of the existing sidewalk condition would reveal that this street is flat and almost level; it doesn't have any disabled accessibility problem. On the other hand, the plan checker's suggested alterations would create multiple uneven and steep sections that would worsen the existing conditions. Furthermore, the requirements are so overreaching and costly that they have made it impossible for us to proceed with our sidewalk project. I have discussed these comments with our neighbors, and to the best of our knowledge, no one had ever seen or heard of such difficulties in our neighborhood. I also discussed the plan review requirements with a DPW's field crew that recently replaced a sidewalk section very similar to ours, only a few blocks away from our house. None of the curb changes or sidewalk alterations that was required of our project was done in DPW's own repairs, and the field crew said that they never altered the existing sidewalks in that manner.

During the past year, I have tried numerous times to contact the DPW plan reviewers to explain why these requirements are detrimental to this sidewalk and impractical to implement. I believe our objections are valid and reasonable. I have also developed and suggested a practical solution that will comply with DPW guidelines without any of the excessive measures that the reviewers are imposing. However, the department staff never answers phone calls or reply to emails or voice messages. Then, I tried to contact the plan reviewer's supervisor and even the DPW director's

office; however, it seemed everyone in that department had turned off their phones and emails. Or perhaps the department had actively adopted a policy not to respond to clients' communications.

Hence, after two long years, we still do not have a permit for a simple sidewalk repair. This long delay has caused us a great deal of difficulties and innumerable financial harm. We cannot even get water into our house because for repairing water and sewer lines the sidewalk must be opened, which we don't have a permit to do. Every week, I reach out to DPW staff, supervisors, and director; I send emails, make phone calls, and leave voice messages asking for their help and trying to find out how we can resolve this case; but they never respond. I am truly astonished to see and experience such callous and disdainful treatment that SFDPW is showing towards its clients and cannot fathom why our project was singled out for such a mistreatment that in my opinion is biased and unfair.

Therefore, I am requesting that PWC include this case in their next public meeting and allow me to present my grievances in-person. In that meeting, I would submit the following questions:

1. Why SFDPW imposes onerous and overreaching requirements inconsistently and with bias against some applicants, while exempts others from the same, sometimes for identical conditions in the same neighborhood?
2. What processes does SFDPW have to receive and respond to an applicant's objections to what is clearly arbitrary and discriminatory plan review requirements? Or is it SFDPW's policy that applicants must obey all plan check comments, regardless of them being inappropriate, prejudiced, or financially unfeasible?
3. Why SFDPW's staff do not follow professional practice standards and ethics in dealing with their clients, for example responding to phone calls or emails?

I would appreciate your consideration of our request for PWC meeting. I am also available to provide more information and answer to any questions that you may have.

Best regards,

Vahid Sattary, SE, PhD

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