

# Elections Commission - Application for Redistricting Task Force

City and County of San Francisco, 2021 Decennial Census Redistricting Task Force on Board of Supervisors Districts: Application for appointment by the San Francisco Elections Commission

Please provide a response to requested information in the space provided. You may extend your response on a separate page or substitute a document providing the same information.

Name:

SALLY STEPHENS

Contact Address:

[REDACTED]

Contact Phone number:

[REDACTED]

Contact Email Address:

[REDACTED]

I am a resident of San Francisco: Yes  No

I am 18 years of age or older: Yes  No

1. Please provide a statement of why you are interested in a seat on this task force:

SEE TYPED RESPONSES ON FOLLOWING PAGES.

**Elections Commission – Application for Redistricting Task Force**

Sally Stephens

**1. Please provide a statement of why you are interested in a seat on this task force.**

I turned 18 in 1972, the first year that 18-year-olds were allowed to vote. I voted that year and I have voted in every election since then. I view voting as one of the most important responsibilities we have as Americans and San Franciscans. In 2002, I offered my garage to be a precinct polling place. That same year, I worked election day as the Election Inspector in my precinct, that is, in my garage. I continued to offer my garage as a polling place and work as an Inspector for over ten years.

I loved the work, even though it made for a very long day. I found it inspiring to witness democracy in action, to see the excitement and pride in people, especially immigrants, who were voting for the first time. I am committed to the democratic process that allows ordinary citizens to have a say about candidates and propositions.

After the 2010 census, however, my precinct was redrawn and, although we stayed in the same Supervisorial district, my garage was now at the extreme northeast corner of the precinct. My neighbors across the street and on the next block could no longer vote in my garage. People who had never voted in my garage and now had to climb a steep hill to get to the polling place complained to me about the change. I decided to stop offering my garage as a polling place and stopped working as an inspector.

I have seen firsthand the impact that redistricting can have on people. It is not simply an academic exercise for me. If appointed to the Task Force, I will not forget that demographic shifts represent real people, not just statistics. I don't have an ideological axe to grind. I just want to do whatever I can to help ensure the redistricting process is done fairly and in a way that everyone can respect and accept.

**2. Provide a statement confirming that you meet the minimum criteria for appointment.**

I confirm that I meet the minimum criteria for appointment, as defined in the Invitation to Apply for an open seat on the Redistricting Task Force.

**3. Please provide a statement regarding a flexible schedule to attend meetings.**

Because I am retired, I have a very flexible schedule. I can attend meetings during the day, evenings, or on weekends.

**4. Please describe your civic engagement including any electoral engagement.**

I believe that we all have a responsibility to give back to our communities. As such, I have, over the years, become active in animal, park, and neighborhood issues in San Francisco.

Since 2004, I have been the Chair of the San Francisco Dog Owners Group, a nonprofit that works to educate people about responsible dog ownership/guardianship and to preserve off-leash recreational opportunities for people whose dogs are under control. SFDOG has organized park clean-ups and offered low-cost dog training workshops. In August of last year, we partnered with the Latino Task Force to provide free dog and cat food to people impacted by the COVID pandemic. We have distributed – and continue to distribute – three tons of pet food each month to the people picking up human food at the Mission Food Hub. No one should have to make the agonizing decision to give up a beloved pet because they lost their job, through no fault of their own, because of the pandemic.

In 2007, I was appointed by the Board of Supervisors to the San Francisco Animal Control and Welfare Commission. The Commission advises the Board on animal issues. I served as Chair of the Commission from 2008 until 2015. In my capacity as a Commissioner, I also served on the Joint Zoo Oversight Committee from 2009 until I voluntarily stepped down from the Animal Commission in 2015.

In 2002, I joined the Board of the Golden Gate Heights Neighborhood Association (GGHNA). I was elected President in 2010, a position I still hold today. GGHNA has been active in a major renovation currently being completed at our neighborhood park. We also inform our members about safety issues and other neighborhood concerns as they arise.

GGHNA is a member of the West of Twin Peaks Central Council (WTPCC), a nonprofit umbrella group of 20 neighborhood organizations in the West of Twin Peaks area. In 2017 and 2018, I was elected President of WTPCC. The organization has sponsored Mayoral and Supervisorial Forums, to help people better understand the positions of candidates (as a nonprofit, WTPCC has never endorsed any candidate), as well as discussions about both neighborhood and citywide issues of concern to our members.

Although I am most familiar with the neighborhoods in the western part of San Francisco where I live, my community advocacy has given me some experience in parks and neighborhoods throughout the City.

I have never run for office nor been paid by any campaign, although I have occasionally walked neighborhoods putting up door hangers for candidates I supported. As described in my response to question #1, I offered my garage as a precinct polling place in 2002 and continued to do so for every election for the next ten years. During that time, I never put a political sign in my window or yard, because I wanted to ensure that all my neighbors, no matter their political beliefs, would feel comfortable and welcome coming to my garage to vote. I also worked as the Precinct Elections Inspector for every election where my garage was the polling place. I did everything I could to ensure each election ran smoothly and fairly. I remain committed to the democratic process and to the idea that every vote counts and should be counted.

**5. Please explain your work experience.**

I initially trained to be an astronomer. I have a B.S. in physics, summa cum laude, from the University of Toledo in Ohio (1979). I also have a M.S. (1983) and Ph.D. (1987) in astronomy and astrophysics from the University of California, Santa Cruz. I also completed UCSC's Graduate Science Writing Program that taught scientists to write for the general public and translate scientific jargon into everyday English. I decided not to continue in research, but to focus on a career as a science writer.

I worked for an independent television production company, the Universe Group, in Washington, D.C. from 1988 to 1991. The Universe Group specialized in stories about science, medicine, and technology. Some of the projects I worked on appeared on PBS and the Discovery Channel.

In 1991 I was hired by the Astronomical Society of the Pacific, a nonprofit in San Francisco that supports astronomical research and education. At the ASP, I held the title of Staff Scientist and Editor of *Mercury*, the organization's publication for members.

In 1994, I left the ASP to become a freelance science writer. I wrote articles for the general public about astronomy for national magazines and regional publications, including for the Exploratorium and the California Academy of Sciences. I co-wrote a book on the science of sports for the Exploratorium, called "The Sporting Life." I also wrote parts of an evolution-based high-school science curriculum for the SETI Institute in Mountain View. I wrote sections about the evolution of the universe, stars, and the planet Earth. From 2000 to 2003, I was President of the Northern California Science Writers Association.

As my animal, park, and neighborhood advocacy began to grow, I found I was spending more time on that than on my science writing. In 2006, I chose to officially retire from science writing, devoting my time to my (non-paying) community advocacy. From October 2015 until April 2020, I wrote an opinion column for the San Francisco Examiner that appeared every other Sunday. I wrote about issues facing San Francisco and my experiences as a senior in the City, along with an occasional column about a new scientific discovery or historical occurrence. I chose to end the column when the COVID pandemic hit.

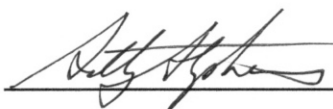
**6. Please describe how your qualifications represent the communities of interest, neighborhoods, and the diversity in ethnicity, race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, types of disabilities, and any other relevant demographic qualities of the City and County of San Francisco.**

I am a white, female senior (I will be 67 in the fall). I live on the western side of San Francisco and have a lot of experience with the Western neighborhoods. Through my animal, park, and neighborhood advocacy, I have some familiarity with neighborhoods throughout San Francisco.

Changes in precincts and Supervisorial districts are needed to reflect the changing demographics in San Francisco. I am committed to the democratic process and ideals, and ensuring redistricting

is done fairly and in a way that everyone can feel confidence in. Voting is a sacred responsibility and right. I saw that repeatedly in my experiences working in my precinct polling place. My history of community involvement, my experiences working in a precinct on election day, and my scientific approach to problems and issues will serve me well on the Redistricting Commission. I want to continue to contribute to my community, and I would be honored to be appointed to the Redistricting Commission.

- 6. Please describe how your qualifications represent the communities of interest, neighborhoods, and the diversity in ethnicity, race, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, types of disabilities, and any other relevant demographic qualities of the City and County of San Francisco:

Date: 4/30/21 Applicant's Signature: (required) 

(Manually sign or type your complete name. NOTE: By typing your complete name, you are hereby consenting to use of electronic signature.)