

1 [Recommending Against the Issuance of Tasers to San Francisco Police Department Officers]

2 **Resolution urging the Mayor and the Board of Supervisors to urge the San Francisco Police**
3 **Department not to acquire stun weapons (Tasers) for police officers.**

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5 WHEREAS, As per Charter SEC. 4.124, the Youth Commission is responsible for identifying
6 the “unmet needs” of young people in San Francisco and “submitting recommendations to the Mayor
7 and Board of Supervisors about juvenile crime prevention,” and the commission believes that these
8 responsibilities require the commission to help ensure our local law enforcement institutions employ a
9 dignified and rehabilitative approach in treating youth who are involved in the justice system; and

10 WHEREAS, Stun weapons, commonly referred to by the popular brand name Tasers, can be
11 lethal and have historically led to unnecessary deaths; for example, data collected over a year ago by
12 Amnesty International indicates that at least 500 people in the United States have died since 2001
13 after being shocked with Tasers either during their arrest or while in jail, and the largest number of
14 deaths (92) following the use of Tasers was in California;¹ and

15 WHEREAS, Though Tasers have been advertised as decreasing the number of shooting
16 deaths and law enforcement officer injuries in jurisdictions where they are used, a 2009 University of
17 California San Francisco research study demonstrated a six-fold increase in the rate of sudden deaths
18 in the first year that California law enforcement agencies deployed the use of stun guns and no change
19 in officer injuries following Taser deployment;² and

20 WHEREAS, Tasers are particularly dangerous to individuals who are mentally ill, are taking
21 medication, are pregnant, are skinny, are old, are young, or have a heart condition; they also should

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23 ¹ “Amnesty International Urges Stricter Limits on Police Taser Use as U.S. Death Toll Reaches 500,” press
24 release, Amnesty International website, February 12, 2012, [http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-](http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/amnesty-international-urges-stricter-limits-on-police-taser-use-as-us-death-toll-reaches-500)
[releases/amnesty-international-urges-stricter-limits-on-police-taser-use-as-us-death-toll-reaches-500](http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/press-releases/amnesty-international-urges-stricter-limits-on-police-taser-use-as-us-death-toll-reaches-500)

25 ² “First study to test real-world effects of stun gun use raises questions about safety,” by Lauren Hammit,
January 27, 2009, UCSF News Center, [http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2009/01/4188/first-study-test-real-world-](http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2009/01/4188/first-study-test-real-world-effects-stun-gun-use-raises-questions-abo)
[effects-stun-gun-use-raises-questions-abo](http://www.ucsf.edu/news/2009/01/4188/first-study-test-real-world-effects-stun-gun-use-raises-questions-abo)

1 not be used on someone's chest or on a number of other body parts due to increased risk of injury or
2 death;³ and

3 WHEREAS, Tasers are potentially expensive, with costs including potential liability to the City
4 from those injured, ammunition (cartridges), re-calibrating the weapon, defibrillators (for starting the
5 heart if the Taser stops it), and training on the use of Tasers to the officers;⁴ and

6 WHEREAS, On February 9, 2011, the San Francisco Police Commission acting by resolution
7 mandated that the San Francisco Police Department (SFPD) fully implement a Crisis Intervention
8 Team (CIT) model of policing, which trains officers in non-lethal de-escalation and community policing
9 techniques⁵ that the Youth Commission believes are potentially much more effective at avoiding officer
10 injury and reducing use of force than Tasers; and

11 WHEREAS, This February 9, 2011 Police Commission resolution required the SFPD to ensure
12 that 20-25% of the SFPD's patrol officers undergo CIT-training, and to date, only 118 officers have
13 been trained;⁶ and

14 WHEREAS, The February 2011 Police Commission resolution also required SFPD to work with
15 a mental health working group, and 911 (Department of Emergency Management) to design new
16 procedures and training for 911 dispatchers, so that dispatchers can identify mental health crisis calls
17 and dispatch a CIT officer to the scene as soon as possible, and to date, only 5 of approximately 150
18 911 dispatchers have been trained;⁷ and

21 ³ *'Less than Lethal'? The Use of Stun Weapons in U.S. Law Enforcement*, Amnesty International Publications,
2008, http://ddq74coujv1i.cloudfront.net/Taser-Amnesty_Intl_Report-Dec_2008.pdf

22 ⁴ Letter to Mayor Edwin M. Lee from the American Civil Liberties Union of Northern California and the Lawyers
23 Committee for Civil Rights, "Regarding Civil Rights Organizations' Opposition to SFPD Taser Deployment,"
https://www.dropbox.com/s/aw6lgcvb4kjt7d/Letter%20to%20Mayor%20Lee_from%20ACLU%20and%20LCCR%207_31_12_Corrected%20Version.pdf.

24 ⁵ San Francisco Police Commission resolution 11-18, "Resolution to Enhance the San Francisco Police
25 Department's Response to Incidents Involving Individuals with Mental Health Needs," <http://www.sf-police.org/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=25386>.

⁶ Chief Greg Suhr, Remarks at Bayview Community Forum on Tasers, Monday, February 11, 2013.

⁷ Ibid.

1 WHEREAS, The San Francisco Police Department wishes to equip its officers with Tasers, and
2 the Department has recently concluded a community process regarding this potential change;⁸ and

3 WHEREAS, The Department has argued that the July 18th, 2012 officer shooting of a TCHO
4 Chocolate factory worker who allegedly attacked his coworker with a box cutter is an incident where
5 Tasers would likely not have resulted in death had police officers been equipped with Tasers; and

6 WHEREAS, While the San Francisco Youth Commission acknowledges and commends the
7 Police Department's desire to provide its officers with alternative tools (other than guns) to better do
8 their important work, the Youth Commission does not believe that Tasers are the best alternative, and
9 the Commission would feel a profound concern for the safety of young people experiencing mental
10 health crisis and psychiatric distress if police officers were to be armed with Tasers; now, therefore, be
11 it

12 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
13 Supervisors to urge the San Francisco Police Department to fully implement the Crisis Intervention
14 Team Model; and be it further

15 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
16 Supervisors to urge the Police Department to institute practical tools and alternative policing practices
17 that reduce lethality and deescalate police encounters other than equipping its officers with Tasers;
18 and be it further

19 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
20 Supervisors to urge the Police Department to launch a full outside investigation into the July 18th
21 TCHO Chocolate factory worker officer shooting to determine what best practices could have been
22 employed to decrease the lethality of that incident; and be it finally

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24 _____
25 ⁸ "Police chief launches campaign to outfit department with stun guns such as Tasers," Joshua Sabatini,
December 7, 2012, *San Francisco Examiner*, <http://www.sfexaminer.com/local/2012/12/police-chief-launches-campaign-outfit-department-stun-guns-such-tasers>.

1 RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Youth Commission urges the Mayor and the Board of
2 Supervisors to urge the Police Department to demonstrate leadership in changing the culture and
3 practices of treating mentally ill, homeless, and people in psychiatric distress.
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Mia Shackelford, Chair

11 2012-2013 Youth Commission Chair

12 Adopted by Youth Commission February 19, 2013
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