

**TO: BALLOT SIMPLIFICATION COMMITTEE**

SAN FRANCISCO  
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**FROM: Katherine Howard, SF Ocean Edge;**

2014 AUG -4 AM 11:30

**Date: August 4, 2014**

DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

**Subject: Request for Reconsideration to the San Francisco Ballot Simplification Committee of the wording of the ballot summary for the "Renovation of Playgrounds, Walking Trails, and Athletic Fields" Initiative.**

First, we would like to express our appreciation for the care that your Committee has shown in listening to all parties and working to provide the voters with a balanced and accurate summary of the ballot measures. We appreciate and support all of the changes that you have made as shown on the DOE website, with two exceptions.

We respectfully request that you consider two changes to the new ballot summary for the above initiative ballot summary.

CURRENT WORDING IN THE BALLOT SUMMARY: "*Proposition \_\_\_ would amend the Park Code to allow the City to renovate any children's....*".

WORDING CHANGE THAT WE ARE REQUESTING: "*Proposition \_\_\_ would amend the Park Code so that the City shall allow renovations to children's . . .*"

CURRENT WORDING IN THE BALLOT SUMMARY: "A YES VOTE MEANS: If you vote "yes," you want to amend the park Code **to allow the city to renovate.....**"

WORDING CHANGE THAT WE ARE REQUESTING: "A 'YES' VOTE MEANS: *If you vote "yes", you want to amend the Park Code so that the City shall allow renovations to children's playgrounds . . .*"

WHY WE ARE REQUESTING THESE TWO CHANGES: Section 14.02 of the Initiative text reads, "**... the City shall allow renovations ...**". We have reviewed the initiative wording with various people who have experience with legal writing and legislative drafting. Opinions vary widely as to the meaning and potential impacts of this initiative.

For example, one attorney suggested that the Ballot initiative means that, if the two conditions are met, "*the City will be compelled ("shall") to allow renovations of parks by outsiders as well as by a city department.*" The *SF Bay Guardian* editor, Steven T. Jones, who certainly has a great deal of experience in reading and evaluating ballot measures, stated in a July 24th, 2014 article that, "*the vaguely worded measure doesn't make clear whether it would preclude citizens from challenging approved projects by initiative or referendum.*"

The exact meaning of this clause will be an important aspect of the public debate. We feel that the voters should be presented with the actual language of the proposed legislation in the ballot summary so that they can better understand to what issue the public debate is referring.

Thank you for your patience and consideration.