



Public Affairs Committee

October 14, 2025, 9:00 am – 10:30 am

291 Geary Street, Suite 200 or Zoom

Minutes

In attendance: Russell D. Keil Jr. (The Keil Companies), Donald Thomas (Club Donatello), J. Timothy Falvey (Hanford – Freund & Co.), Brian Fenwick (The Marker Hotel), Stephen Brett (Brett & Co.), Jessie Kozar (John Varvatos), Lauren Ellis (CK Contemporary), Jeremy Kueffner (Axiom Hotel), Wes Tyler (Chancellor Hotel), Spencer Sechler (ACE Parking), Pulkesin Mohan (Taj Campton Place), and Lori Coleman (Kidder Mathews).

Staff: Marisa Rodriguez (CEO) and E. Ryan Santamaria (Intern).

Guests: Rodney Fong (SF Chamber of Commerce) and Tammy Brock (Property Owner).

1. Call to order and Introductions

Brian Fenwick called the meeting to order at 9:08 am.

2. Public Comment

Stephen Brett noted the positive feedback from both the local community and out-of-state visitors he has heard about Union Square. Marisa acknowledged the new businesses that have opened and vacancies being filled, including the recent opening of Stephen Curry's The Eighth Rule bourbon bar.

3. Announcements & Updates

- Holidays!

- Union Square Foundation Holiday Fundraiser – Tuesday, December 2nd at Chotto Matte

Marisa reminded the committee to save the date of the Union Square Foundation Holiday Fundraiser that will now take place on Tuesday, December 2nd. Brian Fenwick reminded the committee that there are sponsorship opportunities available.

- Winter Walk: December 13-24, Kick off Event Sunday 12/14

Winter Walk will officially be open to the public on Friday, December 12 with the kickoff event to take place on Sunday the 14th. Additionally, the Menorah is confirmed for the holiday season, and the ice skating rink will be open to the public on Wednesday, November 5th. Furthermore, details of the Cable Car Ringing Contest have yet to be determined.

- Tree Update

Marisa stated that negotiations regarding the Macy's Great Tree are currently ongoing. She expressed her confidence that a contract will be signed by the end of that week. The tree lighting is scheduled for November 14 and will be a closed event, not open to the public.

- **Project Updates:**

- **Maiden Lane**

Marisa reported that the Alliance has been working with DPW, MTA, the Planning department, and the Maiden Lane community, to redesign Maiden Lane. Elements from the Powell Street Project and Stockton Street Project influenced the design, to create cohesiveness throughout the district, particularly the incorporation of wayfinding signs. With new businesses opening up on Maiden Lane, Marisa is eager for the Maiden Lane Redesign Project.

- **CCTA Activation**

Marisa shared that the CCTA 3rd art installation, Marigold Rush, honors Dia de los Muertos. The installation is accompanied by related events and activities, including pumpkin painting, zine-making, and mariachi band performances.

- **Powell Street**

Marisa reported that the Alliance has been collaborating with Ned Segal and additional city departments on the Powell Street Improvement Project. The project is anticipated to begin construction in fall 2026, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony targeted for completion by Thanksgiving 2027.

4. Action to approve the September 9, 2025, minutes.

Marisa directed the committee to review the September 9, 2025, meeting minutes.

Action: The committee unanimously approved the minutes from September 9, 2025, as motioned by Spencer Sechler and seconded by Lori Coleman.

5. San Francisco Chamber of Commerce Updates; Rodney Fong

Marisa and Brian welcomed Rodney Fong, President and CEO of the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, to the meeting. Rodney congratulated the Alliance on its continued and impactful efforts in support of the Union Square community. While he emphasized that Union Square remains the centerpiece of San Francisco, he noted that the Chamber represents the entire city and underscored the importance of other neighborhoods building upon and sharing in Union Square's vibrancy to help shift the broader narrative about San Francisco.

Rodney acknowledged the recent progress the city has made but noted that return-to-office rates, while improving, have not yet reached pre-COVID-19 levels. As a result, many local businesses continue to feel the effects of a reduced in-office workforce. He emphasized that retailers and restaurants rely on sustained and growing foot traffic in order to thrive.



Rodney also spoke to the city's need for additional residents, noting that the development of long-term family housing is a gradual process requiring suitable and available opportunity sites. He referenced the Family Housing Plan, which proposes zoning changes to increase building heights along key transit corridors to support higher-density residential development. While the plan has faced some neighborhood opposition, it currently has majority support from the Board of Supervisors and is expected to move forward.

In addition, Rodney shared that the Chamber is closely monitoring regional transit funding ballot measures anticipated for November 2025, as the outcomes will impact MTA's financial stability and have direct implications for accessibility and congestion across city districts.

Finally, Rodney highlighted the growing role of academia in downtown San Francisco and acknowledged the Alliance's contributions to both the content and funding of the initiative, including support for planning work with SOM Architects. He noted that the resulting plan was well received and shared that several presentations have been delivered citywide to showcase the final work.

6. PAC 2025 Recap and Next Steps for 2026

Marisa shared that there have been a wave of businesses entering the district as of late, including Bourbon Steak Restaurant, The Eighth Rule, Bella Café, and news of H&M returning. The entertainment zones have created a significant shift in Union Square, with thousands in attendance for the first Third Thursday on Ellis Street, hosted by John's Grill and are expected to have four times the number of attendees for the upcoming one. Additionally, liquor licenses proved to be effective, as it boosted the entertainment zones within the district, resulting in increased foot traffic. Furthermore, the bollard pilot program has truly been effective, preventing vehicle intrusions into retail spaces. Lastly, Marisa recognized SF Travel for its well-executed "Believe in San Francisco" campaign, which featured Union Square.

A new direction for 2026 Brian Fenwick expressed for 2026 is his interest in hosting a weekly farmer market. Every week would bring high foot traffic. Discussion took place regarding the potential location for the farmer's market.

7. Adjourned: 10:38 a.m.

8. Upcoming Events

- Safe Shopper - November 18th – TBC
- Alliance Board of Directors Meeting- Thursday, November 20th, 2025 - location TBD
- Save the Date! Union Square Foundation Annual Holiday Fundraiser - Dec 2
- Winter Walk- December 13-24