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Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

TO: Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Suzanne Doran, Executive Director
DATE: April 3, 2026
RE: Biennial City Attorney Salary Adjustment as Required by City Charter Section 401(1), for the April 15, 2026, Special PEC Meeting

In November 2022, Oakland voters passed Measure X, which amended Oakland City Charter Section 401(1) to include setting the City Attorney’s salary level to the duties of the Public Ethics Commission (PEC or Commission). Every two years, the Commission is responsible for adjusting the City Attorney’s salary based on criteria specified by City Charter Section 401(1). This memo explains the criteria, summarizes salary survey data, and provides a staff recommendation with options for the biennial salary increase consistent with the criteria.

Background

The City Attorney is the department head for the [Office of the City Attorney](#) and oversees a staff of approximately 78 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions.¹ The current City Attorney was most recently elected in November 2024.

Prior to 2023, the City Attorney’s salary was set by the City Council. In November 2022, Oakland voters passed Measure X, which amended the process for adjusting the City Attorney’s salary and assigned the responsibility to the Commission. Measure OO, passed by voters in November 2024, further amended Section 401(1) by changing the adjustment to a biennial (every other year) adjustment rather than a yearly adjustment. Section 401(1) of the City Charter provides that:

The salary of the elected City Attorney shall be set every two (2) years by the Public Ethics Commission to provide for competitive compensation and equitable alignment and, taking into account the top of the range for the highest paid professional employee in the Office of the City Attorney and salaries for other City department heads, and shall be comparable to the salaries of City Attorneys and other comparable positions, such as County Counsel or Port Attorney, in California cities, counties and agencies selected by the Commission. The City Attorney's salary may not be reduced during the City Attorney's term of office except as part of a general reduction of salaries of all officers and employees in the same amount or proportion.

¹ This represents the number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) positions as reported by the City’s Finance Department. Data provided by Shaleen Singh, Human Resources Operations Supervisor, Finance Department, February 23, 2026.

The Commission last adjusted the salary for City Attorney by 4.6 percent in 2024, resulting in a PEC-adjusted annual salary of **\$320,958.84**. Payroll adjustments must be included in the citywide salary schedule adopted by City Council and take effect on the first payroll period after the beginning of the new fiscal year, which begins July 1. This annual salary amount is applied across 26 bi-weekly pay periods in the City of Oakland’s financial software system, but the actual salary is **\$320,958.82** due to numerical rounding in the system.² The table above shows salary increases approved by the Commission from 2023 through 2024.

Year	PEC-Authorized Annual Salary	Percent Increase
2024	\$320,958.84	4.6
2023	\$306,990.63	26.0

Analysis

Highest Paid Professional Employee – In adjusting the Attorney’s salary, the Charter requires that the Commission take into account, “the top of the range for the highest paid professional employee in the Office of the City Attorney.” The Assistant City Attorney is the highest-paid direct report for the City Attorney. The maximum annual salary for the Assistant City Attorney position is currently **\$284,676.36** per year. According to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data, the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U) in the San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward area rose 5.4 percent from December 2023 to December 2025.³ Since the July 2024 City Attorney salary adjustment, non-sworn represented employees and most City of Oakland department heads received a salary increase of two percent effective March 1, 2025. No negotiated salary increases for 2026 or 2027 are agreed upon for non-sworn employees at the time of writing, as the contracts will expire on June 30, 2026, and the City is presently entering bargaining with all unions.

According to the City’s Human Resources Department, best practices dictate a differential of at least 15 to 20 percent between a supervisor/manager and their highest paid direct reporting employee, although among executive management this is not always achieved. For the City Attorney salary to be 15 to 20 percent above the salary of the highest direct reporting employee would be a salary between **\$327,377.81 and \$341,611.63**. The City Attorney presently makes **12.7** percent more than the highest paid professional employee, which is below that range.

Other City Department Heads – In adjusting the Attorney’s salary, the Charter requires that the Commission take into account “salaries for other City department heads.” The salary range for Oakland department heads is from **\$200,000.04 to \$350,792.40** (See the Appendix for complete salary survey data). The mean annual salary for a department head (excluding the City Attorney) is **\$267,209.34** per year and the median annual salary is **\$270,415.08** (see Appendix Table 1). Of Oakland’s 23 department heads, the City Attorney has the **third highest salary**.

² According to the City’s current Salary Ordinance, the City Attorney’s actual annual salary is \$320,958.82, \$.02 below the PEC-authorized salary. Actual salary amounts may vary slightly from the authorized annual salary due to standard payroll system calculation and rounding when annual amounts are applied across pay periods. Salary data provided by Anjali Saxena, Payroll Manager, Finance Department. January 29, 2026.

³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward, CA Consumer Price Index. December 2023 – December 2025. Data retrieved January 28, 2026 from <https://data.bls.gov/timeseries/CUURS49BSAO>. Inflation formula: (CPI2 – CPI1) / CPI1 x 100 = ___%

In terms of staff size, the Attorney’s Office is a mid-sized City department. Of the seven departments (excluding the City Attorney’s Office) with between 50 and 150 FTE, the mean annual salary for a department head is **\$257,237.26** per year, and the median annual salary is **\$270,415.20**. Oakland’s City Attorney makes 24.8 percent above the mean and 18.7 percent above the median department head salary for comparable-size departments.

Public Sector Attorney Positions – In adjusting the Attorney’s salary, the Charter provides that the Attorney’s compensation shall be “comparable to the salaries of public sector Attorney positions in California cities and counties selected by the Commission.”

Based on a survey of other California cities within the four immediate higher and four lower populations compared to Oakland (see Appendix Table 2), the salary range for the City Attorney position in comparable-size California cities is from **\$285,000.00 to \$379,388.31**. The mean annual salary is **\$338,034.78** and the median annual salary is **\$339,369.29**. Oakland’s City Attorney makes 94.9 percent of the mean and 94.6 percent of the median City Attorney salary in comparable-size cities. The average salary for comparably-sized California cities has increased by 10.3 percent since the Commission’s 2024 survey, although the variability between cities is considerable (see Appendix Table 3).

In accordance with the Charter criteria, staff also surveyed City Attorney salaries for surrounding Bay Area Cities, the salary of the County Counsel for Alameda County, and the salary of the Counsel for the Oakland Port Authority (see Appendix Table 4).

The salary range for the City Attorney position in Bay Area jurisdictions is from **\$325,936.00 to \$415,625.60**. The mean annual salary is **\$367,314.73** per year and the median annual salary is **\$367,676.00**. Oakland’s City Attorney makes 87.4 percent of the mean and 87.3 percent of the median City Attorney salary in Bay Area cities. The average salary for Bay Area jurisdictions surveyed has increased by 6.1 percent since the Commission’s 2024 survey (see Appendix Table 5).

Summary – A salary adjustment of 2 percent would maintain the 15 percent differential above the top of the range for the highest paid professional employee in the City Attorney’s Office and the City Attorney’s ranking as the third highest salary for a department head established by the Commission’s 2024 salary adjustment. However, the Commission has the discretion to authorize a different amount, if it concludes that amount better meets the Charter criteria. The table below provides a summary comparison of the current City Attorney salary with the criteria identified in the City Charter as well as a comparison of three salary increase options, within the range of 15 to 20 percent of above the highest paid employee in the City Attorney’s Office.

		Current Salary	2% increase	5.4% increase	6.4% increase ⁴
City Attorney's salary		\$320,958.82	\$327,377.81	\$338,290.60	\$341,611.63
	Mean	Difference (%)	Difference (%)	Difference (%)	Difference (%)
Top Paid Employee	\$284,676.36	12.7	15.0	18.8	20.0
Other Department Heads (n=22)	\$264,154.38	21.5	23.9	28.1	29.3

⁴ For consistency, percentages are rounded to one decimal place. The exact percentage increase over the current annual salary is 6.434723 for an annual salary 20 percent above the salary for the highest paid employee.

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50-150 FTE Department Heads (7)	\$257,237.26	24.8	27.3	31.5	32.8
Comparable-Size Cities (8)	\$338,034.78	-5.1	-3.2	0.1	1.1
Bay Area Jurisdictions (10)	\$367,314.73	-12.6	-10.9	-7.9	-7.0

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommend the Commission adopt a resolution at its April 15, 2026, meeting adjusting the City Attorney's annual salary by **one** of the three options below, based on the salary survey data and criteria set forth in City Charter Section 401(1), effective in the first pay period after July 1, 2026.

	Monthly	Annual
Current City Attorney salary	\$26,746.57	\$320,958.82
Option 1: 2.0% increase	\$27,281.48	\$327,377.81
Option 2: 5.4% increase	\$28,190.88	\$338,290.60
Option 3: 6.4% increase	\$28,467.64	\$341,611.63

Following Commission approval, Commission staff will finalize and transmit the salary adjustment resolution to the City Administrator; the Department of Human Resources to amend the salary ordinance; and the Treasury Division - Payroll to implement the increase.

Attachment: Draft resolution

APPENDIX: SALARY SURVEY DATA

Table 1: City Department Head Salaries

Director Title	Annual Salary	Similar-Sized Departments
Chief of Police	\$350,792.40	
Chief of Fire	\$326,699.76	
City Attorney	\$320,958.82	\$320,958.82
Director of Public Works	\$313,598.76	
Director of Transportation	\$313,598.76	
Director of Finance	\$289,000.08	\$289,000.08
Director of Housing & Community Dev	\$270,415.20	\$270,415.20
Director of Library Services	\$270,415.20	\$270,415.20
Director of Information Technology	\$270,415.20	\$270,415.20
Director of Animal Services	\$270,415.08	
Director of Planning & Building	\$270,415.08	\$270,415.08
Director of Human Resources Management	\$270,415.08	
Director of Economic & Workforce Dev	\$267,642.96	
Director of Workplace & Employment Stnd	\$250,957.92	
City Clerk	\$243,467.76	
EEO & Civil Rights Director	\$239,008.08	
Executive Director CPRA	\$239,007.96	
Director of Race and Equity	\$239,007.96	
Executive Director, Public Ethics Comm	\$230,000.04	
Director of Human Services	\$230,000.04	\$230,000.04
Inspector General	\$229,510.80	
City Auditor	\$226,612.10	
Director of Parks & Recreation	\$200,000.04	\$200,000.04
Mean salary (Excluding City Attorney)	\$267,209.34	\$257,237.26
Median salary (Excluding City Attorney)	\$270,415.08	\$270,415.20

Data source: Salary data provided by Anjali Saxena, Payroll Manager, City of Oakland Finance Department, January 29, 2026.

Table 2: California Cities City Attorney Salaries

Jurisdiction	Population	Annual Salary
City and County of San Francisco	831,703	\$325,936.00
City of Fresno	543,428	\$285,000.00
City of Sacramento	518,161	\$351,048.19
City of Long Beach	458,222	\$379,388.31
City of Oakland	419,556	\$320,958.82
City of Bakersfield	408,373	\$306,001.32
City of Anaheim	328,580	\$367,438.00
City of Stockton	319,731	\$327,690.38
City of Riverside	313,676	\$361,776.00
Mean (Excluding Oakland)		\$338,034.78
Median (Excluding Oakland)		\$339,369.29

Data source: Published salary schedules and/or salary information provided by public records request as of March 17, 2026.

Table 3: Salary Trends California Cities

Jurisdiction	2024 Survey	2026 Survey	Change (%)
City and County of San Francisco	\$308,724.00	\$325,936.00	5.6%
City of Fresno	\$240,000.00	\$285,000.00	18.8%
City of Sacramento	\$351,048.19	\$351,048.19	0.0%
City of Long Beach	\$354,540.88	\$379,388.31	7.0%
City of Bakersfield	\$227,585.28	\$306,001.32	34.5%
City of Anaheim	\$322,058.00	\$367,438.00	14.1%
City of Stockton	\$280,800.00	\$327,690.38	16.7%
City of Riverside	\$341,004.00	\$361,776.00	6.1%
Mean	\$303,220.04	\$338,034.78	10.3%
Median	\$315,391.00	\$339,369.29	7.1%

Table 4: Bay Area Jurisdictions City Attorney Salaries

Jurisdiction	Annual Salary
County of Alameda	\$415,625.60
City and County of San Francisco	\$325,936.00
City of Alameda	\$347,400.00
City of Berkeley	\$370,406.40
City of Fremont	\$355,159.35
City of Hayward	\$366,496.00
City of Mountain View	\$362,806.86
City of Oakland	\$320,958.82
City of San Jose	\$390,000.00
City of Santa Clara	\$370,461.12
Oakland Port Authority	\$368,856.00
Mean (Excluding Oakland)	\$367,314.73
Median (Excluding Oakland)	\$367,676.00

Data source: Published salary schedules and/or salary information provided by public records request as of March 17, 2026.

Table 5: Salary Trends Bay Area Jurisdictions

Jurisdiction	2024 Survey	2026 Survey	Change (%)
County of Alameda	\$399,630.40	\$415,625.60	4.0%
City and County of San Francisco	\$392,718.73	\$325,936.00	-5.7%
City of Alameda	\$345,000.00	\$347,400.00	13.0%
City of Berkeley	\$336,000.08	\$370,406.40	10.3%
City of Fremont	\$352,800.00	\$355,159.35	4.6%
City of Hayward	\$335,608.00	\$366,496.00	9.2%
City of Mountain View	\$335,338.38	\$362,806.86	8.2%
City of San Jose	\$341,499.37	\$390,000.00	4.0%
City of Santa Clara	\$300,481.00	\$370,461.12	15.6%
Oakland Port Authority	\$308,724.00	\$368,856.00	5.6%
Mean	\$344,780.00	\$367,314.73	6.1%
Median	\$338,749.73	\$367,676.00	7.9%

**CITY OF OAKLAND
Public Ethics Commission**



**RESOLUTION NO. 26-02
[Proposed 4-15-26]**

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A SALARY INCREASE FOR THE OFFICE OF CITY ATTORNEY PURSUANT TO OAKLAND CITY CHARTER SECTION 401(1)

By action of the Oakland Public Ethics Commission:

WHEREAS, Oakland City Charter section 401(1) provides: “The salary of the elected City Attorney shall be set every two (2) years by the Public Ethics Commission to provide for competitive compensation and equitable alignment and, taking into account the top of the range for the highest paid professional employee in the Office of the City Attorney and salaries for other City department heads, and shall be comparable to the salaries of City Attorneys and other comparable positions, such as County Counsel or Port Attorney, in California cities, counties and agencies selected by the Commission. The City Attorney’s salary may not be reduced during the City Attorney’s term of office except as part of a general reduction of salaries of all officers and employees in the same amount or proportion”; and

WHEREAS, Oakland City Charter section 207 charges the City Council with fixing the compensation of all City employees, officers and officials unless otherwise provided by the Charter; and

WHEREAS, Ordinance No. 12187 C.M.S., the “Salary Ordinance,” as amended, sets forth a salary schedule reflecting all classifications of employment within the City including those of city employees and city officers; and

WHEREAS, a salary adjustment to **[INSERT ADOPTED AMOUNT]** annually would provide competitive compensation and equitable alignment of the City Attorney’s salary by providing the City Attorney with a salary that is at least 15 percent above the top of the range for the highest paid professional employee in the Attorney’s Office, that is comparable with the salaries of City Attorneys in other comparable-size cities and Bay Area jurisdictions, and that also accounts for the salaries of other City department heads.

Now, therefore be it:

RESOLVED, that the Commission does hereby authorize an annual salary of **[INSERT ADOPTED AMOUNT]** for the office of City Attorney as mandated by City Charter Section 401(1), effective as of the first payroll period of Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

CERTIFICATION RE: APPROVAL OF RESOLUTION

The foregoing Resolution was presented for approval at a duly noticed meeting of the City of Oakland Public Ethics Commission held on April 15, 2026, where a quorum of the membership of the Commission was present. The Commission approved the resolution by a vote of ___ to ___.

AYES:

NOES:

CITY OF OAKLAND
Public Ethics Commission



RESOLUTION NO. 26-02
[Proposed 4-15-26]

ABSTAIN:
ABSENT:

I hereby certify that the foregoing is true and correct.

Suzanne Doran, Executive Director
Oakland Public Ethics Commission

Date

DRAFT