



**CITY OF OAKLAND
PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION**
Regular Commission Meeting
One Frank Ogawa Plaza (City Hall)
Hearing Room 2
Wednesday, July 15, 2026
6:30 p.m.

This meeting will be streamed live online at [KTOP | City of Oakland, CA](#) and via Zoom.
See the [instructions](#) at the end of the agenda for how to participate in-person or remotely.

Commissioners:

Francis Upton IV (Chair) | Karun Tilak (Vice-Chair) | Luke Apfeld | Tanya Bayeva |
L. Lawrence Brandon | Angi Fisher | Ryan Micik

Commission Staff to attend:

Suzanne Doran, Executive Director | Tovah Ackerman, Enforcement Chief | Jelani Killings, Ethics Analyst

Legal Counsel:

Oliver Luby, Deputy City Attorney

PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

- 1. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum.**
- 2. Staff and Commission Announcements.**
- 3. Open Forum.**
 - Open forum is a time for a member of the public to comment on any matter within the jurisdiction of the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) that is not otherwise included in tonight's agenda. Read the Commission's ***Core Values for Inclusive Engagement (Adopted May 6, 2019)*** on our [website](#).
 - Under the Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission cannot discuss the substance of any public comment made that does not pertain to an item listed on the agenda.
 - The Commission urges members of the public not to make complaints or ask the Commission to investigate alleged legal violations at public meetings since public disclosure of such complaints or requests may undermine any subsequent investigation undertaken. Contact staff at ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov for assistance in filing a complaint.



ACTION ITEMS

4. **Approval of Commission Meeting Draft Minutes for May 20, 2026, Regular Meeting.** ([Attachment: May 20, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes](#))
5. **Case Closure Plan.** PEC staff are working to close older, low-level cases according to a seven-point rubric to address a severe complaint backlog. Case analysis under the criteria does not support additional PEC enforcement activity in the matters listed below, and staff recommend the following cases to the Commission for closure. ([Attachment: Staff Memo Dated July 2, 2026](#))
 - a. **In the Matter of David Silver (PEC # 19-16)**. Staff recommends that the Commission close PEC Case No. 19-16 with no further action.
 - b. **In the Matter of Tyfahra Milele and the Oakland Police Commission (PEC # 23-01)**. Staff recommends that the Commission close PEC Case No. 23-01 with no further action.
 - c. **In the Matter of Ronnie Turner (PEC # 24-13)**. Staff recommends that the Commission close PEC Case No. 24-13 with no further action.

GUEST PRESENTATION

6. **Ethical Climate Survey.** The Commission will receive an informational presentation from City Auditor Michael Houston on the results of the Ethical Climate Survey. The Office of the City Auditor issued a survey to City employees at the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026. The survey instrument, developed by the Institute for Local Government, is designed to provide an overview of the health of an agency's ethical climate, including its capacity for ethical decision-making, both by the organization and by individuals within the organization. ([Attachment: Ethical Climate Report; Presentation Slides](#))

INFORMATION ITEMS

7. **Limited Public Financing Program Overview and 2026 Guide.** Commission staff provides an overview of upcoming activities planned to carry out the Limited Public Financing Program for the 2026 District Councilmember elections and presents the updated Limited Public Financing Program. ([Attachments: Staff Memo dated July 1, 2026; Limited Public Financing Program Guide 2026](#))



- 8. Enforcement Program Report.** This report provides updates regarding Enforcement Division programs and operations such as caseload, enforcement-related litigation, and complaint dismissals since the last Commission meeting. ([Attachment: Enforcement Report dated July 2, 2026](#))
- 9. Executive Director Report.** This report provides updates regarding departmental programs and operations, such as budget, staffing, and PEC legislative and policy initiatives since the last Commission meeting. Specific programs updates, such as public records mediations, disclosure, and engagement, are included as attachments. ([Attachment: Executive Director Report dated July 2, 2026](#); [Engagement & Compliance Program Report dated July 1, 2026](#); [Mediation Program Report dated July 1, 2026](#))
- 10. Reports on Subcommittees and Other Commissioner Assignments.** The Commission Chair may appoint individual commissioners to perform specific tasks or functions by serving on standing or ad hoc committees ([Public Ethics Commission Operations Policies, Article V](#)). Current Standing and Ad-hoc Subcommittee assignments are posted on the [Commission website](#). Commissioners may discuss subcommittee assignments, create a new subcommittee, or report on work done in subcommittees since the Commission's last regular meeting. Commissioners may also provide updates on assignments, efforts, and initiatives they undertake to support the Commission's work.

 - a. Transparency Ad Hoc Subcommittee** (ad hoc, created March 18, 2026) - Upton IV (Chair), Apfeld, Fisher ([Attachment: 5-21-26 Minutes](#); [6-9-26 Minutes](#))
 - b. Democracy Dollars Pilot Ad Hoc Subcommittee** (ad hoc, created May 7, 2026) - Micik (Chair), Bayeva, Brandon ([Attachment: Purpose Statement](#); [5-14-26 Minutes](#); [6-25-26 Minutes](#))
- 11. Future Meeting Business.** Commissioners and staff may propose topics for action or discussion at future Commission meetings.

The meeting will adjourn upon the completion of the Commission's business.



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Should you have questions or concerns regarding this agenda, or wish to review any agenda- related materials, please contact the Public Ethics Commission at ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov or visit our webpage at www.oaklandca.gov/pec.

Suzanne Doran

07/03/2026

Approved for Distribution

Date

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In addition to attending in-person, the following options for public viewing and participation are available:

Livestream Online

Go to the City of Oakland's KTOP livestream page here:

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/services/ktop-tv10-program-schedule> click on "View"

Video Conferencing Access

To access this meeting using Zoom, use the Zoom Meeting link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89169308829> . You will then be prompted to enter the following information:

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Follow the on-screen prompts to join the meeting. You may be asked to download the Zoom application.

Audio Conferencing Access

To access this meeting by phone, do the following:

- Telephone: Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location): US: +1 669 900 6833 or +1 669 444 9171 or +1 719 359 4580 or +1 253 205 0468 or +1 253 215 8782 or +1 346 248 7799 or +1 360 209 5623 or +1 386 347 5053 or +1 507 473 4847 or +1 564 217



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- International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kc69Y2Mnzf>

Public Comment

A member of the public may speak on any item listed on the agenda either in-person or remotely. Speakers are generally limited to three minutes per item, although the Chair may adjust the time based on the number of speakers.

Members of the public may also submit written comments in advance of the meeting to **EthicsPublicComment@oaklandca.gov**. Please indicate the agenda item # you are commenting on in the subject line of the email. All written public comments received at least 24 hours prior to the meeting will be posted on the meeting webpage prior to the meeting as part of the public record and provided at the meeting with agenda materials.

The purpose of Public Comment is for Commissioners to hear from members of the public. After the close of each Public Comment period, the Commission may address questions or concerns that were raised during the public comment period.

Remote Public Comment

Ensure you are in a quiet location. Before you speak, mute the sound of any equipment around you, including television, radio, or computer. It is especially important that you reduce the volume of your computer speaker if you are watching via the Zoom link, to prevent feedback and echo when you speak.

Zoom

- If you connect to the meeting via Zoom, use the **raise hand button** to indicate that you want to speak on an item and to be added to the public comment queue.
- It is your turn to speak when Zoom displays, "The host has unmuted you."
- When you hear PEC staff say, "Welcome Caller," you are encouraged to state your name clearly. As soon as you begin speaking you will have three minutes to provide your public comment (six minutes if you are on the line with an interpreter).
- Once your three minutes have expired, PEC staff will mute you. Zoom will display, "You're



muted.”

- Attendees who want to speak during other public comment periods may stay on the line and listen for the next public comment opportunity and should press the raise hand button to enter the public comment queue again.

Telephone Audio Conferencing

- If you connect to the meeting via telephone, dial *9 to raise your hand to indicate that you want to speak on an item and to be added to the public comment queue.
- When the system message says, “You’re unmuted,” this is your turn to speak.
- When you hear the PEC staff say, “Welcome Caller,” you are encouraged to state your name clearly. As soon as you begin speaking you will have three minutes to provide your public comment (six minutes if you are on the line with an interpreter).
- Once your three minutes have expired, PEC staff will mute you. You will hear, “You’re muted.”
- Attendees who want to speak during other public comment periods may stay on the line and listen for the next public comment opportunity and should dial *9 to raise their hands to enter the public comment queue again.

Language Access

Do you need an ASL, Cantonese, Mandarin or Spanish interpreter or other assistance to participate? Please email ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov or call (510) 238-3593 Or 711 (for Relay Service) five business days in advance.

¿Necesita un intérprete en español, cantonés o mandarín, u otra ayuda para participar? Por favor envíe un correo electrónico a ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov o llame al (510) 238-3593 al 711 para servicio de retransmisión (Relay service) por lo menos cinco días antes de la reunión. Gracias.

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Quý vị cần một thông dịch viên Ngôn ngữ Ký hiệu Mỹ (American Sign Language, ASL), tiếng Quảng Đông, tiếng Quan Thoại hay tiếng Tây Ban Nha hoặc bất kỳ sự hỗ trợ nào khác để tham gia hay không? Xin vui lòng gửi email đến địa chỉ ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov or hoặc gọi đến số (510) 238-3593 hoặc 711 (với Dịch vụ Tiếp âm) trước đó năm ngày.



This meeting location is wheelchair accessible.

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DRAFT

Commissioners:

Francis Upton IV (Chair) | Karun Tilak (Vice-Chair) | Luke Apfeld | Tanya Bayeva | L. Lawrence Brandon | Angi Fisher | Ryan Micik

Commission Staff in Attendance:

Suzanne Doran, Executive Director | Tovah Ackerman, Enforcement Chief | Alex Van Buskirk, Ethics Investigator | Benjamin Mahrer, Ethics Investigator | Jelani Killings, Ethics Analyst | Niels Thorsen, Ethics Analyst | Bhawna Chowdhary, Law Clerk

Legal Counsel:

Oliver Luby, Deputy City Attorney

PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

1. Roll Call and Determination of Quorum.

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m.

Members present: Chair Francis Upton IV, Vice-Chair Karun Tilak, Luke Apfeld, Tanya Bayeva, L. Lawrence Brandon, Angi Fisher, and Ryan Micik.

Members absent: None.

Staff present: Suzanne Doran, Executive Director; Tovah Ackerman, Enforcement Chief; Alex Van Buskirk, Ethics Investigator; Benjamin Mahrer, Ethics Investigator; Jelani Killings, Ethics Analyst; Niels Thorsen, Ethics Analyst; and Bhawna Chowdhary, Law Clerk.

Legal Counsel: Oliver Luby, Deputy City Attorney.

2. Staff and Commission Announcements.

Chair Upton announced that members of the public can now participate in meetings remotely via Zoom.

Public Comment: None.

3. Open Forum.

Chair Upton provided an overview of the rules for public comment during PEC meetings and how to participate via Zoom or phone.

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard; Ralph Kanz.

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ACTION ITEMS

4. Local Public Financing Update.

Guest speaker D. Azarmi, MPP, Money in Politics Program Manager for California Common Cause, gave an informational presentation and provided an overview of public financing trends in California.

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard; Ralph Kanz.

5. Approval of Commission Meeting Draft Minutes for April 15, 2026, Special Meeting.

Brandon moved, and Tilak seconded to adopt the April 15, 2026, special meeting minutes.

Public Comment: None.

Ayes: Tilak, Apfeld, Brandon, Fisher, Micik, Upton.

Noes: None.

Abstentions: Bayeva (Not present at the meeting)

Vote: 6-0-1.

Motion passed.

6. Proposed Amendments to Charter Sections 202, 218, 300, and 603.

The Mayor's Deputy Chief of Staff, Preston Kilgore, presented the proposal by Mayor Barbara Lee to amend City Charter Sections 202, 218, 300, and 603.

Executive Director Doran presented the PEC staff analysis of the proposed City Charter amendments.

Vice Chair Tilak suggested taking separate motions on the item to address Elected Officials' Salaries and Non-Interference in Administrative Affairs separately.

Elected Officials' Salaries.

Tilak moved, and Brandon seconded a motion to support the proposed Charter amendments to Sections 202, 300, and 603(c) with the following amendments:

- a. Align salary setting for all elected officials to occur in the same year, so that the PEC duty of setting the Mayor's salary and the revised method for setting the salary of City Councilmember would take effect in 2028, the same year as salary setting for the City Attorney and City Auditor; and

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- b. Revise the new language in Section 603(c) to clarify that the PEC has the option to seek the assistance of the City Administrator and/or outside consultants at its discretion, but it is not obligated to do so.

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard; Ralph Kanz; Helen Hutchison.

Tilak moved, and Brandon seconded to amend the motion to include the suggestion that City Council consider amendments to conduct salary setting for all elected officials every four years rather than biennially to further depoliticize the salary setting process and to conserve PEC staff resources.

Ayes: Tilak, Apfeld, Bayeva, Brandon, Fisher, Micik, Upton.

Noes: None.

Abstentions: None.

Vote: 7-0.

Motion passed.

Following the vote to amend the original motion, Commissioners voted on the motion as amended.

Ayes: Tilak, Apfeld, Bayeva, Brandon, Fisher, Micik, Upton.

Noes: None.

Abstentions: None.

Vote: 7-0.

Motion passed.

Non-Interference in Administrative Affairs.

Tilak moved, and Micik seconded, to support the proposed Charter amendments to Sections 218 and 603(b) with the following amendments: Revise the amendments to 603(b) to limit the PEC's duty of enforcement to the new Section 218(d), which maintains the prohibition on Councilmember interference in administrative affairs, and exclude the new Sections 218(a), (b), and (c) from the laws the PEC has a duty to enforce enumerated in Section 603(b).

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard; Ralph Kanz.

Ayes: Tilak, Apfeld, Bayeva, Brandon, Fisher, Micik, Upton.

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Noes: None.

Abstentions: None.

Vote: 7-0.

Motion passed.

7. Case Closure Plan.

PEC staff are working to close cases according to a seven-point rubric to address a severe complaint backlog. Enforcement Chief Tovah Ackerman presented, and the Commission discussed the staff's recommendation to close the following cases:

- In the Matter of Darrel Carey and the East Bay Small Business Council (PEC # 18-17). Staff recommend that the Commission close PEC Case No. 18-17 with no further action.
- In the Matter of the Oakland Redistricting Commission (PEC # 23-17). Staff recommend that the Commission close PEC Case No. 23-17 with no further action.

Upton moved, and Apfeld seconded, to adopt the staff's recommendation.

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard; Ralph Kanz.

Ayes: Tilak, Apfeld, Bayeva, Brandon, Fisher, Micik, Upton.

Noes: None.

Abstentions: None.

Vote: 7-0.

Motion passed.

Chair Upton announced a meeting break at 9:23 p.m.

The meeting was called back to order at 9:34 p.m.

INFORMATION/DISCUSSION ITEMS

8. Oakland Campaign Reform Act (OCRA) Guide 2026.

Senior Ethics Analyst Jelani Killings presented an updated guide to the Oakland Campaign Reform Act, including new content explaining recent changes to the Act enacted with the passage of City Council

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amendments in January 2026.

Public Comment: None.

9. Enforcement Report.

Enforcement Chief Tovah Ackerman reported on, and Commissioners discussed, a summary of the Commission's enforcement process, caseload, enforcement-related litigation, and case closures or dismissals.

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard.

10. Executive Director Report.

Executive Director Suzanne Doran reported on overall priorities and PEC activities, such as budget, staffing, and PEC legislative and policy initiatives, since the last Commission meeting, as well as specific program updates included as attachments.

Public Comment: None.

11. Reports on Subcommittees and Commissioner Assignments.

Commissioners provided updates regarding ad hoc subcommittees: 1) Transparency Ad-Hoc Subcommittee and 2) Democracy Dollars Pilot Ad Hoc Subcommittee.

Public Comment: Gene Hazzard.

12. Future Meeting Business.

Public Comment: None.

The meeting adjourned at 10:14 p.m.



Francis Upton IV, Chair
Karun Tilak, Vice Chair
Luke Apfeld
Tanya Bayeva
L. Lawrence Brandon
Angi Fisher
Ryan Micik

Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

TO: Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Tovah Ackerman, Enforcement Chief
DATE: July 3, 2026
RE: Recommendations for Closures under the 2025 Complaint Backlog Strategy for the July 15, 2026 PEC Meeting

This memorandum presents abbreviated summaries of proposed case closures under the Complaint Backlog Strategy plan. Enforcement Staff carefully assessed each case according to a seven-point rubric and recommend the Commission approve closure.

Background

At the May 21, 2025, Commission meeting, Enforcement Staff presented a case closure plan based on a seven-point rubric to address a severe, longstanding complaint backlog and restore a functioning program with a sustainable caseload. (See [Enforcement Report re: Complaint Backlog Strategy for the May 21, 2025, Regular Meeting](#)).

The seven-point rubric used for assessing these cases for closure includes:

- Severity of the alleged violation;
- Impact of a Commission decision;
- Timing of alleged misconduct;
- Availability of a meaningful remedy;
- Level of investigative resources needed to substantiate a violation;
- Probability of substantiating allegations; and
- Availability of enforcement resources.

Under the Commission's [Mediation and Complaint Procedures](#), Commission Staff may recommend closure of a complaint if it falls within the Commission's jurisdiction but there is reason to support

CLOSURE RECOMMENDATIONS UNDER 2025 COMPLAINT BACKLOG STRATEGY – JULY 15, 2026

closure. Unlike dismissals after preliminary review, which are within Staff's discretion, the Commission must take formal action in order to close these complaints.

Staff Recommendation

Based on case analysis under the rubric criteria, Staff recommend the following case(s) to the Commission for closure as part of the 2025 Complaint Backlog Strategy:

1. ***Proposed Closure with No Action: In the Matter of David Silver (PEC # 19-16).*** In September 2019, PEC Staff received a formal complaint alleging that the Respondent violated the Government Ethics Act (GEA) by concurrently holding positions for City Education Director and for Education Director with Oakland Promise/Oakland Public Education Fund. Because both roles were not public offices, this does not violate the "incompatible public offices" section of GEA. In addition, PEC staff does not recommend pursuing an investigation into whether the respondent was employed by or received compensation from a party to a City contract on which he personally and substantially participated. Given that the present record does not establish that the Respondent personally and substantially participated in awarding a relevant City contract while receiving compensation from the contracting party, and proving or disproving that element now would require substantial reconstruction of old payroll, grant, contract, and role-participation records with limited remedial or deterrent value, the backlog review retroactive factors weigh against additional PEC enforcement activity in this matter.

Accordingly, PEC Staff recommends that the Commission close PEC Case No. 19-16 with no further action.

2. ***Proposed Closure with No Action: In the Matter of Tyfahra Milele (then-Chair of the Oakland Police Commission) and the Oakland Police Commission (PEC # 23-01).*** In January 2023, PEC Staff received a formal complaint alleging that the Respondents violated the Sunshine Ordinance / Brown Act in connection with a 2022 Oakland Police Commission closed session agenda item concerning the Inspector General. Complainant (the Inspector General at the time) stated that while the agenda noticed her public employee performance evaluation, Police Commission counsel told her before the meeting that the Commission would not be discussing the Complainant individually and would instead be discussing the evaluation tool. The present record contains stale and contradictory interviews with the Complainant, the Respondent, and the OPC attorney, but does not establish that the closed session was merely a generic tool discussion outside the performance evaluation exception. Given that substantial additional work would be required to materially improve the record, including soliciting extremely dated eyewitness accounts, and given that the allegations raise a potential Sunshine Ordinance violation over which the PEC has limited enforcement

CLOSURE RECOMMENDATIONS UNDER 2025 COMPLAINT BACKLOG STRATEGY – JULY 15, 2026

authority, the backlog review retroactive factors weigh against additional PEC enforcement activity in this matter.

Accordingly, PEC Staff recommends that the Commission close PEC Case No. 23-01 with no further action.

3. ***Proposed Closure with No Action: In the Matter of Ronnie Turner (PEC # 24-13).*** In May 2024, PEC Staff opened a proactive complaint alleging that the Respondent (a registered lobbyist) violated the Lobbyist Registration Act by not filing the Q4 2023 lobbyist activity report despite multiple contacts by PEC Staff. The PEC's public lobbyist filing webpage, as of May 19, 2026, lists a Termination Report for Quarter 4 2023 for the Respondent, with a recorded filing date of June 14, 2024, and no reported lobbying activity (no contacts with City officials, no relevant employment of or by City officials or candidates, and no political contribution solicitation activity in the listed schedules). Given that the report was ultimately filed and because the late-filed report showed no lobbying activity, the backlog review retroactive factors weigh against additional PEC enforcement activity in this matter.

Accordingly, PEC Staff recommends that the Commission close PEC Case No. 24-13 with no further action.

Ethical Climate **REPORT**

2025 - 26 Survey Results

**OAKLAND
CITY AUDITOR**

Michael C. Houston, MPP, CIA

June 29, 2026

Independent Auditor. Reporting Directly to the Residents.

07-15-2026 PEC Regular Meeting Packet 16



**CITY OF
OAKLAND**

Office of the City Auditor



CITY HALL · ONE FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA 4TH FLOOR · OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA · 94612

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City Auditor

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www.oaklandauditor.com

June 29, 2026

RE: City of Oakland Ethical Climate Survey (2025-26)

Dear Residents of Oakland, Mayor Lee, Honorable Councilmembers, City Attorney Richardson, Acting City Administrator Lake, and Fellow City Employees,

At the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026, our Office issued an ethical climate survey to gauge City employees' sense of the ethical climate within the City. The Office of the City Auditor previously issued ethical climate survey reports using this same survey instrument in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014, and 2020.

The survey, developed by the Institute for Local Government, is designed to provide an overview of the health of an agency's ethical climate, including its capacity for ethical decision-making, both by the organization and by individuals within the organization.

Overall, survey respondents rated the City's ethical climate a 'medium' score of 222 out of 300. This score indicates that the City has room for improvement, according to the Institute for Local Government.

The enclosed report provides aggregate results for employees' perceptions of ethical climate at the staff, management, and elected levels, based on the responses of 555 survey respondents. We also received 178 open-ended responses, which give more specific insights into how they see the City's ethical climate, including ways the City can improve it.

I am grateful to the staff that submitted this confidential survey to help us better understand the state of the City's ethical climate. As noted in the report, ethical culture begins at the top and influences all levels of an organization. We each have a role in promoting a culture of transparency and accountability in our local government for our employees, as well as our residents and business owners.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MCHouston". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Michael C. Houston
City Auditor

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City of Oakland Ethical Climate Survey (2025-26)

Background

In January 2025, two months after Oakland voters recalled former Mayor Sheng Thao, she was indicted on charges of bribery, mail and wire fraud, and conspiracy. While this case has not yet gone to trial, the allegations call into question the City of Oakland's ethical climate. Elected officials and leadership shape organizational culture, accountability, and trust in government. To gauge employees' sense of the City of Oakland's ethical climate, the Office of the City Auditor issued a survey to City employees at the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026. The survey instrument, developed by the Institute for Local Government, is divided into three sections: the first gathers opinions on the ethical environments of employees, the second on the ethics of management, and the third on perceptions of the ethics of the City's elected officials. The survey is designed to provide an overview of the health of an agency's ethical climate, including its capacity for ethical decision-making, both by the organization and by individuals within the organization. The Office of the City Auditor previously issued ethical climate survey reports using this same survey instrument in 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2020.

What We Found

Overall, survey respondents rated the City's ethical climate a 'medium' score of 222 out of 300. According to the Institute for Local Government, this score indicates that the City is in a good place but has room for improvement. Employees ranked their perceptions of frontline employees' and management's ethical environments higher than their perceptions of elected officials' ethical environment. The section on employees scored 78, which is rated high within the Institute for Local Government's scoring rubric. Management employees were rated 77, which is also a high score. Employees' perceptions of elected officials scored 67, which is a medium score indicating room for improvement. This survey is based on participants' perceptions and reflects the employees' views at the time the survey was conducted. Responses should indicate perceived ethics-related risk as opposed to factual determinations.

What We Recommend

This report is informational. It is intended to provide a snapshot of the City's ethical climate. Employees who responded to the survey's open-ended questions provided actionable insights into how the City could improve its ethical culture by enhancing organizational transparency and communication, increasing management and supervisor accountability, and addressing City Council conduct and governance. Respondents also emphasized a desire for consistency in merit-based hiring and advancement, policy enforcement and enforcement of ethics violations, ethics training and awareness, and more robust audit and oversight structures.

INTRODUCTION

Ethical culture begins at the top and influences all levels of an organization. Leadership may establish ethical culture through “demonstrating a commitment to act fairly, transparently, and in a trustworthy manner, [and] treating people within the organization, as well as the public, with respect and compassion.”¹ Research has found that ethical leadership “is crucial for employee perceptions in organizations recovering from corruption.”²

Our Office issued a survey to City employees at the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026 to gauge employees’ sense of the City of Oakland’s ethical climate.

The survey tool, developed by the Institute for Local Government, measures the degree to which ethical standards influence organizational and individual decision-making and helps to identify potential “ethical blind spots.”³ The survey is divided into three sections: the first section gauges opinions about the ethical environments of individual employees, the second asks for opinions on the ethics of management, and the third asks about perceptions of the ethics of the City’s elected officials. The survey was distributed to all employees via the City’s electronic mailing list.

Each section has ten statements with five possible responses, ranging from rarely to always, and an option for “don’t know.”⁴ We weighed the responses based on the Institute for Local Government’s methodology, as outlined in the Methodology section at the end of the report. Ethical climate scores for each survey section and the survey overall are explained in a scoring guide issued by the Institute for Local Government which can be found in Exhibit 2.

Throughout the report, we have included select quotes from participants’ open-ended responses. These quotes appear in boxes like the one below.

“ **Quote:** *I think most people believe in making ethical decisions until that decision is difficult to make based on extenuating factors such as political expediency, convenience, or public perception as to what is important. Then, the higher they are [within the organization], or more politically motivated their work is, the harder it is for them to adhere to ethical standards.*

¹ JoAnne Speers. “Leading by Example: Building an Ethical Culture from the Top Down.” icma.org. March 1, 2026. Accessed April 30, 2026. <https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/leading-example-building-ethical-culture-top-down>.

² Tansu Demir, Christopher G. Reddick, and Bruce J. Perlman, “In Search of Ethics Infrastructure in U.S. Local Governments: Building Blocks or Dead End?,” *Administration & Society* 55, no. 10 (2023): 1866-1892. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00953997231190571>

³ <https://www.ca-ilg.org/post/beyond-compliance-assessing-your-agencys-ethics-culture-0>

⁴ Statements that did not receive an answer (i.e., were left blank) and statements that received a “don’t know” answer were not considered in this analysis. This methodology varies from past ethical climate surveys, so we did not compare scores against previous years.

SURVEY RESULTS

The results of the survey show a diverse range of opinions and feelings about the ethical climate of the City.

- **The City of Oakland has room to improve.** Participants gave Oakland an overall score of 222 out of 300. The Institute for Local Government categorizes scores between 150 and 224 as a medium score. According to the Institute for Local Government, this means the City's ethical climate is in a good place but has room to improve.
- **Employees rank their perception of frontline and management employees higher than their perception of the ethics of elected officials.** The section on employees scored 78, the section on management scored 77, both of which are rated high within the Institute for Local Government scoring rubric. Elected officials scored 67, which is a medium score.
- **Employees identified numerous ways the City of Oakland can improve its ethical culture.** Of the 555 participants, 178 or 32 percent of all participants provided open-ended thoughts and comments. Over half of open-ended responses were negative in sentiment. Common themes for improving the City's ethical culture include increasing management and supervisor accountability, enhancing organizational transparency and communication, and addressing City Council conduct and governance. Respondents also described merit-based hiring and advancement, consistent policy enforcement, ethics training and awareness, stronger enforcement of ethics violations, more robust audit and oversight structures. Several comments related insufficient staffing and resources to lower employee morale and ethical climate.

Participation in the survey was voluntary and anonymous. A total of 555 participants completed the survey, which represents about 17 percent of the total positions filled in the City.⁵ The majority of participants reported working for the City between one and five years (see Appendix A for descriptive data on respondents).

Many Respondents Indicated they Did Not Know About Elected Officials' Ethics

Respondents were given the option to answer "don't know" for each of the questions which indicates the question does not apply to the participant. The elected officials section received significantly more "don't knows" than the staff or management sections. Thirty-four percent of the answers in the elected official section were "don't know" compared to 5 and 11 percent of the questions in the staff and management sections, respectively. This indicates greater knowledge of, or confidence in, staff and management's ethical behavior than that of elected officials.

⁵ Per the March 2026 City Staffing Report, there were 3,255 filled positions as of February 1, 2026.

New Employees Gave the City's Ethical Climate Higher Ratings than Employees with more Tenure

Employees with less than one year of service rated employees, management, and elected officials with higher scores than did employees who have worked for the City for more than one year. Regardless of tenure, employees perceive ethical environments of employees (Section 1) to be relatively high. Ethical culture among elected officials received the lowest overall ratings (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1: Elected Officials Received the Lowest Scores by All Participant Groups With More than One Year of Tenure

Years of Service	Section 1 Employees	Section 2 Management	Section 3 Elected	Totals Combined
Less than a Year (<1)	83 High	87 High	84 High	254 High
One to Five Years (1-5)	80 High	81 High	66 Medium	227 High
Five to Ten Years (5-10)	78 High	75 High	69 Medium	222 Medium
Over Ten Years (10+)	75 High	73 Medium	62 Medium	210 Medium
Unknown	78 High	77 High	64 Medium	218 Medium

Source: Auditor analysis of the survey results.



Quote: *I'm still kind of new, but my co-workers and management team are great, and everyone seems to want to help the residents of the city of Oakland.*



Quote: *The City Council is blatantly corrupt.*

For Medium and Low Scores, the Institute for Local Government Recommends Evaluating Areas of Weakness and Identifying Aspects of the Culture that Foster Problematic Behaviors

For medium ratings, the Institute for Local Government recommends identifying areas of improvement by evaluating the areas of weakness indicated by the questionnaire and considering targeted remedial actions, as shown in Exhibit 2.

Similarly, for low ratings, the guide recommends identifying aspects of the agency's culture that need remediating. None of the three sections in the survey received a low score.

Exhibit 2: The Scoring Guide for the Ethical Climate Survey Provides Example Steps to Take Towards Improved Ethical Climate

Score	Rating	What it Means/Steps to Take
75-100 per part or 225-300 for the entire survey	High  Green light	Your agency has a strong ethical environment. Keep up the good work, including such steps as: • Incorporating ethics into the hiring and evaluation process for staff • Conducting regular ethics-related learning opportunities, including examples of ethical dilemmas and how to resolve them • Going through specific items on the assessment to identify further opportunities for positive change • Reinforcing the importance of ethical considerations in agency behaviors and decisions
50-74 per part or 150-224 for the entire survey	Medium  Caution	Your agency is in a good place but has room to improve by doing the following: • Evaluating the areas of weakness indicated by the questionnaire and considering targeted remedial actions • Analyzing the messages that staff and others receive and send about ethics • Reviewing the agency's policies, including the criteria by which staff are evaluated • Considering whether having a code of ethics would be helpful for the agency • Following the best practices indicated in the box above
0-49 per part or 0-149 for the entire survey	Low Stop 	Your agency's culture needs significant change. Suggested activities include: • Identifying the aspects of the agency's culture that foster the problematic behaviors and analyze how to remediate them • Consulting with your agency's attorney about potential violations of laws and agency regulations • Following the best practices indicated in the boxes above

Source: Auditor adaptation of scoring guide in "Assessing Your Agency's Ethical Culture," issued by the Institute for Local Government, September 2006.

Survey Respondents Indicated that the City Could Improve Organizational Transparency and Communication, as well as Management and Supervisor Accountability, Among Other Areas

The survey gave respondents an opportunity to provide open-ended feedback on how the City could enhance its ethical climate. One hundred and seventy-eight respondents provided comments in their own words. We reviewed these comments based on sentiment and content,

and grouped them to identify actionable insights.⁶ Exhibit 3 shows a count of themes that came up within open-ended answers to the prompt, “Please feel free to add your comments and/or ideas on how to enhance the City of Oakland's ethical climate and culture in the text box below.” Select quotes from this open-ended question are included throughout the report.

Over half of open-ended responses were negative in sentiment.⁷ Common themes for improving the City’s ethical culture include enhancing organizational transparency and communication, increasing management and supervisor accountability, and addressing City Council conduct and governance. Respondents also described merit-based hiring and advancement, consistent policy enforcement, ethics training and awareness, stronger enforcement of ethics violations, and more robust audit and oversight structures. Several comments related insufficient staffing and resources to lower employee morale and ethical climate.

“ **Quote:** *There is a lot of talk about how we should improve the ethical climate, but when it comes to action there is not a lot of action.*

⁶ We did not collect any personally identifiable information within the survey. We used generative artificial intelligence (AI) within the online survey tool to thematically code anonymous open-ended survey responses. The survey data is not used to train AI models or otherwise made public. We manually reviewed coded themes against the raw data for accuracy and relevance. We also manually reviewed and identified themes within the data.

⁷ Each open-ended statement made by participants was assigned a sentiment: “negative,” “neutral,” “positive,” or, for responses that did not fit these classifications, “unknown.” Fifty-six percent were negative in sentiment, 29 percent neutral, 11 percent positive, and 5 percent unknown. Unknown comments generally stated “N/A” or similar.

Exhibit 3: In Open-Ended Comments, Respondents Described Opportunities for the City to Enhance Organizational Transparency and Communication and Management and Supervisor Accountability and towards a Better Ethical Climate



Source: Auditor analysis of responses to the Ethical Climate Survey/Integrity Assessment sent to staff Citywide in 2025 and 2026. Note that each comment could have more than one theme identified, so the number exceeds the number of answers. Additionally, 48 comments had 'no applied theme.' These comments included items such as "thank you," "none," "nothing to add," and comments on the survey's construction. We used generative artificial intelligence (AI) within the online survey tool to thematically code anonymous open-ended survey responses. The survey data is not used to train AI models and no personally identifiable information was collected in the survey.

Within these themes, City staff provided actionable insights into how the City can improve its ethical climate. Staff identified opportunities for improved transparency and communication through:

- Making policies and decisions clearer to staff, through improved and consistent communications from leadership.
- Implementing standards for responsiveness to communications and clear policies for reporting ethical concerns.

“ **Quote:** *Revise old policies and procedures. Set clear expectations and guidelines. Help and hold meetings for awareness.*

Staff described the need for accountability at the staff and leadership levels, recommending:

- Consistent performance appraisal processes, potentially with opportunities for employees to inform their managers' reviews,
- Employee recognition,
- Addressing issues related to City Council conduct and governance, emphasizing ethical leadership, and the prohibition of interference, and
- Strengthening leadership credibility through visible commitment, consistent actions, policy enforcement, and disciplinary action when ethical violations occur.

“ **Quote:** *Enforce policy and accountability. Monitor productivity and performance. Recognize excellence with promotions.*

Additionally, staff described organizational disconnects—between the Mayor's Office, City Administrator's Office, and within and across departments—that contribute to lack of transparency in decision-making and direction.

“ **Quote:** *Total lack of transparency and collaboration between departments and often within...*

Staff also identified uneven workloads, stemming from budget constraints and uneven performance appraisals, as contributing to negative ethical pressures and impacts on employee morale. These represent areas where awareness may improve City leadership's ability to address employee concerns. Additionally, awareness can support improved staffing levels and resource allocations to reduce pressures that may lead to unethical practices.

SURVEY SECTION 1: EMPLOYEES

The first section of the survey focused on how employees perceive the ethical climate they work in (see Exhibit 4). This section received a score of 78 out of 100. Per the Institute for Local Government this is a high score. This score shows the ethical expectations the City of Oakland expects of employees is relatively clear to them.

Exhibit 4: Rating Expectations of Themselves, Employees Indicated Treating Everyone Fairly and Equitably as a Common Expectation, while the Lowest Scoring Indicator of Ethical Climate Related to Feeling Encouraged to Report Questionable Ethical Behavior or Policy

In my local government, I AM...	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't Know	Weighted Score	Rating
Encouraged to speak up about any organizational or departmental practices and policies that are ethically questionable.	31%	16%	20%	27%	7%	6.34	Medium
Expected to report questionable ethical behaviors of others.	45%	13%	16%	20%	7%	7.22	Medium
Clear about where to turn to for advice about ethical issues.	31%	19%	21%	18%	10%	6.75	Medium
Expected to follow the spirit as well as letter of the law in my work for the organization/department.	57%	19%	11%	7%	6%	8.35	High
Expected to use ethical behaviors in getting results.	68%	12%	9%	7%	4%	8.68	High
Expected to tell the complete truth in my work for the organization/department.	70%	14%	7%	5%	4%	8.85	High
Expected to treat everyone fairly and equitably, regardless of personal or political connections.	77%	10%	6%	6%	1%	9.01	High
Expected to follow stated policy of the organization/department and not the desires of individual elected or appointed officials.	59%	16%	14%	6%	5%	8.39	High
Surrounded by coworkers who know the difference between ethical and unethical behaviors, and seem to care about the difference.	35%	28%	21%	14%	2%	7.16	Medium
Working with one or more trusted confidantes with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas at work.	41%	18%	20%	14%	6%	7.30	Medium

Source: Auditor analysis of the survey results.

Note: High = 7.5 - 10, Medium = 5.0 - 7.4, Low = 0 - 4.9

SURVEY SECTION 2: MANAGEMENT

The second section of the survey focused on how employees perceive the ethics of management (see Exhibit 5). This section received a score of 77 out of 100. Per the Institute for Local Government this is a high score. This score shows employees have confidence in the ethical practices of management in the City of Oakland.

Exhibit 5: Considering Management, Respondents Indicated that Managers Are Likely to Refuse Gifts and/or Accept Special Treatment from Those Doing Business with the City of Oakland, but Less Likely to Appoint and Reward People Based on Performance and Contribution to the City's Goals

In my local government, MANAGEMENT...	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't Know	Weighted Score	Rating
Create an environment in which staff is comfortable raising ethical concerns.	36%	20%	19%	22%	3%	6.78	Medium
Appreciate staff bringing forward bad news and don't "shoot the messenger" for doing so.	36%	20%	19%	19%	6%	6.94	Medium
Expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results – not "whatever it takes."	51%	20%	13%	12%	4%	7.87	High
Gear their decisions to the spirit as well as letter of the law.	42%	23%	15%	12%	8%	7.58	High
Treat the public with civility and respect.	63%	21%	11%	3%	2%	8.70	High
Use public resources only for organizational/departmental purposes and not for their own personal or political uses (such as agency supplies, staff time and equipment).	56%	18%	9%	5%	12%	8.55	High
Appoint and reward people on the basis of performance and contribution to the organization's goals and services.	29%	17%	21%	21%	11%	6.52	Medium
Treat all members of the public equitably and with fairness and equality regardless of who has people or political connections.	51%	19%	15%	8%	7%	8.04	High
Help elected officials work within their policy role and stay out of day-to-day work of the department.	29%	16%	16%	8%	31%	7.37	Medium
Refuse to accept gifts and/or special treatment from those with who do business with the organization/department.	57%	8%	6%	3%	26%	9.03	High

Source: Auditor analysis of the survey results.

Note: High = 7.5 - 10, Medium = 5.0 - 7.4, Low = 0 - 4.9

SURVEY SECTION 3: ELECTED OFFICIALS

The third section of the survey focused on how employees perceive the ethics of elected officials (see Exhibit 6). This section received a score of 67 out of 100. Per the Institute for Local Government this is a medium score. This score shows employees perceive the ethical climate of elected officials has room for improvement.

Exhibit 6: Many Respondents Indicated They Don't Know About the Ethical Climate or Actions of Elected Officials; Just Over Half Indicated Elected Officials Treat the Public with Civility and Respect Always or Almost Always, and 20 Percent Felt that Elected Officials Rarely Create an Environment in which Staff Feel Comfortable Raising Ethical Concerns

In my local government, ELECTED OFFICIALS...	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't Know	Weighted Score	Rating
Create an environment in which staff is comfortable raising ethical concerns.	16%	13%	21%	20%	30%	5.90	Medium
Appreciate staff bringing forward bad news and don't "shoot the messenger" for doing so.	19%	11%	18%	17%	35%	6.21	Medium
Expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results – not "whatever it takes."	25%	16%	16%	14%	29%	6.84	Medium
Gear their decisions to the spirit as well as letter of the law.	17%	17%	19%	14%	33%	6.40	Medium
Treat the public with civility and respect.	29%	22%	23%	5%	22%	7.39	Medium
Use public resources only for agency purposes and not for their own personal or political uses (such as organizational/departmental supplies, staff time and equipment).	22%	14%	15%	8%	42%	7.13	Medium
Allow the staff to handle day-to-day management issues and don't try to get involved.	15%	18%	26%	11%	30%	6.31	Medium
Treat all members of the public equitably and with fairness and equality regardless of who has people or political connections.	22%	14%	22%	11%	31%	6.71	Medium
Exclude themselves from decisions when reasonable members of the public might question their ability to make a fair decision.	12%	12%	20%	12%	43%	6.04	Medium
Refuse to accept gifts and/or special treatment from those who are doing business with the City.	26%	8%	10%	7%	49%	7.61	High

Source: Auditor analysis of the survey results.

Note: High = 7.5 - 10, Medium = 5.0 - 7.4, Low = 0 - 4.9

CONCLUSION

Research supports the application of strong ethics programs in reducing pressure for unethical behavior, retaliation, and misconduct.⁸ Based on the results of this survey, the City has room to improve its ethical climate. City leadership can set a positive tone at the top by demonstrating a commitment to ethical conduct through consistent actions, open and transparent communication, and addressing ethical concerns consistently. Leadership can also take specific actions to promote an ethical culture through updates to Citywide administrative instructions or policies and procedures, reviewing opportunities to incorporate ethics and management accountability within the performance appraisal process, and providing training to management and leadership on creating and maintaining ethical culture.

“ **Quote:** *Support for ethical behavior must start at the top, setting a clear example for all staff. By promoting a culture of integrity, accountability, and open communication, we can enhance the City's ethical climate and strengthen public trust.*

⁸ Demir, Reddick, and Perlman, “In Search of Ethics Infrastructure in U.S. Local Governments,” 1870.

METHODOLOGY

The Office of the City Auditor collected the data through a web-based survey tool distributed via the City's electronic mailing list. All City employees were invited to take the survey in November 2025 and again in February 2026 due to a low initial response rate. A total of 555 surveys were completed.

Survey Design

This survey was developed to gauge employees' perceptions of ethics, accountability, and the organizational culture of the City.

The survey consisted of thirty statements which were broken into three sections of ten statements. The survey asked participants to answer statements about the ethical climate of employees in section one, of management in section two, and of elected officials in section three.

This survey used a 5-point Likert scale. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement in the survey using the response options "Always," "Almost Always," "Sometimes," "Rarely," or "Don't Know."

Based on the Institute for Local Government's weighting scheme, responses were weighed on a scale of zero to ten after the number of responses to each statement was calculated. The higher the number, the stronger the agreement with each statement.

Response Choice	Weighted Score
Always	10
Almost Always	7.5
Sometimes	5
Rarely	2.5

After weighting each statement, the climate rating score was calculated by dividing the total weighted score by the total number of responses to the statement. Blank and don't know responses were excluded from this analysis.⁹

⁹ Past ethical climate surveys weighted "don't know" responses as 0. For this survey, we excluded "don't know" from the weighting scheme. As a result, the weighted scores of this survey are not comparable to previous surveys. We excluded counts of "don't know" from the weighted scores because "don't know" reflects uncertainty and a weight of 0 may not be consistent with employees' views, as it effectively scores "don't know" lower than "rarely," an affirmative low score. The Institute for Local Government does not specify the weighting of "don't know" in the survey instrument. (See <https://www.ca-ilg.org/post/beyond-compliance-assessing-your-agencys-ethics-culture-0>.) We reached out to the Institute for Local Government for clarification, but they did not respond before publication.

Exhibit 7: Ethical Climate Survey Graduated Scoring Methodology for Each Statement

Response	Points	Scoring Effect	Meaning of the Score
Always	10	High	Your agency has a strong ethical environment
Almost Always	7.5	High	Your agency has a strong ethical environment
Sometimes	5	Medium	Your agency is in a good place, but has room for improvement
Rarely	2.5	Low	Your agency's culture needs significant change

Source: Auditor summary of the scale used the Institute for Local Government.

Limitations

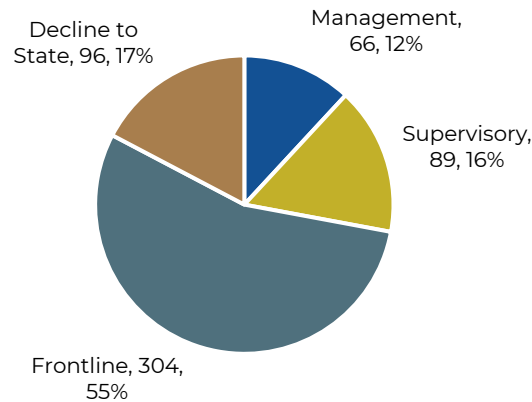
This survey is based on participants' self-reported perceptions and reflects the employees' views at the time the survey was conducted. Responses should indicate perceived ethics-related risk as opposed to factual determinations.

Appendix A: Respondent Demographics

Total Participants by Staffing Position

Frontline employees made up 55 percent of all participants, while managers and supervisors represented 12 percent and 16 percent, respectively. The remaining 17 percent of respondents declined to provide their rank (frontline, supervisory, and management).

Exhibit 8: Those in Management and Supervisory Roles Made Up 28 Percent of All Participants

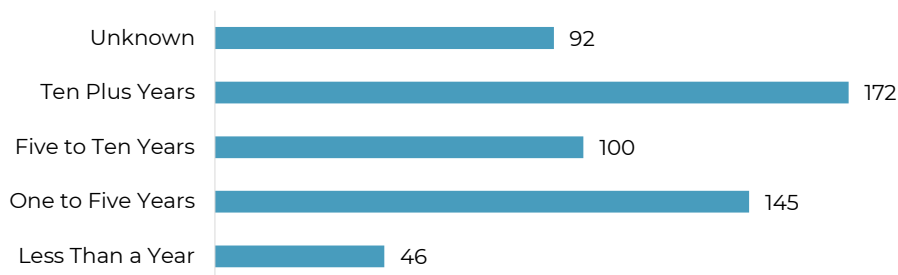


Source: Auditor analysis of survey results from 2025 and 2026.

Respondents' Tenure with the City Varied

Participation in the survey included employees with less than one year of service to more than 20 years. Exhibit 8 below shows the number of participants by their years of service.

Exhibit 9: The Plurality of Participants have Worked for the City for Ten or More Years



Source: Auditor analysis of survey results from 2025 and 2026.

Note: The 92 unknown answers represent participants who chose not to answer the question.

Appendix B: Resources for Raising Ethical Concerns and Questions

The following is a resource for City employees to report ethical concerns and behavior. The open-ended section of the survey contained comments alleging sexual harassment, workplace discrimination and bullying, nepotism, and preferential hiring outside civil service rules. The Office of the City Auditor conducts performance audits and investigates allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse of power. In reviewing the open-ended survey responses, we flagged concerns that merit audit or investigation. To report other ethical concerns and behavior outside the regular duties conducted by the Office of the City Auditor, refer to the following resources:

- If you would like to report a **conflict of interest**, a **campaign finance** or a **Sunshine Ordinance** violation, file a complaint with the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) [HERE](#). You may also contact PEC staff for guidance on questions relating to ethics and transparency rules by emailing ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov or calling 510-238-3593. Additional PEC resources and contact information is listed online [HERE](#).
- If you experience **discrimination**, **sexual harassment**, and/or **retaliation against a protected class**, contact Employment Investigations and Civil Rights Compliance [HERE](#) or call 510-238-3500.
- If you need assistance with a **labor/management grievance**, contact your labor union representative [HERE](#).
- If you need to report a **crime/file a criminal incident** report, contact the Oakland Police Department [HERE](#) under “Services” and “Resources.” For immediate emergencies (risk to life, health, property, or public safety) call 911. Non-emergencies can be reported by calling the Oakland Police Department’s non-emergency hotline: 510-777-3333.
- If you need to report **City Council interference**, contact your department director, the City Attorney [HERE](#), or the Public Ethics Commission [HERE](#) to file a complaint.
- If you need to report **equal employment opportunity violations** or a **discriminatory work environment**, contact your Equal Opportunity Representative or file an Equal Employment Opportunity complaint [HERE](#)
- If you need to report **workplace violence** or **threats of violence**, report to your supervisor or manager or department director. If they are not available, contact the Threat Assessment Team or Risk Manager (510) 986-2898.
- If you need to report **government fraud, waste, or abuse** in the City of Oakland, submit a complaint to the Whistleblower Hotline [HERE](#), or call 888-329-6390.



**CITY OF
OAKLAND**

Office of the City Auditor

CITY AUDITOR

Michael C. Houston, MPP, CIA

WHISTLEBLOWER HOTLINE

1-888-329-6390 (Interpreter available)

SUBMIT A REPORT ONLINE

www.OaklandAuditor.com/Whistleblower

Office of the City Auditor

1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza · 4th Floor, City Hall · Oakland, CA 94612
(510) 238-3378

CityAuditor@OaklandCA.gov

Contact Us!

We'd love to hear from you.

联系我们!

我们非常乐意听到您的反馈。

¡Contáctenos!

Nos encantaría saber de ti.



City of Oakland Ethical Climate Survey (2025-26)

Presentation of the City Auditor
Public Ethics Commission
July 15, 2026

Ethical Climate Survey

- Survey to City employees at the end of 2025 and the beginning of 2026
- The survey instrument, developed by the Institute for Local Government, is divided into three sections:
 - Section 1: Ethical environments of employees
 - Section 2: Ethics of management
 - Section 3: Perceptions of the ethics of the City's elected officials
- 555 City employees responded
- Overall, survey respondents rated the City's ethical climate 222/300
- 178 respondents provided feedback to an open-ended question

Scoring Guide

75-100 per part or 225-300 for the entire survey	High
50-74 per part or 150-224 for the entire survey	Medium
0-49 per part or 0-149 for the entire survey	Low

Source: Auditor adaptation of scoring guide in “Assessing Your Agency’s Ethical Culture,” issued by the Institute for Local Government, September 2006.

Ethical Scores by Employee Tenure

Exhibit 1: Elected Officials Received the Lowest Scores by All Participant Groups With More than One Year of Tenure

Years of Service	Section 1 Employees	Section 2 Management	Section 3 Elected	Totals Combined
Less than a Year (<1)	83 High	87 High	84 High	254 High
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Five to Ten Years (5-10)	78 High	75 High	69 Medium	222 Medium
Over Ten Years (10+)	75 High	73 Medium	62 Medium	210 Medium
Unknown	78 High	77 High	64 Medium	218 Medium

Source: Auditor analysis of the survey results.

“ **Quote:** *There is a lot of talk about how we should improve the ethical climate, but when it comes to action there is not a lot of action.*

Themes in Open-Ended Comments



Source: Auditor analysis of responses to the Ethical Climate Survey/Integrity Assessment sent to staff Citywide in 2025 and 2026. Note that each comment could have more than one theme identified, so the number exceeds the number of answers. Additionally, 48 comments had 'no applied theme' or 'no response' or 'none' or 'nothing to add,' and comments on the survey's construction. We used generative artificial intelligence (AI) within the online survey tool to thematically code anonymous open-ended survey responses. The survey data is not used to train AI models and no personally identifiable information was collected in the survey.

“ **Quote:** *Revise old policies and procedures. Set clear expectations and guidelines. Help and hold meetings for awareness.*

“ **Quote:** *Enforce policy and accountability. Monitor productivity and performance. Recognize excellence with promotions.*

“ **Quote:** *Total lack of transparency and collaboration between departments and often within...*

Open-Ended Response Sentiment

Sentiment	Responses	Percentage
Negative	109	56%
Neutral	56	29%
Positive	21	11%
Unknown	9	5%

Source: Auditor analysis of survey results.

Note: Each open-ended statement made by participants was assigned a sentiment: “negative,” “neutral,” “positive,” or, for responses that did not fit these classifications, “unknown.” Unknown comments generally stated “N/A” or similar.

We did not collect any personally identifiable information within the survey. We used generative artificial intelligence (AI) within the online survey tool to thematically code anonymous open-ended survey responses. The survey data is not used to train AI models or otherwise made public. We manually reviewed coded themes against the raw data for accuracy and relevance. We also manually reviewed and identified themes within the data.

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Expected to report questionable ethical behaviors of others.	45%	13%	16%	20%	7%	7.22	Medium
Clear about where to turn to for advice about ethical issues.	31%	19%	21%	18%	10%	6.75	Medium
Expected to follow the spirit as well as letter of the law in my work for the organization/department.	57%	19%	11%	7%	6%	8.35	High
Expected to use ethical behaviors in getting results.	68%	12%	9%	7%	4%	8.68	High
Expected to tell the complete truth in my work for the organization/department.	70%	14%	7%	5%	4%	8.85	High
Expected to treat everyone fairly and equitably, regardless of personal or political connections.	77%	10%	6%	6%	1%	9.01	High
Expected to follow stated policy of the organization/department and not the desires of individual elected or appointed officials.	59%	16%	14%	6%	5%	8.39	High
Surrounded by coworkers who know the difference between ethical and unethical behaviors, and seem to care about the difference.	35%	28%	21%	14%	2%	7.16	Medium
Working with one or more trusted confidantes with whom I can discuss ethical dilemmas at work.	41%	18%	20%	14%	6%	7.30	Medium

Section 1: Employees

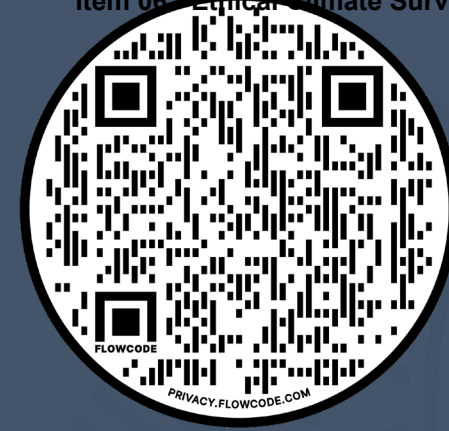
In my local government, MANAGEMENT...	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't Know	Weighted Score	Rating
Create an environment in which staff is comfortable raising ethical concerns.	36%	20%	19%	22%	3%	6.78	Medium
Appreciate staff bringing forward bad news and don't "shoot the messenger" for doing so.	36%	20%	19%	19%	6%	6.94	Medium
Expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results – not "whatever it takes."	51%	20%	13%	12%	4%	7.87	High
Gear their decisions to the spirit as well as letter of the law.	42%	23%	15%	12%	8%	7.58	High
Treat the public with civility and respect.	63%	21%	11%	3%	2%	8.70	High
Use public resources only for organizational/departmental purposes and not for their own personal or political uses (such as agency supplies, staff time and equipment).	56%	18%	9%	5%	12%	8.55	High
Appoint and reward people on the basis of performance and contribution to the organization's goals and services.	29%	17%	21%	21%	11%	6.52	Medium
Treat all members of the public equitably and with fairness and equality regardless of who has people or political connections.	51%	19%	15%	8%	7%	8.04	High
Help elected officials work within their policy role and stay out of day-to-day work of the department.	29%	16%	16%	8%	31%	7.37	Medium
Refuse to accept gifts and/or special treatment from those with who do business with the organization/department.	57%	8%	6%	3%	26%	9.03	High

Section 2: Management

In my local government, ELECTED OFFICIALS...	Always	Almost Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Don't Know	Weighted Score	Rating
Create an environment in which staff is comfortable raising ethical concerns.	16%	13%	21%	20%	30%	5.90	Medium
Appreciate staff bringing forward bad news and don't "shoot the messenger" for doing so.	19%	11%	18%	17%	35%	6.21	Medium
Expect staff to use ethical practices in getting results – not "whatever it takes."	25%	16%	16%	14%	29%	6.84	Medium
Gear their decisions to the spirit as well as letter of the law.	17%	17%	19%	14%	33%	6.40	Medium
Treat the public with civility and respect.	29%	22%	23%	5%	22%	7.39	Medium
Use public resources only for agency purposes and not for their own personal or political uses (such as organizational/departmental supplies, staff time and equipment).	22%	14%	15%	8%	42%	7.13	Medium
Allow the staff to handle day-to-day management issues and don't try to get involved.	15%	18%	26%	11%	30%	6.31	Medium
Treat all members of the public equitably and with fairness and equality regardless of who has people or political connections.	22%	14%	22%	11%	31%	6.71	Medium
Exclude themselves from decisions when reasonable members of the public might question their ability to make a fair decision.	12%	12%	20%	12%	43%	6.04	Medium
Refuse to accept gifts and/or special treatment from those who are doing business with the City.	26%	8%	10%	7%	49%	7.61	High

Section 3: Elected Officials

“ **Quote:** *Support for ethical behavior must start at the top, setting a clear example for all staff. By promoting a culture of integrity, accountability, and open communication, we can enhance the City’s ethical climate and strengthen public trust.*



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Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

TO: Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Jelani Killings, Senior Analyst, Engagement and Compliance
DATE: July 1, 2026
RE: 2026 LPF Program Implementation

The PEC administers the Limited Public Financing (LPF) Act, which provides public funds for City Council district candidates running for office in Oakland. Commission staff is gearing up for program implementation for the 2026 election. This memorandum provides an overview of the LPF program and plan for the 2026 election.

Background

The Limited Public Financing Act was adopted in 1999 to provide limited monetary assistance to candidates for local elective office for the purpose of helping ensure that all individuals have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in the elective and governmental process. The LPF Act was amended in 2010 to set specific parameters around who may participate, how funds may be used, and how the funds may be dispersed. The program now is a reimbursement system for City Council District candidates only.

In November 2022, the voters passed Measure W, which repealed and replaced Oakland's Limited Public Financing Act (LPF) Program with the Democracy Dollars Program. However, due to the fiscal shortfall the City is facing, the City Council has not appropriated any money, to be distributed to candidates, for Democracy Dollars. Subsequently, the Council passed legislation to temporarily reinstate LPF to bridge a gap in public funding for candidates until Democracy Dollars funds are available.

The Commission is responsible for administering the LPF program, including developing procedures, publishing reimbursement application forms, ensuring that candidates meet eligibility criteria, and issuing payments to candidates for qualified expenditures.

The process for applying for public funds begins after the City Clerk certifies the names of all candidates to appear on the ballot, shortly after the close of nominations on August 7, 2026, which is 88 days before the November election. No later than seven days after the City Clerk certifies the names

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of candidates, the Commission must determine at a public meeting whether the amount of money in the Election Campaign Fund is adequate to provide the maximum amount of funds to potentially eligible candidates, and if not, how the Commission will disburse available funds on a pro rata or other equitable basis.

Funds Available

Currently, there is approximately \$155,000 allocated in the LPF Election Campaign Fund for the 2026 election.

There are three district seats open in the November 2026 election: District 2, District 4, and District 6. As of the date of this memorandum, there are six candidates who have filed campaign forms as candidates for office in one of these three districts.

Under the LPF Act, a candidate may receive LPF funds in an amount up to 30 percent of the voluntary expenditure ceiling (spending limit) for that race; however, the amount in the Election Campaign Fund ultimately dictates how much money is available to each candidate. The Commission will need to determine whether the amount of money in the Election Campaign Fund is adequate to provide the maximum amount of funds to all potentially eligible candidates, and if not, the Commission will disburse available funds on a pro rata or other equitable basis. The legally required meeting for the Commission to make that determination will be scheduled to occur sometime in mid- to late-August, depending on the date the City Clerk announces candidate certifications.

The table below summarizes the potential breakdown of the number of candidates expected to run in the 2026 election, the maximum amount allowable per candidate under the law, and the estimated amount of money that will likely be available for each candidate based on the amount of money in the Fund, assuming all candidates are eligible and opt into the program.

City Council District	Voluntary Expenditure Ceiling	Maximum Potential LPFA Amount for Each Candidate (if fully funded)	Number of Candidates Currently Campaigning	Estimated Amount Available to Each Candidate (if all participate)
2	\$160,000	\$48,000	3	\$25,833.33
4	\$160,000	\$48,000	1	
6	\$160,000	\$48,000	2	

Below is a projected timeline of events for the LPF program:

Process	Details	Date
Nomination Period Begins	The Nomination Period opens 113 days before an election.	Monday, July 13, 2026

Process	Details	Date
Nomination Period Ends	The Nomination Period closes 88 days before the election.	Friday, August 7, 2026
Nomination Period Extended	If the incumbent does not file for re-election, then the nomination period is extended for five days.	Wednesday, August 12, 2026
City Clerk Certification	The Office of the City Clerk certifies the names of all candidates to appear on the ballot.	Usually within a few days of the end of Nomination Period
Public Ethics Commission Determines Disbursement Plan	The Commission determines whether the Election Campaign Fund will be adequate to provide the maximum amount of funds to potentially eligible candidates, and the Commission decides on a process for disbursement of available funds on a pro rata or another equitable basis.	Not to exceed seven days after City Clerk certification (a special PEC meeting must be set)
Potential Funds Redistribution by the Commission	The Commission may at any time revise the disbursement plan consistent with LPFA.	October 1, 2026
Election Day	The day before the election is the last day to submit claims for reimbursement to the Commission.	Tuesday, November 3, 2026

This memorandum is for informational purposes in preparation for the Commission's next step of determining the allocation of campaign funds once the number of candidates is confirmed. That determination will be made at a special meeting, exact date to be determined, in mid-August. No Commission action is needed at this time.



Limited Public Financing Act Guide

2026

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Oakland Limited Public Financing Act of 2024 (Act) provides a limited amount of campaign funds for candidates running for Oakland City Council District seats. The purposes of the Act include the following:

1. Ensure that people have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in elective and governmental processes;
2. Reduce the influence of large contributors with a specific financial stake in matters under consideration by the City and counter the perception that decisions are influenced more by the size of contributions than by the best interests of the people;
3. Reduce the pressure on candidates to raise large campaign war chests for defensive purposes, beyond the amount necessary to communicate reasonably with voters;
4. Encourage competition for elective office;
5. Allow candidates and officeholders to spend a smaller proportion of their time on fundraising and a greater proportion of their time dealing with issues of importance to their constituents and the community;
6. Ensure that serious candidates are able to raise enough money to communicate their views and positions adequately to the public, thereby promoting public discussion of important issues involved in political campaigns; and
7. Help preserve public trust in governmental and electoral institutions.
8. Prevent corruption or the appearance of corruption. [Oakland Municipal Code (OMC) § 3.13.030]

Campaign Reform Act Compliance

Public financing laws work in coordination with the Oakland Campaign Reform Act (OCRA), which limits contributions, restricts contributions from people doing business with the City, and regulates local campaign finance disclosure as a supplement to state campaign finance laws.

The Commission imposes fines for violations of campaign finance and public financing laws, such as failure to file campaign finance forms or receiving contributions over the limit. For more information about campaign

The Public Ethics Commission (Commission) administers the Public Financing Program (Program) and is here to assist you in your application and reimbursement process. The application and reimbursement process is complex, so please contact Commission staff if you are a candidate for a City Council District seat who might be interested in help with financing your campaign.

AM I ELIGIBLE FOR PUBLIC FINANCING?

Any candidate who is certified by the City Clerk to appear on the 2026 general election ballot for the office of Oakland City Councilmember in Districts 1 – 7 and who is opposed by another candidate may apply for public financing through the City. Candidates for Citywide offices, such as the office of Mayor, City Auditor, City Attorney, and At-Large Council Member, along with candidates for the Oakland Unified School District Board of Directors, are not eligible. [OMC § 3.13.060].

HOW MUCH MONEY WILL BE AVAILABLE?

The amount of money available to candidates depends on how much money is budgeted by City Council and how many candidates run for City Council Districts 1 – 7 in this election. In past years, the maximum amount that a participating candidate could receive has ranged between \$8,000 and \$35,000. Commission staff will announce the amount available to candidates during the nomination period for candidates to opt in to the program (as detailed below).

Regardless of the amount appropriated for public financing, no candidate may receive more than 30% of Oakland's voluntary expenditure limit -- \$48,000 -- for the office being sought.

HOW DO I APPLY?

There are **two** main forms for applying for public financing:

1. **Opt-In** – Complete the **Acceptance/Rejection of Public Financing Form (LPF Form 1)** to accept or reject public financing no later than 14 days after the City Clerk has certified the names of all candidates to appear on the ballot (usually mid-August). [OMC § 3.13.070(B)]
 - Failure to file **LPF Form 1** by the deadline is treated the same as **rejection** of public financing for the upcoming election.
2. **Apply for Program Participation** – Complete the **LPF Application (LPF Form 2)** to officially apply for public financing. LPF Form 2 requires the following:
 - **Campaign Information** – Be sure campaign contact information is up-to-date as we use this information to communicate with you and your campaign staff regarding all aspects of your public financing participation, including when your check is ready.

- **Tax ID/EIN Number** – Campaign committees need to obtain a Taxpayer/Employer Identification Number (EIN) from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to receive reimbursement payments from the City. You can request an EIN online as a political organization at www.irs.gov. Once you have obtained your EIN from the IRS, submit a completed IRS Form W-9 to the PEC. If you encounter any trouble obtaining your EIN, contact PEC staff for assistance.
- **Proof of Contributions Received** – The candidate must submit copies of campaign contributions (i.e., contribution checks; not cash) demonstrating that the candidate has received contributions from Oakland donors that total at least \$8,000 (5% of the voluntary spending limit for the office you are running for). The check used to make the contribution must demonstrate an Oakland address. Candidates may submit contributions received electronically from Oakland residents to meet the 5% contribution threshold. In that case, candidates should request that the vendor collecting the online contributions send a CSV (comma separated variable) report directly to the PEC to validate contributor and payment information. PEC staff can assist you with this process. Note that contributions from a candidate's own funds do not count toward meeting this 5% requirement. [OMC § 3.13.080(C)]
- **Proof of Expenditures Made** – The candidate must also submit proof in the form of detailed invoices or proof of payments/receipts that he or she has made campaign expenditures totaling at least 5% of the voluntary spending limit for the office being sought, i.e., \$8,000. [OMC § 3.13.080(C)]
- **Debate Participation** – The candidate must attest that he or she will personally participate in at least one public debate or forum.

The table on the following page outlines application process steps and eligibility requirements for participating candidates.

Step	Program Requirement	Due Date
1	Submit OCRA Form 301 – Candidate agrees to voluntary spending limit of \$160,000 by submitting signed OCRA Form 301 to the Public Ethics Commission	Any time before opting into the program
2	Candidate Certified for Ballot – City Clerk certifies candidate to appear on the ballot	City Clerk deadline for certification – 88 days prior to the election.
3	Candidate Has Opposition – Candidate is opposed by another candidate for the same office	Certification of candidates by City Clerk
4	Candidate Attends Training – Candidate or their campaign treasurer or designee has attended a PEC LPF training program	August 21, 2026
5	Submit LPF Form 1 – Candidate Statement of Acceptance or Rejection submitted to PEC	Within 14 days of certification by City Clerk
6	Submit LPF Form 2 – Initial Application for Public Financing submitted to PEC	September 18, 2026
7	Minimum Campaign Contributions Received – Candidate demonstrates receipt of at least \$8,000 in total contributions from Oakland donors	September 18, 2026
8	Minimum Campaign Spending Made – Candidate demonstrates at least \$8,000 total campaign spending	September 18, 2026
9	Personal Funding Limit – Contributions or loans from candidate's personal funds may not exceed \$19,000, unless voluntary spending limits are lifted	Ongoing
10	Campaign Fundraising Materials Comply with OCRA – All campaign materials include the required text regarding contribution limits and prohibitions on contributions from contractors doing business with the City (See Oakland Campaign Reform Act Section 3.12.140)	Ongoing
11	Public Debate – Candidate participates in at least one public debate or forum. To count towards the requirement all candidates accepting public financing for the office sought by the candidate must be invited to participate in the debate.	November 3, 2026

HOW DO I REQUEST FUNDS?

Funds are provided to candidates as reimbursements for certain types of campaign expenditures (see box on this page). At the start, candidates may apply for reimbursement in increments of \$1,000 or more. In the ten days leading up to the election, candidates may apply for reimbursements in increments of \$500 or more. [OMC § 3.13.120]

To apply for reimbursement candidates submit the **Reimbursement Claim Form (LPF Form 3)**.

Reimbursement claims must include copies of the following records for each expense for which reimbursement is requested:

1. Billing invoice;
2. Proof of payment by the campaign committee; and
3. A copy of the campaign literature, advertisement, radio or television script, or webpage, if applicable. [OMC § 3.13.110(C)]

Expenditures Qualifying for Reimbursement

Reimbursement will only be provided for the following campaign expenditures:

- Candidate filing and ballot fees
- Printed campaign literature and production costs
- Postage
- Print advertisements
- Radio airtime and production costs
- Television or cable airtime and production costs
- Website design and maintenance costs

[OMC § 3.13.110(B)]

Reimbursement claims also include a sworn statement by the candidate and their campaign treasurer that (a) the check(s) used to make payment on the billing invoice represents payment in full of the billing invoice submitted for reimbursement and that the campaign account contains enough funds to provide payment, and (b) any money received from the election campaign fund has not been already set aside or specifically used to pay off any loans, return contributions, or cover any expenses other than those for which reimbursement was requested.

All requests for reimbursement must be submitted prior to the date of the election. Claims submitted on or after the date of the election will not be considered.

Commission staff reviews reimbursement claims and works closely with candidates to ensure they are complete. Once the claim is complete, Commission staff will respond with payment or an explanation of denial within two weeks.

Public financing checks are only payable to a candidate's campaign committee account. The check must be deposited into the candidate's campaign account within thirty calendar days of receipt.

A denial or limitation of a request for reimbursement by the Commission's Executive Director may be appealed to the Commission whose decision shall be final. A request to appeal the denial shall be submitted to Commission staff in writing no more than ten calendar days after receiving written notice of the denial. [OMC § 3.13.110(D)]

REALLOCATION OF THE FUND

To ensure that the full amount allocated in the general election fund is distributed to all interested candidates, the Commission conducts a two-phase approach for payment of LPF funds to participants.

1. Phase I – Once eligible candidates opt in to the LPF program, the PEC determines the amount available to each participant. The **LPF Application** and the first **LPF Reimbursement Claim Form** must be submitted by participating candidates by the Phase II deadline of **September 18**. Failure to submit the **LPF Application** and at least one **LPF Reimbursement Claim Form** by the deadline will disqualify the candidate from receiving public funds for the 2026 election.
2. Phase II – Candidates who meet the September 18 deadline proceed to Phase II. After the September 18 deadline, the PEC recalculates and then re-allocates funds according to the number of candidates that met the Phase II requirement. The redistribution can potentially increase the maximum allotted amount available to each participant based on the number of qualified candidates.

PUBLIC DEBATE REQUIREMENT

In 2024, the City adopted a new debate requirement as a condition of participating in the LPF Program. Candidates receiving public financing must agree to participate in at least one public debate or forum that meets the PEC's debate guidelines.

An eligible public debate or forum can be an online or in-person live event where a participating candidate gives a live speech, participates in a panel discussion, or responds to questions. In addition, the event must meet all the following conditions:

1. The event is free and open to the public.
2. The event is held within 120 days of the applicable election.
3. The event is not structured to promote or advance one candidate over another.

4. The following candidates have been invited to participate in the event:
 - a. All candidates for the covered office being sought that have filed a Form 501; or
 - b. All candidates for the covered office being sought that have qualified to participate in the LPF Program or the Democracy Dollars Program or that have pending applications to participate in either program; or
 - c. All candidates for the covered office being sought that have qualified for the ballot.
5. The event host has not already endorsed any of the candidates for the covered office being sought for this election and is not endorsing any of the candidates for the covered office being sought at the event.

Candidates must submit a form notifying the PEC within five days of attending a qualifying debate. Participating candidates must provide event details, organizer info, and confirm that the debate met program requirements.

If the Executive Director decides that an event doesn't qualify, the candidate will be notified with the reasons why. Within 14 days of receiving such notice, the candidate may appeal the Executive Director's decision to the full Commission at its next regular meeting.

Failure to Meet the Debate Requirement: Thirty (30) days before the election, the PEC may require that participating candidates demonstrate that they have met the minimum public debate or forum requirements. **Candidates failing to meet the debate requirement may face enforcement actions and may have to reimburse all or some of the public funds received.**

See Appendix 2 to read the PEC's full LPF/Democracy Dollars Debate Guidelines.

POST-ELECTION PROCEDURES

The Act requires that a portion of any leftover campaign funds remaining as of December 31, 2026, be returned to the Election Campaign Fund by January 31, 2027. [OMC § 3.13.150] The refund amount will be determined by multiplying the surplus campaign funds (after subtracting any debts) by the percentage of total public financing received compared to the total monetary contributions for the election.

Candidates are not required to return leftover funds that is more than the amount of public financing received. Commission staff can assist you in calculating the amount that must be returned, if any.

ENFORCEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

The Public Ethics Commission is authorized to enforce the provisions of the Limited Public Financing Act, which may include the imposition of fines, penalties and the return of public financing received. [OMC § 3.13.180, 3.13.200] In addition, the City Auditor may audit candidates receiving public financing to ensure compliance with the rules of the program. [OMC § 3.13.100]

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APPENDIX 1: OCRA FORM 301

Voluntary Expenditure Limits - OCRA Form 301

My progress: 33%

Candidate Information

Name Required

John Doe

Email Required

johnforoakland@gmail.com

Office Sought Required

City Council - District 6

Election Date Required

11/3/2026

Candidate Intention Statement (Form 501)

Required for recipient committees

Select file

Remove all

FPPC For...



Saved

APPENDIX 2: LPF/DEMOCRACY DOLLARS PROGRAM DEBATE GUIDELINES

Oakland Public Ethics Commission Limited Public Financing/Democracy Dollars Program Debate Guidelines

A. **Purpose.** This policy describes:

1. What events qualify as a “public debate or forum” for the purposes of candidate eligibility for the Limited Public Financing Program of 2024 (LPF) or the Democracy Dollars Program;
2. The process candidates will use for certifying compliance with the minimum debate or forum requirements of these Programs to the Public Ethics Commission (PEC); and
3. The actions the PEC shall take if the requirement is not met.

B. **Eligible Debates.** For the purposes of the Oakland Fair Elections Act Democracy Dollars program and the Limited Public Financing Act program, a “public debate or forum” means an online or in-person live event where a participating candidate gives a speech, participates in a panel discussion, or responds to questions, and that meets all the following conditions:

1. The event is free and open to the public.
2. The event is held within 120 days of the applicable election.
3. The event is not structured to promote or advance one candidate over another.
4. The following candidates have been invited to participate in the event:
 - a. All candidates for the covered office being sought that have filed a Form 501; or
 - b. All candidates for the covered office being sought that have qualified to participate in the LPF Program or the Democracy Dollars Program or that have pending applications to participate in either program; or
 - c. All candidates for the covered office being sought that have qualified for the ballot.
5. The event host has not already endorsed any of the candidates for the covered office being sought for this election and is not endorsing any of the candidates for the covered office being sought at the event.

- C. **Certifying Debate Attendance.** Within 5 days of attending a qualifying debate or forum, the candidate shall notify the PEC using a form provided by the PEC. The form shall require that the candidate indicate all the following:
1. The date, time, and location of the event.
 2. The name of the person or entity organizing the event.
 3. The contact information for the person or entity organizing the event, including at least an email address or phone number.
 4. A certification that to the best of the candidate's knowledge, the event met the requirements for being a qualifying public debate or forum and an acknowledgment that failure to meet the debate requirement may result in forfeiture of some or all public financing received by the campaign, in addition to other penalties.
 5. The candidate's name, contact information, and signature.
 6. Any other information required by the Executive Director to verify compliance with OMC 3.15.080(A)(3), OMC 3.13.080(H), or this Policy.
- D. **Demonstrating Compliance.** Thirty (30) days before the election the PEC may require that participating candidates demonstrate that they have met the minimum public debate or forum requirements by either:
1. Submitting certifications for attending the minimum number of qualifying events; or
 2. Submitting a form indicating that, prior to the election, they will have met this requirement, along with a list of the date, time, location, host name, and host contact information for the upcoming qualifying event(s) they have committed to attend.
- If a candidate does not demonstrate that they have met or will meet the minimum debate or forum requirements with the submissions identified in (1) and/or (2), the PEC may halt distribution of additional public funds to the candidate until the candidate demonstrates they have or will meet this requirement.
- E. **Disqualifying a Debate/Forum.** If the Executive Director determines that an event does not qualify as a debate or forum, the Director shall notify the candidate and the reason why. Within 14 days of receiving such notice, the candidate may appeal the Executive Director's decision to the full Commission at its next regular meeting.
- F. **Waiver for Good Cause.** The Executive Director may grant a partial or complete waiver of the debate requirement if a candidate shows good cause for not attending the

required number of qualifying events. The Director may require that the candidate provide adequate supporting documentation that good cause exists. The following are examples of reasons that **do constitute good cause** and are eligible for a waiver:

1. ***There were insufficient qualifying events for a covered office.***
2. ***The candidate had a reasonable and good faith belief that a non-qualifying event was a qualifying event.*** Adequate documentation may include a written statement by the event host before the event indicating that the event met the requirements of a qualifying event.
3. ***The candidate was incapacitated for medical reasons which prevented the attendance of a qualifying event.*** Adequate documentation may include the candidate providing a signed statement by a medical provider, such as a doctor or therapist, on the medical provider's letterhead identifying the candidate, the nature of the candidate's incapacitation, and the date(s) thereof.
4. ***The candidate was hospitalized which prevented the attendance of a qualifying event.*** Adequate documentation may include the candidate providing a copy of the hospital bill or physician's statement showing the candidate's name and the date(s) of the hospitalization.
5. ***The candidate was involved in a serious accident or was the victim of a serious crime which prevented the attendance of a qualifying event.*** Adequate documentation may include the candidate providing a copy of a police report showing the candidate's name, the date and time of the accident or incident, and, if applicable, whether the vehicle was disabled, in addition to a written statement by the candidate explaining how the accident prevented them from attending a qualifying event.
6. ***The candidate was unable to meet the requirement because they were assisting an immediate family member who was medically incapacitated, hospitalized, or involved in a serious accident or was the victim of a crime.*** Adequate documentation may include documents described above and documents indicating that the affected person(s) are an immediate family member. Immediate family is defined as the candidate's spouse or registered domestic partner; sibling; sibling's spouse or registered domestic partner; child or stepchild; child or stepchild's spouse or registered domestic partner; grandchild; parent; spouse or registered domestic partner's parent; or grandparent.
7. ***Other compelling reasons generally beyond the candidate's control.***

The Executive Director shall report back to the Commission on any waivers granted or denied pursuant to this Section.

This Section applies to the Democracy Dollars Program only.

- G. **Alternate Qualifying Events in lieu of a Debate/Forum.** If, prior to the election, there will be insufficient qualifying events or if a candidate shows good cause for why they will not be able to attend the required number of qualifying events, the Executive Director may allow a candidate to satisfy the debate requirement by participating in alternate activities aimed at voter education, such as conducting a "Town Hall Meeting."

For the purposes of this policy, a "Town Hall Meeting" means an event conducted by a participating candidate, in-person or online, that meets all the following conditions:

1. The event is open to the public, the media, and other candidates.
2. The event lasts at least 60 minutes.
3. The majority of the event time is focused on the participating candidate responding to questions posed by attendees.
4. The candidate promoted the event in advance to the public, for example by posting information about the event to the candidate's website and social media accounts and alerting media outlets.

This Section applies to the Democracy Dollars Program only.

- H. **Failure to Meet Debate Requirement.** If, after the election, a candidate is determined not to have met the minimum debate or forum requirements, the PEC may bring an enforcement action against the candidate for violating the requirements of the LPF or Oakland Fair Elections Act, and the candidate may be required to reimburse all or some of the public funds previously distributed to that candidate in addition to any other enforcement penalties.
- I. **Optional Event Pre-Qualification.** An organization may register their event as a qualifying debate or forum in advance of the event using a form provided by the PEC which indicates:
1. The name of the organization hosting the event.
 2. The date, time, and location of the event.
 3. The names of the candidates who were or will be invited to participate at the event.
 4. A certification that the event meets the requirements for being a qualifying public debate or forum.

5. An acknowledgement that the organizer understands that event information may be posted online and/or shared with PEC subscribers to notify the public of the event.

After a registered qualifying event, the organization may provide to the PEC a link to a recording of the full event.

The PEC will provide participating candidates with a list of registered qualifying debates and may post upcoming registered qualifying debates and/or links to recordings of qualifying debates on its website.

APPENDIX 3: LIMITED PUBLIC FINANCING ACT OF 2024

Chapter 3.13 - LIMITED PUBLIC FINANCING ACT OF 2024

Article I. - Findings and Purpose

3.13.010 - Title.

This chapter shall be known as the "Limited Public Financing Act of 2024."

3.13.020 - Findings and declarations.

The findings of this Act are as follows:

- A. The financial strength of certain individuals or organizations should not enable them to exercise a disproportionate or controlling influence on the election of candidates.
- B. The rapidly increasing costs of political campaigns have forced many candidates to raise larger and larger percentages of money from interest groups with a specific financial stake in matters under consideration by City government. This has caused the public perception that votes are being improperly influenced by monetary contributions.
- C. High campaign costs are forcing officeholders to spend more time on fundraising and less time on the public's business. The constant pressure to raise contributions is distracting officeholders from urgent governmental matters.

3.13.030 - Purpose of this Act.

The purpose of this Act is to accomplish the objectives stated in Oakland's Campaign Reform Act as follows:

- A. To ensure that all individuals and interest groups in our city have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in elective and governmental processes.
- B. To reduce the influence of large contributors with a specific financial stake in matters under consideration by the city, and to counter the perception that decisions are influenced more by the size of contributions than by the best interests of the people of Oakland.
- C. To reduce the pressure on candidates to raise large campaign war chests for defensive purposes, beyond the amount necessary to communicate reasonably with voters.

- D. To encourage competition for elective office.
- E. To allow candidates and officeholders to spend a smaller proportion of their time on fundraising and a greater proportion of their time dealing with issues of importance to their constituents and the community.
- F. To ensure that serious candidates are able to raise enough money to communicate their views and positions adequately to the public, thereby promoting public discussion of important issues involved in political campaigns.
- G. To help preserve public trust in governmental and electoral institutions.
- H. To prevent corruption or the appearance of corruption.

Article II. – Definitions

3.13.040 - Interpretation of this Act.

Unless the term is specifically defined in this Act or the contrary is stated or clearly appears from the text, the definitions set forth in Chapter 3.12 of this Code and in Government Code Sections 81000 et seq. as amended govern the interpretation of this Act.

For purposes of this Act, "principal residence" shall mean the place in which a person's habitation is fixed, wherein the person has the intention of remaining, and to which, whenever he or she is absent, the person has the intention of returning.

For purposes of this Act, "primary place of doing business" shall mean the street address of a corporation's or association's principal executive office as filed with the California Secretary of State or the street address of an unincorporated association's principal office as filed with the California Secretary of State.

Article III. - Election Campaign Fund

3.13.050 - Election campaign fund.

There is hereby established an account within a special revenue fund of the city to be known as the "Election Campaign Fund."

3.13.060 – Establishment of public financing program.

- A. Subject to an appropriation by the City Council for this purpose, the Public Ethics Commission shall establish and allocate funds for a public financing program, consistent with this chapter, to fund all candidates eligible to receive public financing

running for the office of District City Councilmember in the 2024, 2026 and 2028 general elections

- B. Any unspent funds allocated for the public financing program pursuant to Subsection A. at the end of a fiscal year shall remain in a fund administered by the Public Ethics Commission and accrue for disbursement to candidates eligible for public financing in future elections and for administrative costs.
- C. Up to seven and one-half percent (7.5%) of the amount allocated to the public financing program pursuant to Subsection BA. may be utilized by the Public Ethics Commission to cover the anticipated cost of administering the provisions of this Act.

3.13.065 - Allocation of election campaign fund.

No later than seven (7) days after the City Clerk has certified the names of all candidates to appear on the ballot, the Public Ethics Commission shall determine at a publicly noticed meeting whether, based on the number of potentially eligible candidates, the amount of money in the election campaign fund is adequate to provide the maximum amount to potentially eligible candidates. If the Commission determines that the election campaign fund will not be adequate to provide the maximum amount of funds to potentially eligible candidates, the Commission shall order the disbursement of available funds on a pro rata or other equitable basis. The Commission may at any time revise the disbursement plan consistent with these rules and prevailing law.

Article IV. - Eligibility for Public Financing

3.13.070 - Application and withdrawal procedures.

- A. Each candidate for District City Council shall file a statement with the Public Ethics Commission on a form approved for such purpose indicating acceptance or rejection of the voluntary expenditure limits pursuant to Subsection [3.15.140](#) A.
- B. Each candidate for district city council shall file with the Public Ethics Commission a statement of acceptance or rejection of public financing on a form approved by the Public Ethics Commission no later than fourteen (14) calendar days after the date the City Clerk has certified the names of candidates to appear on the ballot for the election in which public financing will be sought. The statement of acceptance or rejection of public financing shall advise and require that the candidate's decision to reject public financing is irrevocable for the election in which his or her name appears on the ballot. The failure to timely file a statement of acceptance or rejection of public financing shall constitute a rejection of public financing.

- C. If a candidate declines to accept the voluntary expenditure limits prescribed in Subsection [3.15.140](#) A., the candidate shall not be eligible for public financing.
- D. If a candidate agrees to accept the voluntary expenditure limits prescribed in Subsection [3.15.140](#) A., the candidate shall be eligible for public financing upon meeting the qualification requirements as provided in this Act.
- E. If a candidate declines to accept voluntary expenditure limits and receives contributions or makes qualified campaign expenditures equal to fifty percent (50%) or more of the voluntary expenditure limit, or if any person makes one (1) or more independent expenditures totaling more than thirty thousand dollars (\$30,000.00) on a District City Council election, the applicable voluntary expenditure limit shall no longer be binding on any candidate running for the same office.
- F. In the event voluntary expenditure limits are lifted pursuant to Subsection E., a candidate who accepted the voluntary expenditure limits shall be permitted to receive public financing but shall no longer be subject to the voluntary expenditure limits.

3.13.080 - Qualification procedures.

A candidate shall be approved to receive public financing if the candidate meets all of the following requirements:

- A. The candidate has filed a timely statement of acceptance of the voluntary spending ceilings and acceptance of public financing.
- B. The candidate is certified to appear on the ballot for the election for which public financing is sought.
- C. The candidate has (1) received contributions in an aggregate amount of at least five percent (5%) of the expenditure limit for the office being sought from contributors whose principal residence or whose primary place of doing business is located within the City and which residence or business address appears on the written instrument used to make the contribution, and (2) made qualified campaign expenditures in an aggregate amount of at least five percent (5%) of the expenditure limit for the office being sought. Contributions from the candidate's own funds shall not be counted towards meeting this five percent (5%) requirement. The candidate shall provide copies of the contribution checks received and records of payments made to meet the five percent (5%) eligibility requirements.
- D. The candidate is opposed by another candidate for the same office.
- E. The candidate agrees to all conditions and requirements of this Act and to submit to any reasonable audit deemed appropriate by the public ethics commission or other civil authorities.

- F. The candidate or his or her campaign treasurer or designee attends a training program conducted or sponsored by the Public Ethics Commission.
- G. The candidate has filed, and completely and accurately executed, all pre-election campaign statements that are due at the time public financing is payable. All candidates receiving public financing shall timely file, and completely and accurately execute, all post-election campaign statements for each election in which they received public financing.
- H. The candidate attests that he or she will personally participate in at least one (1) public debate or forum. Only public debates or forums to which all other candidates accepting public financing for the office sought by the candidate are invited to participate shall be counted for the purposes of this Section. Within five (5) days of the candidate's participation in a qualifying public debate or forum, the candidate shall notify the Public Ethics Commission, in writing, of his or her participation in the debate or forum.

3.13.090 - Use of personal funds.

A candidate who accepts public financing shall not receive contributions or loans from the candidate's own funds which aggregate total exceeds nineteen thousand dollars (\$19,000.00) for the office being sought. If the voluntary expenditure limits for the office being sought are lifted, this provision shall not apply.

Article V. - Disbursement of Public Financing

3.13.100 - Duties of the Public Ethics Commission and Office of the City Auditor.

- A. The Public Ethics Commission shall develop any and all forms necessary to carry out the provisions of the Act. The Public Ethics Commission may, in its discretion, require any document or form to be filed in an electronic format that is provided by the Public Ethics Commission to the candidates free of charge.
- B. The Public Ethics Commission shall review records submitted to determine a candidate's eligibility to receive public financing and requests for reimbursement promptly. For any candidate determined not to be eligible for public financing, the Commission or its designee shall inform the candidate of the reasons why the candidate is not eligible and what actions, if any, the candidate may take to correct any insufficiencies.
- C. The City Auditor may conduct a discretionary audit of the Public Ethics Commission's disbursement of public financing funds to candidates or may conduct discretionary audits of the campaign committee of any candidate who receives public financing. The audit report shall be a public record and provided to the Public Ethics

Commission. The City Auditor shall conduct all audits in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

3.13.110 - Requests for public financing.

- A. Public financing pursuant to this Act shall be provided solely by reimbursing eligible candidates for certain qualified campaign expenditures lawfully made by the candidate and his or her campaign committee.
- B. The qualified campaign expenditures eligible for reimbursement are:
 - 1. Candidate filing and ballot fees;
 - 2. Printed campaign literature and production costs;
 - 3. Postage;
 - 4. Print advertisements;
 - 5. Radio airtime and production costs;
 - 6. Television or cable airtime and production costs; and
 - 7. Website design and maintenance costs.
- C. The following conditions and restrictions shall apply to any request for reimbursement:
 - 1. All requests for reimbursement shall be made on a form authorized by the Public Ethics Commission and shall include: (a) a copy of the billing invoice for which reimbursement is sought; (b) a copy of the check(s) by which the candidate's campaign committee made payment on the billing invoice; and (c) a copy, when applicable, of the campaign literature, advertisement, radio or television script, or website configuration.
 - 2. All requests for reimbursement shall include a sworn declaration by the candidate and his or her campaign treasurer that (a) the check(s) used to make payment on the billing invoice represents payment in full of the billing invoice submitted for reimbursement and that sufficient funds exist in the campaign account to provide payment, and (b) any money received from the election campaign fund has not been previously earmarked or specifically encumbered to pay or to secure payment of any loan, return of contribution or of any expenditure other than the one for which reimbursement was sought.
- D. Any decision made by the Executive Director to deny a request for reimbursement may be appealed to the Commission whose decision shall be final. A request to agendize an appeal of the Executive Director's decision shall be made in writing and delivered to the office of the Public Ethics Commission no more than ten (10) calendar days after receiving written notice of the Executive Director's decision.
- E. The total amount of public financing allocated to each candidate shall not exceed 30 percent of the voluntary expenditure ceiling per election for the office being sought.

3.13.120 - Disbursement and deposit of public financing.

- A. A candidate or candidate's controlled committee, certified as eligible to receive public financing, shall submit requests for reimbursement to the Public Ethics Commission in minimum increments of one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) or more.
- B. A candidate or candidate's controlled committee, certified as eligible to receive public financing, shall submit requests for reimbursement in minimum increments of five hundred dollars (\$500.00) or more ten (10) calendar days before the election.
- C. The Public Ethics Commission or its designee shall have ten (10) calendar days to cause the review and approval or denial of the request for reimbursement and disburse funds from the election campaign fund to the candidate or candidate's controlled committee.
- D. All funds disbursed from the election campaign fund shall be made payable to the candidate's controlled committee and shall be deposited directly into the candidate's campaign checking account within thirty (30) calendar days of receipt.

3.13.150 - Return of surplus funds.

- A. Surplus campaign funds remaining at the end of the post-election reporting period following the election for which public financing was received shall be returned to the election campaign fund no later than thirty-one (31) calendar days from the last day of the semi-annual reporting period following the election in an amount specified by this Section. A candidate shall not be required to return any surplus funds in an amount greater than the amount of public financing received. The amount of surplus campaign funds to be returned to the election campaign fund shall be calculated by multiplying the amount of surplus campaign funds by the percentage that total public financing received represents of total monetary contributions received for the election period.
- B. For purposes of this Act, campaign funds shall be considered "surplus" campaign funds to the extent that the total amount of contributions (excluding the receipt of public financing) exceed the total financial obligations of the candidate's campaign committee (excluding unlawful or non-qualified campaign expenditures) as of the last day of the semi-annual reporting period following the election. A financial obligation includes: (1) accounts payable billed, or (2) accounts payable for which bills may be expected, for goods or services received during the election.
- C. Public financing shall not be disbursed to the certified candidate from the election campaign fund following the day of the election or the candidate's withdrawal from the election, whichever occurs first, except that public financing may be disbursed to a

certified candidate after the date of the election or withdrawal provided that the candidate submitted a properly documented request for reimbursement before the date of the election or the date of withdrawal from the election.

3.13.180 - Enforcement.

The Public Ethics Commission is the sole body for civil enforcement of this Act. In the event criminal violations of the Act come to the attention of the Public Ethics Commission, the Commission shall promptly advise in writing the City Attorney and the appropriate prosecuting enforcement agency.

3.13.190 - Criminal misdemeanor actions.

Any person who knowingly or willfully (1) misrepresents his or her eligibility for public financing, (2) makes a material misrepresentation in connection with a request for reimbursement, or (3) causes, aids or abets any other person to violate the provisions of this Act, is guilty of a misdemeanor. Prosecution shall be commenced within four (4) years after the date on which the violation occurred.

3.13.200 - Enforcement actions.

- A. Any person who intentionally or negligently (1) misrepresents his or her eligibility for public financing, (2) makes a material misrepresentation in connection with a request for reimbursement, or (3) causes, aids or abets any other person to violate the provisions of this Act, is subject to enforcement proceedings before the public ethics commission pursuant to the public ethics commission general rules of procedure.
- B. If two or more persons are responsible for any violation, they shall be jointly and severally liable.
- C. Any person alleging a violation of this Act shall first file with the Public Ethics Commission a written complaint on a form approved for such purpose. The complaint shall contain a statement of the grounds for believing a violation has occurred. The Public Ethics Commission shall review, investigate and make determinations regarding any alleged violation consistent with the Public Ethics Commission's general complaint procedures.
- D. The Commission has full authority to settle any action involving public financing in the interest of justice.
- E. If the Commission determines a violation has occurred, the Commission is hereby authorized to administer appropriate penalties and fines not to exceed \$1,000.00 per

violation and to order the repayment of public financing received or expended in violation of law.

- F. The Public Ethics Commission may sue for injunctive relief to enjoin violations or to compel compliance with the provisions of this Act.
- G. No complaint alleging a violation of any provision of this Act shall be filed more than four (4) years after the date the violation occurred.

3.13.220 - Construction.

The Act shall be liberally construed to accomplish its purposes.

3.13.240 - Applicability of other laws.

Nothing in this Act shall exempt any person from applicable provisions of any other laws of the City, State or other appropriate jurisdiction.

3.13.260 - Severability.

If any provision of this Act, or the application of such provision to any person or circumstance, shall be held invalid, the remainder of this Act to the extent it can be given effect, or the application of such provision to persons or circumstances other than those as to which it is held invalid, shall not be affected thereby, and to this extent the provisions of this Act are severable.

3.13.265 - Sunset

- A. This Chapter shall be operative for the 2024, 2026 and 2028 general elections only.
- B. Notwithstanding subsection A., this Chapter shall not apply to any City Council District election for which the Commission projects, pursuant to sections 3.15.070(C) and (E), that the amount of Democracy Dollars proceeds available is at least \$30,000 per certified candidate for that City Council District office.



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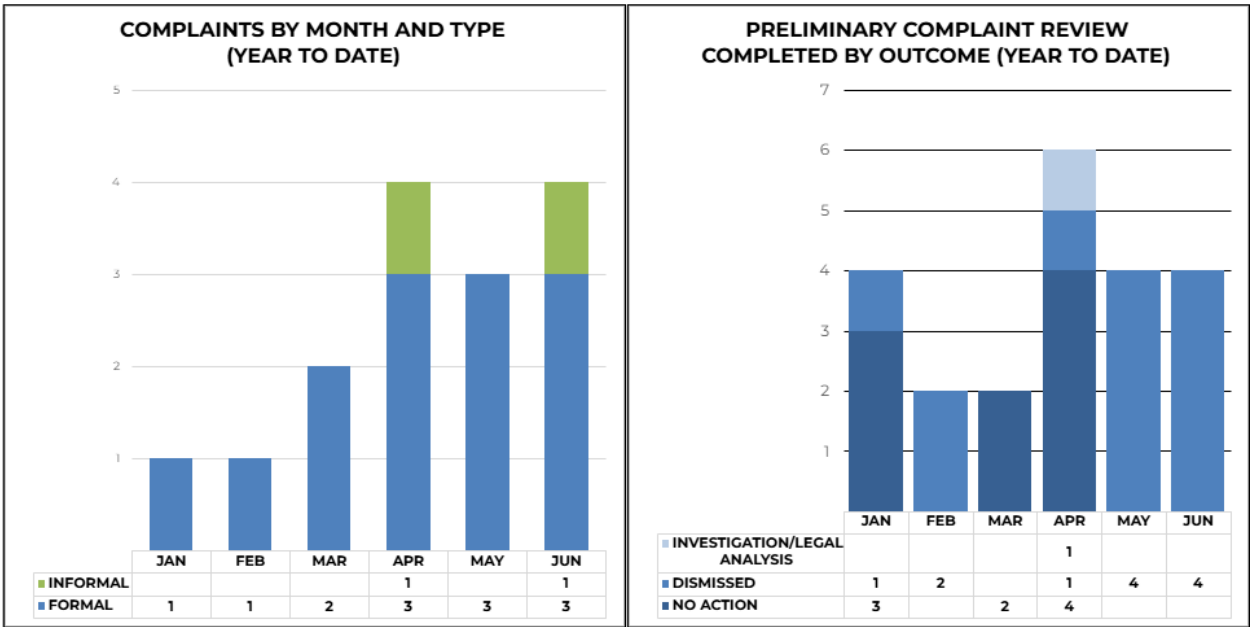
Francis Upton IV, Chair
Karun Tilak, Vice Chair
Luke Apfeld
Tanya Bayeva
L. Lawrence Brandon
Angi Fisher
Ryan Micik

Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

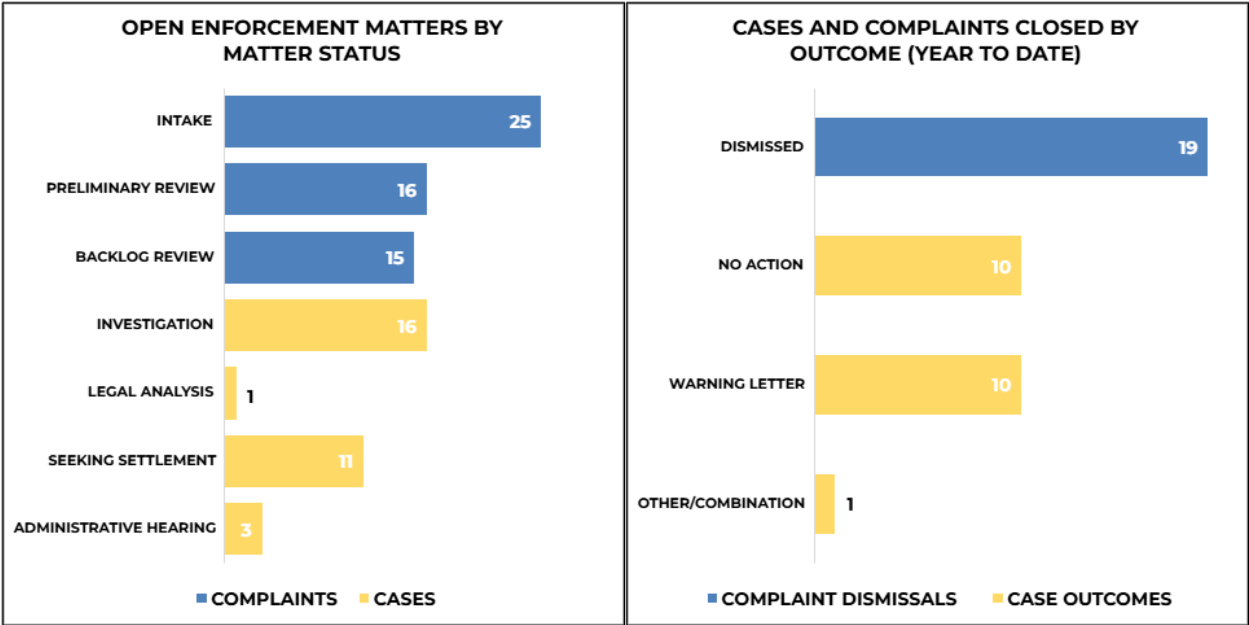
TO: Public Ethics Commissions
FROM: Tovah Ackerman, Enforcement Chief
DATE: July 2, 2026
RE: Enforcement Report for the July 15, 2026, Regular PEC Meeting

Since the last Enforcement Program update submitted to the Commission on May 8, 2026, Commission staff received six formal (sworn) complaints. This brings the total Enforcement caseload to 87 open matters. Additionally, there are 30 informal matters under review that have not yet been dismissed or elevated and assigned a case number.

The charts below summarize preliminary review of complaints completed by year and outcome, all open enforcement matters by complaint status, active cases by alleged violation, and open v. closed complaints by year initiated.



ENFORCEMENT REPORT – JULY 15, 2026



An overview of the complaint process as well as the Commission’s full Complaint Procedures and Penalty Guidelines can be found on our [Enforcement Program](#) webpage

A searchable table of closed complaints can be found on our [Enforcement Actions](#) webpage.

The following complaints have been dismissed:

- ***In the Matter of Joey Harrison (PEC # 23-05).*** In December 2022, PEC Staff received an informal complaint alleging that the Respondent violated the Government Ethics Act by using his position as a member of the City’s Commission on Homelessness to order or direct removal of an encampment at the Athol tennis courts. PEC staff dismissed the complaint for lack of enough information to support further investigation.
- ***In the Matter of Reginald Freeman (PEC # 23-06).*** In October 2022, the City of Oakland Public Ethics Commission (PEC) received an informal complaint alleging that the Respondent was using his social media account (TikTok) against city policies by following young women using his professional title “@chiefbeaux.” PEC staff dismissed the complaint for lack of jurisdiction.
- ***In the Matter of Unknown (Oakland Fire Department Personnel) (PEC # 23-19).*** In March 2023, the PEC received a formal complaint alleging that Oakland Fire Department (OFD) personnel falsely attributed smoke or fire near 9615 International Boulevard to a nearby homeless encampment and treated the activity as permitted cooking. Complainant also raised broader concerns about sidewalk fire hazards, compressed gas cylinders, gasoline

ENFORCEMENT REPORT – JULY 15, 2026

cans, gasolinepowered generators, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) access, and inadequate response by City personnel. PEC staff dismissed the complaint for lack of jurisdiction.

- ***In the Matter of Alison Ferris (PEC # 26-02).*** In February 2026, the PEC received a formal complaint alleging that the complainant's father's properties passed to the complainant via deed and were "time barred and conclusive and settled by the year 2014." The complaint further holds that in July of 2020 the Respondent became involved in the matter, allegedly influencing a judge to effectuate the sale of the properties despite lacking the necessary authority. The complaint alleged a conflict of interest for the Respondent in this matter. Because the Respondent is not an employee of the City of Oakland, PEC staff dismissed the complaint for lack of jurisdiction.
- ***In the Matter of Ken Houston (PEC # 26-06).*** In April 2026, the PEC received a formal complaint alleging that the Respondent violated PEC codes through failure to represent and hostility, abuse of power and harassment, public disparagement and retaliation, and misleading city leadership. PEC staff dismissed the complaint for lack of jurisdiction.
- ***In the Matter of Oakland Animal Control Division et al. (PEC # 26-07).*** In April 2026, the PEC received a formal complaint alleging that the Complainant's service dog was attacked by a pitbull on Oakland Point L.P. (OPLP) property and that, despite the attack being reported to OPLP, the Oakland Police Department, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation (EBALDC), and the Oakland Animal Control Division, the pitbull continued to be seen on the property. PEC staff dismissed the complaint for lack of jurisdiction.
- ***In the Matter of Kevin Jenkins et al. (PEC # 26-11).*** In May 2026, the PEC received a formal complaint alleging that the City Council vote to fine a couple \$915,000 for cutting down protected trees was a violation of the Brown Act/Sunshine Ordinance. The Complainant in this matter has previously submitted "four (4) complaints with the Commission within a twelve month period and has had each complaint determined adversely," thereby qualifying as a Repetitive and Unmeritorious Complainant (Mediation and Complaint Procedures § III(A)(5)). PEC staff therefore processed the complaint in accordance with PEC procedures for a "repetitive and unmeritorious complainant," which require review by the Commission Chair for final determination. The Commission Chair reviewed PEC #26-11 and concurred with staff's recommendation that the complaint be found unmeritorious and dismissed the complaint.



Francis Upton IV, Chair
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 Tanya Bayeva
 L. Lawrence Brandon
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Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

TO: Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Suzanne Doran, Executive Director
DATE: July 2, 2026
RE: Executive Director's Report for the July 15, 2026, Regular PEC Meeting

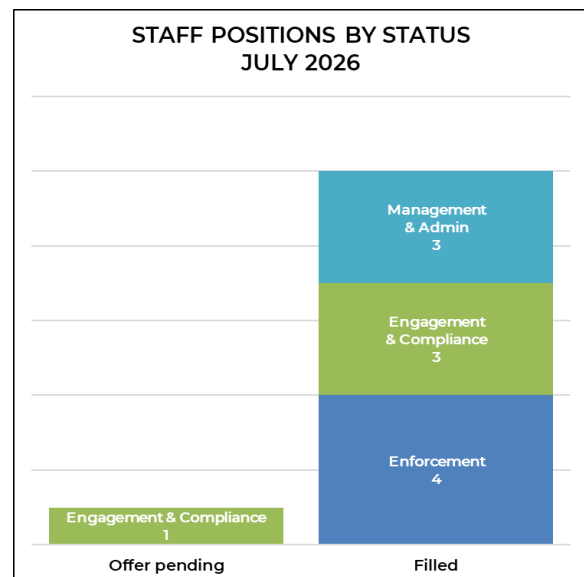
This memorandum provides updates regarding Public Ethics Commission (PEC or Commission) programs and operations, such as budget, staffing, and legislative and policy initiatives since the last Commission meeting, as well as a summary of major 2026 Commission projects and initiatives.

Budget

In even numbered years, the City goes through a mid-cycle planning process to modify its budget for the upcoming fiscal year from the previously adopted biennial spending plan. The City Administration has stated in multiple reports that the City's revenue base is not sufficient to fund current services and programs creating ongoing and long-term fiscal constraints. In May, Mayor Barbara Lee published a proposed Mid-cycle Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-27, which included reductions across departments. On June 12, City Council approved the budget which included reductions to the PEC's operating budget. The adopted budget preserves the Commission's salary budget and positions, but start-up funding for the Democracy Dollars program allocated for FY 26-27 was reduced. Staff estimates the reduced start-up funds are adequate for anticipated contract expenditures in FY 2026-2027. Information on the City of Oakland budget, including department-specific data is available to the public on the [City of Oakland website](#).

Staffing

In June, staff completed applicant testing and candidate interviews to fill multiple staff vacancies. Three fulltime positions and one part-time position have been filled and offers are pending for two remaining positions. Staff is delighted to announce the following staff appointments: Law Clerk **Bhawna Chowdhary** has been promoted to provisional



Analyst on as of June 6. Effective July 20, **Carina Lieu** assume the long-vacant Program Manager position. The PEC also welcomes its third Investigator, **Dillon Bezeherntny**, on July 20. In addition, Northeastern graduate student **Katherine Stein** joined the PEC for a part time summer/fall internship in June.

Over the past 12 months, staff has conducted full recruitments to fill eight out of eleven fulltime, budgeted positions, including Executive Director, Program Manager, three Investigators, and three Ethics Analysts. The Commission is now on track to be fully staffed by August, just in time for the 2026 election season, a time of peak demand for PEC staff services. Onboarding and training for new staff will be a major focus of staff activity in coming months.

In addition to staff recruitment, each year performance reviews are prepared for permanent staff incorporating a review of individual performance objectives for the past year as well as any new individual objectives stemming from overall PEC goals. Annual performance reviews were completed in June.

PEC Legislation

Current activities related to implementation and administration of laws in the Commission's jurisdiction include:

Charter Amendments. On June 16, City Council voted to place the Mayor's Charter amendment proposal on the November ballot. The final legislation incorporated minor changes to the proposed amendments to sections within the PEC's jurisdiction and includes language requested by the PEC to clarify Commission discretion to seek the assistance of the City Administrator or outside consultants when conducting the salary adjustment process for elected officials. The effective date for the PEC to conduct new salary setting duties for the Office of Mayor and for City Councilmembers under the measure remains in 2027. In addition, provisions added to Section 218 related to interactions between Councilmembers and administrative staff remain in the measure, expanding the Commission's enforcement jurisdiction should the ballot measure be approved by voters. The full text of the Charter amendments along with staff reports and the PEC's comment is available on the City Council's [Legistar website](#).

Charter-mandated Salary Adjustments. Following Commission actions in March and April authorizing biennial salary adjustments for the offices of City Councilmember, City Auditor, and City Attorney, the Commission resolutions were transmitted to the City Administration for inclusion in the citywide salary schedule. Payroll adjustments must be included in the citywide salary schedule adopted by City Council and are scheduled for the first reading at the July 7 Council meeting.

Limited Public Financing Program. The Limited Public Financing Act (LPF Act), provides District City Council candidates with public funds to be used for campaign expenses, with the goal of helping ensure that all individuals have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in the electoral and governmental process. Eligible candidates may apply for LPF funds after the City Clerk certifies the names of all candidates to appear on the ballot, which typically occurs in the first two weeks of August. After

candidates for District City Council seats are certified by the City Clerk, the Commission must hold a special meeting to assess the funding available for eligible candidates and affirm the method for distributing funds.

Major 2026 Projects or Initiatives

The chart below provides a high-level overview of PEC projects and initiatives that are either statutory requirements or obligatory core services that require substantial staff time in 2026:

Quarter	Month	Commission Items	Major Staff Activities
1	January	Elect Chair and Vice Chair ✓ PEC-appointments to fill vacant seats ✓ Democracy Dollars Outreach Strategy Report presented ✓	- New Commissioner onboarding - Chair and Vice Chair Orientation - City Council salary adjustment presented to Commission - Hybrid meetings implemented - Recruitment to fill staff vacancies conducted - Mid-cycle budget proposal and information submitted
	February	No meeting	
	March	City Council Salary Adjustment resolution adopted (Charter Sec. 202) ✓ City Attorney and City Auditor Salary Adjustment discussion ✓ Transparency ad hoc subcommittee established ✓	
2	April	Special Meeting – City Attorney Salary Adjustment resolution adopted (Charter Sec. 401(1)) ✓ City Auditor Salary Adjustment resolution adopted (Charter Sec. 403(1)) ✓	- City Attorney and City Auditor salary adjustment presented to Commission - Mid-cycle budget adjustment process - Staff Performance Reviews completed - Dept. Equal Access Report completed 5 positions filled, offers pending for remaining vacant positions - Updates to OCRA and LPF guides and training materials for 2026 elections published - Election-related education, compliance, and enforcement activities
	May	Review and comment on proposed Charter amendments to Sections 218, 301, 400, and 603 ✓ 2026 OCRA Guide published ✓ Democracy Dollars ad hoc subcommittee established ✓	
	June	No meeting	
3	July	- Limited Public Financing Program Overview and 2026 Guide presented - City Auditor's Ethics Climate Survey Report	- Onboarding and training for 4 new FTEs - Administer Limited Public Financing Program - Election-related education, compliance, and enforcement activities - Update the OpenDisclosure website for the 2026 elections - Initiate Democracy Dollars software development process
	August	Special Meeting – Adopt Limited Public Financing fund distribution	
	September	- Presentation/demo of PEC disclosure tools - Announce Commissioner application process - City Attorney informational presentation on PEC jurisdiction and authority	

Item 09 - Executive Director's Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT – JULY 2, 2026

P. 4

Quarter	Month	Commission Items	Major Staff Activities
			Draft 2023, 2024, and 2025 Annual reports/Strategic Planning Retreat planning
4	October	No meeting scheduled	- Administer Limited Public Financing Program - Election-related education, compliance, and enforcement activities - Conduct Administrative Hearings - Recruit 4th ethics analyst - Recruitment to fill PEC-appointed Commission seat/Coordinate with City Attorney appointment
	November	- Adopt 2027 meeting schedule - Establish Commissioner Recruitment ad hoc subcommittee, refer applicants for full Commission interviews	
	December	No meeting scheduled	
TBD			
		Special meeting for strategic planning retreat	- Office suite renovations – on hold pending budget appropriation - Select case management software – on hold pending budget appropriation - Partner with ITD to update local disclosure forms and automate data processing - on hold



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L. Lawrence Brandon
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Ryan Micik

Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

TO: Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Jelani Killings, Senior Analyst, Engagement and Compliance
DATE: July 1, 2026
RE: Engagement and Compliance Program Report for the July 15, 2026 Regular PEC Meeting

This memorandum provides a summary of major accomplishments in the Public Ethics Commission's (PEC or Commission) Engagement and Compliance program activities since the last regular meeting. Commission Staff compliance activities focus on enhancing compliance with disclosure rules and improving tools for public access to local campaign finance and other disclosure data. Engagement activities include training and resources provided to the regulated community, as well as general outreach to Oakland residents to raise awareness of the Commission's role and services.

Compliance with Disclosure Requirements

Commission Staff conducts filing officer duties as required by state and local law and aims to help candidates, lobbyists and City officials submit required disclosure reports and ensure residents can easily access campaign finance, lobbyist, and ethics-related data and information.

Campaign Finance Disclosure – The second semi-annual statement deadline is upcoming, on July 31, 2026, and covers activity from January 1, 2026 through June 30, 2026. Upcoming pre-election deadlines related to the November 3, 2026, election are September 24, 2026, and October 22, 2026.

As of the date of this report, 22 candidates have declared their intention to run, and 11 have registered campaign committees for the November 3, 2026 election. Campaign statements are available to view and download at the Commission's [Public Portal for Campaign Finance Disclosure](#).



Lobbyist Registration Program – The Oakland Lobbyist Registration Act (LRA) requires any person that qualifies as a lobbyist to register annually with the Commission before conducting any lobbying activity and to submit quarterly activity reports. As of July 1, 2026, 44 lobbyists are registered with the City of Oakland. All lobbyists paid the \$500 fee upon

registration. July 31, 2026 is the deadline for lobbyists in Oakland to file their Quarterly Activity Report for the second quarter of 2026.

An up-to-date list of registered lobbyists and lobbyist activity reports with links to view and download individual reports is available at the Public Ethics Commission's [Lobbyist Dashboard and Data](#) webpage.

Behested Payment¹ Disclosure – During the months of May and June, the Mayor's Office reported 12 behested payments totaling \$919,000 in solicited contributions for charitable, legislative or governmental purposes. Behested payment reports are available for public viewing through the [Public Portal for Campaign Finance Disclosure](#). A search for filings by a public official's name will return any behested payment reports in the database submitted by the official (identified as Form 803).

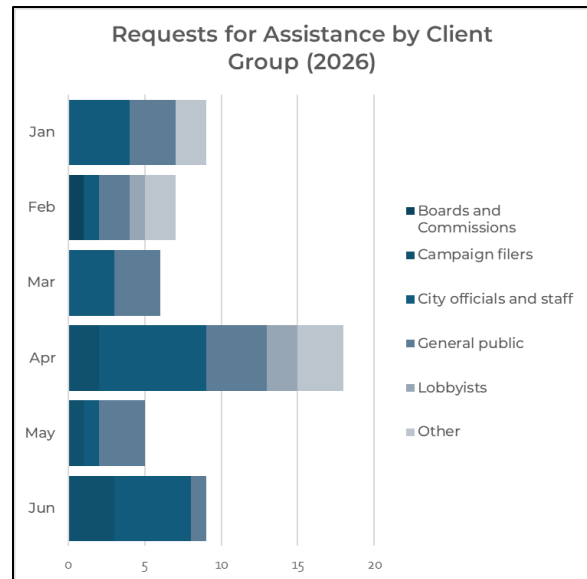
Advice and Engagement

Advice and Technical Assistance – Between May 2026 and the date of this report, Commission Staff responded to 14 requests for information, advice, or assistance regarding campaign finance, ethics, Sunshine law, or lobbyist issues.

Limited Public Financing Act Guide – Commisison staff updated the PEC's comprehensive guide to the Limited Public Financing Act for the 2026 election including format improvements to enhance accessibility.

FPPC Trainings – In preparation for the upcoming election, Staff participated in several FPPC trainings to increase knowledge of disclosure requirements that the PEC enforces and to increase capacity for services provided to campaign filers. The trainings attended include:

- Behested Payments (Form 803)
- Candidate/Treasurer
- Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700)



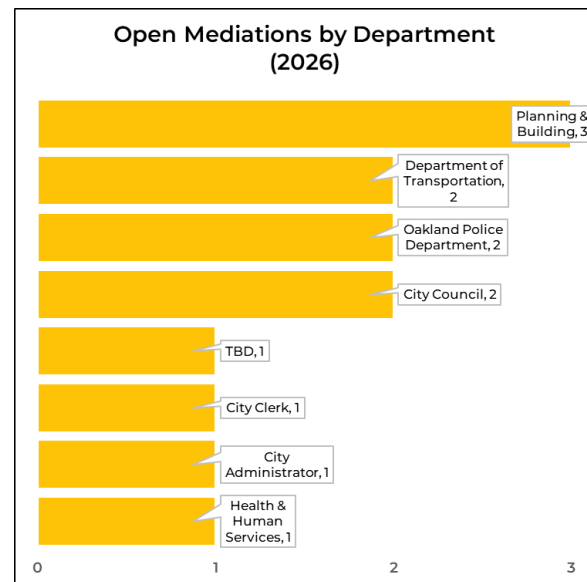
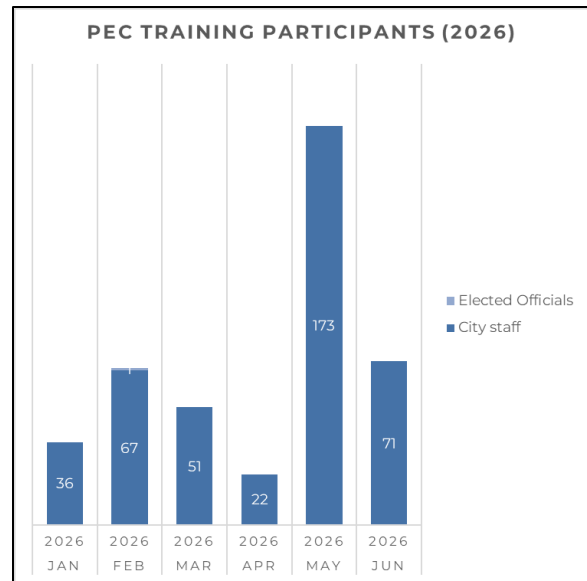
¹ "Behested payments" are payments made to a charity upon the solicitation of an elected official. Behested Payment Reports must filed with the campaign filing officer within 30 days of successfully soliciting \$5,000 or more on FPPC Form 803.

- Campaign Filing Officers
- Completing Campaign Forms 460/497

Ethics Training – In addition to the PEC’s online ethics trainings, Commission Staff regularly provide live trainings for City employees through the City’s New Employee Orientation (NEO), Supervisory Academy, and upon request. On May 29, Commission staff conducted an ethics training for over 100 new employees of the Oakland Parks, Recreation, and Youth Development Department during their summer staff orientation. Commission staff provided an overview of the Public Ethics Commission and the City’s Government Ethics Act.

Mediation Program

Pursuant to the Oakland Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission conducts mediation of public records requests made by members of the public to City departments for records within the department’s control. Since the last Commission meeting, the Commission received five new requests for mediation, and eight mediations were completed, for a total of 13 open mediation cases this year.





Francis Upton IV, Chair
 Karun Tilak, Vice Chair
 Luke Apfeld
 Tanya Bayeva
 L. Lawrence Brandon
 Angi Fisher
 Ryan Micik

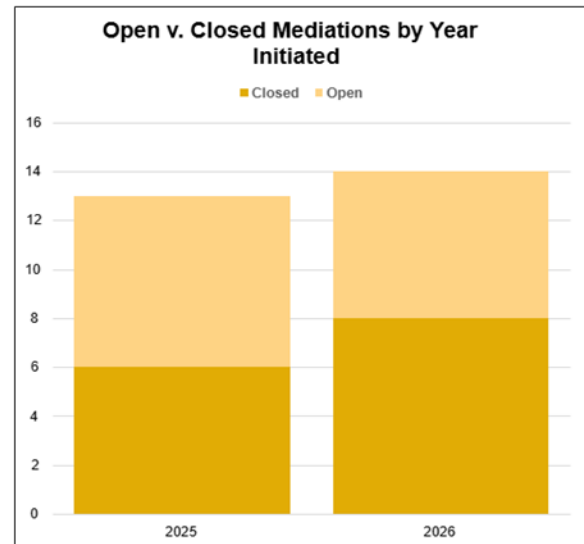
Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

TO: Public Ethics Commission
FROM: Bhawna Chowdhary, Ethics Analyst
 Jelani Killings, Senior Analyst, Engagement and Compliance
DATE: July 1, 2026
RE: Mediation Program Report for the July 15, 2026, PEC Meeting

Pursuant to the Oakland Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission conducts mediation of public records requests made by members of the public to City departments for records within the department's control. Since the last Commission meeting, the Commission has received five new requests for mediation, and eight mediations were completed. This brings the total mediation caseload to 13 open mediations.

Staff resolved the following cases:

- 1. In the Matter of the City Administrator's Office (Mediation Case No. M2025-04).** On August 14, 2025, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the City failed to respond to a public records request. The request sought all documents, records, and communications from specified City officials and employees from January 1, 2023 to April 1, 2023. The City Administrator's Office (CAO) asked for further clarification so they could respond to the request, but the Requestor did not respond. Subsequently, the CAO closed the public records request. On May 19, 2026, Staff reached out to the Requestor to inquire if they were still interested in pursuing the mediation. The Requestor notified Staff that they did not want to pursue the mediation any further. Subsequently, the mediation was closed with no further action.
- 2. In the Matter of the Community Police Review Agency (Mediation Case No. M2025-13).** On December 23, 2025, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the Community Police Review Agency failed to respond to a public records request made by the



Requestor. Staff contacted the Community Police Review Agency several times and requested that they release any responsive records. The Community Police Review Agency initiated an IT request on April 30, 2026, for any available responsive documents and still awaits the results of that request. On June 2, 2026, the Requestor notified Staff via email that they did not want to pursue the mediation any further and had withdrawn it. Subsequently, the mediation was closed with no further action.

- 3. In the Matter of the Community Police Review Agency (Mediation Case No. M2026-04).** On January 29, 2026, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the Community Police Review Agency failed to timely respond to a public records request. The request asked for the professional biographies, notes, ratings, scores, and deliberations related to complaint investigators hired between September 2025 and January 2026. Staff contacted the agency multiple times to obtain any responsive records. The public records request was later assigned to the Department of Human Resources Management, which released all responsive documents on May 5, 2026. Since the responsive documents were released, the mediation was closed with no further action.
- 4. In the Matter of the Office of the Department of Human Resources Management (Mediation Cases No. M2026-07).** On May 3, 2026, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) failed to timely respond to a public records request. The Requestor asked for all TCSE and ELDE contracts and offer letters for a specified employee from 2021 onward. A prior public records request only yielded a TCSE contract ending June 30, 2024, but the employee worked until December 2024. Staff contacted the DHRM to provide the responsive documents. Subsequently, the department released all responsive documents and the mediation was closed with no further action.
- 5. In the Matter of the Office of the Department of Human Resource Management (Mediation Cases No. M2026-08).** On May 3, 2026, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) failed to respond to a public records request. The request sought hiring and promotion offer letters, as well as vacation accrual requests exceeding the MOU parameters for several City employees. Staff contacted the DHRM, which provided all relevant documents. Since the department provided all responsive documents, the mediation was closed with no further action.
- 6. In the Matter of the Office of the City Administrator's Office (Mediation Cases No. M2026-10).** On May 26, 2026, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the City Administrator's office failed to timely respond to a public records request. The request sought all text messages to and from specified individuals and phone numbers. Staff confirmed with the City Administrator's and City Attorney's offices that there were no responsive records. Subsequently, the mediation was closed with no further action.

7. **In the Matter of the City Administrator's Office (Mediation Cases No. M2026-11).** On May 26, 2026, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the City Administrator's office failed to timely respond to a public records request. The request sought all text messages sent to and received from specified individuals and phone numbers. Staff contacted both the City Administrator's and City Attorney's offices, which confirmed they had no responsive records to the request. As a result, the mediation was closed with no further action.
8. **In the Matter of the Office of the Department of Human Resource Management (Mediation Cases No. M2026-12).** On May 26, 2026, the Commission received a request for mediation alleging that the Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) failed to timely respond to a public records request. The request sought policies on the department's hiring and promotion certification list management, including expiration of lists for staff, and the hiring process for exempt staff. Staff contacted the DHRM, which confirmed they released the documents. The City Attorney's office also confirmed all available documents were previously released. As a result, the mediation was closed with no further action.

Transparency Ad Hoc Subcommittee

(ad hoc, created March 18, 2026)

Members: Commissioners Francis Upton IV (Chair), Luke Apfeld, Angi Fisher

May 21, 2026, Minutes

Attendees:

Commissioners present: Francis Upton IV (Chair), Luke Apfeld, Angi Fisher

Staff present: Suzanne Doran, Executive Director

Discussion

1. Reviewed previous work by the PEC in transparency (just brief discussion, not a review of these documents)

- a. Goldman 2024 report - <https://www.oaklandca.gov/files/assets/city/v/2/boards-amp-commissions/documents/pec/publications/reports-by-third-parties/2024-05-01-open-by-default-best-practices-analysis.pdf>
- b. Presentations by Planning, police, and fire departments

2. Brief overview of Oakland's public records system

- a. Based on CPRA and Sunshine Act, handles the production of redacted documents that can be public
- b. Very little self-service access
- c. Next request portal (administered by the City Attorney's office)
 - i. Allows any document to be requested
 - ii. Previously requested documents are available (so they can be searched for with NextRequest)
 - iii. City Attorney's office does only minimal administration of the system
- d. Completely decentralized, each department handles its own requests (departments have to be identified by the requestor), some departments with high volumes (police, fire, planning) have dedicated people handling requests, others don't
- e. No overall tracking of request timeliness, or efficacy of the whole system
- f. PEC handles mediation requests

3. Overall work to be done

- a. Current records-based systems
 - i. Should be better monitored to report on timeliness and effort required to fulfill requests.
 - ii. Look for opportunities for better efficiency
- b. Movement towards self-service access to public information

- i. ITD should have a lot of ideas about this, given their recent city-wide email about document classification
- ii. Consider the public access requirements of any computers systems in the city
- iii. Each department could provide self-service access to more or all public records (appropriately redacted of course)
- iv. All computer systems should consider public access to information of record

4. Near term deliverables

- a. Create a draft vision statement that captures improving the current records-based systems, and also moving towards self service (see attachment for some notes on this)
- b. Create a memo to invite ITD to present to the PEC on these topics, both referring to current processes and opportunities to improve things, and how a future world of self-service might be possible (Francis will make a draft to be worked on at the next meeting)

5. Longer term deliverables (for the scope of the subcommittee)

- a. ITD Presentation to PEC
- b. City-wide forum for public records
 - i. Stakeholders can share information and best practices
 - ii. Problems the departments are having can be identified
 - iii. Short- and long-term improvements can be identified

6. Next meeting: June 9 at 3pm on Zoom (Angi will provide the link for the invite)

Transparency Ad Hoc Subcommittee

(ad hoc, created March 18, 2026)

Members: Commissioners Francis Upton IV (Chair), Luke Apfeld, Angi Fisher

June 9, 2026, Minutes

Attendees:

Commissioners present: Francis Upton IV (Chair), Luke Apfeld, Angi Fisher

Staff present: Jelani Killings, Ethics Analyst III

Discussion:

1. The Commissioners discussed an invitation to ITD leadership to present at future subcommittee and/or Commission meetings. The intention is to provide an opportunity to learn about ITD's visions, views, and plans for how public records and transparency are considered in creating procedures relating to the City's data overall as well as gain insight into ways City policy could be modernized. Commissioners identified the following questions and areas of interest for discussion at a future subcommittee and/or full Commission meeting:
 - a. We are interested in learning more about ITD's day-to-day practices when it comes to managing the City's data as they relate to the public's access to City records.
 - b. What's ITD's overall vision in maintaining data and processes to support records access and transparency?
 - c. What do you think are the risks in giving self service access?
 - d. What plans/work are being made now to better support records access and transparency? We are interested in work to process and store data in a way that any required redaction to make the data public is automatic.
 - e. Can you explain the Electronic Data Discovery Request (EDDR) system and respond to the issues mentioned in the reports from Planning and OFD? Kindly provide data pertaining to the volume, type, frequency, and response times associated with EDDRs.
 - f. Does ITD have any relationship with the use of the NextRequest system for public records request coordination as used by OCA? If so, what are the plans for NextRequest considering the responses from OFD?
 - g. Residents have repeatedly commented that contracts and promises related to funding measures and contracts have not been properly fulfilled. Does ITD have ideas about how this data can be presented to the public, so these concerns are addressed?

- h. The PEC is considering convening a forum with representatives of interested departments to discuss ways records access and transparency can be improved. We hope ITD can contribute and use this as an opportunity to help gather requirements for this area. Do you have comments about this?
- i. Is there any additional information you would like to share with the Commission on this issue?

Purpose Statement:

**Democracy Dollars Pilot Subcommittee
(ad hoc, created May 5, 2026)**

Members: Ryan Micik (Chair), Tanya Bayeva, and L. Lawrence Brandon

A) What is the specific goal of the committee?

This advisory subcommittee will discuss and provide input to support staff activities to research pilot options, in lieu of postponing Democracy Dollars program implementation, that may be employed for future elections if budget reductions are necessary due to the City of Oakland's ongoing fiscal challenges. The Commissioners will also assist staff with the development of the PEC's communications strategy and outreach materials for its public campaign financing programs consistent with an extended program implementation timeline.

B) What is the expected deliverable and in what time period?

Commissioners will provide input to staff on an as-needed basis as options are researched for a Democracy Dollars pilot for upcoming election years given the City of Oakland's ongoing projected fiscal deficit. A memorandum outlining pilot options and feasibility is expected to be delivered for discussion to the full Commission by late 2026.

C) What level of staff vs Commissioner work is expected?

Staff will research and provide cost estimates for different pilot scenarios and review major elements, priorities, options, and feasibility with the Subcommittee for input. Additionally, staff will collect baseline metrics tracking campaign funding and voter engagement to update the Commission's analysis of current outcomes and identify metrics to measure future pilot or full program outcomes. Commissioners will report recommendations regarding options that the Commission may decide to support. Commissioners may partner with staff in outreach and community engagement activities such as developing outreach materials and network building with community leaders and organizations to spread program awareness and gain input from targeted audiences on program implementation.

Democracy Dollars Pilot Subcommittee

(ad hoc, created May 5, 2026)

Members: Commissioners Ryan Micik (Chair), Tanya Bayeva, L. Lawrence Brandon

May 14, 2026, Minutes

Attendees:

Commissioners present: Ryan Micik (Chair), Tanya Bayeva

Commissioners absent: L. Lawrence Brandon

Staff present: Suzanne Doran

Discussion

1. **Review of Purpose Statement** – subcommittee members reviewed the draft purpose statement and discussed the subcommittee’s scope and deliverables. Micik will edit and circulate the draft purpose statement with subcommittee members to finalize before the next regular meeting in July.
2. **Staff Updates** – staff shared updates, including progress on filling the vacant program manager position and hiring a part-time graduate student intern, continued partnership with non-profit Local Policy Lab to support Democracy Dollars implementation, and the public financing update presentation by Common Cause on the upcoming PEC agenda.
3. **Feedback on Outreach Materials/Talking Points** – subcommittee members provided feedback on the format and content of draft talking points and other materials to support Commission and Staff communications about the Democracy Dollars program, and discussed planning for stakeholder engagement and advocacy. Staff will provide revised drafts based on feedback and circulate with the subcommittee in June, with a goal to finalize materials before the next regular Commission meeting in July.
4. **Meeting Follow-up Items:**
 - **Micik – coordinate member scheduling for a subcommittee meeting in June**
 - **Micik to Finish Purpose statement and circulate**
 - **Micik to finalize minutes**
 - **Staff to - Create a shared folder for the subcommittee and add useful materials such as:**
 - **Re-circulate the Talking Points & Outreach materials**
 - **Any prior staff reports re: pilot options**
 - **Any info on Seattle (Micik)**
 - **Original campaign materials for Measure W (Micik)**

Democracy Dollars Pilot Subcommittee

(ad hoc, created May 5, 2026)

Members: Commissioners Ryan Micik (Chair), Tanya Bayeva, L. Lawrence Brandon

June 25, 2026, Minutes

Attendees:

Commissioners present: Ryan Micik (Chair), Tanya Bayeva

Commissioners absent: L. Lawrence Brandon

Staff present: Suzanne Doran

Discussion

1. **Report Backs on Tasks Assigned at May 14 Meeting**– Chair Micik reported that he had compiled documents on Seattle’s democracy vouchers program and original campaign materials for Measure W, in addition to circulating a draft purpose statement and minutes. Executive Director Doran reported that she had created a shared Dropbox folder with useful materials
2. **Staff Updates** – Executive Director shared that the City Council had adopted the mid-cycle budget, which reduced Democracy Dollar startup funding; however, she does not expect this reduction to delay the MapLight contract. She also shared that staff anticipates completing hiring for a new program manager by the end of July. Voters rejected Measure E, resulting in an estimated \$40 million shortfall for public safety and essential services. The administration’s “Roadmap to Fiscal Health,” establishing strategies proposed for the coming three years to address the City’s financial challenges does not project funding for DD implementation until 2032; no elected officials have voiced support for an earlier timeline.
3. **Discussion of Next Steps in Wake of General Fund Shortfall**– subcommittee members and staff discussed shifting the DD focus from immediate pilot implementation to a longer timeline, aiming for a pilot no earlier than 2030. Subcommittee members and staff agreed that, in the meantime, they should continue to flesh out a pilot plan, build program awareness and support among elected officials and allies, adjust public messaging, gather baseline data, and consider sunseting the subcommittee after developing deliverables this fall.
4. **Meeting Follow-up Items:**
 - **Micik to sketch out potential timeline for deliverables for discussion with new program manager and other staff and subcommittee members**
 - **Micik to draft minutes**
 - **Staff to revise purpose statement to reflect adjustments discussed at this meeting**