

CITY OF OAKLAND  
PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION  
Regular Commission Meeting  
One Frank Ogawa Plaza (City Hall)  
Hearing Room 2  
Wednesday, May 20, 2026  
6:30 p.m.



## 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.