



**CITY OF OAKLAND
PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION**
Special Commission Meeting
One Frank Ogawa Plaza (City Hall)
Hearing Room 3
Wednesday, October 28, 2026
4:30 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 |
Carina Lieu, Program Manager | Jelani Killings, Ethics Analyst

Legal Counsel:

Oliver Luby, Deputy City Attorney

PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION SPECIAL 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.



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ACTION ITEMS

4. Public Ethics Commission Retreat: Review Program Area Work and Identify Key Projects for 2027.

The Commission will convene to conduct team development, review the annual report of the Commission's 2025 activities, assess Commission accomplishments and current context, participate in strategic visioning, and identify key opportunities and priorities for 2027-2029. There will be discussion and decisions made as a group regarding overall PEC direction, goals, activities, and priorities with an emphasis on what projects have been completed and what items remain for completion in the next one to three years. For each program area, Commission staff will share details of program goals and accomplishments, identify opportunities and challenges to completing Commission goals, and will open the discussion to Commissioners to assist with challenges and next steps. (Attachments – [2025 Annual Report](#), [2024 Annual Report](#), [2023 Annual Report](#), [Case Prioritization Activity Handout](#))

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

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.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Doran".

Approved for Distribution

10/23/2026

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:



- Name: This field is required to be entered; however, if you wish to remain anonymous, you may type "Public" in the name field.
- Email Address: This field is required to be entered; however, if you wish to remain anonymous, you may type "Public@public.com" in the email field.

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 2000 or +1 646 931 3860 or +1 689 278 1000 or +1 929 205 6099 or +1 301 715 8592 or +1 305 224 1968 or +1 309 205 3325 or +1 312 626 6799 Webinar ID: 891 6930 8829
- 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



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reunión. Gracias.

你需要手語, 西班牙語, 粵語或國語翻譯服務嗎? 請在會議五天前電郵
ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov or 或致電 (510) 238-3593 或 711 (電話傳達服務)。

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.



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Photo: Greg Linhares, City of Oakland

Public Ethics Commission

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Website: www.oaklandca.gov/pec

Tel: (510) 238-3593

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ABOUT THE PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION

Created by Oakland voters in 1996, the mission of the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) is to promote more inclusive, representative, and accountable democracy in Oakland and ensure fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in City government. The PEC's work is governed by local ordinances in three main areas: campaign finance, transparency, and ethics. The Commission's authority and ability to do its work is guided by the provisions outlined in the City Charter, as amended through 2024, as well as the laws within its jurisdiction:

Government Ethics Act
Oakland Campaign Reform Act
Oakland Fair Elections Act
Lobbyist Registration Act

Conflict of Interest Code
False Endorsement in Campaign Literature
Limited Public Financing Act
Sunshine Ordinance

The Commission's activities and staffing structure are organized by the following ethics compliance framework to ensure a strong, effective, and fair ethics commission:

Lead/Collaborate – Lead by example and facilitate City policy, management, and technological changes to further the Commission's mission.

Educate/Engage – Provide education, advice, technical assistance, and formal legal opinions to promote awareness and understanding of the City's campaign finance, ethics, and transparency laws.

Disclose/Illuminate – Facilitate accurate, effective, and accessible disclosure of government integrity data, such as campaign finance reporting, conflicts of interest/gifts reports, and lobbyist activity, all of which help the public and PEC staff monitor filings, view information, and detect inconsistencies or noncompliance.

Detect/Deter – Conduct investigations and audits to monitor compliance with the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction.

Prosecute – Enforce violations of the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction through administrative or civil remedies.

STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION FOR PUBLIC TRUST

In 2025, the Public Ethics Commission continued building the foundation for stronger public trust and more transparent, accountable government during a period of significant change. The year saw several important transitions for the Commission, including new leadership, expanded staffing, and a growing investment in Oakland's government integrity systems. Despite ongoing fiscal constraints, the Commission expanded its capacity, advanced reforms, increased engagement with residents, and delivered meaningful results across its ethics, transparency, disclosure, and enforcement programs.

2025 Highlights

- **New Leadership Team** – The Commission selected longtime PEC staff member Suzanne Doran as Executive Director and appointed Tovah Ackerman as Enforcement Chief, ensuring continuity while adding fresh leadership to position the agency for future growth.
- **Growing Capacity** – The PEC continued its expansion from six full-time positions and a \$1.5 million budget in FY 2021-22 to an anticipated 11 full-time positions and a \$2.7 million budget by FY 2026-27, significantly strengthening its ability to serve Oakland residents.
- **Delivering Enforcement Results** – The Enforcement Unit evaluated 20 complaints, initiated 4 proactive cases, resolved 65 cases, assessed \$1,750 in penalties, and conducted the Commission's first administrative hearing in five years.
- **Advancing Democracy Dollars** – Although the Democracy Dollars Program was postponed because of the City's ongoing fiscal challenges, the Commission continued preparing for a successful future launch, executing a technology contract with MapLight and partnering with civic engagement non-profit Local Policy Lab to develop a comprehensive community outreach strategy.
- **Preserving Public Campaign Financing** – The Commission successfully advocated for continued public financing of local elections, ensuring Oakland's long-standing commitment to publicly supported campaigns continued.
- **Expanding Community Engagement** – The PEC participated in 15 community events throughout Oakland to increase public awareness of ethics oversight, the highest level of annual outreach in a decade.
- **A New Home for a Growing Agency** – The Commission relocated to a larger office suite designed to support its expanding workforce and the operational demands of future initiatives, including Democracy Dollars.



LEAD AND COLLABORATE

LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

The Commission leads by example and employs collaborative approaches to facilitate changes in City laws, policies, systems, and technology to ensure fairness, openness, integrity, and innovation.

Moving Democracy Dollars Forward

Measure W, passed by Oakland voters in 2022, created Democracy Dollars, a public campaign financing program administered by the PEC. The program will give Oakland residents public funds to support local candidates, helping expand participation and reduce barriers tied to personal wealth. Although implementation was delayed by the City's fiscal deficit, the PEC made significant progress in 2025 to prepare for the program's future launch:

- Executed a contract with government transparency non-profit MapLight to build the online platform to administer the program and increase transparency in Oakland campaign finance.
- Relocated to a larger office suite to accommodate a fully staffed PEC and the storage and processing needs of Democracy Dollars.
- Used a grant from the Haas Jr. Foundation to hire temporary staff and gather community input on program outreach.
- Partnered with non-profit Local Policy Lab to develop recommendations and a roadmap for future outreach and program implementation.

Maintaining Public Financing During the Transition

Postponement of the Democracy Dollars Program for the 2026 election would have left Oakland with no public financing program for candidates for the first time in two decades. The PEC successfully advocated for the City Council to fund the Limited Public Financing (LPF) program, ensuring that 2026 would not be the first election in more than two decades without any public financing in Oakland. Council authorized the LPF through the 2028 election cycle, until the Democracy Dollars Fund is available, and allocated nearly \$230,000 in public campaign funds for 2026 Council District candidates.

Council Adopts Campaign Finance Changes Following PEC Review

As required by the City Charter, the Commission reviewed proposals from Councilmembers to amend the Oakland Campaign Reform Act and Limited Public Financing Program in May and December. The Commission adopted recommendations and presented them to the City Council. The City Council approved the amended ordinances without changes. The amendments increased campaign contribution limits from \$650 to \$900, raised annual officeholder account limits to \$75,000 for district councilmembers and \$100,000 for citywide elected officials, added a new restriction limiting the use

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of officeholder funds for communications to constituents when an elected official is a candidate seeking reelection, and extended the Limited Public Financing Program through the 2028 election cycle while Democracy Dollars funds are unavailable.

Updating the Rules That Guide the Commission

In March, the Commission updated its Operations Policies to align Commission procedures with laws enacted since the policies were first adopted and improve overall governance and transparency. The changes clarified the commissioner selection process, required ad hoc committees to maintain meeting minutes, and updated meeting scheduling and noticing requirements.

Planning for a Stronger, Sustainable PEC

The Commission formed an ad hoc subcommittee to explore options to ensure stable funding for ethics enforcement and future implementation of Democracy Dollars. The subcommittee presented draft legislation to fully fund the PEC and strengthen Oakland's anti-corruption policies. The Commission will continue working with City leaders and partner agencies to identify stable funding sources that support PEC independence and long-term success.

PROGRAM UPDATES

EDUCATE AND ENGAGE

Prevention activities consist of education, outreach, and online information to facilitate compliance with government integrity laws. The Commission educates and advises candidates for local elective office, elected officials, appointed officials, City staff, lobbyists, people doing business with Oakland, City residents, businesses, and organizations.

Advice and Assistance

In 2025, Commission staff responded to 109 requests for information, advice, or assistance regarding campaign finance, ethics, Sunshine law, or lobbyist issues, fielding an average of nine requests per month. Just over half of the requests for advice and assistance came from City officials and staff seeking to comply with government ethics laws such as gift restrictions, misuse of City resources, and conflicts of interest. Other questions came from campaigns and lobbyists, as well as members of the public regarding campaign finance and lobbyist disclosure rules.

Training and Guidance

Through live presentations, online training, and written guidance, the Commission provided ethics education and compliance outreach to elected officials, City employees, board and commission members, electoral campaigns and lobbyists throughout the year, including:

Elected Officials

- Seven elected officials and 20 staff members participated in ethics check-ins and training sessions covering the role and work of the Public Ethics Commission, as well as recent changes to local and state ethics and transparency laws.

City Employees

- More than 270 new City employees received an ethics overview as part of the City's monthly New Employee Orientation program. In addition, PEC staff conducted live ethics training for more than 50 employees during the Oakland Parks,



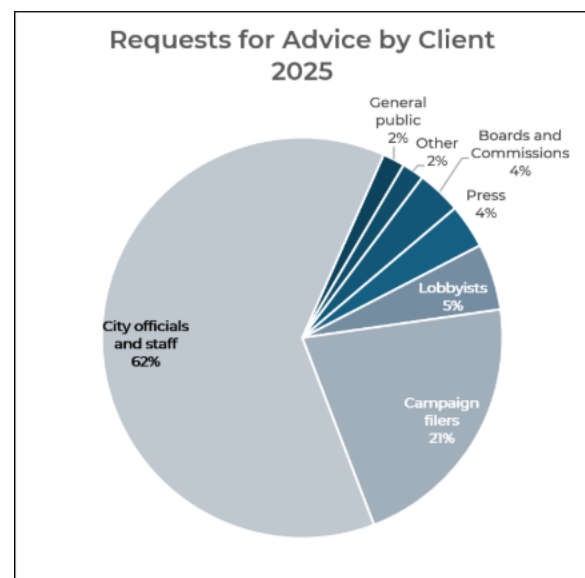
109 requests for advice or assistance



800+ training participants



1,635 views of training content



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Recreation, and Youth Development Department's Summer Orientation.

- A total of 183 City employees completed comprehensive Government Ethics Training for Form 700 Filers through the City's online learning management system.
- Sixty-six City supervisors and managers received advanced ethics training through the City's Supervisor Academy.

Board and Commission Members

- Twenty-two City board and commission members completed the online Government Ethics Training.
- PEC staff also provided live ethics training to 12 Youth Advisory Commissioners.

Candidates and Campaign Committees

Throughout 2025, PEC staff provided guidance to candidates and campaign committees with a focus on those participating in the April 15, 2025, Special Election.

- Staff issued ten bulletins addressing topics including 24-hour reporting requirements, updated contribution limits, social media disclaimer requirements, and campaign activity by officeholders and City employees.
- Staff updated the Commission's comprehensive guide to the Oakland Campaign Reform Act (OCRA) to reflect City Council-adopted changes, including a temporary contribution limit increase and an increase to the annual officeholder account contribution cap.

Online Engagement

In 2025, staff produced monthly social media content highlighting PEC policy areas, activities, and topics of interest to specific client groups. A total of 35 posts were published on the PEC's Facebook and X platforms, with an audience of 1,412 X followers and 359 Facebook page likes. The PEC YouTube channel reached 1,790 viewers in 2025.

- 1,300 viewers watched the Commission's ten-minute Ethics Introduction video.
- 75 viewers viewed the Lobbyist Training.
- 260 viewers watched training videos covering specific topics such as open meeting requirements, gift rules, conflicts of interest, misuse of City resources, and Form 700 (Statement of Economic Interests) reporting.

Outreach and Engagement

The Commission conducts outreach to help Oakland residents and individuals regulated by ethics laws understand its role and access resources on ethics, campaign finance, and government transparency. In 2025, the PEC participated in 15 community events, its highest level of outreach in the past decade. Seven events took place in neighborhoods designated "High-Priority Equity Neighborhoods," reflecting the Commission's commitment to reaching all residents across Oakland.



DISCLOSE AND ILLUMINATE

The Commission's Disclosure Program helps candidates, lobbyists, and City officials file required reports and provides Oakland residents with access to campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics information. The program seeks to promote transparency by making data accurate, understandable, and easy to use. This helps both the public and the Commission monitor filings, review information, and identify potential errors or noncompliance. Beyond simply providing copies of filings, the Commission shares data in user-friendly formats, seeks public feedback, and encourages community engagement.



800+ disclosure reports reviewed



~14,000 views of disclosure content



15 mediations completed

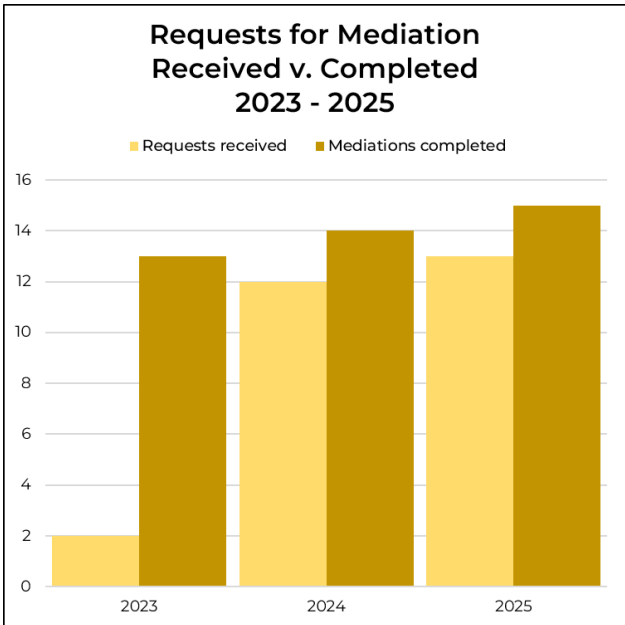


Making Disclosure Data Work for the Public

After a Special Election was scheduled for April 15, Commission staff worked with OpenOakland volunteers to ensure the OpenDisclosure (www.opendisclosure.io) campaign finance app was up-to-date with data from the City's campaign finance database. Open Disclosure is a nonpartisan tool developed by civic tech group OpenOakland in partnership with Commission staff to give all Oakland residents equal access to campaign finance data. In 2025, the site recorded 6,900 users and 13,941 page views.

Mediation Program

Under the Oakland Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission mediates public records disputes between members of the public and City departments. In 2025, the Commission received 13 mediation requests and completed 15 mediations, eliminating its backlog of cases from prior years. PEC staff also digitized the mediation request form on the Commission's website, streamlining processing and making submissions more convenient for requestors.



COMPLIANCE AND DISCLOSURE

As Filing Officer, the Commission collects, reviews, and provides public access to ethics-related data.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE data includes candidate and ballot-measure campaign committee information, including contributions to campaigns and expenditures made during the election cycle. Oakland had 110 active political committees as of December 2025. A special election was held on April 15, 2025. There were five campaign statement deadlines, and PEC staff processed and reviewed over 800 campaign-related filings disclosing approximately \$4 million in campaign contributions during 2025. Ninety percent of scheduled filings were timely in 2025.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS SOLICITED BY CITY OFFICIALS required to file a Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) must be disclosed to the Public Ethics Commission within 30 days when a political contribution of \$5,000 or more is made by a person or entity that contracts or proposes to contract with the official's department. No reports were submitted in 2025.

LOBBYING activity reports identify who is lobbying City officials and for what purpose. In 2025, 47 lobbyists registered with the City of Oakland representing approximately 95 clients. Oakland lobbyists reported a total of 588 contacts with City officials during 2025. PEC staff provides outreach and assistance to lobbyists to ensure compliance with registration and reporting requirements. Staff processed and reviewed 75 quarterly lobbyist activity reports in 2025. Ninety-three percent were timely in 2025. One hundred percent of the registered lobbyists who were required to complete the PEC's online lobbyist training successfully completed it.

BEHESTED PAYMENTS reports show who is donating to a nonprofit organization at the request or solicitation of an elected official. Elected officials who solicit such payments are required to file Form 803 to report these payments if they amount to \$5,000 or more. In 2025, elected officials reported 13 behested payments totaling \$769,000 benefiting local non-profits and programs.

STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS (Form 700) are filed with the City Clerk's office but are of high interest to the PEC in ensuring compliance with ethics laws that require reporting of personal financial information by City officials. Commission staff checks for elected official compliance with filing deadlines and provides education and advice regarding Form 700 filing.

ENFORCEMENT

The Commission conducts investigations, holds public hearings, issues subpoenas, and imposes fines and penalties as provided for by ordinance. City ordinances give the Commission the authority to impose penalties for violations of ethics laws, campaign finance laws, and lobbyist registration requirements. The Commission also can mediate or recommend “cure and correction” for violations of public records and open meetings laws, respectively.

Incoming Cases

Commission staff received 27 formal complaints, and seven informal complaints were elevated and assigned case numbers, for a total of 34 allegations of potential violations under campaign finance, conflicts of interest, transparency, and other ethics-related laws in 2025. Enforcement staff also initiated four proactive complaints. Staff completed preliminary review of 20 complaints and opened one new investigation. At year-end, there were 107 open enforcement complaints that had been assigned a case number.

Significant Increase in Case Closures

Over the past five years, both the volume and complexity of complaints have risen sharply, while Enforcement’s staffing levels had not changed since 2014. This contributed to a severe complaint backlog which strains Commission resources and undermines the Commission’s ability to provide timely and effective resolution of complaints. New Enforcement Chief Tovah Ackerman designed a strategy employing both process improvements and a prioritized complaint closure process that the Enforcement Unit implemented in June to restore operational sustainability, reduce backlog, and refocus resources on high-impact investigations. The strategy included detailed criteria to ensure that enforcement efforts are both strategic and effective.

As a result of Chief Ackerman’s strategy, the Enforcement unit significantly increased case closures, resolving 65 complaints by year-end and reducing backlog cases by 50 percent. While a disproportionately low staff-to-complaint ratio presents an ongoing Enforcement challenge, program effectiveness has vastly improved since the new strategy was employed because of the focused effort to reduce the caseload. The addition of newly budgeted investigative staff in 2025 and 2026 will continue to improve the PEC’s effectiveness as an anti-corruption agency in the years ahead.



71 investigations



65 cases resolved



\$1,750 penalties

Enforcement Outcomes

By year-end, the Commission resolved 65 cases as follows:

- One administrative hearing resulting in a penalty of \$1,750;
- 15 cases resolved with diversion training;
- One case resolved with a warning letter;
- One case resolved with an advisory letter;
- 11 cases resolved with closure, no action; and
- 36 complaints dismissed.

2025 MAJOR ENFORCEMENT CASES

In the Matter of Michael Dabney, Case #23-28. The Commission found that respondent Michael Dabney, a mobile food vendor, violated the Government Ethics Act by attempting to bribe a City inspector. The Commission approved a penalty in the amount of \$1,750.

ADMINISTRATION

Staff

Commission staff are responsible for the Commission's day-to-day operations, including investigations and enforcement casework, education and advice, data collection and illumination activities, and law and policy projects.

In early 2025, Executive Director Nicolas Heidorn announced he would be stepping down from the Commission.

Following public recruitment, the Commission named PEC Program Manager Suzanne Doran to serve as Executive Director. Since joining the Commission in 2016, Ms. Doran has been responsible for administration of the Commission's disclosure and engagement program and led multiple technology projects to enhance compliance and improve tools for public access to local campaign finance and other disclosure data. Ms. Doran previously served as Acting Executive Director in 2022 and 2023 during the Commission's last leadership transition. Most recently, Ms. Doran's work focused on overseeing implementation of the City's Fair Elections Act, the innovative public campaign financing program for Oakland candidates that will put Democracy Dollars vouchers directly into the hands of voters during elections. Ms. Doran holds a



6 volunteer
Commissioners



9 full-time staff



\$2.8M FY 25-26

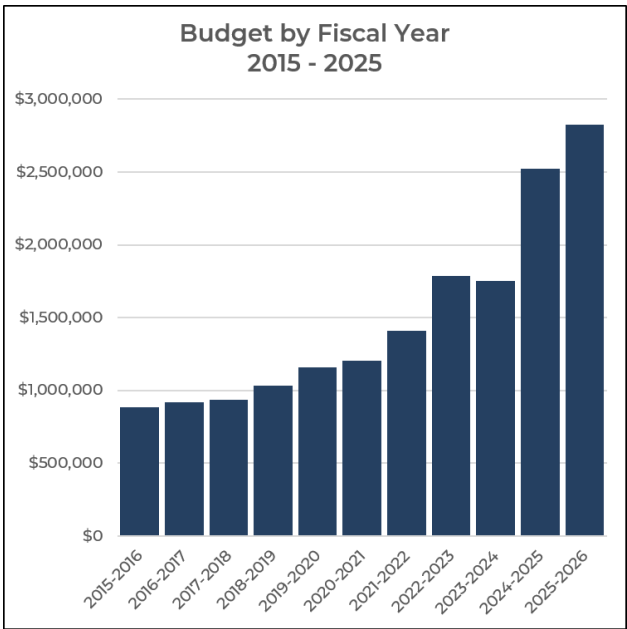
**Public Ethics Commission
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B.A. in Rhetoric with an emphasis on human rights discourse from the University of California, Berkeley, and a master’s degree in public policy from Mills College.

Other significant staff transitions in 2025 included the appointment of Tovah Ackerman as the Commission’s new Enforcement Chief. Ms. Ackerman has extensive investigative experience, most recently serving as an Investigator with the Prison Law Office, where she led investigations into conditions at California prisons. She received her J.D. from New York University School of Law and has a Master of Philosophy in criminology from Cambridge University.

Budget

The adopted budget for the Commission was \$2,524,893 for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 and \$2,823,094 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Although the PEC baseline budget was reduced by over 50 percent compared with City Charter and Measure W (2022) minimum requirements due to the City’s significant deficit, the 2025-2027 budget nonetheless provided substantial improvements to PEC resources compared with prior years. Significantly, the adopted budget included several important PEC priorities: bringing Enforcement Unit staffing up to three investigators (one starting in the second half of 2025 and the other starting in the second half of 2026) and funding the Limited Public Financing Program for the 2026 election while the



Democracy Dollars program is postponed. These important enhancements over the last budget cycle will continue to bolster increased PEC effectiveness.



Moving Into a New Home

In 2025, the Commission bid farewell to its City Hall home after 11 years. In June, the Commission received approval from the City Administrator to move all staff into a new suite at 250 Frank Ogawa Plaza, across from City Hall, which better meets the Commission’s operational needs now and in the future. While the new office suite requires design updates to accommodate security and operational needs, staff are excited about the Commission’s new home.

2025 COMMISSIONERS

The Commission is a seven-member volunteer board composed of Oakland residents. The Mayor, City Attorney, and City Auditor each appoint one member, and the Commission appoints the remaining four. In 2025, the mayor-appointed seat remained vacant because no appointment was made for the 2023-2026 term.

Francis Upton IV, Chair
City Auditor Appointee
2022–2025; 2025–2028

District 4

Francis Upton IV is a software executive with extensive experience in data systems and software development productivity. He is the founder and Chief Technology Officer of SnapStrat, Inc. and previously served as Vice President of Architecture and Governance at Talend. Before joining Talend, he founded Oakland Software, leading the development of advanced data-transformation technology. His earlier work included senior engineering and management roles at technical startups and at Digital Equipment Corporation and Hewlett-Packard. Francis is also a long-time contributor to open-source initiatives, including projects with the Eclipse Foundation and Jenkins CI. He holds a BA in Liberal Studies from Antioch University and has lived in Oakland for more than 25 years, currently residing in Glenview.



strategies that expand economic opportunity in underserved communities. Earlier in her career, Tanya advised technology companies on corporate governance, securities reporting, and commercial matters, and previously represented major financial institutions in complex transactions at law firms in New York and Chicago. Tanya is committed to community engagement and pro bono work, assisting clients on issues ranging from family law to consumer protection and volunteering as a mediator with Community Boards in San Francisco. She holds a BS in Finance from Yeshiva University and a JD from the University of Michigan Law School, and lives in the Claremont Hills.

Alea Gage
Commission Appointee
2023–2026

District 4

Alea Gage is a city planner and community development professional who serves as Preservation Program Manager at the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing & Community Development. Her work supports nonprofit organizations and tenants in stabilizing multifamily housing through the Small Sites Program. Previously, Alea led the City of Vallejo's economic development strategy and coordinated the nation's first citywide participatory budgeting process, engaging thousands of residents in allocating public funds. She is a former Coro Fellow and holds a master's degree in city planning from UC



Tanya Bayeva, Vice Chair
Commission Appointee
2024–2028

District 4

Tanya Bayeva is an experienced corporate attorney with a focus on impact-driven finance, governance, and compliance. She serves as Associate General Counsel for Impact Investments at Mission Driven Finance, LLC, where she structures capital

Berkeley. An Oakland resident for 13 years, Alea is committed to civic engagement and proud to raise her children in a vibrant and inclusive community.



Ryan Micik
City Attorney Appointee
2022–2024; 2024–2027

District 2

Ryan Micik operates a political research and communications consulting practice serving nonprofits, advocacy organizations, government reform groups, and candidates for public office. His work includes helping clients navigate complex policy issues, public records laws, and communication strategy. Ryan previously served as Deputy Director of Maryland StateStat, a statewide performance and accountability initiative, where he worked with agencies to improve service delivery and efficiency. He earned a BA in Political Science from UC Berkeley, where he was active in progressive and AAPI organizations and received awards for radio journalism. Ryan is a former member of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee and resides in the Grand Lake neighborhood.



Vince Steele
Commission Appointee
2023–2026

District 2

Vince Steele is a policy analyst with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and a dedicated community organizer. Before joining the County, he worked for the Service Employees International Union

(SEIU) as an internal organizer and chief negotiator, contributing to major victories such as the Fight for \$15 minimum-wage campaign in Los Angeles. Vince later served as Organizing and Political Director at two Bay Area nonprofits focused on criminal justice reform and education equity. He also led campaign strategy for Oakland’s Measure S, expanding voting access in school board elections to non-citizen residents. Vince is an NLC-Oakland Fellow and former board member of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club. He holds an MPA from UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy.



Karun Tilak
Commission Appointee
2024–2027

District 1

Karun Tilak is a local government attorney with significant experience in consumer protection, public health, and civil rights litigation. He serves as a Deputy City Attorney in the San Francisco City Attorney’s Office and has previously held legal roles with Santa Clara County and the City of Oakland. His work includes litigating complex cases to safeguard tenants’ rights, protect consumers, and uphold public safety. Karun also advises agencies on compliance with transparency and public-safety laws. Before entering government service, Karun worked in private practice, litigating challenges to federal policies affecting democratic participation. He holds a JD from Yale Law School and BA/BS degrees in International Relations and Economics from American University and has lived in Oakland since 2018.

RESOURCES

The [Public Ethics Commission | City of Oakland, CA](#) website offers resources, guidance, reports, and information for the public, candidates, campaign committees, lobbyists, and City officials.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Photo: Greg Linhares, City of Oakland

Public Ethics Commission

Email: ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov

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Tel: (510) 238-3593

250 Frank H Ogawa Plaza, Suite 6303

Oakland, CA 94612



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ABOUT THE PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION

Created by Oakland voters in 1996, the mission of the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) is to promote more inclusive, representative, and accountable democracy in Oakland and ensure fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in City government. The PEC's work is governed by local ordinances in three main areas: campaign finance, transparency, and ethics. The Commission's authority and ability to do its work is guided by the provisions outlined in the City Charter, as amended through 2024, as well as the laws within its jurisdiction:

Government Ethics Act
Oakland Campaign Reform Act
Oakland Fair Elections Act
Lobbyist Registration Act

Conflict of Interest Code
False Endorsement in Campaign Literature
Limited Public Financing Act
Sunshine Ordinance

The Commission's activities and staffing structure are organized by the following ethics compliance framework to ensure a strong, effective, and fair ethics commission:

Lead/Collaborate – Lead by example and facilitate City policy, management, and technological changes to further the Commission's mission.

Educate/Engage – Provide education, advice, technical assistance, and formal legal opinions to promote awareness and understanding of the City's campaign finance, ethics, and transparency laws.

Disclose/Illuminate – Facilitate accurate, effective, and accessible disclosure of government integrity data, such as campaign finance reporting, conflicts of interest/gifts reports, and lobbyist activities, all of which help the public and PEC staff monitor filings, view information, and detect inconsistencies or noncompliance.

Detect/Deter – Conduct investigations and audits to monitor compliance with the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction.

Prosecute – Enforce violations of the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction through administrative or civil remedies.

A LANDMARK YEAR FOR ETHICS, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND REFORM

In 2024, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) achieved major milestones that strengthened government accountability, transparency, and public trust in Oakland. One of the year's most significant accomplishments was voter approval of Measure OO, a Charter amendment that represents the most substantial update to the PEC's governing authority in a decade. Measure OO strengthens the Commission's independence, clarifies its mission, and enhances support for future enforcement staffing. The Commission also reached a record-breaking enforcement milestone, levying more than \$440,000 in campaign finance and ethics penalties. The PEC ensured that meaningful progress was made in advancing public financing for Oakland candidates, despite setbacks. These accomplishments laid a solid foundation for continued reform and stronger, more effective PEC programs in the years ahead.

2024 Highlights

- Voters Strengthen the Public Ethics Commission – Measure OO, approved by 73 percent of Oakland voters, significantly strengthens the Commission's independence, authority, and capacity by establishing it as an autonomous City agency, expanding its mission, and enhancing safeguards for commissioner independence. It also guarantees funding for at least two investigators.
- Landmark Enforcement Actions – Enforcement staff presented seven cases to the Commission for a monetary penalty, the most in Commission history. The PEC approved seven settlements representing over \$440,000 in penalties for violations of Oakland campaign finance and ethics laws – another PEC milestone.
- Democracy Dollars Advances Despite Delayed Rollout – While the Democracy Dollars Program was postponed for the 2024 election, the Public Ethics Commission advanced key preparation efforts in 2024 by securing a technology partner, MapLight, and using Haas Jr. Foundation grant funding to build outreach and program implementation capacity for a future launch.
- Public Financing Restored for the 2024 Election – The PEC successfully restored public financing for Oakland City Council candidates after funding for the program was initially eliminated, ultimately distributing \$155,000 to seven participating candidates in the 2024 election.
- Providing Recommendations on Mayoral Salary Setting – The Commission studied potential Charter amendments that would transfer responsibility for setting the mayor's salary to the PEC and developed a comprehensive policy proposal.

LEAD AND COLLABORATE

LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

The Commission leads by example and employs collaborative approaches to facilitate changes in City laws, policies, systems, and technology to ensure fairness, openness, integrity, and innovation.

Voters Deliver Resounding Approval for Ethics Reform

Through the leadership of Chair Ryan Micik and the Public Ethics Commission's Charter Ad Hoc Subcommittee, the PEC developed a comprehensive package of reforms to strengthen the Commission's independence, authority, and capacity. A modified version of the proposal, advanced by Councilmember Dan Kalb and placed on the ballot by the Oakland City Council as Measure OO, was approved by an overwhelming 73 percent of voters. The measure formally establishes the PEC as an autonomous City agency, expands its mission to promote both a more inclusive, representative, and accountable democracy and greater fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in City government, and strengthens commissioner independence through enhanced eligibility requirements and service restrictions. Measure OO also guarantees funding for at least two investigators, ensures the Commission can retain conflict counsel when the City Attorney is recused, and requires the City Council to consider all PEC legislative proposals. Representing the most significant expansion of the Commission's Charter authority since Measure CC in 2014, Measure OO marks a major milestone in strengthening Oakland's ethics and accountability framework.

Laying the Groundwork for Democracy Dollars

In 2022, Oakland voters approved Measure W, the Oakland Fair Elections Act (OFEA), creating a groundbreaking public financing program that will provide every eligible Oakland resident with four \$25 Democracy Dollars vouchers to support qualifying candidates for City and School District offices. While implementation was postponed after the City Council declared an extreme fiscal necessity in 2023 and did not allocate sufficient funding for the program's initial rollout, the Commission continued critical preparation efforts in 2024. These efforts included securing City Council approval to contract with government transparency technology vendor MapLight to develop the program's administrative platform and leveraging the PEC's first-ever grants from the Haas Jr. Foundation to enhance staff resources for outreach planning. Together, these investments helped lay the groundwork for a successful future launch of Democracy Dollars and broad community participation in the program.

Restoring Public Financing for Oakland Candidates

Following the postponement of the Democracy Dollars Program, the City Council adopted a PEC-sponsored ordinance in 2023 that reinstated the Limited Public Financing (LPF) Program for the 2024

election cycle. After funding for the program was initially eliminated, the PEC successfully advocated for its restoration and administered the program during the 2024 City Council District elections, distributing \$155,000 to seven participating candidates. The 2024 LPF Program also incorporated several reforms required by Measure W, serving as an important step toward the future implementation of Democracy Dollars.

Providing Recommendations on Mayoral Salary Setting

In response to a City Council directive, the Public Ethics Commission studied potential Charter amendments that would transfer responsibility for setting the mayor's salary to the PEC and developed a comprehensive policy proposal. A modified version of the Commission's recommendation was later advanced by Councilmember Dan Kalb for consideration as a ballot measure, though it was ultimately not adopted by the City Council.

Promoting Public Access and Transparency

The Commission's Transparency and Public Records Subcommittee examined public records practices across key City departments to identify successes, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. The Commission received presentations from the Police Department, Fire Department, and Planning and Building Department on their public records request process challenges and accomplishments. The Commission also sponsored a Goldman School of Public Policy project exploring best practices for public records compliance and government transparency, culminating in a presentation to the Commission.

PROGRAM UPDATES

EDUCATE AND ENGAGE

Prevention activities consist of education, outreach, and online information to facilitate compliance with government integrity laws. The Commission educates and advises candidates for local elective office, elected officials, appointed officials, City staff, lobbyists, people doing business with Oakland, City residents, businesses, and organizations.

Advice and Assistance

In 2024, Commission staff responded to 134 requests for information, advice or assistance regarding campaign finance, ethics, Sunshine law, or lobbyist issues, fielding an average of 11 requests per month. Inquiries from campaign filers and City officials and staff made up most requests for advice and assistance followed by lobbyists.

Training and Guidance

The Commission updated three comprehensive guides to assist the regulated community in complying with local laws:

- Guide to the Lobbyist Registration Act – Commission staff made substantial revisions incorporating newly adopted amendments including registration fees and training requirements.
- Oakland Campaign Reform Act Guide – Commission staff updated the Guide to reflect amendments resulting from passage of Measure W including new contribution limits and independent expenditure disclosure requirements.
- Limited Public Financing (LPF) Guide – Commission staff updated the guide for the 2024 election consistent with amendments to the Oakland Campaign Reform Act.

Throughout the year, Commission staff provided ethics, campaign finance, and other training to more than 800 participants, including:

Elected Officials

- Conducted a joint candidate and treasurer training with representatives from the



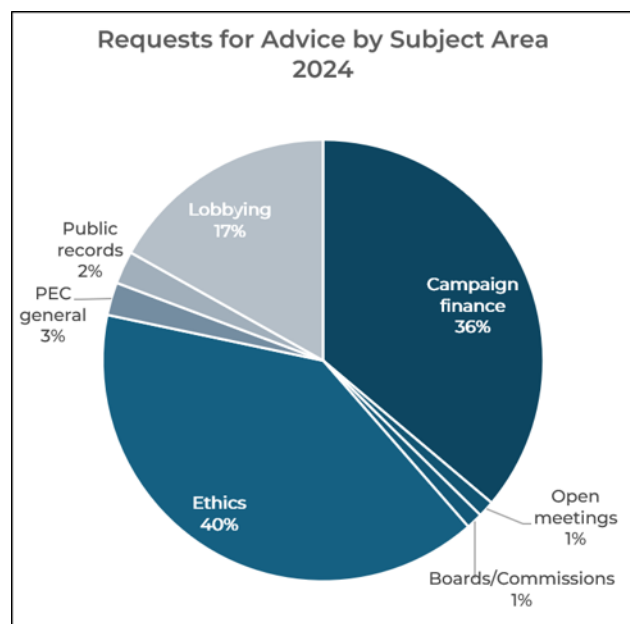
134 requests for
advice or assistance



739 training participants



3,196 views of training
content



California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC). Sent regular communications with targeted guidance to ensure campaign and candidate compliance throughout the year.

City Employees

- Reached 90 supervisors through the Supervisor Academy, 400 new employees through live and recorded orientations, and 30 Form 700 filers through comprehensive Government Ethics Training.

Board and Commission Members

- Presented in joint training with the Mayor's Office, City Clerk, and City Attorney to City Board and Commission staff liaisons.

Lobbyists

- Created a new online training and post-training quiz on the City's lobbying laws to implement new lobbyist training requirements.

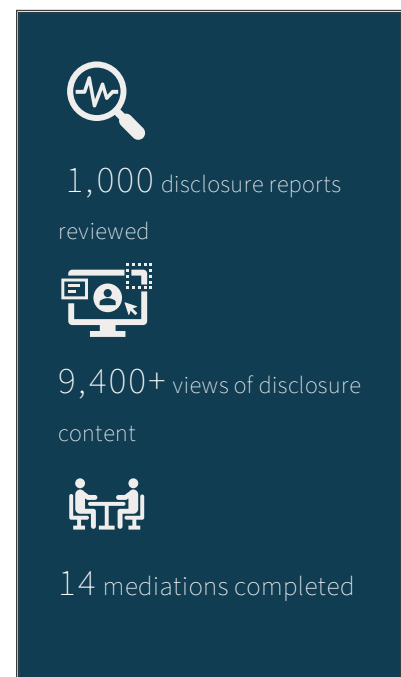
DISCLOSE AND ILLUMINATE

The Commission's Disclosure Program helps candidates, lobbyists, and City officials file required reports and seeks to provide Oakland residents with easy access to campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics information. The program promotes transparency by making data accurate, understandable, and easy to use. This helps both the public and the Commission monitor filings, review information, and identify potential errors or noncompliance. Beyond simply providing copies of filings, the Commission shares data in user-friendly formats, seeks public feedback, and encourages community engagement.

Making Disclosure Data Work for the Public: Online Tools Help Oaklanders Follow the Money



Commission staff partnered with volunteers from OpenOakland to present campaign finance data in formats that can be searched and displayed in easy-to-use visuals available for public viewing and more meaningful public disclosure. The year included both a Special Election on March 5 and the General Election on November 5. Commission staff and volunteers worked to ensure the



Public Ethics Commission
Annual Report 2024

www.opendisclosure.io campaign finance app was live with data for both 2024 elections. Open Disclosure Oakland, a nonpartisan tool, was developed by volunteers from OpenOakland, a civic technology group, in partnership with Commission staff to give all Oakland residents equal access to campaign finance data. Digital advertisements and social media posts ran from October through Election day to raise awareness of the website. In 2024, the site recorded over 9,400 page views across all campaign-related pages and over 2,600 users who engaged with the website.

Online Payment System for
Lobbyist Fees

With the addition of lobbyist registration and late fees in 2023, Commission staff began a collaboration with the IT Department to incorporate tools to make compliance with new requirements simple for lobbyists and easy to monitor for Commission staff. Commission staff developed procedures to assess and collect the new fees as lobbyists renew their registrations for 2024, including an option for lobbyists to pay their fees online through Oakland’s invoice payment portal and an online application for fee waivers or reductions in accordance with the Commission’s new policies.

City of Oakland

Lobbyist Reporting

Login or Register

OAK APPS

Home | Reports | Lobbyist

Registered Lobbyists

64 Registered Lobbyists 2024

227 Reports Filed

View Reports %

Search for lobbyist or employer name

Search

Clear

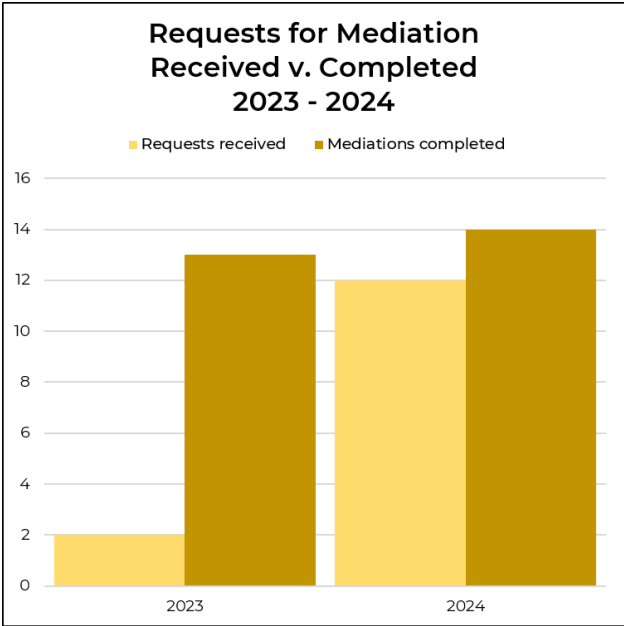
Year 2024

Quarter

Atty

Lobbyist	Employer	Number of Clients	Date Registered	Account Terminated	Actions
Albigen, Adam	Rox Road Group, Inc.	8	1/11/2024		View
Arghandeh, Edwica	Oakland Roots and Soul Sports Club	1	1/4/2024		View
Bacello, Brett	Pacific Gas and Electric Company	1	2/15/2024		View
Baldwin, David	Aletris, Inc.	1	1/4/2024		View
Barnes, Lindsay	Oakland Pro Soccer LLC	1	2/21/2024		View
Charles, JB	Fortress Capital Formation LLC	1	1/25/2024		View
Coltrane, Michael	MLU Group of California	7	1/10/2024		View
Custer, Kristin	TSC, L.P.	1	1/29/2024		View
DufRanks, Nora	MLU Group of California	8	1/10/2024		View
Day, Jay	Vastcom Communications, Inc. and its Affiliates	1	1/5/2024		View
Ellington, Theo	Strategies 360	4	1/25/2024	Yes	View
Forest, Zachary	Ground Floor Public Affairs	1	1/25/2024	Yes	View
Geddes, MICHAEL	Oakland Pro Soccer LLC	1	1/29/2024	Yes	View
Gutier, Michelle	Earthjustice	1	1/9/2024		View
Goffa, Max	Oakland Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce	1	10/11/2024	Yes	View

1 to 15 of 64 records



Mediation Program

Under the Oakland Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission mediates public records disputes between members of the public and City departments. The Commission received 12 requests for mediation in 2024 and completed 14 mediations.

COMPLIANCE AND DISCLOSURE

As Filing Officer, the Commission collects, reviews, and provides public access to ethics-related data.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE data includes candidate and ballot-measure campaign committee information, including contributions to and expenditures made by committees during the election cycle. In 2024, the City of Oakland had 64 registered committees. Two Oakland elections were conducted in 2024: a Special Election on March 5, 2024, and the General Election on November 5, 2024. There were six campaign statement deadlines in 2024, and staff processed and reviewed over 1,000 campaign-related filings covering nearly \$5.2 million in contributions.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS SOLICITED BY CITY OFFICIALS required to file a Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) must be disclosed to the Public Ethics Commission within 30 days when a political contribution of \$5,000 or more is made by a person or entity that contracts or proposes to contract with the official's department. In 2024, no contributions solicited by City Officials were reported.

LOBBYING activity reports identify who is lobbying City officials and for what purpose. In 2024, 64 lobbyists registered with the City of Oakland representing over 100 clients. Oakland lobbyists reported a total of 533 contacts with City officials. Commission staff processed and reviewed 171 quarterly lobbyist activity reports in 2024.

BEHESTED PAYMENTS reports show who is donating to a nonprofit organization at the request or solicitation of an elected official. Elected officials who solicit such payments are required to file Form 803 to report these payments if they amount to \$5,000 or more. In 2024, no Behested Payment Reports were submitted.

STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS (Form 700) are filed with the City Clerk's office but are of high interest to the PEC in ensuring compliance with ethics laws that require reporting of personal financial information by City officials. Commission staff checks for elected official compliance with filing deadlines and provides education and advice regarding Form 700 filing.

ENFORCEMENT

The Commission conducts investigations, holds public hearings, issues subpoenas, and imposes fines and penalties as provided for by ordinance. City ordinances give the Commission the authority to impose penalties for violations of ethics laws, campaign finance laws, and lobbyist registration requirements. The Commission also can mediate or recommend “cure and correction” for violations of public records and open meetings laws, respectively.

Incoming Cases

Commission staff received a total of 24 formal complaints alleging potential violations of campaign finance, conflicts of interest, open meetings, public records, and other ethics-related laws in 2024. Enforcement staff also elevated two informal complaints and initiated 70 proactive complaints.



Bringing Greater Accountability to Disclosure Compliance

In response to a 2022 Alameda Grand Jury finding that the City of Oakland was not in compliance with annual Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) disclosure for its public officials, the PEC initiated a pilot program in 2023 to improve timely submissions. In 2024, the program expanded to fully enforce state requirements resulting in 60 proactive complaints.

Record-Setting Enforcement in 2024

Over the course of 2024, the Enforcement Unit focused its limited resources on the most impactful cases and presented seven cases to the Commission for a monetary penalty, the most in Commission history. Ultimately, the Commission approved just over \$440,000 in monetary penalties across these seven cases – another PEC milestone.

By year end, the Commission resolved 50 cases as follows:

- Seven cases resolved with total penalties of \$440,243;
- One case resolved with a warning letter;
- Ten cases resolved with diversion training;
- 17 cases closed with no action; and
- 15 complaints dismissed.

2024 MAJOR ENFORCEMENT CASES

In the Matter of Oaklanders For Responsible Leadership, et al. (PEC # 22-09.01); In the Matter of Committee for an Affordable East Bay, et al. (PEC # 20-41.01) and In the Matter of Oakland Fund for Measure AA, et al. (PEC # 19-01.01) These three related cases involved fundraising and control issues related to independent expenditures to oppose the re-election of an incumbent City Councilmember during the 2018 election by former Mayor Libby Schaaf and associates. The investigation found violations including failure to disclose a controlling candidate on campaign forms and mass mailers; receiving contributions in an amount over the legal limit; receiving contributions from City contractors; and failure to report intermediary contributions. The Commission approved a combined settlement agreement with all respondents with total penalties in the amount of \$382,158.

In the matter of Californians for Independent Work, Sponsored by Lyft, Inc.; Lyft Inc. (PEC # 20-41.2). A PEC investigation found the respondents, a City contractor and its sponsored committee, made a contribution to the Committee for An Affordable East Bay. The Commission approved a settlement agreement with the respondent with penalties in the amount of \$50,000.

In the matter of Julian Orton (PEC # 19-18). A PEC investigation found the respondent, a City contractor, made a contribution to the Oakland Fund for Measure AA. The Commission approved a settlement agreement with the respondent with penalties in the amount of \$5,000.

In the Matter of William Witte (PEC # 20-41.3). A PEC investigation found the respondent, a City contractor, made a contribution to the Committee for an Affordable East Bay. The Commission approved a settlement agreement with the respondent with penalties in the amount of \$2,500.

In the Matter of Susan Montauk (PEC No. 19 01.2). A PEC investigation found the respondent failed to comply with laws concerning candidate-controlled ballot measure committees in the operation of The Oakland Fund For Measure AA. The Commission approved a settlement agreement with the respondent with penalties in the amount of \$500.

ADMINISTRATION

Staff

Commission staff are responsible for the Commission’s day-to-day operations, including investigations and enforcement casework, education and advice, data collection and illumination activities, and law and policy projects.

For several years, the Commission has highlighted the challenges of managing caseloads approaching 150 complaints with a single investigator. Voter approval of Measure OO in 2024 marked an important step forward, establishing funding for a second Investigator to expand the Commission's enforcement resources beginning in July 2025. The Commission also enhanced its staff capacity through a generous grant from the Haas Jr. Foundation, which provided funds for an additional position to begin development of the Commission’s Democracy Dollars public outreach plan.

In October 2024, Enforcement Chief Simon Russell concluded nearly a decade of service with the Commission. As the Commission's first Investigator and later as Enforcement Chief, Simon played a pivotal role in building the Enforcement Unit and advancing many of the Commission's most significant enforcement cases.

Budget

The adopted budget for the Commission was \$1,752,267 for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 and \$2,524,893 for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. In 2023, facing a significant revenue shortfall, the City Council declared an “extreme fiscal necessity,” and the PEC’s baseline budget was reduced over 50 percent compared with minimum requirements under the City Charter and Measure W (2022). The adopted budget nonetheless improved the PEC’s resources compared with prior years, including funds to develop software for the Democracy Dollars program, administer the Limited Public



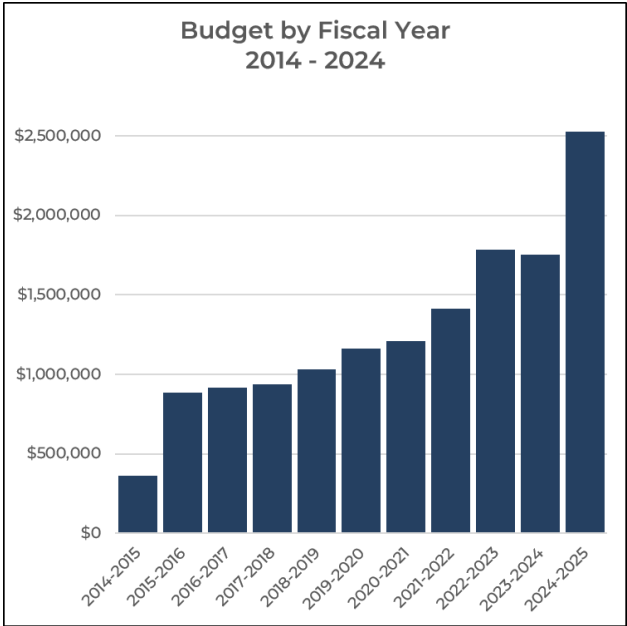
6 volunteer Commissioners



8 full-time staff



\$2.5M
FY 23-24 budget



Financing program for the 2024 election, and funding the Program Manager position to conduct new Commission duties added by ballot measure. These important improvements allowed the Commission to make progress on its major initiatives despite the significant challenges posed by the City's fiscal difficulties.

Promoting Access to Local Office Through Public Financing

In 2024, Commission staff administered the Limited Public Financing (LPF) program, reimbursing campaign expenses for seven participating City Council district candidates. Staff distributed the full \$155,000 available through the program.

2024 COMMISSIONERS

The Commission is a seven-member volunteer board composed of Oakland residents. The Mayor, City Attorney, and City Auditor each appoint one member, and the Commission appoints the remaining four. In 2024, the mayor-appointed seat remained vacant because no appointment was made for the 2023-2026 term.



Ryan Micik, Chair
City Attorney Appointee
2022 – 2024

District 2

Ryan Micik operates a political research and

communications consulting practice serving nonprofits, advocacy organizations, government reform groups, and candidates for public office. His work includes helping clients navigate complex policy issues, public records laws, and communication strategy. Ryan previously served as Deputy Director of Maryland StateStat, a statewide performance and accountability initiative, where he worked with agencies to improve service delivery and efficiency. He earned a BA in Political Science from UC Berkeley. Ryan is a former member of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee and resides in the Grand Lake neighborhood.



Francis Upton IV, Vice Chair
City Auditor Appointee
2022 – 2025

District 4

Francis Upton IV is a software

executive with extensive experience in data systems and software development productivity. He is the founder and Chief Technology Officer of SnapStrat, Inc. and previously served as Vice President of Architecture and Governance at Talend. Before joining Talend, he founded Oakland Software, leading the development of advanced data-transformation technology. Francis is also a long-time contributor to

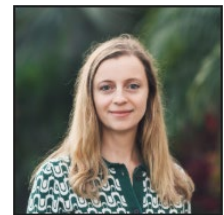
open-source initiatives, including projects with the Eclipse Foundation and Jenkins CI. He holds a BA in Liberal Studies from Antioch University and has lived in Oakland for more than 25 years, currently residing in Glenview.

Tanya Bayeva

Commission Appointee
Partial term 2024

District 4

Tanya Bayeva is an experienced corporate attorney with a focus on impact-driven finance, governance, and compliance. She serves as Associate General Counsel for Impact Investments at Mission Driven Finance, LLC, where she structures capital strategies that expand economic opportunity in underserved communities. Tanya is committed to community engagement and pro bono work, assisting clients on issues ranging from family law to consumer protection and volunteering as a mediator with Community Boards in San Francisco. She holds a BS in Finance from Yeshiva University and a JD from the University of Michigan Law School and lives in the Claremont Hills.



Alea Gage

Commission Appointee
2023 – 2026

District 4

Alea Gage is a city planner and community development professional who serves as Preservation Program Manager at the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing &



Community Development. Her work supports nonprofit organizations and tenants in stabilizing multifamily housing. Previously, Alea led the City of Vallejo's economic development strategy and coordinated the nation's first citywide participatory budgeting process, engaging thousands of residents in allocating public funds. She is a former Coro Fellow and holds a master's degree in city Planning from UC Berkeley. She has been an Oakland resident for 13 years.



Charlotte Hill
Commission Appointee
2022 – 2024

District 4
Charlotte Hill is a political scientist at UC Berkeley,

where she researches the impact of electoral and voting reforms on political participation. She regularly advises organizations focused on improving democracy policy and increasing voter turnout. Before entering academia, Charlotte held senior communications roles for the nonpartisan political reform organization RepresentUs and the international petition platform Change.org. She recently served as the vice president of the San Francisco Elections Commission, where she helped oversee local election administration. Charlotte grew up in Northern California and has lived in the Bay Area since 2006. She holds a BA, an MPP, and a PhD in Public Policy from UC Berkeley.

Vince Steele

Commission Appointee
2023 – 2026

District 2

Vince Steele is a policy

analyst with the Alameda

County Board of Supervisors and a dedicated

community organizer. Before joining the County, he worked for the Service Employees

International Union (SEIU) as an internal

organizer and chief negotiator. Vince later served

as Organizing and Political Director at two Bay

Area nonprofits focused on criminal justice

reform and education equity. Vince is an

NLC-Oakland Fellow and former board member

of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club. He

holds an MPA from UC Berkeley's Goldman

School of Public Policy.



Karun Tilak

Commission Appointee
2024 – 2027

District 1

Karun Tilak is a local

government attorney with

significant experience in consumer protection,

public health, and civil rights litigation. He serves

as a Deputy City Attorney in the San Francisco

City Attorney's Office and has previously held

legal roles with Santa Clara County and the City

of Oakland. His work includes litigating complex

cases to safeguard tenants' rights, protect

consumers, and uphold public safety. Karun also

advises agencies on compliance with

transparency and public-safety laws. He holds a

JD from Yale Law School and BA/BS degrees in

International Relations and Economics from

American University and has lived in Oakland

since 2018



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Oakland, CA 94612



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ABOUT THE PUBLIC ETHICS COMMISSION

Created by Oakland voters in 1996, the mission of the Public Ethics Commission (PEC) is to promote more inclusive, representative, and accountable democracy in Oakland and ensure fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in City government. The PEC's work is governed by local ordinances in three main areas: campaign finance, transparency, and ethics. The Commission's authority and ability to do its work is guided by the provisions outlined in the City Charter, as amended through 2024, as well as the laws within its jurisdiction:

Government Ethics Act
Oakland Campaign Reform Act
Oakland Fair Elections Act
Lobbyist Registration Act

Conflict of Interest Code
False Endorsement in Campaign Literature
Limited Public Financing Act
Sunshine Ordinance

The Commission's activities and staffing structure are organized by the following ethics compliance framework to ensure a strong, effective, and fair ethics commission:

Lead/Collaborate – Lead by example and facilitate City policy, management, and technological changes to further the Commission's mission.

Educate/Engage – Provide education, advice, technical assistance, and formal legal opinions to promote awareness and understanding of the City's campaign finance, ethics, and transparency laws.

Disclose/Illuminate – Facilitate accurate, effective, and accessible disclosure of government integrity data, such as campaign finance reporting, conflicts of interest/gifts reports, and lobbyist activities, all of which help the public and PEC staff monitor filings, view information, and detect inconsistencies or noncompliance.

Detect/Deter – Conduct investigations and audits to monitor compliance with the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction.

Prosecute – Enforce violations of the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction through administrative or civil remedies.

NEW LEADERSHIP, NEW DUTIES, PERSISTENT PROGRESS

Despite the City of Oakland's challenging fiscal situation in 2023, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC or Commission) made meaningful progress on Commission priorities and began important foundational work for several of its programs. The Commission welcomed a new Executive Director in May of 2023, acted swiftly to enact new duties added by ballot measures adopted in 2022, advanced implementation of the innovative Democracy Dollars Program, and successfully advocated to restore public campaign financing through the Limited Public Financing Program for the 2024 election cycle.

2023 Highlights

- New Executive Director – The Commission welcomed Nicolas Heidorn as its new Executive Director. Mr. Heidorn is a former Chief Consultant of the California State Senate Elections Committee and former Policy and Legal Director for California Common Cause.
- Preparing for Democracy Dollars – While the Democracy Dollars Program was postponed, the Commission successfully implemented new disclosure requirements and contribution limits established by Measure W, advocated for startup funding to begin technology development, won a \$210,000 Haas Jr. Foundation grant to develop the program's outreach plan, and hired Program Manager Suzanne Doran to lead implementation.
- Limited Public Financing Program Reestablished for 2024 Election – The Commission successfully advocated to re-enact the Limited Public Financing Program for the City's 2024 elections to ensure continuity of public financing for City Council District candidates until the Democracy Dollars program is in effect.
- Public Disclosure Enforcement Pilot Project – **The PEC initiated a new pilot program this year to improve timely annual Statement of Economic Interest Form 700 submissions.**
- Commission sets the City Attorney and City Auditor salaries for the first time – The Commission executed new duties added by the Charter Amendment Measure X, setting salaries for the office of City Attorney and City Auditor to ensure fair and competitive compensation for these positions.



LEAD AND COLLABORATE

LEGISLATION AND POLICY UPDATES

The Commission leads by example and employs collaborative approaches to facilitate changes in City laws, policies, systems, and technology to ensure fairness, openness, integrity, and innovation.

Democracy Dollars Delayed, Preparations Continue

Launch of the Democracy Dollars public campaign financing program established by Measure W (2022) was delayed due to the City's significant 2023 deficit. Despite postponement of the launch, the PEC advanced in hiring a Program Manager to lead implementation; successfully implemented new disclosure requirements and contribution limits established by Measure W (2022); developed the requirements for software to track, distribute, and redeem Oaklanders' Democracy Dollars; won two grants to support development of the Democracy Dollars outreach plan; and developed a model voter guide to aid voters in assigning their Democracy Dollars.

Maintaining Public Financing During the Transition

Measure W repealed the City's existing Limited Public Financing Program (LPF). The postponement of the Democracy Dollars Program would have left Oakland with no public financing program for candidates for the first time in two decades. To avoid this outcome, the PEC successfully advocated for City Council approval of an ordinance to re-establish a version of LPF for the 2024 election cycle.

PEC Establishes Salaries for City Attorney and City Auditor

The 2022 voter-approved Measure X gave the PEC new duties under the City Charter to review and authorize salaries for the office of City Attorney and City Auditor. In 2023, the PEC developed a salary review method and adopted new salaries for the City Attorney and the City Auditor for the first time.

Strengthening Lobbying Transparency and Compliance

In 2023, the PEC proposed, and the City Council adopted, a \$500 annual registration fee, as well as a \$10 per day fee for late filings to encourage timely submissions. For non-profit lobbyists and lobbyists who fall under a certain income level, the policy offers fee reduction and waiver possibilities. A mandatory training requirement for lobbyists was also enacted. The new fees and training requirements take effect in 2024.

Streamlining Compliance and Enforcement

The Commission adopted revisions to its Complaint Procedures and Penalty Guidelines to provide more streamlined processes for assessing penalties and requiring diversion training for low-level offenses of PEC-enforced laws. The Commission also adopted a waiver policy for late filing fees.

PROGRAM UPDATES

EDUCATE AND ENGAGE

Prevention activities consist of education, outreach, and online information to facilitate compliance with government integrity laws. The Commission educates and advises candidates for local elective office, elected officials, appointed officials, City staff, lobbyists, people doing business with Oakland, City residents, businesses, and organizations.

Advice and Assistance

In 2023, Commission staff responded to 217 requests for information, advice or assistance regarding campaign finance, ethics, Sunshine law, or lobbyist issues, fielding an average of 18 requests per month. Just over half of requests for advice and assistance came from campaign filers and City officials seeking to comply with campaign finance and ethics laws.

Training and Guidance

Commission staff provided ethics, campaign finance, and other training to more than 800 participants throughout the year including:

Elected Officials

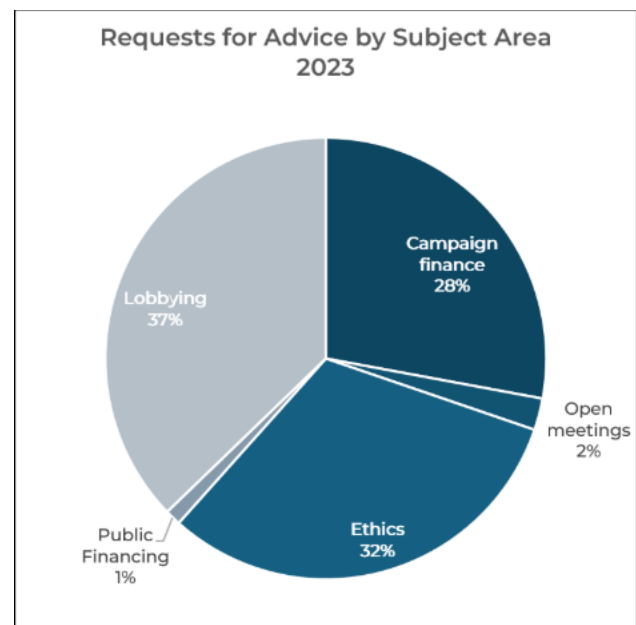
- Presented an ethics training at the City Councilmember orientation and conducted individual meetings with elected officials and their staff during the year.

City Employees

- 85 supervisors reached through the Supervisor Academy, 570 new employees through live and recorded orientations, and 141 Form 700 filers through comprehensive Government Ethics Training.

Board and Commission Members

- Provided introductory ethics training to the Youth Advisory Commission and comprehensive training for board and commission staff.



DISCLOSE AND ILLUMINATE

The Commission's Disclosure Program helps candidates, lobbyists, and City officials file required reports and provides Oakland residents with easy access to campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics information. The program promotes transparency by making data accurate, understandable, and easy to use. This helps both the public and the Commission monitor filings, review information, and identify potential errors or noncompliance. Beyond simply providing copies of filings, the Commission shares data in user-friendly formats, seeks public feedback, and encourages community engagement.



Making Disclosure Data Work for the Public

After a Special Election was scheduled to fill the vacant Oakland Unified District 5 School Board Director seat, staff ensured the Commission's election-focused disclosure projects, Show Me the Money and Open Disclosure, were updated with 2023 campaign data. Show Me the Money, an app hosted on Oakland's open data platform, builds maps showing the source of campaign contributions to candidates, top contributors, and fundraising and spending patterns over time. Open Disclosure is a nonpartisan tool developed by civic tech group OpenOakland in partnership with Commission staff to give all Oakland residents equal access to campaign finance data. With three local elections scheduled for 2023 and 2024, the project team implemented modifications allowing visitors to view data for multiple upcoming elections.



Rapid Implementation of Measure W Disclosure Requirements

Measure W amended the Oakland Campaign Reform Act to require committees filing FPPC Form 496 (24-hour or 10-day Late Independent Expenditure Reports) with the Commission to submit supplemental disclosure information, including a copy of the communication. When the November Special Election triggered this new requirement, Commission staff quickly launched an online form, informational webpage, and targeted outreach to help campaign filers understand and comply with the rules. Staff also monitored independent expenditure filings and proactively contacted committee treasurers throughout the pre-election period to support compliance.

Standardizing Ethics Compliance Processes

PEC staff partnered with the City Clerk's Office and the Department of Human Resources Management (DHRM) to improve management of the City's Form 700 filer database. DHRM now provides monthly reports on employee and filer status, enabling PEC staff to monitor compliance.

Mediation Program

Under the Oakland Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission mediates public records disputes between members of the public and City departments. The Commission received two new requests for mediation in 2023 and completed 13 mediations.

DISCLOSURE AND COMPLIANCE

As Filing Officer, the Commission collects, reviews, and provides public access to ethics-related data.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE data includes candidate and ballot-measure campaign committee information, including contributions to and expenditures made by committees during the election cycle. Oakland had 98 active political committees as of December 2023. A special election was conducted in November 2023. There were four campaign statement deadlines, and PEC staff processed and reviewed almost 250 campaign-related filings during 2023. Staff conducted outreach to ensure that all 2023 candidate committees submitted the required disclosure statements. The PEC assessed \$2,270 in late fees from 13 filers.

POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS SOLICITED BY CITY OFFICIALS required to file a Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) must be disclosed to the Public Ethics Commission within 30 days when a political contribution of \$5,000 or more is made by a person or entity that contracts or proposes to contract with the official's department.

LOBBYING activity reports identify who is lobbying City officials and for what purpose. In 2023, 72 lobbyists registered with the City of Oakland. PEC staff provided outreach and assistance to lobbyists to ensure compliance with registration and reporting requirements. Staff processed and reviewed 266 quarterly lobbyist activity reports in 2023.

BEHESTED PAYMENTS reports show who is donating to a nonprofit organization at the request or solicitation of an elected official. Elected officials who solicit such payments are required to file Form 803. In 2023, no Behested Reports were submitted.

STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS (Form 700) are filed with the City Clerk's office but are of high interest to the PEC in ensuring compliance with ethics laws that require reporting of personal financial information by City officials. Commission staff checks for elected official compliance with filing deadlines and provides education and advice regarding Form 700 filing. In 2023, all 11 officials filed their annual statement.

ENFORCEMENT

The Commission conducts investigations, holds public hearings, issues subpoenas, and imposes fines and penalties as provided for by ordinance. City ordinances give the Commission the authority to impose penalties for violations of ethics laws, campaign finance laws, and lobbyist registration requirements. The Commission also can mediate or recommend “cure and correction” for violations of public records and open meetings laws, respectively.

Incoming Cases

Commission staff received a total of 18 formal complaints alleging potential violations of campaign finance, conflicts of interest, open meetings, public records, and other ethics-related laws in 2023. In addition, nine informal complaints were elevated and assigned complaint numbers, and PEC staff initiated 13 proactive complaints. Fourteen new investigations were opened, ending the year with 86 open enforcement matters.



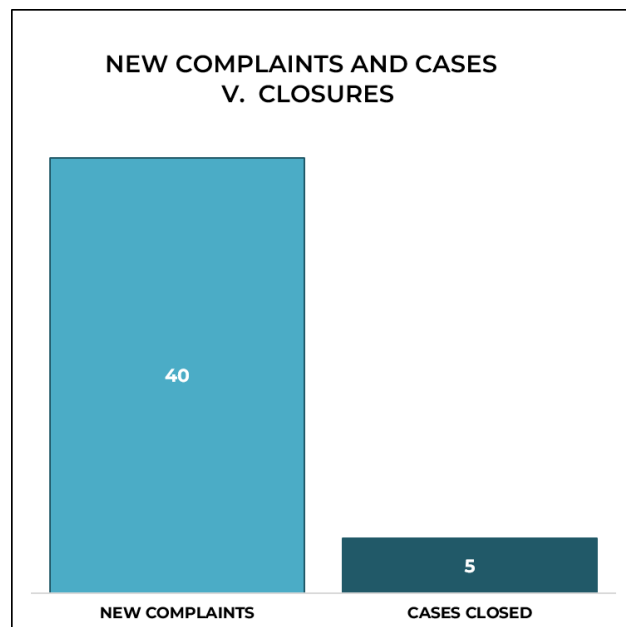
86 open matters



14 new investigations



5 cases resolved



Enforcement Outcomes

By year end, the Commission resolved five complaints. All five were dismissed. No cases were presented to the Commission for an enforcement penalty. In 2023, staff turnover and lengthy vacancies within the Enforcement unit significantly impacted program capacity. A difficult decision was made to place cases “on hold” to free up limited resources for the most urgent and impactful cases. By the close of 2023, both permanent and temporary support were retained to address these limitations.

A Roadmap for Form 700 Compliance

In response to the 2022 Alameda Grand Jury finding that the City of Oakland was not in compliance with timely public disclosure filings of the annual Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700), the PEC initiated a new pilot program in 2023 to improve timely submission. The PEC Enforcement unit made a public announcement to all city officials that it would be actively verifying Form 700 filing status and prosecuting non-filers for 2023. The cross-departmental collaboration and increased

communication resulted in an increase in Form 700 filings and enforcement follow-up for senior-level City officials who had not filed their statements. The PEC intends to use resolution of those cases as a template for resolving Form 700 non-filer cases in 2024.

ADMINISTRATION

Staff

2023 was a year of growth and transition for PEC staff. The Commission welcomed a new Executive Director, Nicolas Heidorn, in May of 2023. Mr. Heidorn is a former Chief Consultant of the California State Senate Elections Committee and former Policy and Legal Director for California Common Cause. The Commission added one new position, Program Manager, to lead implementation of the Democracy Dollars program. Longtime-PEC Lead Analyst Suzanne Doran was promoted to the position. Grant awards from the Haas Jr. Foundation provided funds for a graduate student intern and additional position to support Democracy Dollars outreach and implementation projects in 2023 and 2024. While Commission staffing increased from seven to eight budgeted full-time positions in 2023, high turnover and extended vacancies due to a Citywide hiring freeze created significant challenges.



6 volunteer
Commissioners



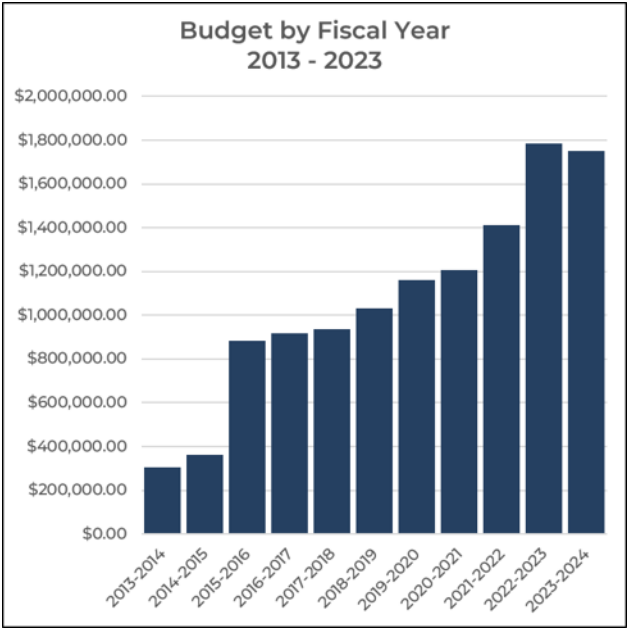
8 full-time staff



\$1.8M
FY 23-24 budget

Budget

The adopted budget for the Commission was \$1,786,115 for Fiscal Year 2022-23 and \$1,752,267 for Fiscal Year 2023-24. In 2023, facing a significant revenue shortfall, the City Council declared an “extreme fiscal necessity,” and the PEC’s budget allocation included cuts to funding and staffing minimums established by the City Charter and ordinance. Nevertheless, the 2022 – 2024 Biennial budget expanded resources and included \$525,000 in start-up funds for the PEC to develop the Democracy Dollars software platform and included the addition of the Program Manager position.



Return to In-person Public Meetings

With the State of California lifting the emergency order allowing teleconferencing for public meetings, all public meetings including Board and Commission meetings are again required to be held in-person. Starting in March, the PEC resumed conducting meetings in person.

2023 COMMISSIONERS

The Commission is a seven-member volunteer board composed of Oakland residents. The Mayor, City Attorney, and City Auditor each appoint one member, and the Commission appoints the remaining four. In 2023, the Mayor-appointed seat remained vacant because no appointment was made for the 2023-2026 term.



Ryan Micik, Chair
City Attorney Appointee
2022 – 2024

District 2

Ryan Micik operates a political research and communications consulting practice serving nonprofits, advocacy organizations, government reform groups, and candidates for public office. His work includes helping clients navigate complex policy issues, public records laws, and communication strategy. Ryan previously served as Deputy Director of Maryland StateStat, a statewide performance and accountability initiative, where he worked with agencies to improve service delivery and efficiency. He earned a BA in Political Science from UC Berkeley, where he was active in progressive and AAPI organizations and received awards for radio journalism. Ryan is a former member of the Alameda County Democratic Central Committee and resides in the Grand Lake neighborhood.



Charlotte Hill, Vice Chair
Commission Appointee
2022 – 2025

District 4

Charlotte Hill is a political scientist at UC Berkeley, where she researches the impact of electoral and voting reforms on political participation. She regularly advises

organizations focused on improving democracy policy and increasing voter turnout. Before entering academia, Charlotte held senior communications roles for the nonpartisan political reform organization RepresentUs and the international petition platform Change.org. She recently served as the vice president of the San Francisco Elections Commission, where she helped oversee local election administration. Charlotte grew up in Northern California and has lived in the Bay Area since 2006. She holds a BA, an MPP, and a PhD in Public Policy from UC Berkeley.



Alea Gage
Commission Appointee
2023 – 2026

District 4

Alea Gage is a city planner and community development professional who serves as Preservation Program Manager at the San Francisco Mayor's Office of Housing & Community Development. Her work supports nonprofit organizations and tenants in stabilizing multifamily housing. Previously, Alea led the City of Vallejo's economic development strategy and coordinated the nation's first citywide participatory budgeting process. She holds a master's degree in city planning from UC Berkeley. An Oakland resident for 13 years, Alea is committed to civic engagement and proud to

raise her children in a vibrant and inclusive community.



Arvon J. Perteet
Commission Appointee
2021 – 2024
District 5

Arvon J. Perteet is the Global Legal Response and Fraud Investigations Manager at Square, Inc. Arvon’s teams are responsible for conducting investigations related to external fraud against Square and Square’s merchants and responding to legal requests, both civil and criminal in nature. Prior to working at Square, Arvon was an Assistant District Attorney in the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office investigating and prosecuting cases involving officer involved shootings, use of excessive force, and in-custody deaths. Arvon is a graduate of Golden Gate University School of Law, and a graduate of Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. Arvon is an Oakland native.



Vince Steele
Commission Appointee
2023 – 2026
District 2

Vince Steele is a policy analyst with the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and a dedicated community organizer. Before joining the County, he worked for the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) as an internal organizer and chief negotiator, contributing to major victories such as the Fight for \$15 minimum-wage campaign in Los Angeles. Vince

later served as Organizing and Political Director at two Bay Area nonprofits focused on criminal justice reform and education equity. He also led campaign strategy for Oakland’s Measure S, expanding voting access in school board elections to non-citizen residents. Vince is an NLC-Oakland Fellow and former board member of the East Bay Stonewall Democratic Club. He holds an MPA from UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy.



Francis Upton IV
City Auditor Appointee
2022 – 2025
District 4

Francis Upton IV is a software executive with extensive experience in data systems and software development productivity. He is the founder and Chief Technology Officer of SnapStrat, Inc., and previously served as Vice President of Architecture and Governance at Talend. Before joining Talend, he founded Oakland Software, leading the development of advanced data-transformation technology. His earlier work included senior engineering and management roles at technical startups and at Digital Equipment Corporation and Hewlett-Packard, where he contributed to operating systems, distributed systems, and international standards. Francis is also a long-time contributor to open-source initiatives, including projects with the Eclipse Foundation and Jenkins CI. He holds a BA in Liberal Studies from Antioch University and has lived in Oakland for more than 25 years, currently residing in Glenview.

RESOURCES

The [Public Ethics Commission | City of Oakland, CA](#) website offers resources, guidance, reports, and information for the public, candidates, campaign committees, lobbyists, and City officials.

Contact Us

Telephone: (510) 238-3593 Email: Ethicscommission@oaklandca.gov

Sign Up for the Mailing List

Subscribe for email notices: [Subscriber List](#)

Report a Problem

- [File a Complaint with the Public Ethics Commission](#)
- [Request Mediation of your Public Records Request](#)

Learning Resources, Campaign and Lobbying Manuals, and Factsheets

Find detailed guidance for local candidates, campaign committees, and lobbyists: [Publications](#)

Data and Disclosure Reports

Find government ethics data and search for campaign statements, lobbyist activity reports, and other disclosure information.

- Economic Interest Statements: Search for economic interest disclosure information filed by Oakland elected officials and civil servants: [Search for SEI Statements](#)
- Campaign Finance Statements: Search campaign statements and contributor data: [Public Portal for Campaign Finance Disclosure](#)
- Lobbyist Registration and Activity Reports: View registered lobbyists and access individual lobbyist activity reports: [Lobbyist Dashboard and Data](#)
- Disclosure Information and Data webpage: [List and links to sources for reports and data](#)

Public Participation

- PEC Meeting Calendar and Agendas: [Public Ethics Commission Meetings](#)
- Submit a Comment on a PEC Meeting Agenda Item: Submit comments by email to EthicsPublicComment@oaklandca.gov
- Apply to Join the Commission: Each year, the Commission seeks Oakland residents to apply for a role as Commissioner. Learn more: [Join the Public Ethics Commission | City of Oakland, CA](#)

Governing Laws and Policies

Links to City Charter sections and local ordinances defining the Commission's powers and duties, information about newly amended or added regulations, and other materials updated annually: [Governing Laws and Policies](#)

Handout: Case Prioritization Activity

For October 28, 2026, Special Meeting – Enforcement Program Presentation

Introduction: This activity presents Commissioners and staff with four hypothetical complaints of the kind that regularly come to the Enforcement Unit. All cases, names, and facts are fictional, but each case reflects a realistic mix of the issues, evidence, and jurisdictional questions staff encounter when evaluating a new matter. Page 2 of this handout sets out the elements staff consider when assessing the relative severity of a case and the likelihood of substantiating a violation, weighing factors such as the strength of the Commission's penalty authority, the quality of the evidence, the seriousness and apparent intent of the conduct, and whether PEC enforcement is the right forum given other available remedies.

Working together in small groups, Commissioners and staff will analyze each hypothetical using the rubric and rank the four cases in order of severity on page 3. After the break-out groups discuss and rank the four cases, each group will share out how they ranked the cases and why. The goal is not to arrive at a single correct answer, but to surface where views align and diverge about what matters most, and to assist Enforcement staff in calibrating case prioritization with the Commission's priorities.

Case A — The Late Campaign Statements

Source: Informal (staff-identified from filing review)

A first-time candidate for City Council filed three pre-election campaign statements at least 32 days late and after the election. Total activity reported on the late reports was about \$20,000. The treasurer was a volunteer family member; the candidate lost the election with 6% of the vote and has no current intention to run again. No evidence of hidden contributions. This case is also within the California Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) jurisdiction.

Case B — The Unregistered Lobbyist

Source: Formal (sworn complaint from a competing hauler, with meeting dates and the engagement letter attached)

A consultant met with four councilmembers and two department heads over eight months on behalf of a company that cleans up illegal dumping sites. The company is seeking a contract amendment worth roughly \$3 million annually. He never registered as a lobbyist or filed quarterly reports. He says he was a "technical advisor," but his engagement letter describes his role as "securing Council support." This case is not within FPPC jurisdiction.

Case C — The Laundered Contributions

Source: Formal (sworn complaint from a former employee, with bank records and two written statements)

Bank records show a small-business owner reimbursed six employees for maximum contributions to a mayoral candidate, totaling \$5,400 in disguised money. The candidate's committee denies knowledge. The business owner has a pending lease dispute with the City. Two employees have confirmed the reimbursement in writing. There is no indication that the candidate knew the money was disguised, and the candidate immediately offered to disgorge the money. This case is also within FPPC jurisdiction.

Case D — The Group Text

Source: Formal (sworn complaint from a journalist, with screenshots obtained from a board member who has since left)

Four of the seven members of a City advisory board exchanged text messages on their private phones over two evenings about a pending recommendation on which nonprofit should receive a \$1.2 million grant allocation. The texts discuss the merits of the applicants, express a preference for one organization, and end with "sounds like we're all good for Thursday." At the Thursday meeting, the item passed 4–3 with no substantive discussion before the vote. When a journalist requested the texts after an anonymous tip with a Public Records Request, the City responded that board members had reported no responsive records on their personal devices. The texts surfaced only because one member voluntarily turned them over after leaving the board. The board chair says the texts were "informal chatter among friends" and that no decision was made outside the meeting. The alleged conduct may violate the Oakland Sunshine Ordinance and, at the state level, the Brown Act's prohibition on serial meetings. However, the PEC's power to respond to such a violation is limited. The Commission can make a finding of a violation and write an advisory letter, but nothing more. This case is not within FPPC jurisdiction.

Scoring Rubric

Score each factor 1–5. Factor 1: rate detail 1–3, then add +1 if the complaint is informal or +2 if formal (maximum 5).

Factor	1	2	3	4	5
1. Complaint type & detail Is it a formal or informal complaint? How much information does it include?	Not detailed	Moderately detailed	Highly detailed	+1 for informal	+2 for formal
2. Appropriate forum To what extent is the PEC the appropriate forum, given other agencies, processes, or remedies?	Better-positioned alternatives exist	Strong alternative exists	Mixed / unclear	Alternatives are weak or poorly positioned	No meaningful alternative
3. Enforcement authority How strong is the PEC's enforcement authority?	Little / no authority	Weak authority	Moderate authority	Strong authority	Very strong authority
4. Likelihood of substantiation How likely is it that the PEC could substantiate a violation?	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Uncertain	Likely	Very likely
5. Pattern / recurrence Does the matter reflect repeated, recurring, or systemic misconduct rather than a one-off?	No indication of recurrence	Likely Isolated	Possibly recurrent	Likely substantial pattern	Strong indication of systemic pattern
6. Intent / evasion What level of intent, evasion, or noncompliance does the matter indicate?	Minimal / none (inadvertent)	Low (possible negligence)	Mixed / unclear	Substantial (intent)	High (intent plus concealment / obstruction)
7. Seriousness If the alleged conduct occurred, how serious would the violation be?	Minimal severity	Low severity	Moderate severity	High severity	Very high severity
8. Public interest & mission How important is this matter given current public interest, timing, and relevance to PEC's mission?	Minimal importance	Low importance	Moderate importance	High importance	Very high importance
9. Impact of action If PEC acts formally, how much difference is that action likely to make?	Minimal impact	Limited impact	Moderate impact	Substantial impact	Major impact
10. Feasibility Given current staffing, time, evidence needs, and complexity, how feasible is it to pursue?	Very difficult	Difficult	Feasible with tradeoffs	Readily feasible	Highly feasible

Score Sheet

Enter a score of 1–5 for each factor and case. Add each column, then double the subtotal for the total out of 100.

Factor	Case A	Case B	Case C	Case D
1. Complaint type & detail				
2. Appropriate forum				
3. Enforcement authority				
4. Likelihood of substantiation				
5. Pattern / recurrence				
6. Intent / evasion				
7. Seriousness				
8. Public interest & mission				
9. Impact of action				
10. Feasibility				
Subtotal (out of 50)				
Total (subtotal × 2, out of 100)				
Group ranking (1 = highest priority, 4 = lowest priority)				

Notes / rationale for your rankings:
