

Item #5 - PEC Annual Report 2020

City of Oakland Public Ethics Commission



ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Public Ethics Commission
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PEC ADAPTS AND INNOVATES THROUGH CHALLENGES

The COVID-19 global pandemic required people around the world to radically change how they work and interact with each other. Despite the unprecedented circumstances, the Public Ethics Commission (PEC or Commission) continued its core work in 2020 to ensure compliance with ethics, campaign finance, lobbying and transparency laws while developing new and innovative tools to promote more meaningful public disclosure and civic engagement.

2020 HIGHLIGHTS

- **Campaign finance reimagined** – The Commission released *Race for Power: How Money in Oakland Politics Creates and Perpetuates Disparities Across Income and Race*, a review of Oakland’s campaign finance system that offers a new paradigm for financing campaigns in a manner that promotes greater equity and broader participation across racial and socio-economic lines.
- **Campaign and lobbyist data illuminated** – The Commission launched three new tools for more meaningful public disclosure by consolidating ethics-related data in user-friendly, understandable formats: the 2020 edition of www.OpenDisclosure.io, an online application that consolidates campaign data for Oakland voters; Show Me the Money, an interactive tool that allows residents to map the source of campaign contributions; and an online Lobbyist Dashboard and Data Portal.
- **Advice and technical assistance calls reach record levels** – Staff responded to a record 460 telephone and email requests for advice and assistance related to campaign finance, ethics, and transparency compliance in 2020.
- **Campaign finance and ethics training go virtual** – Commission staff provided a live, online, comprehensive training on state and local campaign laws for candidates and committees participating in the 2020 election, as well as 17 live, online ethics trainings.
- **Disclosure filing processes streamlined and modernized** – PEC staff launched a new e-filing system for lobbyist registration and reporting and streamlined campaign filing processes to simplify procedures and remove any need for in-person contact.
- **Enforcement Program sustains productivity** – The Enforcement Unit maintained its high productivity, resolving 44 cases, imposing \$23,000 in penalties, and receiving and evaluating 39 alleged violations – a ten-year high.

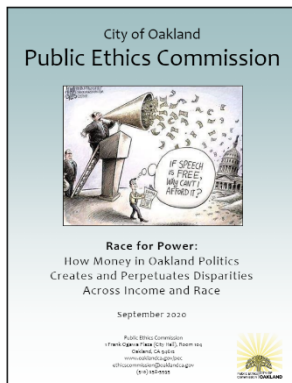
While the COVID-19 pandemic brought change and challenges to the PEC in 2020, the Commission was able to sustain its productivity, complete major projects, and adapt core services and processes to better meet the needs of residents and the regulated community. This report summarizes the Commission’s work in 2020, an election year in which the Commission continued to fulfill its role as educator, compliance officer, data illuminator, investigator, enforcer, and leader in furthering local discourse about how to expand and diversify civic engagement in the Oakland campaign process.

LEAD AND COLLABORATE

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.

EXPANDING EQUITY AND PARTICIPATION IN THE CAMPAIGN PROCESS

In September 2020, the Commission released a report on Oakland's system of campaign finance and public financing laws and outcomes, with an emphasis on who participates in Oakland City elections. The report, *Race for Power: How Money in Oakland Politics Creates and Perpetuates Disparities Across Income and Race*, analyzes campaign finance data from the 2014, 2016, and 2018



elections to assess current participation in campaign contributions by factors such as race, income, and inside-versus-outside of Oakland.

The report describes the weight of independent expenditures, how campaign donors influence policy outcomes, and how the

system perpetuates distrust in government. It offers a new paradigm for financing campaigns, such as a restructuring of the system, with Oaklander input, in a manner that promotes greater equity and broader participation across racial and socio-economic lines.

PUBLIC FUNDS FOR CANDIDATES

The Limited Public Financing (LPF) program provides District City Council candidates with some public funds by way of reimbursements for certain qualified expenditures to be used for campaign expenses. The goal of the program is to help ensure that all individuals have a fair and equal opportunity to participate in the elective and governmental process. The 2020 program began with a training in August and ongoing interaction with candidates in facilitating program requirements and distributing public funds. Seven candidates participated and received some or all of the \$21,857 that was available to them, for a total disbursement of \$137,485 for the 2020 election.

PEC MISSION AND ACTIVITIES

The Public Ethics Commission was created in 1996 to 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 in 2014, as well as in each relevant ordinance, listed as follows:

- Government Ethics Act
- Conflict of Interest Code
- Oakland Campaign Reform Act
- Lobbyist Registration Act
- Sunshine Ordinance
- Limited Public Financing Act
- False Endorsement in Campaign Literature Act

The Commission's activities, and the six-person 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.

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 2020, Commission staff responded to a record 460 requests for information, advice or assistance regarding campaign finance, ethics, lobbyist registration or public records issues. Campaign finance questions again topped all other issues among requests for advice and assistance (54 percent), mostly from treasurers, candidates, and law firms seeking to comply with campaign finance laws. Other questions come from City staff and officials, lobbyists, and members of the public regarding misuse of public resources, gift restrictions, conflicts of interests, and lobbying rules, to name a few.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE TRAINING

Commission staff proactively connected with candidates and committees early, often, and ongoing throughout the election season, including orientations for candidates as they initiated their campaign filings, as well as monthly reminders and trainings.

PEC staff partnered with the Fair Political Practices Commission in May 2020 to provide a joint, comprehensive candidate and treasurer training on on both state and local campaign rules, reaching 26 local candidates/committees.

Commission staff also provided public financing training to candidates and their campaign staff in August to promote participation in the 2020 Limited Public Financing (LPF) program for District City Council candidates. Sixteen candidates and/or campaign representatives

460

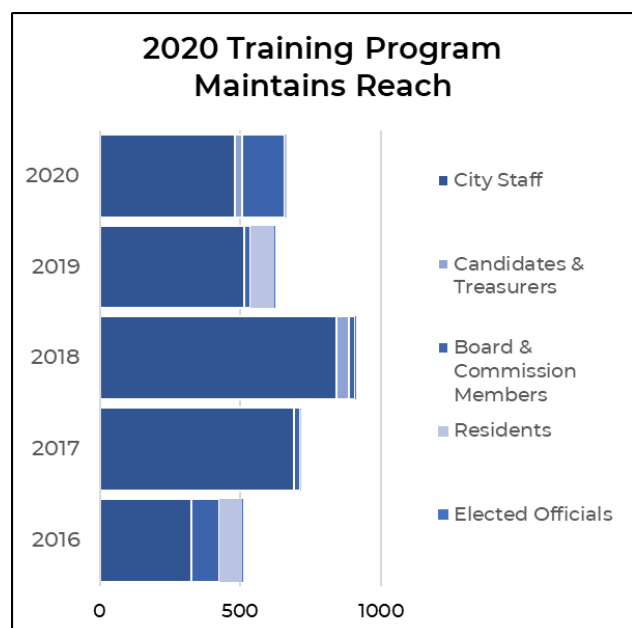
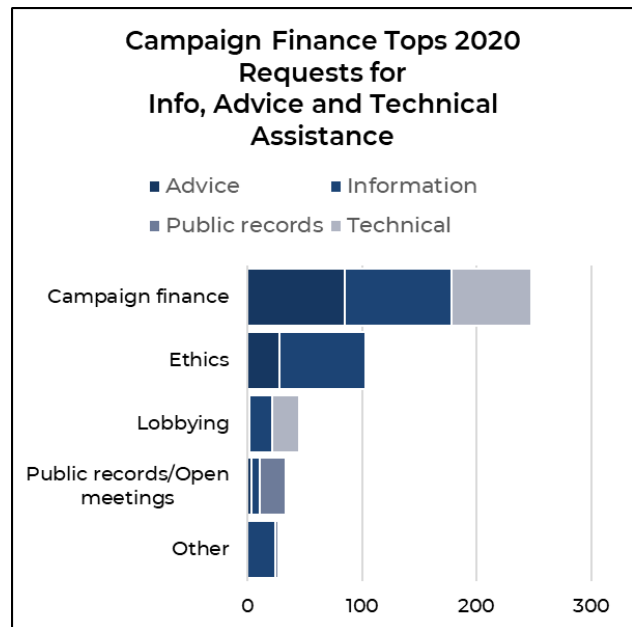
requests for information, advice or technical assistance

666

training participants

1,432

views of PEC online training content



attended the training, representing 16 of the 17 City Council candidates certified to appear on the 2020 ballot.

ETHICS TRAINING

Commission staff provided ethics training through various avenues to reach the following target audiences:

- Newly elected officials during the first 90 days of taking office (State-required AB 1234 training and Oakland Government Ethics Act training);
- New employees participating in monthly orientation sessions provided by the City, for a total of eight presentations and 270 new employees in 2020;
- City staff supervisors (40 in total) received a more specialized, higher-level ethics training at the City's Supervisor Academy, which covers City policies and procedures, internal City systems, and leadership skills relating to day-to day-supervision;
- Board and Commission Members and staff received introductory ethics trainings, for a total of three Commissions and 100 board members and staff;
- City employees took the PEC's one-hour online Ethics Training for Form 700 Filers, available in the City's learning management system, Target Solutions, for a total of 148 in 2020. PEC staff also held three live, online trainings attended by 60 employees covering the same content; and
- 1,100 YouTube viewers watched the PEC's 10-minute ethics introductory video, and another 109 viewers watched the one-hour Ethics Training for Form 700 Filers in video format; another 75 viewers watched ethics training segments on specific topics such as Gift rules, conflicts of interests, misuse of City resources, and post-employment restrictions.

OUTREACH AND PUBLICATIONS

The Commission made substantial revisions to two comprehensive guides to assist the regulated community in complying with local laws: the Oakland Campaign Reform Act Guide and the Limited Public Financing (LPF) Guide. A new brochure outlining rules for lobbying Oakland City officials was also published to increase awareness of the Lobbyist Registration Program among potential lobbyists and City staff. PEC staff also published the ninth edition of its *Public Trust* newsletter highlighting the Commission's activities to keep the regulated community and the general public informed about the Commission's work. The PEC newsletter was distributed to 935 email subscribers and shared widely via social media and the Commission's website.

Before the shelter-in-place order, Commissioners and staff participated in two in-person events in January: a community roundtable with the City Auditor and a keynote presentation to the Alameda County Grand Jury Association on the PEC's five-year progress since the new City Charter amendment was adopted by Oakland voters in 2014.

DISCLOSE AND ILLUMINATE

The Commission's Disclosure Program aims to help candidates submit required data and ensure Oaklanders can easily access campaign finance and ethics-related data and information that is accurate, user-friendly, and understandable. The goal is for the public and the PEC to be able to monitor filings, view information, and detect inconsistencies or noncompliance. This program utilizes a collaborative transparency approach, which reaches beyond the traditional minimum of providing copies of filings. The Commission proactively shares data in user-centered formats, invites participation and feedback, and facilitates shared discussion around community needs.



1,200+ campaign and lobbyist disclosure reports processed



Over 67,000 views of disclosure content or data online¹



10,000+ users of online disclosure tools

ILLUMINATING ETHICS DATA

The Commission collects, reviews, and provides public access to ethics-related data. As part of this responsibility, Commission staff works to put the information into formats that can be searched and displayed in easy-to-use data visuals made available for public viewing. Commission staff implemented three new tools to provide more meaningful public disclosure:

- **Lobbyist Disclosure Data** – As of 2020, Oakland residents have immediate online access to lobbyist disclosure data for the first time. In December, the Commission's [public lobbyist dashboard and data page](#) went live providing a searchable directory of Oakland lobbyists and enabling users to access lobbyist activity reports from the City's [OakApps](#) platform.
- **Show Me the Money App** – Commission staff implemented the interactive [“Show Me the Money”](#) application on the City's open data platform, OakData. The tool allows users to view the location of campaign contributors on a map and enables side-by-side comparisons of candidates' funding sources.
- **Open Disclosure** – Commission staff and Open Oakland volunteers launched the newly updated 2020 [OpenDisclosure](#) campaign finance app showing the flow of money in Oakland's March and November elections in an easy to understand, interactive format. New features implemented for the 2020 elections included an expanded donor search tool and election overview pages with key metrics. OpenDisclosure users increased 156 percent in 2020 over 2018 (8,166 compared to 3,192) and generated 36,099 pageviews.

FILING PROCESSES STREAMLINED

The Commission serves as filing officer for campaign finance and lobbyist disclosures. As part of this responsibility, Commission staff also work to move from paper-based to electronic filing systems to make the process easier for those who must submit the data and vastly improve internal and public access to the data contained within the reports. Modernizing filing processes to allow campaign and

¹ Source: Google Analytics. Includes pageviews of the Public Ethics Commission Public Portal for Campaign Finance Disclosure, www.opendisclosure.io, and Show Me the Money application.

lobbyist filings to be submitted without any in-person contact became particularly important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Two major 2020 projects were:

- The new Lobbyist Registration and Reporting application went live in July 2020 on the City's OakApps platform. The application was developed by Commission staff in partnership with the Information Technology Department (ITD). The system is designed to make compliance with the disclosure requirements of the Oakland Lobbyist Registration Act simpler and more convenient for the regulated community and enables lobbyists to submit and manage all aspects of their registration and reporting requirements online.
- Staff worked with filing system vendor NetFile to implement a completely paperless, simplified submission process for campaign finance disclosure in time for the first major filing deadline in July. In addition, digital forms are now available for all local campaign disclosure forms.

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

In 2020, Commission staff continued highlighting specific PEC policy areas, activities or client-groups via social media and saw a positive increase in followers and engagement with PEC-content ending the year with 1,462 followers. Social media generated more than 1,000 user engagements (likes, shares or retweets, clicks on links, and new followers).

Commission staff conducted user research in collaboration with the City's Digital Services department to improve discoverability of core PEC services on the City's service menu page without prior knowledge that the PEC is the service provider.

DISCLOSURE COMPLIANCE AND DATA

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 the committee during the election cycle. Oakland had 98 active political committees as of December 2020. Two Oakland elections were conducted in 2020, a special election on March 3 and the general election on November 3, 2020. As a result, there were six scheduled campaign statement deadlines this year. In all, staff processed and reviewed close to 1,000 campaign-related filings during 2020.

Political Contributions Solicited by City Officials – Effective July 1, 2019, any Oakland public servant required to file a Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) who successfully solicits a political contribution of \$5,000 or more from any person or entity that contracts or proposes to contract with the official's department must disclose the solicitation to the Public Ethics Commission within 30 days. Two solicited contributions were disclosed in connection with the November 2020 election. Both contributions were to the Committee for an Affordable East Bay and totaled \$107,500.

Lobbying activity reports identify who is lobbying City officials and for what purpose. In 2020, 63 lobbyists registered with the City of Oakland representing over 100 clients. Oakland lobbyists reported \$1,314,123 in payments from clients¹ and a total of 678 contacts with City officials during the first three quarters of 2020. PEC staff provides targeted outreach and assistance to lobbyists to ensure compliance with registration and reporting requirements. Staff processed 200 quarterly lobbyist activity reports in 2019.

Behested Payments reports (Form 803) 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 a Form 803 to report these payments if they amount to \$5,000 or more. In 2020, the Commission received 38 filings reporting \$16,541,009 in solicited contributions.

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.



ENFORCEMENT OUTCOMES

By the end of 2020, the Commission resolved 44 cases and imposed \$23,000 in fines (penalties). The 44 cases the Commission closed in 2020 were resolved as follows:

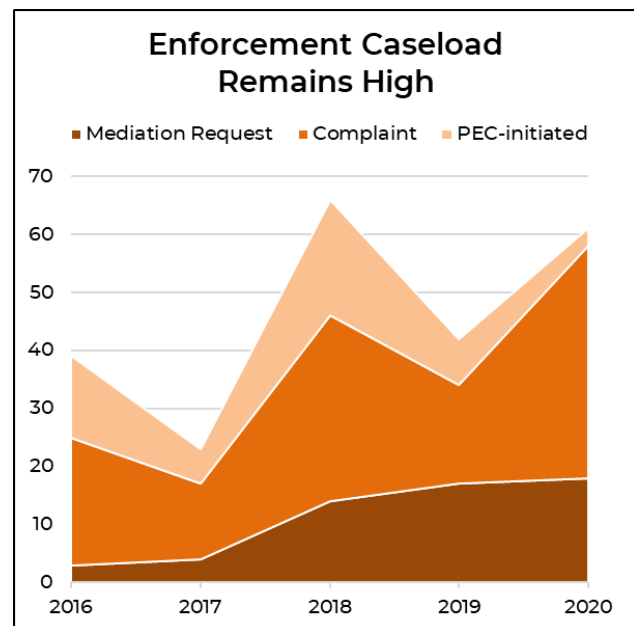
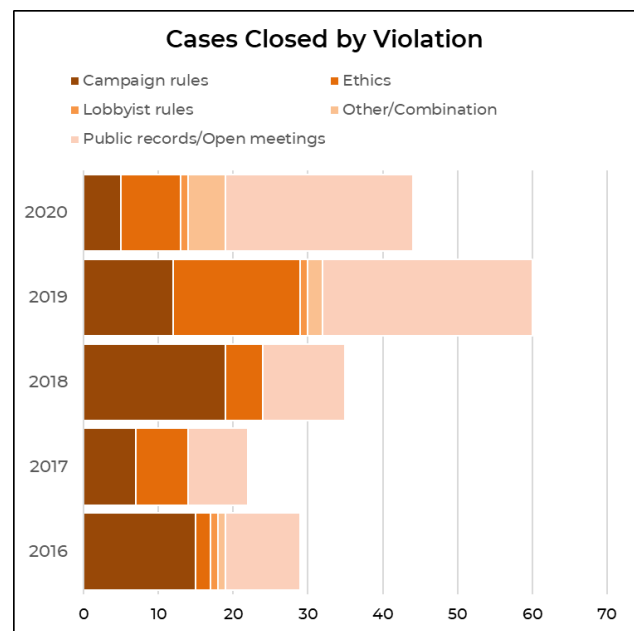
- Three fines, \$23,000 in total penalties
- Five mediations completed (Public Records Requests)
- 36 complaints dismissed for lack of PEC jurisdiction, insufficient evidence that suggests any violation, or no violation following an investigation.

INCOMING CASES

Commission staff received or initiated a total of 42 allegations of potential violations in 2020. The total number of allegations reviewed or initiated in 2020 breaks down as follows: Commission staff received 39 formal complaints submitted by members of the public alleging violations of campaign finance, conflicts of interest, open meetings, public records, and other ethics-related laws; PEC staff opened 3 cases proactively based on hearing or reading of suspicious activities, receiving anonymous tips, or obtaining information from third parties.

MEDIATION CASES

The Commission’s Mediation program seeks to resolve matters between any person whose request to the City of Oakland to inspect or copy public records has been denied, delayed or not



completely fulfilled. In year 2020, Enforcement received a total 19 requests for mediation and closed a total of five mediation cases.

While the Commission's Enforcement Unit maintains high productivity despite lack of staffing, the trend for the last several years shows an increase in incoming complaints and caseload. PEC staffing established by the 2014 Charter amendment was based on 2013 case levels. In the intervening years, staffing has remained the same while the PEC caseload has doubled², an issue that needs to be addressed to ensure the sustainability of a timely, effective enforcement program.

MAJOR ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS IN 2020

In the Matter of Michael Colbruno; Case No. 16-01. In January 2020, the Commission found that Mr. Colbruno failed to timely file lobbyist registration forms and quarterly reports in 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2015 in violation of the Oakland Lobbyist Registration Act. The matter had gone to a full administrative hearing back in November 2019, after which the Commission accepted the hearing officer's findings of facts and increased the fine from the proposed \$5,250 to the final fine of \$10,000 paid to the City General Fund.

In the Matter of Haydel and Lane Partners (Complaint No. 19-24). In March 2020, the Commission imposed a fine against Andrew Haydel and Lane Partners for making a \$1,000 contribution to the Lynette Gibson-McElhaney Defense Fund at a time when they were subject to the City's ban on contributions from City contractors to candidates, in violation of Oakland Municipal Code section 3.12.140. Commission staff had initiated a pro-active investigation after Mr. Haydel's lawyer called to report the violation; staff initially proposed a \$2,000 penalty by settlement but the Commission rejected the amount and voted to increase the fine to \$5,000 paid to the City General Fund.

In the Matter of Dorian Gray; (Case No. 18-03). In July 2020, the Commission imposed a fine against Dorian Gray who offered to pay City Councilmember Larry Reid \$10,000 and provide an all-expense paid trip to Spain for City employee Gregory Minor to secure a cannabis permit for a business associate. City ethics ordinances prohibit anyone from offering a city employee or political candidate a gift "when it is reasonably foreseeable that the public servant or candidate could be influenced by the gift in the performance of an official act." The Oakland Government Ethics Act also bars anyone doing business or seeking to do business with the city from offering gifts to public servants. The Commission and the District Attorney entered into a joint settlement with the Gray, imposing criminal and administrative penalties, including an \$8,000 fine paid to the City General fund.

In the Matter of Anthony Harbaugh (Case No. 18-11). In November 2020, PEC staff brought to an administrative hearing evidence of a bribery and misuse of position scheme that involved Anthony Harbaugh, a City building inspector. Between January 2015 and December 2016, Mr. Harbaugh committed, participated in, or aided and abetted a fellow building inspector in committing multiple violations of the Oakland Government Ethics Act, including soliciting and receiving bribes; making, and seeking to use his official position to influence governmental decisions in which he had a disqualifying financial interest; misusing City resources for personal financial gain; and misusing his City position to induce/coerce others to provide him with and failing to report significant income from individuals with matters before him as a City building inspector. Following the November administrative hearing, the Commission imposed a fine of \$55,000 payable to the General Fund. (Note: This fine was imposed in January 2021, so the amount is not included in the total fines imposed for 2020 as summarized in this report.)

² Caseload counts encompass all matters handled by enforcement staff, which currently include complaints, proactive investigations, and public records request mediations.

ADMINISTRATION

STAFFING

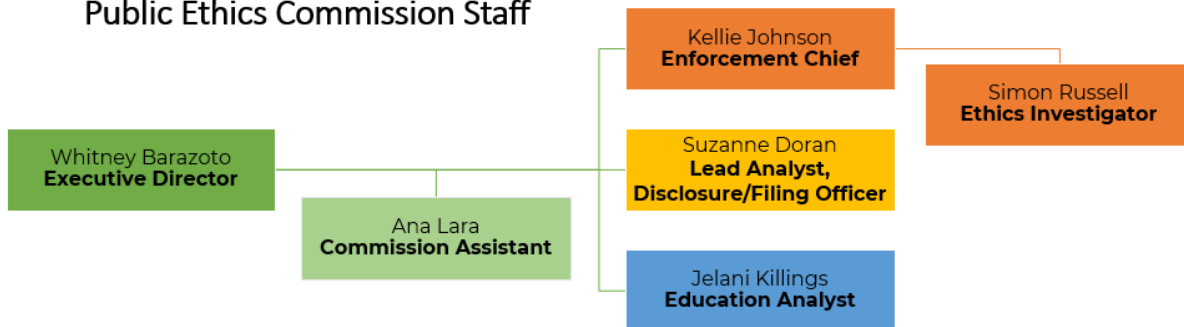
Commission staff are responsible for the Commission’s day-to-day operations, including investigations and enforcement casework, education and advice, data collection and illumination activities, and law and policy projects. The COVID pandemic brought significant changes to the way staff and Commissioners interacted and conducted Commission business, including adjusting to working from home and providing services without in-person contact. Staff continue to participate in ongoing professional development, including opportunities through the Council of Government Ethics Laws, U.C. Berkeley, Alameda County Law Library, International Association for Public Participation, the City of Oakland, and Code for America.

7 volunteer Commissioners

6 fulltime staff

\$1,300,237
2020-2021 budget

Public Ethics Commission Staff



BUDGET

The adopted budget for the Commission was \$1,160,831 for Fiscal Year 2019-20 and \$1,300,237 for Fiscal Year 2020-21. The latter includes a one-time augmentation of \$100,000 for election-related services that was added for Fiscal Year 2020-21 in response to and in lieu of the additional two positions requested by the Commission for investigative and policy functions that cannot be addressed within current staffing capacity. This allowed the PEC to hire a temporary part-time investigator to join the enforcement team in November 2020 through June 30, 2021, and begin to recruit for a part-time analyst. However, in December the City Administrator announced a \$62 million shortfall for the current fiscal year as well as hiring freezes on vacant positions, furloughs, and deferrals of salary increases for department heads, and a moratorium on temporary employees, among other reductions. As a result, the PEC had to forego filling the part-time analyst position.

2020 COMMISSIONERS

James E.T. Jackson, Chair

Commission Appointee 1/22/2018 - 1/21/2021

With more than 25 years in healthcare administration, James Jackson is the Chief Operating Officer of Seton Medical Center & Seton Coastside, part of the Verity Healthcare System. Prior to this role, he served as Chief Administrative Officer of San Leandro & Alameda Hospitals, as well as the Administrator of Fairmont Hospital, both part of the Alameda Health System. Previously, Mr. Jackson was a Support Services Assistant Administrator with Kaiser Foundation Hospitals in the Diablo Service Area and the Chief Operating Officer of Saint Francis Memorial Hospital in San Francisco, California. Prior to joining Saint Francis, he held several positions at Children's Hospital and Research Center in Oakland, California, where he ultimately served as the Vice President of Ancillary and Support Services. His career in healthcare administration began with his service in the United States Navy at the Naval Hospital in Oakland, California.



Mr. Jackson has served his community as a Big Brother, was the Chair of the African American Outreach program for the local American Diabetes Association chapter, and was named Volunteer of the Year. He served as the Chair of the Blind Babies Foundation, is a director with the San Leandro Chamber of Commerce, and serves on the Alameda Chamber of Commerce as well. A Bay Area native, Mr. Jackson holds a Master's Degree in Public Health from the University of California in Berkeley and a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He lives in Oakland with his wife and two children.

Jill M. Butler, Vice Chair

City Attorney Appointee 11/13/2018 - 1/21/2021

Jill Butler is a Manager of System wide Human Resources at the University of California (UC) Office of the President. In this role, she manages a system-wide compliance policy that ensures Senior Management executives' outside activities do not pose a reputational risk nor Conflict of Interest or Commitment to the University. She is responsible for enforcing the policy and educating Senior Management executives, UC Regents and Human Resources staff at the University's ten campuses and medical centers.



Ms. Butler has over 10 years of public policy and legal experience having held Counsel and Legislative Affairs positions in the United States Congress, Social Security Administration and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). She graduated from U.C. Berkeley with a B.A. in Political Science, and she earned her J.D. from Seattle University School of Law.

Joseph Tuman

Mayoral Appointee 1/22/2020 – 1/21/2023

Joseph Tuman is a full-time university professor at San Francisco State University in First Amendment law, public speaking, critical thinking and argumentation, and debate. He has also taught at St. Mary's, the New School for Social Research in New York, and Paris II Law School in France.



Mr. Tuman received his B.A. in Political Science from UC Berkeley with Great Distinction and Highest Honors, his J.D. from Boalt Law, and was a McBane Moot Court Award winner. His law work included comprehensive evidence review and sorting of internal documents produced by tobacco companies re-advertising and marketing campaigns targeting children for class-action lawsuits filed by different states. His law work also included being the primary drafter of a successful Amicus Curiae brief to US Supreme Court in *Reno v. ACLU* in 1997.

He currently serves as an academic advisor to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) regarding terrorist use of social media, symbolism, and counter-messaging as counter-terrorism. Mr. Tuman advises NATO senior staff (Generals and Admirals) 1-2 times a year. He has also served as a political analyst for all major television networks, and many of the largest newspapers in the US since 1984. He co-authored with Professor Douglas Fraleigh "Freedom of Expression in the Marketplace of Ideas" (St. Martins, New York: 1998), and the second edition "Freedom of Expression in the Marketplace of Ideas," (Sage, Atherton: 2010). He is an author and senior editor of numerous books and academic journals, which include "Political Communication in American Campaigns," (Sage, Atherton: 2004) and "Communicating Terror: The Rhetorical Dimensions of Terrorism" (Sage, Atherton: 2003 and 2011).

Mr. Tuman was born in Dallas, Texas, and raised in the San Joaquin Valley. He has lived in Oakland since 1984 and ran twice for Mayor of Oakland.

Nayeli Maxson Velázquez

Commission Appointee 1/22/2019 - 1/21/2022

Maxson Velázquez is the Chief Executive Officer of the Alliance for Community Development, an Oakland-based not-for-profit dedicated to economically empowering local residents, increasing access to capital for underrepresented entrepreneurs and small business owners across the Bay Area.



Prior to joining the Alliance, Ms. Maxson Velázquez worked on political campaigns in California and Nevada, and worked for elected officials at the federal, state and local levels. She has completed the Coro Center for Civic Leadership's Public Affairs Fellowship and the Woodhull Institute for Ethical Leadership program. Ms. Maxson Velázquez formerly served on the Community Development Block Grant Board for Oakland's Central District and currently serves on the Board of Directors for Resilient Wellness (a local organization focused on providing holistic, trauma-informed care through innovative healthcare models) and on the Advisory Board for Oakland Grown (a membership organization of Oakland small businesses and organizations who support them).

Ms. Maxson Velázquez holds a Juris Doctor in Government Law and Social Justice from UC Hastings College of the Law, a Bachelors Degree in Psychology from UC Santa Cruz, a Certificate of French Fluency from Universite de la Sorbonne, and a Certificate of Intermediate Spanish from Ixchel Spanish School.

Janani Ramachandran Commission Appointee - 1/22/2020 - 2/2/2021



Janani Ramachandran is third-year law student at Berkeley Law. A native of Alameda County, she graduated from Stanford University in 2014, receiving honors from the Center for Democracy, Development, and Rule of Law. Janani began her career at a large community health clinic, working as a home-visiting case manager for low-income immigrant mothers. She later founded and managed the clinic's first domestic violence advocacy program, where she conducted trainings for staff and partner agencies, supervised crisis workers, and launched public outreach campaigns. Janani is currently a Board Director at two local nonprofits, Family Violence Appellate Project and Men Creating Peace.

During her time at Berkeley Law, Janani has externed for the Honorable Judge Tara Flanagan, and has worked with East Bay Community Law Center on eviction defense cases, and with Bay Area Legal Aid on representing survivors of domestic violence. She founded Berkeley Resistance Against Inter-Partner Violence (BRAIV), which advocates for survivors by conducting court-observations, and by hosting campus educational programs. Janani was previously a summer fellow at the Ford Foundation, and at the Hewlett and Flora Family Foundation, where she worked on-site with civil society organizations in Haiti, Gujarat, and Bangalore. Janani has also pursued her advocacy through performing arts, and has devised original theater productions and music with the goal of catalyzing community action on various social justice issues.

Jerett Yan City Auditor Appointee 1/22/2019 - 1/21/2022



Jerett Yan is an attorney with Hanson Bridgett LLP in San Francisco where he provides litigation and advisory services to public entities. In that capacity, he currently serves as a deputy city attorney to the City of Millbrae and an investigator for the San Jose Board of Fair Campaign and Political Practices, where he advises on matter relating to public ethics, transparency, elections, and campaign practices. He also has particular expertise in public works contracting, public ethics, and civil rights compliance.

Mr. Yan has previously served as an attorney adviser to the US Environmental Protection Agency's Office of Civil Rights, where he investigated claims of discrimination in environmental permitting practices, a law clerk with the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, and an Americorp VISTA in Chicago as a tenant organizer with the Metropolitan Tenants Organization.

Mr. Yan holds degrees from UC Berkeley School of Law and Northwestern University.