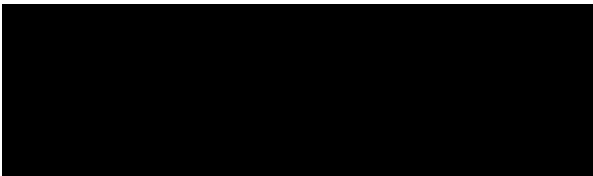


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# Item #5d Sheehan Application

## Public Ethics Commission Application

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### Contact Information

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**Name** Nicholas Sheehan

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**Address**



**Phone**

**Evening Phone**

**Email**

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### Please answer the following questions

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**Are you an Oakland resident?** Yes

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**Years of residency in Oakland** 5

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**Your City Council District** District 1

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**Have you attended a Public Ethics Commission meeting?** No

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**Are you currently employed by the City of Oakland or do you have any direct and substantial financial interest in any work, business, or official action by the City?** No

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**Are you currently or are you planning to run for elective office in Oakland?** No

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**Are you currently or are you planning to endorse, support or oppose an Oakland candidate or ballot measure?** No

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**Are you currently or are you planning to work on behalf of an Oakland candidate or ballot measure?** No

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**Are you a registered Oakland lobbyist?** No

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## Item #5d Sheehan Application

Are you required to register as a lobbyist?

No

Do you receive compensation from an Oakland lobbyist?

No

Do you receive gifts from an Oakland lobbyist?

No

How did you hear about this vacancy?

I believe through Dan Kalb's newsletter

### Supplemental Questions

**1. Why do you want to serve on the Public Ethics Commission?**

Two main reasons. First, I believe strongly that for any government to be perceived as legitimate it must treat all citizens equitably. In this regard, our local, state, and federal governments far too frequently fail. I've dedicated my professional career to ensuring that the governmental systems that touch the lives of people from historically marginalized or underserved communities treat those communities fairly and equitably. And I would like to bring the skills and sensibilities I've gained in those experiences to the Public Ethics Commission (PEC).

My first real job out of college was as an advocate on behalf of low-income special education students and their parents. After attending law school, I returned to this work, focusing my efforts on the issue of school discipline and policing; my clients were kids facing long-term school suspensions and involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Today I represent several men on California's death row. Each of my current clients touched many governmental systems throughout their lives. But at each of those touchpoints, they were ignored, poorly served, or treated unfairly.

Having read the PEC's recent report *Race for Power: How Money in Oakland Politics Creates and Perpetuates Disparities Across Income and Race* (hereafter *Race for Power*), it's clear to me that the PEC also recognizes how essential equity is in maintaining the legitimacy of democratic government. This apparent alignment in values motivates my application.

Second, although I'm a fairly new resident of Oakland - I moved here from New York City in 2015 - I've come to love the city. I'm especially impressed with the city's obvious commitment to the ongoing struggle for equity and social justice. I am raising my family here in Oakland and I would love the opportunity to contribute to making Oakland a more democratic, equitable, and just city for them and for everyone.

## Item #5d Sheehan Application

**2. What skills and experience will you bring to the Commission? (Include any governmental experience, activities with civic and business organizations, neighborhood groups, or any other experience that would contribute to your effectiveness as a Commissioner.)**

As an attorney, I have experience interpreting rules, laws, and policies and objectively applying a rule to a particular set of facts. I also have some experience working with city governments, specifically the City of New York. As a Skadden Fellow at Advocates for Children of New York, I represented my organization on a subcommittee of a citywide commission established to explore and recommend changes to the city's school-discipline and policing practices. In this role, I regularly interacted with various city officials including elected office holders and their staff. I believe I was able to collaborate effectively with the people I encountered in this role. A recent performance evaluation I received in my current position supports my belief in my collaboration skills. At the risk of tooting my horn, I include the relevant language from this evaluation below in response to question five.

While at Advocates for Children, I also represented my organization in several grassroots coalitions. Parent organizations or other community groups often led these coalitions. My experience working in coalition with these people and communities gave me some insight into how to be an ally. They also taught me that lasting change is achieved not by merely soliciting and listening to "public input," but by working to empower people and communities to effect change themselves.

Admittedly, I gained all of this experience in New York City, and I have little exposure to Oakland politics and community organizing. Still, I think the lessons I've learned are transferrable and would make me an effective PEC commissioner.

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## Item #5d Sheehan Application

### 3. What issues, projects, or goals would you like to pursue while serving on the Commission?

On a big-picture level, I would like to work on addressing the high level of distrust of government among communities of color and low-income communities. As documented in *Race for Power*, distrust of government is more prevalent among Oakland's communities of color and low-income neighborhoods. This distrust is, of course, understandable and justified, given the ways in which government has historically failed to serve or actively discriminated against these communities. But it is precisely because of this historical legacy - that is, because government bears responsibility for breaking that trust in the first place - that I believe government must take proactive steps repair harm and rebuild trust.

Which leads me to the discrete project that I am most interested in pursuing: Democracy Vouchers. I honestly had not heard of Democracy Vouchers before reading *Race to Power*, but now that I'm aware of them, I'm infatuated. I believe Democracy Vouchers would go a long way to repairing the broken trust between government and communities of color and/or low-income neighborhoods. The outcomes Seattle has achieved with its voucher program indicate that it can be a great way to improve participation in local politics and elections. Furthermore, I believe this program is a great example of a proactive step government can take to empower the disempowered, in part because of the evidence demonstrating how it changed candidate behavior in Seattle: candidates were more likely to engage in communities that they might otherwise have ignored. Seeing a candidate, and knowing that they are working to earn your voucher, seems like it would help repair trust in the political system; it would make candidates (and eventually elected officials) more accessible to people who might otherwise believe themselves to be shut out of power and therefore discouraged.

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### 4. What do you think are the City's most pressing ethics, campaign finance, or transparency challenges?

Independent expenditures by non-residents. As *Race for Power* notes, independent expenditures have increased in recent election cycles. That such expenditures have become "particularly influential in Oakland Unified School District Board races," is especially troubling to me, as a parent of future OUSD students. I believe that local governments should be responsive to their constituents, not to the desires of non-resident millionaires and billionaires.

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## Item #5d Sheehan Application

### 5. What else would you like the subcommittee to know as your application is considered?

As mentioned above, I believe I am very good at collaborating and working as a member of a team. As my most recent professional performance evaluation notes:

"Nick offers encouragement, support, and helpful guidance to his team members, and consistently asks how he can help others and checks in with team members. He is available to his team members and very communicative - these factors, in turn, encourage a collaborative decision-making process and enables him to keep the team on task. Here and elsewhere, Nick's approachability and good humor were noted as extremely helpful because, as one team member described it, Nick 'manages to diffuse the stress of everyone on the team while making sure that everything gets done.'"

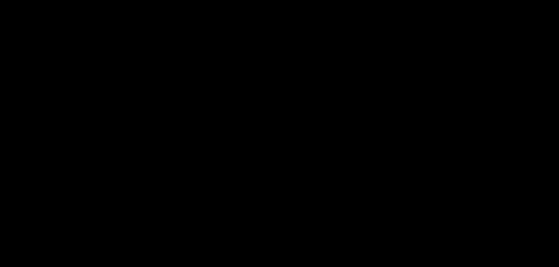
One final note - I recognized that, as a heterosexual, cisgender, white male, I operate and move in the world with a tremendous amount of privilege. There's a strong argument to be made that the last thing Oakland needs is a person who looks like me in a position like PEC Commissioner. I see the merit in that argument, and I would be very happy to see this position filled by a person of color or someone from a low-income community. Still, I think I would do good job. I would be thrilled to help the PEC advocate for and "build a civic-engagement infrastructure and political leadership evaluation, recruitment, and selection process that facilitates broad, inclusive, meaningful, and equitable engagement by all Oaklanders." (Race for Power, p. 1)

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### Please provide two references

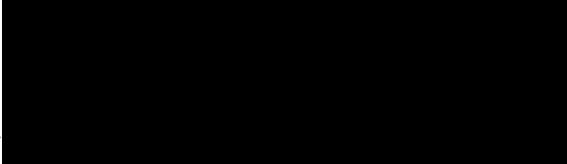
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#### Reference 1

Name	Anne Hawkins
Address	
Phone	
Email	

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#### Reference 2

Name	Nisha Shah
Address	

Phone



#5d Sheehan Application

Email



Submit your resume

Upload your resume



Sign and submit application

Signature



Date/Time

Mar 05, 2021

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**LEGAL EXPERIENCE**

**Habeas Corpus Resource Center**, San Francisco, CA *September 2015 – Present*

Habeas Corpus Counsel III

Represent five condemned inmates in their habeas corpus and executive clemency proceedings; draft, file, and argue motions in Superior Court; draft and file writs in the Court of Appeals and California Supreme Court; interview clients, their family members and friends to develop comprehensive, multi-generational social history; prepare witnesses and conduct direct examinations in evidentiary hearings.

**Advocates for Children**, New York, NY *September 2013 – September 2015*

Skadden Fellow, School Justice Project

Represented students at school suspension hearings and the parents of court-involved, special education students at administrative hearings under the IDEA; conducted community outreach and trainings regarding school discipline; and advocated for policy changes around New York City's school-to-prison pipeline.

**Center for Applied Legal Studies**, Washington, D.C. *January 2013 – May 2013*

Student Attorney

Successfully represented a refugee whose application for asylum had been rejected by the U.S. government and was in deportation proceedings before a federal immigration judge; interviewed client, researched and wrote brief for the court, and interviewed and prepared witnesses.

**Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP**, New York, NY *June 2012 – August 2012*

Summer Associate (Permanent Offer Extended)

Conducted legal research and drafted memoranda for attorneys on civil litigation matters; participated in professional development training on legal writing, cost-effective research strategies, and presentation skills.

**The Legal Aid Society of the District of Columbia**, Washington, D.C. *September 2011 – April 2012*

Legal Intern, Housing Unit

Drafted briefs, motions, memoranda and client correspondence; conducted housing investigations, photographing and documenting housing code violations.

**The New York Legal Aid Society**, New York, NY *May 2011 – July 2011*

Summer Law Clerk, Criminal Appeals Bureau

Drafted appellate briefs, motions, memoranda and client correspondence; researched constitutional, sentencing and evidentiary issues. Researched statutory changes to penal law and updated agency-wide penal law database.

**Advocates for Children**, New York, NY *May 2007 – July 2010*

Project Coordinator, Juvenile Justice Project

Drafted impartial hearing requests and prepared attorneys for special education due process proceedings; appeared before Family Court Judges to detail clients' educational needs and advocate for beneficial dispositions.

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**EDUCATION**

**Georgetown University Law Center**, Washington, D.C.

*Juris Doctor*, May 2013

*GPA:* 3.54; 3L Dean's List; 2L Dean's List

*Journal:* *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy*, Editor-in-Chief, Volume XX

*Activities:* East of the River Youth Court, Intramural Basketball

**Trinity College**, Hartford, CT

*Bachelor of Arts in Political Science*, December 2005

*Activities:* Trinity College Rugby Football Club (Captain, 2005)

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**AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS**

**Fellowship for Emerging Leaders in Public Service (FELPS)** *January 2009 – May 2009*

The Research Center for Leadership in Action at NYU Wagner selects fellows based on leadership potential and demonstrated commitment to public service in New York City.

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**ACTIVITIES**

**The James P. & Debra Healy Foundation**, Norwalk, CT – Board Member *May 2011 – May 2017*

**Obama for America**, Philadelphia, PA – Staging Location Manager *January 2008 – November 2008*

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**BAR ADMISSIONS**

Admitted to practice law in New York and California