



ETHICS COMMISSION

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Date: August 24, 2017

To: Members of the Ethics Commission

From: Jessica Blome, Deputy Director, Enforcement & Legal Affairs

Subject: **Agenda Item 7: Discussion and possible action on overview of Staff's preliminary proposals to strengthen Commission's Enforcement Regulations**

Summary: This report sets forth Staff's proposed conceptual changes to the Commission's Enforcement Regulations as well as a process for considering public comment and implementing changes for formal Commission promulgation later this calendar year.

Action Requested: No action is required by the Commission, but Staff welcomes the Commission's policy guidance and direction as we continue to refine proposals to bring forward for Commission action.

Beginning in August 2016, Staff undertook a comprehensive evaluation of its enforcement processes. To develop its concepts for proposed changes to the Commission's Enforcement Regulations, Staff has consulted with the investigations and enforcement directors at the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), Oakland Public Ethics Commission, and Los Angeles Ethics Commission; researched and evaluated these agencies' enforcement regulations; reviewed the Commission's authority as set forth in the various ordinances it enforces; and researched California law regarding administrative delegation of duties. All the while, Staff worked within current enforcement procedures to identify where, when, and why investigations are delayed or hindered because of processes that may be duplicative, unduly cumbersome, or unnecessary.

This memorandum represents Staff's first step toward implementing improvements in the Commission's enforcement procedural regulations. First, this memorandum will describe the Commission's authority to promulgate regulations. Next, this memorandum will explain what past Civil Grand Juries have identified as areas for improvement in the Commission's enforcement procedures. Finally, this memorandum proposes several changes to the Commission's enforcement regulations designed to meet the Commission's goals of increased effectiveness and timeliness of investigations and enforcement actions.

A. The Charter gives the Commission authority to promulgate enforcement regulations.

San Francisco Charter section 15.102 authorizes the Ethics Commission to adopt, amend and rescind rules, including those related to governing procedures of the Commission. SF Charter §

15.102. The Commission promulgated its first set of Regulations for Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings on July 5, 1997, and has amended them on multiple occasions since then. See Attachment A, Ethics Commission Regulations for Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings, Cover Page (March 28, 2016). The current iteration of the Enforcement Regulations was last amended on March 28, 2016, to include a provision requiring quarterly reporting for whistleblower retaliation complaints. See Enforcement Regulation § IV(A)(1).

B. Two Civil Grand Juries have identified deficiencies in the Commission’s enforcement processes.

In support of the 1993 proposition that created the Commission, the Board of Supervisors argued,

The people of San Francisco are in danger of losing faith in our city government. Every few weeks another scandal arises and public confidence sinks to new lows. We need an Ethics Commission to turn things around at City Hall. Proposition K will establish an independent body to clean up our city government. The Ethics Commission will investigate and punish wrongdoing . . . establish tougher rules for city lobbyists . . . strengthen the city’s whistleblower program . . . draft stricter guidelines for city officials. . . educate and advise on ethics laws.

See Proponent’s Argument in Favor of Proposition K, Nov. 23 Voter Pamphlet, pg. 104.

Seventeen years later, the 2010 Civil Grand Jury focused its attention on an audit of the Commission’s investigations and enforcement program. See 2010 Civil Grand Jury Report, p. 1. The 2010 CGJ concluded that “fines and enforcement irregularities [and inconsistencies]”, among other things, had caused the public to lose faith in the Commission’s enforcement process. *Id* at p. 8. Again in 2014, the CGJ assessed the Commissions’ enforcement program. This time, the CGJ called on the Commission to be more transparent in its investigations and enforcement actions, to the extent permitted by law. See 2014 Civil Grand Jury Report, p. 14.

In response to the CGJ Reports, the Commission has implemented several important changes to improve transparency and accountability in its enforcement processes. For example, the Commission adopted a penalty assessment matrix, late fines waiver policy (though complicated), and more recently a parallel investigations policy. However, more work is needed to strike an appropriate balance between assignment of functions to the Executive Director and Ethics Commission. With its proposed conceptual changes to the Enforcement Regulations, Staff hopes to maximize Due Process available to respondents; ensure confidential, transparent, and fair outcomes; ensure independence where decisions are at risk of perceived subjectivity or bias; and provide appropriate Commission oversight.

C. Staff’s Proposed Changes to the Enforcement Process

As a result of Staff’s ongoing review, and to further implement recommendations made by the CGJ in 2010 and 2014, Staff proposes the following structural changes to its enforcement processes:

1. **Conduct of Investigations.** The Charter requires that the “commission” conduct investigations. See SF Charter § C3.699-13(a). Historically, the Commission delegated this responsibility to the Executive Director. Enforcement Regulation §§ III, IV, and V. Pursuant to Enforcement

Regulation § V, the Executive Director is also empowered to compel the testimony of witnesses and the production of documents relevant to an investigation by subpoena. Staff propose delegating the responsibility to conduct investigations to the Deputy Director for Enforcement (“Enforcement Director”), so the Executive Director retains neutral views on each investigation and can make objective decisions when asked to issue an administrative subpoena or determine matters related to probable cause. See Enforcement Regulation § VI (empowering the Executive Director currently to make findings of no probable cause).

2. **Probable Cause Determinations.** According to the Charter, “[n]o finding of probable cause to believe that a provision [of law] has been violated shall be made by the commission unless, at least 21 days prior to the commission’s consideration of the alleged violation, the person alleged to have committed the violation is notified . . . , is provided a summary of the evidence, and is informed of his or her right to be present . . . at any proceeding of the commission held for the purpose of considering whether probable cause exists for believing the person committed the violation.” SF Charter § C3.699-13(b). Under the current Enforcement Regulations, the full panel of the Ethics Commission meets to conduct a probable cause hearing, which must be held in closed session. See Enforcement Regulation § VII. If the full Commission finds probable cause, then the Executive Director must issue a public “accusation.” *Id.* at IX. The accusation serves as the charging document for a second “Hearing on the Merits” that again takes place before the full panel of the Ethics Commission. *Id.* at XII.

Staff recommends revising this process to adopt the FPPC and Los Angeles City Ethics Commission models, which delegate to the Executive Director authority to hold a probable cause conference and make probable cause determinations. Under Staff’s proposal, the Enforcement Director will conduct independent investigations, and the Executive Director will serve as the Commission’s probable cause hearing officer. With this delegation, the Commission preserves its objectivity for the consideration of evidence presented at a Hearing on the Merits or in connection with a proposed Stipulated Decision and Order. Moreover, eliminating this inefficient duplication will enhance a respondent(s)’s Due Process right to a fair administrative Hearing on the Merits, free of preconceived notions or inadvertent *ex parte* disclosures.

3. **Eliminate Use of a Duplicative Accusation Document.** As explained in section C(2), above, current regulations require the Executive Director to issue a public accusation, which serves as the charging document, following the Commission’s finding of probable cause. The issuance of a charging document is important to ensure the respondent has notice in advance of a formal Hearing on the Merits, after which the Commission may make findings of fact, conclusions of law, issue orders, and assess administrative penalties. In conjunction with delegating the authority to make probable cause determinations to the Executive Director, Staff proposes eliminating use of a separate accusation document. Instead, the Executive Director’s Probable Cause Determination would serve as the charging document for the Hearing on the Merits before the full Commission. This proposal is designed to eliminate duplication and unnecessary steps in the enforcement process and clearly require investigation to conclude prior to a probable cause proceeding before the Executive Director.
4. **Stipulations Considered in Public & by Consent Calendar.** Under the current Enforcement Regulations, the Commission must consider proposed Stipulated Decision & Orders in closed session, and respondents are not permitted to make argument in support of their negotiated

settlement. The Charter requires confidentiality through the finding of probable cause, but Stipulated Orders are negotiated based on an agreement that probable cause exists. Staff recommends changing the Enforcement Regulations to require the Commission to consider Stipulations in open session. Both the FPPC and Los Angeles Ethics Commission have adopted this policy by regulation in order to advance the goals of fairness and transparency during the Commission's consideration of settlements and to promote confidence in the Commission's deliberative process as consistent, fair, and impartial. Staff also recommends implementing use of a Consent Calendar to agendaize Stipulations where the administrative penalty assessed is below a threshold set by the Commission. For the FPPC, that threshold is \$10,000. Each Commissioner will have the right to request an open hearing on any proposed Stipulated Order that was placed on the Consent Calendar within five days of each regular Commission meeting. Absent a request for a hearing by a Commission, members of the public will not have an opportunity to provide public comment and debate regarding each proposed Stipulated Order.

5. **Sunshine Ordinance Enforcement.** The Sunshine Ordinance provides for Ethics Commission enforcement power over provisions of that law in two circumstances: (1) To "handle" complaints involving allegations of willful violations of the Sunshine Ordinance, Brown Act, or Public Records Act by elected officials and department heads under Section 67.34; and (2) If enforcement action is not taken by a city or state official 40 days after a complaint is filed under Section 67.35(d). On January 25, 2013, the Commission adopted Regulations for Handling Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance to clarify its role under the Sunshine Ordinance. As adopted, the creation of separate Sunshine Ordinance Regulations divides the Commission's investigative responsibilities into two "tracks" of investigation. To help promote easier access to and better understanding of the Commission's investigative processes, Staff recommends incorporating the Sunshine Ordinance Regulations into one set of agency Enforcement Regulations. Staff will preserve the integrity of the Sunshine Ordinance Regulations, which clarify roles by identifying when the Commission must act.
6. **Default Orders.** The current Enforcement Regulations do not address the Commission's authority when respondents default or fail to respond or appear to a notice of Commission action. Staff propose including a process for penalizing respondents who default, which should include entry of Default Orders.
7. **Late Filing Fees.** Each ordinance administered by the Commission contains a provision allowing the Commission to assess daily fees for late filed statements or reports. However, only the Campaign Finance Reform Ordinance permits the Commission to waive late filing fees for deadlines that fall on weekends or City holidays. Staff propose adopting a provision in the Enforcement Regulations that permits Staff to waive late filing fees that fall on weekends and holidays for all statements and reports required to be filed by the laws within the Commission's jurisdiction. In addition, Staff proposes incorporating the Commission's late filing fees waiver policy into the Enforcement Regulations, so the public has ready access to all of the Commission's enforcement policies in one place.

D. Next Steps: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Public input is critical to ensuring the revised enforcement regulations are as strong, clear, and effective as possible. Accordingly, Staff is planning two Interested Persons meetings the week of September 11.

We anticipate spending the remainder of September evaluating and incorporating public comment into a draft set of proposed regulations for initial consideration by the Commission during the September 25, 2017, regular meeting. If helpful, Staff will plan to host two additional Interested Persons meetings in October, with the goal of all public comment due to Staff on or before October 15. Staff would then publicly publish the final draft version of the Enforcement Regulations in advance of the Commission's October 30 regular meeting. Because the Commission's Bylaws require a 21-day circulation period before the Commission can adopt a regulation, final action by the Commission on proposed Regulations would likely occur at its meeting on November 27.

After the final vote, the Commission must transmit its proposed regulations to the Board of Supervisors within 24 hours of their adoption. SF Charter § 15.102. A rule or regulation adopted by the Commission becomes effective 60 days after the date of its adoption, unless before the expiration of this 60-day period, two-thirds of all members of the Board of Supervisors vote to veto the rule or regulation. *Id.*

Agenda Item 7, Attachment A

San Francisco
Ethics Commission



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ETHICS COMMISSION
REGULATIONS FOR INVESTIGATIONS
AND ENFORCEMENT PROCEEDINGS

Effective Date: July 5, 1997

Includes technical amendments effective April 13, 2002;

Streamlined Process for Complaints Alleging a Failure to File Campaign Finance Disclosure

Reports effective August 15, 2004; amendments effective October 10, 2005;

amendments effective March 10, 2006; amendments effective November 10, 2006; amendments

effective December 18, 2009; amendments effective January 8, 2010; amendments effective

*November 11, 2011; and amendments effective March 29, 2013; and amendments effective March
28, 2016*

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I. PREAMBLE

These Regulations of the San Francisco Ethics Commission are promulgated in order to ensure the fair, just, and timely resolution of complaints presented to the Commission that allege violations of laws within the Commission's jurisdiction by:

1. Setting and maintaining objective standards for the investigation and prosecution of matters brought before the Commission;
2. Eliminating any political or improper influence in the investigation and prosecution of persons accused of ethics violations;
3. Protecting the privacy rights of those accused of ethics violations by maintaining the confidentiality of complaints filed with, and investigations conducted by, the Commission;
4. Setting and enforcing reasonable time limits within which enforcement proceedings should be completed;
5. Coordinating and sharing with other governmental agencies the responsibility for investigations and prosecutions of complaints, whenever consistent with the interests of justice;
6. Delegating to the Commission staff maximum discretion in the handling and resolution of complaints at staff level, while retaining oversight of those staff activities.

II. DEFINITIONS

For purposes of these Regulations, the following definitions shall apply:

- A. "Business day" means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, City holiday, or a day on which the Commission office is closed for business.
- B. "City" means the City and County of San Francisco
- C. "Commission" means the Ethics Commission.
- D. "Complainant" means a person or entity that makes a complaint.
- E. "Credible" means offering reasonable grounds for being believed.
- F. "Day" means calendar day unless otherwise specifically indicated. If a deadline falls on a weekend or City holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the next working day.

G. “Deliver” means transmit by U.S. mail or personal delivery to a person or entity or to an agent authorized to accept delivery on behalf of the person or entity. For purposes of these Regulations, delivery may be made by leaving copies of the material with a responsible person at either the residence or place of business of the person or entity to whom the material is directed. The Commission, the Executive Director or a respondent receiving material may consent to any other means of delivery, including delivery by e-mail or fax. In any proceeding, following a determination of probable cause, the Commission Chair or designated Commissioner or hearing officer may order that delivery of briefs or other materials be accomplished by e-mail.

H. “Enforcement action” means an action pursuant to San Francisco Charter section C3.699-13.

I. “Exculpatory information” means information tending to show that the respondent is not guilty of the alleged violations.

J. “Executive Director” means the Executive Director of the Commission or the Executive Director’s designee.

K. “Mitigating information” means information tending to excuse or reduce the significance of the respondent’s conduct.

L. “Probable cause” means that based on the evidence presented there is reason to believe that the respondent committed a violation of law.

M. “Respondent” means a person or entity that is alleged in a complaint to have committed a violation of law.

N. “Stipulated order” means an order regarding a complaint the terms of which have been agreed to by both the Executive Director and the respondent.

O. “Violation of law” means a violation of City laws relating to campaign finance, lobbying, campaign consulting, conflicts of interest, or governmental ethics, and State laws relating to campaign finance, conflicts of interest, or governmental ethics, including, but not limited to: San Francisco Charter section 15.100 et seq. and Appendix C (ethics); the San Francisco Campaign and Governmental Conduct Code; the Political Reform Act of 1974, Government Code section 81000 et seq.; Government Code section 1090 et seq.; and Government Code section 3201, et seq.

III. COMPLAINTS

A. Formal Complaints.

1. Any person or entity may file a formal complaint alleging a violation of law. Formal complaints must be made in writing on a form specifically provided by the

Commission staff. Formal complaints must include the following information, upon the complainant's information and belief:

- (a) the name and address of the respondent;
- (b) the provision(s) of law allegedly violated;
- (c) the facts constituting the alleged violation(s);
- (d) the names and addresses of witnesses, if any; and
- (e) identification of documents or other evidence which may prove the facts constituting the alleged violation(s), if any.

2. Formal complaints may be filed anonymously. Any formal complaint not filed anonymously must be verified and signed by the complainant under penalty of perjury. If the complainant is an entity, the complaint must be verified and signed under penalty of perjury by an authorized officer or agent of the entity.

3. The Executive Director shall process and review all formal complaints, following the process described in Section IV.

B. Informal Complaints. Any person or entity may file an informal complaint alleging a violation of law by submitting a complaint by telephone, in person, or in writing other than on the form prescribed by the Commission. The Executive Director shall have no obligation but has the discretion to process and review informal complaints.

C. Complaints Initiated by the Executive Director. The Executive Director may initiate complaints. These complaints need not conform to the requirements for formal complaints specified in subsection A of this Section.

D. Complaints Alleging a Violation of the Sunshine Ordinance. Any complaint that alleges a violation of the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance shall be governed by the Ethics Commission Regulations for Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance.

IV. REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS

A. Preliminary Review. The Executive Director must conduct a preliminary review of each formal complaint. This inquiry may include reviewing relevant documents, communicating with the complainant, communicating with the respondent, and any other inquiry to determine whether a full investigation is warranted.

1. Whistleblower Retaliation Complaint Timeframes and Report to Commission

- (a) Ethics Commission Staff will initiate a preliminary review of any complaint it receives that alleges retaliation under Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code,

Article IV, Chapter 1, § 4.100, *et seq.* within two business days of receiving the complaint, and will work to complete the preliminary review within 90 days of receipt.

- (b) No less than quarterly, the Executive Director shall provide a summary to the Commission of the status of all complaints received that allege Whistleblower retaliation that remain under preliminary review, and for matters that have been pending for over 90 days, an explanation for why the Ethics Commission Staff has not completed the preliminary review and a target date for its completion.
- (c) Ethics Commission Staff will notify any complainant who has alleged retaliation under Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code, Article IV, Chapter 1, § 4.100, *et seq.* and whose complaint remains under preliminary review 90 days after receipt of that complaint that it remains under preliminary review. Subsequent notice shall be provided to the complainant at the end of every additional 90 days that the complaint remains under preliminary review. Ethics Commission Staff providing such notification may not provide any details about its preliminary review, except as necessary to conduct the investigation.

B. Dismissal of Complaint. Based on the allegations and information contained in a complaint, and the Executive Director's preliminary review, the Executive Director may dismiss the complaint if the allegations do not warrant further action for reasons that may include, but are not limited to:

1. Credible evidence clearly refutes the allegations.
2. The allegations, if true, do not constitute a violation of law within the Commission's jurisdiction.
3. The complaint contains an expression of opinions, rather than specific allegations.
4. The allegations contained in the complaint are already under investigation, or already have been resolved, by the Commission or another law enforcement agency.

If the Executive Director dismisses a complaint under this section, the Executive Director shall take no further action on the complaint, except that he or she may: 1) inform the complainant of the Executive Director's decision; 2) at his or her discretion, issue a warning letter to the respondent; or 3) at his or her discretion, refer the complaint to another agency for its appropriate action.

The Executive Director shall provide a monthly summary to the Commission of each complaint dismissed, including the reasons for dismissal, provided that such information shall comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Charter.

C. There is Reason to Believe a Violation May Have Occurred. If, based on the allegations and information contained in a complaint, and the Executive Director's preliminary review, the Executive Director determines that there is reason to believe that a violation of law may have occurred, the Executive Director shall immediately forward the complaint to the District Attorney and the City Attorney.

Within ten business days after receipt of the complaint, the District Attorney and City Attorney shall inform the Commission whether the District Attorney or City Attorney has initiated or intends to pursue an investigation of the complaint.

If neither the District Attorney nor City Attorney intends to pursue an investigation, the Executive Director shall, within 14 days of such notification, inform the complainant in writing of the action, if any, that he or she has taken or plans to take on the complaint, together with the reasons for such action or non-action. If the Executive Director has not informed the complainant of the action that he or she has taken or plans to take on the complaint within 14 days, the complainant shall be notified of the reasons for the delay and shall subsequently receive notification as provided above.

V. CONDUCT OF INVESTIGATIONS

A. Factual Investigation. The Executive Director's investigation may include, but shall not be limited to, the interview of the respondent(s) and any witnesses, the deposition of respondent(s) and/or witnesses, and the review of documentary and other evidence.

B. Subpoenas. During an investigation, the Executive Director may compel by subpoena the testimony of witnesses and the production of documents relevant to the investigation.

VI. DETERMINATION THAT THERE IS NOT PROBABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE A VIOLATION OF LAW HAS OCCURRED

A. Executive Director Determination and Calendaring. If the Executive Director determines that there is not probable cause to believe that a violation of law has occurred, the Executive Director shall inform the Commission of that determination and provide clear and concise reasons supporting that determination. Thereafter any member of the Commission may cause the item to be calendared for consideration by the full Commission in a closed session at the next Commission meeting held no sooner than ten days after the date the Executive Director informs the Commission of the Executive Director's determination. A Commissioner's request that a complaint be calendared for consideration by the full Commission must be received by the Executive Director not less than five days prior to the date of the meeting, so that the Executive Director may comply with the applicable notice and agenda requirements.

B. Commission Decision Not to Dismiss. If the matter is calendared for consideration by the Commission, and if the Commission decides that there is reason to believe that a violation of law may have occurred, the Commission shall direct the

Executive Director either to investigate the matter further or to prepare a probable cause report and schedule a probable cause hearing.

C. Commission Decision to Dismiss. If the matter is calendared for consideration by the Commission, and if the Commission decides that there is not reason to believe that a violation of law may have occurred, the Commission shall take no further action on the complaint other than: 1) inform the complainant and respondent of the Commission's decision; 2) at the Commission's discretion, issue a warning letter to the respondent; or 3) at the Commission's discretion, refer the complaint to another agency for its appropriate action.

D. Commission Decision Not to Calendar. If the Executive Director determines that there is not probable cause to believe that a violation of law has occurred, and if after the Executive Director informs the Commission of the determination the Commission does not calendar the matter for consideration pursuant to section VI(A), the Executive Director shall take no further action except that he or she may: 1) inform the complainant and respondent of the Executive Director's decision; 2) at his or her discretion, issue a warning letter to the respondent; or 3) at his or her discretion, refer the complaint to another agency for its appropriate action.

VII. RECOMMENDATION THAT THERE IS PROBABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE A VIOLATION OF LAW HAS OCCURRED

A. Probable Cause Report. When the Executive Director determines there is probable cause to believe a violation of law has occurred, the Executive Director shall prepare a written "probable cause report" and schedule a probable cause hearing. The probable cause report shall contain a summary of the laws that the Executive Director believes the respondent(s) violated and evidence gathered through the investigation, including any exculpatory and mitigating information. In the probable cause report, the Executive Director may present statements including hearsay, declarations of investigators or others relating to the statements of witnesses, or the examination of physical evidence. Unless otherwise permitted by the Commission Chair or the Commission Chair's designee for good cause shown, the probable cause report shall not exceed 25 pages excluding attachments.

B. Delivery of Probable Cause Report and Notice of Probable Cause Hearing. The Executive Director shall deliver to each respondent a copy of the probable cause report, with written notice of the date, time and location of the probable cause hearing, at least 45 days in advance of the hearing date. The notice shall inform each respondent that he or she has the right to be present and represented by counsel at the probable cause hearing.

C. Response to the Probable Cause Report.

1. Each respondent may submit a written response to the probable cause report. The response may contain legal arguments, a summary of evidence, and any mitigating or exculpatory information. Unless otherwise permitted by the Commission Chair or the

Commission Chair's designee for good cause shown, the response shall not exceed 25 pages excluding attachments.

2. Each respondent who submits a response must deliver the response no later than 20 days prior to the date of the probable cause hearing. Unless the parties agree to deliver materials by email, the respondent must deliver a total of eight copies of the response to the Executive Director. The Executive Director must then immediately distribute copies of the response to the Commission. The respondent must also deliver one copy of the response to every other respondent named in the probable cause report.

D. Rebuttal . The Executive Director may submit evidence or argument in rebuttal to a response. If the Executive Director chooses to do so the Executive Director must deliver the rebuttal to the Commission and each respondent named in the probable cause report no later than seven days prior to the date of the probable cause hearing. Unless otherwise permitted by the Commission Chair or the Commission Chair's designee for good cause shown, the rebuttal shall not exceed ten pages excluding attachments.

VIII. PROBABLE CAUSE HEARING; DETERMINATION OF WHETHER AND HOW TO PROCEED WITH A HEARING ON THE MERITS

A. General Rules and Procedures.

1. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, the Commission shall sit as a hearing panel to conduct the probable cause hearing. The Commission may assign one of its members to conduct the probable cause hearing and submit a report and recommendation to the Commission.

2. The hearing shall be closed to the public to the extent permitted by state law, unless the respondent requests that the probable cause hearing be held in public.

3. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, formal rules of evidence shall not apply to the probable cause hearing. Neither the Executive Director nor the respondent(s) may present live witness testimony at the probable cause hearing.

4. The Commission may find that there is probable cause to believe a violation of law has occurred only if a person of ordinary caution and prudence would conclude, based on the evidence, that there is a reasonable ground to suspect that the respondent has committed the violation.

B. Probable Cause Determination.

1. If the Commission as a whole conducts the probable cause hearing, the Commission shall make the probable cause determination no later than 45 days after the date the hearing is concluded. If the Commission assigns one of its members to conduct the probable cause hearing, the assigned member shall submit a report and

recommendation to the Commission no later than 30 days after the date the hearing concludes, and the Commission shall make the probable cause determination no later than 45 days after the assigned member delivers his or her report and recommendation.

2. A determination that there is probable cause to believe that a violation of law has occurred shall be based on the entire record of the proceedings. Each Commissioner who participates in the decision shall certify on the record that he or she personally heard or read the testimony (either in person or by listening to a tape or reading the transcript prepared by a court reporter) and reviewed the evidence, or otherwise reviewed the entire record.

3. The Commission shall not make a finding of probable cause if it is presented with clear and convincing evidence that, prior to the alleged violation:

(a) the respondent had requested and obtained a written opinion from the Commission;

(b) the respondent, in requesting the opinion, disclosed truthfully all the material facts pertinent to the case;

(c) the Commission or its staff issued a formal, written opinion with which both the District Attorney and City Attorney concurred; and

(d) the respondent committed the acts or violations alleged in the complaint in good-faith reliance upon the formal, written opinion of the Commission.

4. If the Commission determines that there is not probable cause to believe a violation has occurred, the Commission shall dismiss the complaint and take no further action on the complaint, except: 1) inform the complainant and each respondent of the Commission's decision; 2) at the Commission's discretion, issue a warning letter to the respondent; or 3) at the Commission's discretion, refer the complaint to another agency for its appropriate action.

5. If the Commission determines that there is probable cause to believe a violation of law has occurred, the Commission shall announce its determination in open session. The announcement shall contain a summary of the allegations for which the Commission determines there is probable cause to believe a violation of law has occurred and a cautionary statement that each respondent is presumed to be innocent unless and until such time that the allegations are proved in a subsequent hearing on the merits.

C. Determination How to Proceed with Hearing on Merits.

1. Following a determination of probable cause by the Commission, the Commission shall proceed with a hearing on the merits of the complaint. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, the Commission shall sit as the hearing panel to hear the merits of the case. The Commission may also sit as the hearing panel to hear the case, with an outside

hearing officer presiding, or designate an individual Commissioner or an outside hearing officer to hear the case and file a report and recommendation for decision by the Commission.

2. The Commission shall provide for resolution of preliminary matters in advance of the hearing on the merits. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, the Commission Chair shall hear and decide preliminary matters pursuant to Section X, subsection B. The Commission alternatively may designate an individual Commissioner or an outside hearing officer to hear and decide preliminary matters.

3. The Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to decide preliminary matters shall also be authorized to provide for the issuance of subpoenas.

D. Amending Probable Cause Determination.

Before the Executive Director has scheduled the hearing on the merits, or no later than 60 days prior to the date the hearing on the merits is scheduled to commence, the Executive Director may request that the Commission amend the probable cause determination to add or amend allegations or charges against the respondent. If the Executive Director seeks to amend the probable cause determination, the Executive Director, the respondent(s) and the Commission shall follow the procedures set forth in Sections VII and VIII, and the Executive Director shall issue an amended accusation and notice of the hearing on the merits following the procedures set forth in Section IX.

IX. ISSUANCE OF ACCUSATION; SCHEDULING AND NOTICE OF HEARING ON MERITS

A. Issuance of Accusation.

Except as provided in Section XI, following a determination of probable cause by the Commission, the Executive Director shall issue an accusation. The accusation shall clearly specify the provisions of the laws that each respondent allegedly violated and shall set forth the acts or omissions with which each respondent is charged. The accusation shall list only those charges for which the Commission made a determination of probable cause. The Executive Director shall deliver a copy of the accusation to each respondent ten days after the Commission's probable cause determination. The accusation is a public document.

The Executive Director shall present the case in support of the accusation at the hearing on the merits. The accusation shall be the charging document for the purpose of the hearing on the merits. The commission shall not find that any respondent has committed a violation of law if the accusation does not allege such a violation and provide the respondent notice of the basis for the allegation.

B. Scheduling and Notice of Hearing on Merits.

The Executive Director shall schedule the hearing on the merits, and deliver written notice of the date, time and location of the commencement of the hearing to each respondent at least 45 days prior to the commencement of the hearing. The notice shall be in substantially the following form:

“You are hereby notified that a hearing will be held before the Ethics Commission (or name of hearing officer or assigned Commissioner) at ___ on the ___ day of ___, 20___, at the hour of ___, at (location of _____), upon the charges made in the accusation. You may be present at the hearing, may, but need not, be represented by counsel, may present any relevant evidence, and will be given an opportunity to cross-examine all witnesses testifying against you. You may request the issuance of subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and the production of books, documents or other things by applying to the Commission on or before (date).”

X. DISCOVERY; HEARING BRIEFS; PRELIMINARY MATTERS.

A. Discovery. The Executive Director and each respondent shall be entitled to pre-hearing discovery in accordance with the provisions of California Administrative Procedure Act, Government Code, Title 2, Division 3, Part 1, Chapter 5, section 11500 et seq.

B. Resolution of Preliminary and Procedural Matters.

1. The Executive Director and any respondent may present preliminary matters, unrelated to the merits of the accusation, to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer designated to hear such matters pursuant to Section VIII, subsection C(2). Preliminary matters may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) procedural matters;
- (b) disqualification of any member of the Commission from participation in the hearing on the merits;
- (c) requests for dismissal of any charges in the accusation because, even if the allegations set forth in the accusation are true, those charges do not state a violation of law as alleged;
- (d) discovery motions; and
- (e) any other matters not related to the truth or falsity of the factual allegations in the accusation.

2. A request for resolution of preliminary matters must be delivered to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer no later than 25 days prior to the commencement of a hearing on the merits. At the same time that the request is delivered to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer, the requester must deliver copies of the request to the Executive Director and every other respondent named in the accusation.
3. The request for resolution of preliminary matters may contain legal arguments and a summary of the facts underlying the request. Unless otherwise permitted by the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer for good cause shown, the request shall not exceed 15 pages excluding attachments.
4. The Executive Director or each respondent may submit a written opposition to a request for resolution of preliminary matters. The opposition must be delivered to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer no later than ten days after the date of delivery of the request. At the same time that the opposition is delivered to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer, the party submitting the opposition must deliver copies of the opposition to the Executive Director and every other respondent named in the accusation. Unless otherwise permitted by the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer for good cause shown, the opposition shall not exceed ten pages excluding attachments.
5. The requestor may submit a written reply to an opposition. The reply must be delivered to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer no later than five days after the date of delivery of the opposition. At the same time that the reply is delivered to the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer, the party submitting the reply must deliver copies of the reply to the Executive Director and every other respondent named in the accusation. Unless otherwise permitted by the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer for good cause shown, the reply shall not exceed five pages excluding attachments.
6. The assigned Commissioner or hearing officer shall issue a written decision on each request for resolution of preliminary matters no later than five days prior to the commencement of the hearing on the merits.
7. The Executive Director or any respondent may submit a written request for reconsideration, by the Commission, assigned Commissioner or hearing officer who will conduct the hearing on the merits, of any decision made on preliminary matters. A party requesting reconsideration shall deliver the request on the Commission, assigned Commissioner or hearing officer, and the Executive Director and any other respondent, no less than three days prior to the hearing on the merits.
8. Before or during the hearing on the merits, the Executive Director and any respondent may file a request for resolution of a procedural matter affecting the conduct of the hearing. This request shall be directed to the Commissioner or hearing officer designated to hear preliminary matters pursuant to Section VIII, subsection C(2). The request shall follow the process outlined by paragraphs 2 through 5 of this section, except that the request may be submitted later than 25 days prior to the commencement of the

hearing on the merits but may not be submitted after the conclusion of the hearing on the merits. If either party requests a written decision, the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer shall issue a written decision no later than 20 days after the date of the request.

C. Hearing Briefs.

The Executive Director shall, and any respondent may, submit a hearing brief. The brief shall outline significant legal arguments and list evidence and witnesses to be presented at the hearing. The brief is not required to list anticipated rebuttal evidence or rebuttal witnesses. Unless the Commission or outside hearing officer agrees to accept briefs by email, six copies of the brief shall be delivered to the Commission, assigned Commissioner, or outside hearing officer no later than 20 days prior to the date the hearing on the merits commences. The Executive Director shall deliver a copy of the Executive Director's brief to each respondent named in the accusation. Each respondent who chooses to submit a brief shall deliver copies of the respondent's brief to the Executive Director and to every other respondent named in the accusation.

D. Issuance of Hearing Subpoenas.

The Executive Director and any respondent named in the accusation may request the issuance of subpoenas for the attendance of witnesses and for the production of documents at the hearing on the merits. Requests for the issuance of subpoenas should be delivered no later than 20 days prior to the commencement of the hearing on the merits. The request shall be accompanied by a declaration specifying the name and address of the witnesses and setting forth the materiality of their testimony. If the request is for a document subpoena, it shall be accompanied by a declaration which includes the following information: a specific description of the documents sought; an explanation of why the documents are necessary for the resolution of the complaint; and the name and address of the witness who has possession or control of the documents. Subpoenas may be issued upon approval of the Commission or the Commissioner or hearing officer designated by Section VIII, subsection C(2).

XI. DISCOVERY OF EXCULPATORY INFORMATION AND DISMISSAL OF COMPLAINT PRIOR TO HEARING ON THE MERITS

A. Discovery of Exculpatory Information. Following the delivery of the probable cause report, if the Executive Director is aware of or discovers any exculpatory information with respect to any charge listed in the accusation, the Executive Director shall notify the Commission and the respondent(s) of this information.

B. Dismissal Recommendation. After a determination of probable cause and before a hearing on the merits, the Executive Director may recommend that the Commission dismiss the complaint. The Executive Director may make such a recommendation based on the Executive Director's discovery of exculpatory information or other good cause. In such situations, if he or she has not done so already, the Executive Director is not

required to issue an accusation and the Commission need not hold a hearing on the merits, unless the Commission overrides the Executive Director's dismissal recommendation.

C. Commission Consideration of Dismissal Recommendation. The Executive Director shall present the dismissal recommendation and the reasons for the recommendation to the Commission in a public memorandum. Thereafter, any member of the Commission may cause the complaint to be calendared for consideration by the full Commission in open session at the next Commission meeting occurring no sooner than ten days from the date the Executive Director informs the Commission of the Executive Director's recommendation. A Commissioner's request that a complaint be calendared must be received by the Executive Director no fewer than five days prior to the date of the meeting, so that the Executive Director may comply with the applicable notice and agenda requirements. If members of the Commission do not cause the complaint to be calendared, or if in open session a majority of the Commission does not vote to override the dismissal recommendation, the Commission shall take no further action on the complaint except: 1) inform the complainant and each respondent of the Commission's decision; 2) at the Commission's discretion, issue a warning letter to the respondent; or 3) at the Commission's discretion, refer the complaint to another agency for appropriate action.

D. Dismissal or Removal of Specific Charges. After a determination of probable cause and before a hearing on the merits, the Executive Director may decide not to proceed with a specific charge listed in the accusation. If the Executive Director makes such a determination, the Executive Director shall immediately notify in writing the respondent(s) and the Commission or hearing officer. If the Executive Director provides such notice, the Commission shall not find a violation based on the specific charge or violation after a hearing on the merits.

XII. HEARING ON THE MERITS

A. General Rules and Procedures.

1. Public Hearing

The hearing on the merits shall be open to the public, provided that either the Executive Director or the respondent(s) may request that the Commission, assigned Commissioner or hearing officer exclude any witnesses.

2. Standard of Proof

The Commission may determine that a respondent has committed a violation of law only if a person of ordinary caution and prudence would conclude, based on a preponderance of the evidence, that the respondent has committed the violation.

3. Rules of Evidence

All evidence admissible in an administrative proceeding governed by the California Administrative Procedure Act shall be admissible in a hearing on the merits. The Executive Director and each respondent shall have the right to call and examine witnesses under oath or affirmation, to introduce exhibits, to cross-examine and impeach witnesses, and to rebut any evidence presented.

4. Exhibits

Where both parties stipulate to the admissibility of an exhibit, the parties shall so advise the Commission in advance of the hearing. For all other exhibits, each party may move to admit a particular exhibit at the hearing, and the other party shall have an opportunity to object prior to the ruling on the admission.

5. Witnesses

Witnesses shall be examined by the parties as follows: direct examination, cross-examination, re-direct. After the parties have concluded their examination of a witness, Commissioners shall have an opportunity to pose questions to the witness.

6. Oral Argument

At the hearing, the Executive Director and each respondent shall be allowed oral argument. The Commission, assigned Commissioner, or hearing officer shall determine the appropriate length for the arguments.

B. Finding of Violation.

If the Commission as a whole conducts the hearing on the merits, the Commission shall determine, no later than 45 days after the date the hearing is concluded, whether the respondent has committed a violation of law. If the Commission assigns one of its members or an outside hearing officer to conduct the hearing on the merits, the assigned member or hearing officer shall submit a report and recommendation to the Commission no later than 30 days after the date the hearing is concluded. Thereafter, the Commission shall determine, no later than 45 days after the date the report and recommendation is delivered, whether the respondent has committed a violation of law.

The votes of at least three Commissioners are required to find a violation of law. The finding of a violation shall be supported by findings of fact and conclusions of law and shall be based on the entire record of the proceedings. Each Commissioner who participates in the decision shall certify on the record that he or she personally heard the testimony (either in person or by listening to a tape or recording of the proceeding) and reviewed the evidence, or otherwise reviewed the entire record of the proceedings.

C. Administrative Orders and Penalties.

1. The votes of at least three Commissioners are required to impose orders and penalties for a violation. The Commission may issue orders and penalties requiring the respondent(s) to:

(a) cease and desist the violation;

(b) file any reports, statements or other documents or information required by law; and/or

(c) pay a monetary penalty to the general fund of the City in an amount permitted under the law that the Commission finds the respondent has violated, or, if the law does not specify the amount of the monetary penalty, in an amount up to five thousand dollars (\$5,000) for each violation, or three times the amount which the respondent failed to report properly or unlawfully contributed, expended, gave or received, whichever is greater.

2. When deciding on an order and penalties, the Commission shall consider all the relevant circumstances surrounding the case, including but not limited to:

(a) the severity of the violation;

(b) the presence or absence of any intention to conceal, deceive, or mislead;

(c) whether the violation was deliberate, negligent or inadvertent;

(d) whether the violation was an isolated incident or part of a pattern;

(e) whether the respondent has a prior record of violations of law; and

(f) the degree to which the respondent cooperated with the investigation and demonstrated a willingness to remedy any violations.

3. Unless otherwise ordered by the Commission, any penalties imposed by the Commission must be paid in full by the respondent within 90 days of the Commission's decision.

D. Finding of No Violation.

If the Commission determines that there is insufficient evidence to establish that the respondent has committed a violation, or if the Commission determines that there is sufficient evidence to establish that the respondent has not committed a violation, the Commission shall publicly announce this fact. Thereafter, the Commission shall take no further action on the complaint. The Executive Director shall inform each respondent and complainant of the Commission's determination.

XIII. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

A. Ex Parte Communications.

Once a complaint is filed, no Commissioner or staff member shall engage in oral or written communications outside of a Commission meeting, interview or settlement conference regarding the merits of an enforcement action with the respondent or complainant or any person communicating on behalf of the respondent or complainant unless the communication is necessary for the conduct of the investigation or enforcement action.

B. Access to Complaints and Related Documents and Deliberations.

1. No complaint, response thereto, investigative file or information contained therein, or Commissioner and staff deliberations about complaints shall be disclosed except as necessary to the conduct of an investigation, prior to a probable cause determination.

2. After a determination of probable cause, the probable report, the response, and the rebuttal shall be confidential, unless the respondent requested that the probable cause hearing be public. All investigative documents, including notes and memoranda, created prior to the probable cause determination, such as the complaint, shall remain confidential, except that the Executive Director may provide a copy of the complaint to the respondent(s) if the Executive Director determines that disclosure is necessary to the conduct of the investigation. All investigative documents, including notes and memoranda, created by the Executive Director and his or her staff after the probable cause determination shall be confidential, except for the accusation, until any such documents are either delivered to the Commission or respondent(s), introduced as evidence or an exhibit, or distributed for public consumption, such as an agenda or press release.

3. In addition to the prohibition on ex parte communications stated in Section XIII, subsection A, except at a public meeting of the Commission, Commissioners are prohibited, prior to a final determination on the merits of a complaint, from engaging in oral or written communications regarding the merits of a complaint or enforcement action with any person or entity unless the communication is necessary for the conduct of the investigation or enforcement action. After a final determination on the merits of a complaint, Commissioners may discuss matters in the public record.

C. Oaths and Affirmations.

The Commission, and individual Commissioners and hearing officers assigned to conduct hearings, may administer oaths and affirmations.

D. Selection of Designee by the Executive Director.

Whenever the Executive Director designates an individual other than a member of the Commission staff to perform a duty arising from the Charter or these Regulations, the

Executive Director shall notify the Commission of the designation no later than the next business day.

E. Powers and Duties of Hearing Officers.

1. Unless otherwise provided, whenever the Commission assigns an individual Commissioner or hearing officer to hear any matter under these Regulations, the assigned Commissioner or hearing officer shall have the same authority, and be subject to the same restrictions, as the Commission.

2. When an individual Commissioner or a hearing officer is assigned to hear and decide preliminary matters in advance of a hearing on the merits, he or she shall make an actual determination. This determination may be reviewed by the Commission upon request by the Executive Director or a respondent, pursuant to the procedures specified in Section X, subsection B(7).

3. When an individual Commissioner or a hearing officer is assigned to conduct a probable cause hearing or hearing on the merits, he or she shall submit a report and recommendation for decision by the Commission. The report and recommendation shall contain proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. Copies of the report and recommendation shall be delivered to the Commission, Executive Director, and each respondent no later than 30 days after the date the hearing is concluded. Thereafter, the Executive Director shall calendar the matter for consideration at the next Commission meeting not less than 15 days after the date the report and recommendation is delivered to the Commission.

4. When the Commission sits as the hearing panel to hear a case, with an outside hearing officer presiding, the hearing officer shall rule on procedural matters and on the admission and exclusion of evidence only, and shall have no role in the decision on the merits.

F. Statute of Limitations.

1. Unless otherwise stated in local or State law, for statute of limitations purposes, an action or proceeding for administrative penalties is brought or commenced by the Executive Director on the date the Executive Director delivers the probable cause report.

2. If there is no statute of limitations for violations of the law allegedly violated, the probable cause report must be delivered within four years of the date of events which form the basis of the complaint, or the date that the events constituting the basis of the complaint were discovered by the Ethics Commission, whichever is later.

G. Extensions of Time and Continuances.

Whenever the Executive Director, a respondent, or a witness is required to complete an act or produce materials pursuant to these Regulations, that party may request an

extension of time. Requests for extensions of time may be made to the Commission Chair or the Commission Chair's designee. The requester must deliver the request to the Commission Chair or designee and provide a copy of the request to all other parties no later than ten business days before the deadline to complete an act or produce materials. The Commission Chair or designee shall have the discretion to consider untimely requests. The Commission Chair or designee shall approve or deny the request within five business days of the submission of the request. The Commission Chair or designee may grant the request only upon a showing of good cause.

The Executive Director or any respondent may request the continuance of a hearing date. The requester must deliver the request to the Commission Chair or the individual Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to hold the hearing, and provide a copy of the request to all other parties no later than ten business days before the date of the hearing. The Commission Chair or the individual Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to hold the hearing shall have the discretion to consider untimely requests.

The Commission Chair or the individual Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to hold the hearing shall approve or deny the request within five working days of the submission of the request. The Commission Chair or the individual Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to hold the hearing may grant the request only upon a showing of good cause.

H. Referrals to Other Enforcement Agencies.

At any time after the filing of a complaint, the Commission or Executive Director may refer the matter to another government agency or official if the Commission or Executive Director determines that the agency or official may more appropriately resolve the allegations in the complaint or enforce the applicable provisions of law. A copy of all information gathered by the Commission staff shall be sent to the agency or official together with the referral.

A determination by the Executive Director or the Commission that no further action should be taken on a matter shall not prevent any other government agency from initiating its own enforcement action, including disciplinary action, based on the same allegations and facts.

I. Recordings and Transcripts.

Every probable cause hearing and hearing on the merits shall be tape-recorded. Where the Commission assigns a Commissioner to conduct a probable cause hearing, and where the Commission assigns a Commissioner or hearing officer to conduct a hearing on the merits, the hearing shall also be recorded stenographically. The Commission shall retain the tapes until the opportunity for legal challenge has been exhausted. Copies of a tape shall be available to the respondent upon request.

J. Place of Delivery.

1. Whenever these Regulations require delivery to the Commission, its members, or the Executive Director, delivery shall be effected at the Commission office.

2. Whenever these regulations require delivery to a respondent or his or her committee, delivery shall be effective and sufficient if made by U.S. mail, personal delivery or any other means of delivery agreed upon by the parties under section II, subsection F, to:

a. If the respondent is a City employee, to the address listed with the (Controller/ Payroll) as the employee's current address.

b. If the respondent is a former City employee, to the address listed with the City's retirement system.

c. If the respondent is a current or former candidate or committee registered with the Ethics Commission, to the address provided to the Ethics Commission by that candidate or committee.

d. If subsections (a) through (c) are not applicable, to an address reasonably calculated to give notice to and reach the respondent.

It is the responsibility of City employees, or candidates or committees who file reports with the Ethics Commission, to maintain accurate addresses with relevant City Departments. The Executive Director therefore may rely on those addresses in carrying out the objectives of the Commission.

3. Delivery is effective upon the date of delivery, not the date of receipt.

K. Page Limitations and Format Requirements.

Whenever these Regulations impose a page limitation, a “page” means one side of an 8½ inch by 11 inch page, with margins of at least one inch at the left, right, top and bottom of the page, typewritten and double-spaced in no smaller than 12 point type. Each page and any attachments shall be consecutively numbered.

L. Public Summary of Dismissed Complaints.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these regulations, the Executive Director may provide a public summary of dismissed complaints. Such summary may include, but need not be limited to, a generic description of each dismissed complaint and a summary of the reasons for dismissal, provided that such information shall comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Charter.

M. Conclusion of Hearing on the Merits.

For the purposes of these Regulations, a hearing on the merits concludes on the last date on which the Commission hears argument or testimony in the proceeding.

XIV. STIPULATED ORDERS

A. At any time after the Commission takes jurisdiction over a complaint, the Executive Director may enter into negotiations with a respondent for the purpose of resolving the factual and legal allegations in a complaint by way of a stipulation, decision and order. Any proposed stipulation, decision and order shall explicitly state that:

- (1) the proposed stipulation, decision and order is subject to approval by the Commission;
- (2) the respondent knowingly and voluntarily waives any and all procedural rights under the law and these Regulations;
- (3) the respondent understands and acknowledges that the stipulation is not binding on any other law enforcement agency, and does not preclude the Commission or its staff from referring the matter to, cooperating with, or assisting any other government agency with regard to the matter, or any other matter related to it;
- (4) the respondent agrees that in the event the Commission refuses to approve the proposed stipulation, it shall become null and void; and
- (5) in the event the Commission rejects the proposed stipulation and a full evidentiary hearing before the Commission becomes necessary, no member of the Commission shall be disqualified because of prior consideration of the stipulation.

B. The stipulated order shall set forth the pertinent facts and may include an agreement as to anything that could be ordered by the Commission under its authority pursuant to Charter section C3.699-13.

C. Once the Executive Director enters into a stipulated agreement with a respondent, the Executive Director shall inform the Commission of this stipulation. Thereafter, any member of the Commission may cause the stipulation to be calendared for consideration by the full Commission in a closed session at the next Commission meeting occurring no sooner than ten days from the date the Executive Director informs the Commission of the stipulated agreement. A Commissioners' request that a stipulated agreement be calendared for consideration by the full Commission must be received by the Executive Director no fewer than five days prior to the date of the meeting, so that the Executive Director may comply with the applicable notice and agenda requirements.

D. Stipulated orders must be approved by the Commission and, upon approval, must be announced publicly. The stipulated order shall have the full force of an order of the Commission.

XV. SEVERABILITY

If any provision of these Regulations, or the application thereof to any person or circumstance, is held invalid, the validity of the remainder of the Regulations and the applicability of such provisions to other persons and circumstances shall not be affected thereby.