



ETHICS COMMISSION

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

PETER KEANE
CHAIRPERSON

Date: January 16, 2018

To: Members of the Ethics Commission

DANA CHIU
VICE-CHAIRPERSON

From: LeeAnn Pelham, Executive Director
Jessica Blome, Deputy Director, Enforcement & Legal Affairs

PAUL A. RENNE
COMMISSIONER

Re: **AGENDA ITEM 5 – Proposed Revision of Enforcement and
Sunshine Ordinance Regulations**

QUENTIN L. KOPP
COMMISSIONER

YVONNE LEE
COMMISSIONER

Summary Staff presents for the Commission's consideration and action a revised set of consolidated Enforcement Regulations

LEEANN PELHAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Action Requested That the Commission vote to repeal the Ethics Commission Regulations for Handling Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance (Jan. 25, 2013) and to replace the Commission's Enforcement Regulations (July 5, 1997) with the revised consolidated Enforcement Regulations attached as Exhibit A.

Legal Authority

The Charter provides that the Commission may adopt rules and regulations related to carrying out the purposes and provisions of San Francisco law related to campaign finance, conflicts of interest, lobbying, campaign consultants, governmental ethics, open meetings, and public records. S.F. Charter § 15.102. Exercising this authority, the Ethics Commission first adopted the Ethics Commission Regulations for Handling Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings on July 5, 1997. These Enforcement Regulations govern the Commission's enforcement procedures when carrying out its duties pursuant to S.F. Charter Section C3-699-13. The Commission's existing Enforcement Regulations are attached as Exhibit B. On January 25, 2013, the Commission adopted its Regulations for Handling Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance, bifurcating the processes Staff must use for investigating allegations of wrongdoing that involve open meetings and public records. The Commission's existing Regulations for Handling Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance are attached as Exhibit C.

Updates to Regulations after the Ethics Commission's December 18, 2017, Meeting

At its December 18, 2017 meeting, the Ethics Commission considered a final draft of Staff's proposed consolidated Enforcement Regulations and advised Staff to revise the regulations so that complainants and respondents could reserve some of their allotted speaking time for rebuttal. See Section 10(B)(1)(iii). Staff made the requested change, which is reflected in the regulations attached to this memorandum.

In addition, Staff has received advice from the City Attorney's Office that a proposed provision giving the Ethics Commission authority to impose administrative penalties against city

employees who violate the Sunshine Ordinance is subject to meet and confer with the City's bargaining units before it can be added as a Commission regulation. *See* Section 10(B)(1)(v). Accordingly, Staff has removed that provision from the pending regulations so that Staff can engage with the City's labor unions regarding a new policy that will impact employee rights and responsibilities. Staff will bring this proposal to the Commission for action at a future meeting once the meet and confer process has concluded.

Proposed Action for the Ethics Commission's January 19, 2018, Meeting

At the Commission's Friday, January 19, 2018, meeting, Staff requests that the Commission formally repeal its Ethics Commission Regulations for Handling Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance (Jan. 25, 2013). *See* Exhibit C. Staff has incorporated the relevant procedures from those regulations into its proposed new, consolidated Enforcement Regulations, so separate regulations are no longer needed. Staff then requests that the Commission formally adopt the comprehensive revision to the Ethics Commission's Enforcement Regulations in totality, as set forth in the attached Exhibit A.

If adopted by the Commission, Staff will transmit the proposed Enforcement Regulations as set forth in Exhibit A to the Board of Supervisors, which has sixty days to request modification or approve of the regulations as presented. *See* S.F. Charter section 15.102.

The Enforcement Regulations as proposed in Exhibit A reflect changes recommended by Staff to make the regulations and the processes they govern more fair, clear, transparent, and efficient. To summarize, the revised set of Enforcement Regulations will:

1. Delegate responsibility for conducting probable cause conferences and making probable cause determinations from the Ethics Commission to the Executive Director, to increase due process protections for respondents by preserving the neutrality of Commissioners for a hearing on the merits;
2. Delegate responsibility to conduct investigations from the Executive Director to the Deputy Director for Enforcement, to increase due process protections for respondents by preserving the Executive Director's neutrality for making probable cause determinations;
3. Use the Executive Director's written determination of a Finding of Probable Cause as the charging document for administrative hearing purposes instead of creating a duplicative Accusation document for that purpose, a streamlining procedure designed to increase efficiency and promote more timely enforcement proceedings;
4. Require the Ethics Commission to consider proposed settlement agreements in public session and allow for certain stipulations to be heard by consent calendar, to increase the transparency and efficiency of the Commission's case resolution processes;
5. Combine portions of the Ethics Commission Regulations for Handling Violations of the Sunshine Ordinance with the Enforcement Regulations, while preserving the integrity of both the authority and jurisdictional responsibilities of the Ethics Commission and Sunshine Ordinance Task Force under the City's Sunshine Ordinance, to increase efficiency in the conduct of investigations, clarify jurisdiction, and strengthen collaboration between the Commission and the Task Force;
6. Permit the Commission to enter Default Orders when respondents fail to meet their obligation to participate in an enforcement action, to increase efficiency and promote just outcomes;

7. Codify Commission policy to waive late filing fees for filing deadlines that fall on weekends and City holidays and amend the late filing fee waiver policy to reflect the requirements of the enabling ordinances, to increase fairness.

Staff's Response to Recent Public Comment

Staff met with Sunshine Ordinance Task Force (SOTF) Chair Bruce Wolfe and Member Leuwam Tesfai on January 2, 2018, to further discuss the SOTF's request that the Commission convert its Show Cause Hearing to a Sentencing Hearing. Specifically, the SOTF asks that the Commission prohibit itself from evaluating either the SOTF's findings of facts *or* conclusions of law as presented in an SOTF referral to the Commission for enforcement of the Sunshine Ordinance. Staff explained to Chair Wolfe and Member Tesfai that the Sunshine Ordinance does not give the Commission authority to delegate to the SOTF its responsibility to interpret and implement the Sunshine Ordinance through the enforcement process (San. Fran. Admin. Code § 67.35) or rulemaking process (San. Fran. Charter § 15.102)^[1]. Staff also relayed to Chair Wolfe the Commission's request that he submit the SOTF's position on this issue in writing for the January 19, 2018 meeting.

Staff looks forward to answering any questions the Commission may have about its process or the substance of the new Enforcement Regulations at the January meeting.

^[1] San Francisco Charter section 15.102 grants the Ethics Commission authority to adopt regulations "relating to carrying out the purposes and provisions of ordinances regarding open meetings and public records."



San Francisco Ethics Commission

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Enforcement Regulations¹

Section 1. Preamble

The San Francisco Ethics Commission adopts the following regulations applicable to the Commission's enforcement authority as granted by the San Francisco City Charter and Municipal Code.

- A. Purpose. These regulations are intended to ensure the fair, just, and timely review, investigation, and hearing of complaints presented to the Commission by doing the following:
 - 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 violations of laws within the Commission's jurisdiction;
 - 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. Providing a fair hearing for persons and entities accused of violations;
 - 5. Ensuring timely enforcement and complaint resolution;
 - 6. Coordinating and sharing with other governmental agencies the responsibility for investigations and prosecutions of complaints, whenever consistent with the interests of justice; and
 - 7. Delegating to the Commission staff maximum discretion in the handling and resolution of complaints at staff level, while retaining oversight of those staff activities.
- B. Enforcement Authority. These regulations are applicable to potential violations of City laws relating to campaign finance, lobbying, campaign consulting, conflicts of interest, governmental ethics, the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance, and the Whistleblower Protection Ordinance, as well as 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; San Francisco Administrative Code, Chapter 67, *et seq.*; 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.*

¹ *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; amendments effective March 29, 2013; amendments effective March 28, 2016; and substantial revisions effective _____.*

Section 2. Definitions

For purposes of these regulations, the following definitions will apply:

- A. "City" means the City and County of San Francisco.
- B. "Commission" means the Ethics Commission.
- C. "Complainant" means a person or entity making a complaint.
- D. "Enforcement action" means an action pursuant to San Francisco Charter section C3.699-13. An enforcement action does not include the opening of an investigation.
- E. "Director of Enforcement" means the Deputy Director of Enforcement or her designee.
- F. "Deliver" means transmit by U.S. mail, electronic mail, or personal delivery to the individual's registered address with the Ethics Commission, a business entity's registered agent, the business entity's principal place of business, or by leaving a copy of the document or thing at an individual's usual place of abode with someone of suitable age and discretion who resides there. Delivery is effective upon the date of delivery, not the date of receipt.
- G. "Executive Director" or "Director" means the Executive Director of the Commission or the Executive Director's designee.
- H. "Probable cause" means evidence sufficient to lead a person of ordinary caution and prudence to believe or entertain a strong suspicion that a proposed respondent committed or caused a violation of law.
- I. "Respondent" means a person or entity that is alleged to have committed a violation of law.
- J. "Referral" means a document from the Task Force or Supervisor of Records to the Commission finding a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, which is located at Chapter 67 of the San Francisco Administrative Code.
- K. "Staff" means the Commission's full-time professional staff.
- L. "Violation of law" means a violation of City law relating to campaign finance, lobbying, campaign consulting, conflicts of interest, governmental ethics, the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance, and the Whistleblower Protection Ordinance, as well as 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; San Francisco Administrative Code, Chapter 67, *et seq.*; 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.*

Section 3. Filing a Complaint

A complaint alleging a violation of law may be submitted by any person, including a member of the public, any employee or official of the City, or any member of the Commission. A complaint may also be submitted by an entity. Complaints may be sworn or informal, as discussed in greater detail below.

- A. **Sworn Complaints.** Sworn complaints must be made in writing on a form designated by the Executive Director or in a writing that contains all the information requested in the Director's designated form.
 - 1. **Content of Sworn Complaints.** Sworn complaints must be signed by the complainant under penalty of perjury. Electronic signatures that conform with the Commission's electronic signature policy sufficiently comply with this requirement. Sworn complaints should include the following facts:
 - i. The name and address of the respondent;
 - ii. The facts constituting an alleged violation(s) of law;
 - iii. The names and addresses of witnesses, if any; and
 - iv. Copies of documents or other evidence that may be relevant to proving the fact(s) constituting the alleged violation(s), if any.
 - 2. **Effect of Sworn Complaints.** The Director of Enforcement must process and evaluate all sworn complaints, pursuant to procedure outlined in Section 4, Preliminary Review.
- B. **Informal Complaints.** Informal complaints may be submitted by telephone, in person, or in a writing.
 - 1. **Content of Informal Complaints.** An informal complaint should include the name of the person or organization believed to have violated the law and the facts of the alleged violation. A complaint submitted on the prescribed complaint form that does not meet the requirements of a sworn complaint will be considered an informal complaint.
 - 2. **Effect of Informal Complaints.** The Enforcement Director has the discretion to review informal complaints. In exercising that discretion, the Enforcement Director should consider the nature of the alleged violation and whether the information contained in the complaint permits review and investigation of the alleged violation(s).
- C. **Anonymous Complaints.** Complaints may be submitted anonymously. Such complaints will be treated as informal complaints.
- D. **Commissioner-initiated Complaints.** Any member of the Commission who submits a formal or informal complaint must recuse him or herself from all consideration, review, investigation, or hearing of that complaint.
- E. **Complaints alleging violations of the Sunshine Ordinance.** Pursuant to section 67.34 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, the Commission will investigate complaints containing credible allegations against elected official(s) or department head(s) alleging willful violations of the

Sunshine Ordinance. If a complaint filed with the Commission does not meet the criteria set forth in section 67.34, the Commission will refer it to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force.

- F. **Withdrawal of Complaint.** The Commission may continue to investigate a complaint even if the complainant withdraws it.

Section 4. Preliminary Review of Complaints

- A. **Preliminary Review.** Upon receipt of a sworn complaint, the Director of Enforcement will conduct a preliminary review of the complaint to determine whether there is reason to believe a violation of law may have occurred. This preliminary review may include reviewing documents, communicating with the complainant or respondent, and any other inquiry to determine whether a full investigation is warranted. If the Director of Enforcement determines there is reason to believe a violation of law has occurred, the Director of Enforcement will open an investigation.
- B. **Complaint Dismissal.** If, based on the allegations and information contained in a complaint, and the Director of Enforcement's preliminary review, the Director of Enforcement determines that no violation of law has likely occurred, the Executive Director may dismiss the complaint. Reasons for dismissal include but are not limited to:
 - 1. The complaint does not include enough information to support further investigation.
 - 2. Credible evidence clearly refutes the allegation.
 - 3. The allegations, if true, do not constitute a violation of law.
 - 4. The complaint contains an expression of opinions, rather than specific allegations.
 - 5. The allegations contained in the complaint are already under investigation, or already have been resolved, by the Commission or another law enforcement agency.
 - 6. Dismissal, rather than initiating an investigation, would better serve the interest of justice.
- C. **Complaint Referral.** The Director of Enforcement, with the concurrence of the Executive Director, may refer the matter to another government agency if the Director of Enforcement determines that the agency has jurisdiction and may more appropriately resolve the allegations in the complaint or enforce the applicable provisions of law. If the Executive Director concurs with the Director of Enforcement's recommendation, the Executive Director will notify the Commission pursuant to subsection E.
- D. **Report to the Commission.** The Director of Enforcement will provide a monthly summary to the Commission of each complaint dismissed including the reasons for dismissal provided. That summary will comply with the confidentiality requirements of the Charter.
 - 1. **Whistleblower Retaliation Quarterly Report.** No less than quarterly, the Director of Enforcement will provide a summary report to the Commission of the status of all complaints still under preliminary review that allege retaliation against whistleblowers. For matters that have been under preliminary review for more than 90 calendar days, the Director of Enforcement will provide an explanation for why the Commission's staff has not completed its preliminary review as well as a target date for completion.

- E. Final Decision. A dismissal or closure of a complaint, after notification to the Commission pursuant to this Section, is a final decision and represents the end of the administrative process. No further action will be taken by the Commission to review or investigate the allegations contained in the complaint. If a complainant desires further review, the complainant must follow the procedures set forth in Section 1094.5(a) of the California Code of Civil Procedure governing judicial review of any final administrative order or decision.

Section 5. Investigation

- A. Open Investigation. If, after a preliminary review of the complaint, the Director of Enforcement determines there is reason to believe a violation of law has occurred, then the Director of Enforcement will open an investigation into the allegations contained in the complaint.
 - 1. Upon the Director of Enforcement's decision to open an investigation, the Director of Enforcement will immediately forward the complaint to the District Attorney and City Attorney. Within 10 business days after receipt of the complaint, the District Attorney and City Attorney will inform the Director of Enforcement in writing regarding whether the District Attorney or City Attorney has initiated or intends to pursue an investigation of the matter.
 - 2. Within 14 calendar days after receiving notification that neither the District Attorney nor City Attorney intends to pursue an investigation, the Director of Enforcement will notify in writing the complainant of the action, if any, the Commission has taken or plans to take on the complaint, together with the reasons for such action or inaction. If no decision has been made within 14 calendar days after receiving notification that neither the District Attorney nor City Attorney intends to pursue an investigation, the person who made the complaint will be notified of the reasons for the delay and will subsequently receive notification as provided above.
- B. Ex Parte Communication. Once an investigation is opened and until the Commission has made a final decision or order, whether by stipulation or otherwise, members of the Commission will not engage in oral or written communications with the parties or any member of the public outside of a Commission meeting, witness interview or examination, or settlement conference regarding the merits of an enforcement action.
- C. Subpoenas and Subpoenas Duces Tecum.
 - 1. Issuing Subpoenas. The Executive Director may issue subpoenas and *subpoenas duces tecum* on behalf of the Commission. A subpoena or *subpoena duces tecum* may not be issued unless the Executive Director finds that the person to be subpoenaed or the information to be requested in the *subpoena duces tecum* is relevant to a specific matter under investigation or that the person or entity to be subpoenaed controls relevant information.
 - 2. Notice Required. If a *subpoena duces tecum* seeks the production of either personal or financial records, the Enforcement Director will provide notice as required by California Government Code, section 7460, *et seq.*

3. Service. Subpoenas will be served at least 15 calendar days before the time required for attendance. *Subpoenas duces tecum* will be served at least 25 calendar days before the time required for attendance or production of the requested documents. Service must be made by delivering the subpoena or *subpoena duces tecum* as set forth in Section 2(F) herein.
4. Compliance.
 - i. If the Director of Enforcement consents, any person subject to a *subpoena duces tecum* may satisfy the *subpoena duces tecum* by delivering the requested documents together with an affidavit in compliance with section 1561 of the California Evidence Code.
 - ii. If any person or entity refuses to comply with a subpoena or *subpoena duces tecum*, the Executive Director may ask the City Attorney to petition the San Francisco Superior Court for an order compelling compliance.
5. Objections.
 - i. Any person or entity served with a subpoena or *subpoena duces tecum* may object by filing written objections with the Executive Director at least 5 calendar days before the time required for attendance or production of the requested documents.
 - ii. The Executive Director will rule on the objections and issue a written order at least one calendar day before the time required for attendance or production of the requested documents. The Executive Director's decision is final.
 - iii. Failure to file timely objections with the Executive Director waives all grounds for any objection.
 - iv. Any person or entity that files a motion to quash or modify a subpoena or *subpoena duces tecum* in Superior Court must inform the Executive Director in writing on the same day the motion is filed.
- D. Confidentiality: Disclosure deemed Official Misconduct. The investigation will be conducted in a confidential manner. Records of any investigation will be considered confidential information to the extent permitted by state law. All investigative documents, including notes and memoranda, created prior to the probable cause determination, such as the complaint, will remain confidential. 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, unless and until any such documents are introduced as evidence or as an exhibit for a hearing on the merits, pursuant to Sections 8 and 9 herein. Any member or employee of the Commission or other City officer or employee who, prior to a determination concerning probable cause, discloses information about any preliminary investigation, except as necessary to conduct the investigation, will be subject to an administrative enforcement action and may be deemed guilty of official misconduct. The unauthorized release of confidential information will be sufficient grounds for the termination of the employee or removal of the commissioner responsible for such release.

Section 6. Page Limitations and Format Requirements

The Probable Cause Report and Hearing Brief will be limited to 25 pages, exclusive of any attachments. The Responses to the Probable Cause Report and Hearing Brief will be limited to 25 pages, exclusive of any attachments. Any rebuttal or reply will be limited to 10 pages, exclusive of any attachments. All other filings will be limited to 10 pages, exclusive of any attachments. A “page” means one side of an 8½ inch by eleven-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 twelve-point type. Each page and any attachments will be consecutively numbered.

Section 7. Probable Cause Proceedings

- A. Complaint Closure. The Director of Enforcement may recommend closure of a complaint if it falls within the Commission’s jurisdiction, but closure rather than initiating probable cause proceedings would better serve the interest of justice. Cause for closure under this provision includes but is not limited to the Enforcement Director’s finding that the violation was *de minimus*; further prosecution of the complaint would not further the purpose of the law; the provision of law at issue was struck down by a court of competent jurisdiction; or the respondent came into full compliance with a reporting obligation prior to the Enforcement Director’s initiating an investigation. If the Executive Director concurs with the Director of Enforcement’s recommendation, the Executive Director will notify the Commission in a monthly report pursuant to Section 4(D).
- B. Initiation of Probable Cause Proceedings.
 - 1. Delegation of Probable Cause Hearing Officer Duties. The Commission delegates responsibility for conducting Probable Cause Conferences to the Executive Director but, as described below, the Commission retains the authority to make probable cause findings. The Executive Director may not recommend a probable cause determination unless the respondent(s) has been provided an opportunity to respond to a Probable Cause Report and appear in person to make oral argument, if requested.
 - 2. Probable Cause Report. When the Director of Enforcement believes that probable cause exists to find a violation of law has occurred, the Director of Enforcement will prepare a written “Probable Cause Report” to commence probable cause proceedings. The Director of Enforcement must deliver a copy of the Probable Cause Report to each respondent, the Executive Director, and if applicable, a complainant who has alleged retaliation pursuant to Section 4.115 of the San Francisco Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code. The Probable Cause Report must include:
 - i. Identification of the alleged violations;
 - ii. A summary of the laws at issue;
 - iii. A statement of the evidence gathered through the investigation, including any exculpatory and mitigating information of which Staff has knowledge;
 - iv. Notification that the respondent has the right to respond in writing to the Probable Cause Report;

- v. Notification that the respondent has the right to request a Probable Cause Conference, at which the respondent may be present in person and represented by legal counsel or another representative; and
 - vi. Any other relevant material or argument.
 - 3. Whistleblower Complainants. Complainants who have alleged retaliation pursuant to Section 4.115 of the San Francisco Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code may participate in probable cause proceedings regarding their complaint as identified in this section. Participation may include but is not limited to providing additional evidence to the Executive Director in response to the Director of Enforcement's Probable Cause Report or writing an independent response to the Director of Enforcement's Probable Cause Report. Complainants who would like to participate pursuant to this section must deliver a request to the Executive Director in writing within 10 calendar days of the issuance of Director of Enforcement's Probable Cause Report. The Executive Director shall have discretion to define the scope of the complainant's participation in probable cause proceedings.
 - 4. Response to the Probable Cause Report. Each respondent may submit a written Response to the Probable Cause Report. The Response may contain evidence, legal arguments, and any mitigating or exculpatory information. Responses must be delivered to the Executive Director and delivered to all other respondents listed in the probable cause report not later than 21 calendar days following service of the Probable Cause Report.
 - 5. Rebuttal. The Director of Enforcement may submit evidence or argument in rebuttal to the response. When the Director of Enforcement submits a rebuttal, the Director of Enforcement shall deliver a copy to all respondents not later than 14 calendar days following the date the response was filed.
 - 6. Evidence. The evidence recited in the Probable Cause Report, Response, and Rebuttal may rely on witness declarations, hearsay evidence (including declarations of investigators or others relating the statements of witnesses or concerning the examination of physical evidence), and any other relevant evidence.
 - 7. Requests for Extension of Time. The Executive Director may extend the time limitations in this section for good cause. At any time prior to a determination of probable cause, the Executive Director may allow the submission of additional material. Parties seeking extensions of time to file pleadings or present additional materials must file a request with the Executive Director at least 5 calendar days prior to the original deadline.
- C. Probable Cause Conference.
- 1. Confidentiality. Probable cause conferences shall be confidential and closed to the public unless the respondent requests, and all other respondents agree, that it be open to the public. After a determination regarding probable cause, the Probable Cause Report, the Response, and the Rebuttal will be confidential pursuant to section 5(D) of these regulations, unless the respondent requested that the probable cause hearing be public. If the respondent(s) agreed to a public hearing, then any evidence or argument produced at the public hearing shall be deemed public records.

2. Requesting a Probable Cause Conference. The Executive Director, Director of Enforcement, or any respondent(s) may request a Probable Cause Conference. The request will be served upon the Executive Director and all other parties no later than 21 calendar days after delivery of the Probable Cause Report unless the Executive Director extends the time for good cause. The Executive Director will set a time for the Probable Cause Conference, which will be conducted informally. Complainants who have alleged retaliation pursuant to Section 4.115 of the San Francisco Campaign & Governmental Conduct Code may appear at a Probable Cause Conference, but they may not request a Probable Cause Conference.

3. Probable Cause Conference Procedures.

- i. Representation. The Probable Cause Conference will be an informal proceeding. The respondent may bring legal counsel or any other representative to assist them in the Probable Cause Conference.
- ii. Presentation of Evidence. The Executive Director may allow witnesses to attend and participate in the Probable Cause Conference. A party making a request to present witness testimony at the Probable Cause Conference pursuant to this section must deliver a written request to the Executive Director and all parties within 7 calendar days of the Probable Cause Conference. When deciding whether to allow witness testimony, the Executive Director will consider the relevance of the witness's proposed testimony, whether the witness has a substantial interest in the proceedings, and whether fairness requires that the witness be allowed to participate.
- iii. Additional Information. If the Executive Director requires additional information to determine whether there is probable cause, he or she may permit any party to submit additional evidence at the Probable Cause Conference or by a specified date following the Probable Cause Conference.
- iv. Recordings and Transcripts. Every Probable Cause Conference will be audio recorded. The Director of Enforcement will retain the recording until the opportunity for legal challenge has been exhausted. The audio recording of the Probable Cause Conference will be provided to the respondent upon request. A respondent may ask that a certified court reporter attend and record the Probable Cause Conference at the respondent's cost. That respondent will provide copies of any transcript to the Executive Director and all other respondents. The cost of such a record will be borne by the respondent requesting the record.

D. Executive Director's Recommended Probable Cause Determination

- 1. Standard. The Executive Director may recommend a finding of probable cause to believe a violation has occurred if the evidence is sufficient to lead a person of ordinary caution and prudence to believe or entertain a strong suspicion that a respondent committed or caused a violation. A recommended finding of probable cause by the Executive Director does not constitute a finding that a violation has occurred.
- 2. Finding of Probable Cause. If the Executive Director recommends a finding of probable cause, the finding must be in writing and must be based solely on the evidence and

argument presented in the Probable Cause Report, Response, and Rebuttal, as well as any evidence or argument presented by the parties at the Probable Cause Conference. A recommended finding of probable cause must contain a summary of all evidence and arguments presented at the Probable Cause Conference, and the Executive Director's assessment of that evidence.

3. **Finding of No Probable Cause.** If the Executive Director determines that probable cause does not exist to believe a violation of law has occurred, the Executive Director will issue a finding of no probable cause in writing. The finding of no probable cause will provide clear and concise reasons supporting that determination.
4. **Default Orders.** If the Director of Enforcement followed the notice of conference procedures identified in these Regulations, and the respondent(s) failed to appear before the Executive Director for the Probable Cause Conference, then the Executive Director may make a recommendation for a finding of probable cause adverse to the interests of the respondent(s) who failed to appear. The Director of Enforcement bears the burden of proving that the respondent(s) was properly served in accordance with these regulations.
5. **Timeframe.** The Executive Director will make a probable cause determination within 60 calendar days after the later of the date the Probable Cause Report was served, the date the Probable Cause Conference was held, or the date the last pleading was received if no Probable Cause Conference is held. The Executive Director will not make a Probable Cause Determination before the respondent's deadline to respond to the Probable Cause Report. The Executive Director will deliver the Probable Cause Determination to each respondent and the Director of Enforcement within 7 calendar days of making the determination.
6. **Commission Ratification of Executive Director's Probable Cause Determination.** Upon finalizing her recommended probable cause determination, the Executive Director will immediately inform the Commission of that determination. Thereafter, any member of the Commission may request review of the Executive Director's recommended probable cause determination by the full Commission in closed session at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting. A Commissioner's request that a probable cause determination be calendared for consideration by the full Commission must be received by the Executive Director within 5 calendar days of the Executive Director's notification.
 - i. If any Commissioner requests review of the Executive Director's recommended probable cause determination, then the determination is not final until at least three members of the Commission agree to ratify it at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting. The Commission must consider the Executive Director's recommendation in closed session and may hear argument from the Director of Enforcement or the respondent(s). The parties will not be given additional opportunity to provide written argument to the Commission.
 - ii. If no Commissioner requests review of the Executive Director's recommended probable cause determination, then the Commission has ratified the Executive Director's recommended probable cause determination, and the Executive Director will publish the formal Probable Cause Determination by delivering it to the parties and posting it to the Commission's website.

7. Findings of No Probable Cause are Final. The Commission's finding of no probable cause is a final decision and represents the end of the administrative process. No further action will be taken by the Commission to review or investigate the allegations contained in the complaint. If a complainant desires further review, the complainant must follow the procedures set forth in Section 1094.5(a) of the California Code of Civil Procedure governing judicial review of any final administrative order or decision.
8. Effect of Formal Written Advice. The Executive Director will not make a finding of probable cause if she or he is presented with clear and convincing evidence that, prior to the alleged violation:
 - i. The respondent had requested and obtained written formal advice from the Commission;
 - ii. The respondent, in requesting the opinion, disclosed truthfully all facts pertinent to the case;
 - iii. The Commission or its staff issued a written opinion with which both the District Attorney and City Attorney concurred; and
 - iv. The respondent committed the acts or violations alleged in the complaint in good-faith reliance upon the written opinion of the Commission.

Section 8. Pre-Hearing Matters

- A. Delegation to a Hearing Officer. Upon majority approval, the Commission may delegate authority to preside over a hearing on the merits to a hearing officer. Any licensed attorney in the state of California or individual member of the Commission may serve as a hearing officer.
 1. 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 will make an actual determination. Procedural determinations may be reviewed by the Commission upon request by the Executive Director or a respondent.
 2. After presiding over a hearing on the merits, the hearing officer must submit a report and recommendation to the Commission for its consideration. The report and recommendation will contain proposed findings of fact and conclusions of law. Copies of the report and recommendation will be delivered to the Commission, Executive Director, and each respondent no later than 30 calendar days after the date the hearing is concluded. Thereafter, the Executive Director will calendar the matter for consideration at the next Commission meeting in open session.
- B. Scheduling and Notice of Hearing on Merits. The Executive Director will 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 30 calendar days prior to the commencement of the hearing. The notice will 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 Finding of Probable Cause. You may be present at the hearing and may, but need not, be represented by counsel or another representative. You may also present any relevant evidence, and you 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 records, documents, or other things by applying to the Commission on or before (date).”

- C. Hearing Officer. Following the issuance of a Finding of Probable Cause by the Executive Director, the Commission will proceed with a hearing on the merits of the complaint. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission pursuant to Section 7(A), the Commission will sit as the hearing panel to hear the merits of the case.
- D. Discovery. The Executive Director and each respondent will be entitled to pre-hearing discovery in accordance with the provisions of the California Administrative Procedure Act, Government Code, Title 2, Division 3, Part 1, Chapter 5, section 11500 *et seq.*
 - 1. Subpoenas. The Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to decide preliminary matters will be authorized to provide for the issuance of subpoenas. The Executive Director and any respondent named in the Finding of Probable Cause may request the issuance of subpoenas to compel the attendance of witnesses and production of documents at the hearing on the merits. Requests for the issuance of subpoenas should be delivered no later than 20 calendar days prior to the commencement of a hearing on the merits. The request will 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 will 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 hearing officer.
- E. Hearing Briefs. The Executive Director will, and any respondent may, submit a hearing brief. The briefs will outline significant legal arguments and list evidence and witnesses to be presented at the hearing and may attach anticipated evidence, including documents and declarations. The briefs are not required to list anticipated rebuttal evidence or rebuttal witnesses. For page limitations and formatting requirements, see Section 6 of these regulations. Unless the Commission or outside hearing officer agrees to accept briefs by email, six copies of Staff’s Hearing Brief will be delivered to the Commission, assigned Commissioner, or outside hearing officer and all parties to the proceeding no later than 30 calendar days prior to the date the hearing on the merits commences. The respondent(s)’ responsive brief will be due no later than 15 calendar days prior to the date the hearing on the merits commences, and Staff’s rebuttal brief will be submitted no later than 5 calendar days prior to the date the hearing on the merits commences.
- F. Preliminary Matters. Any party may request formal consideration of preliminary matters by delivering to the assigned Commissioner, or hearing officer a motion setting forth relevant facts, law, and argument. Preliminary matters may include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Procedural matters;
2. Disqualification of any member of the Commission from participation in the hearing on the merits;
3. Requests for dismissal of any charges in the Probable Cause Determination because, even if the allegations set forth in the Determination are true, as a matter of law those charges do not state a violation of law as alleged;
4. Discovery motions; and
5. Any other matters not related to the truth or falsity of the factual allegations in the Probable Cause Determination.

A request for resolution of preliminary matters must be delivered to the Commission or hearing officer no later than 25 calendar days prior to the commencement of a hearing on the merits. Responses are due 20 calendar days prior to the hearing on the merits, and replies are due 15 calendar days prior to the hearing on the merits. When the request, response, or reply is delivered to the Commission or hearing officer, the requester must deliver copies of the request to the Executive Director and every other respondent(s).

- G. Recordings and Transcripts. Every hearing on the merits will be recorded digitally. The Commission will retain the tapes until the opportunity for legal challenge has been exhausted. Copies of a tape will be available to the respondent upon request.
- H. Place of Delivery. Whenever these regulations require delivery to the Commission, its members, or the Executive Director, delivery will be made at the Staff's office. Whenever these regulations require delivery to a respondent or his or her committee, delivery will be effective and sufficient if made by first class U.S. mail, personal delivery, or any other means of delivery agreed upon by the parties. In addition, the Commission may rely on the following addresses:
 1. If the respondent is a City employee, to the address listed with the (Controller/ Payroll) as the employee's current personal address.
 2. If the respondent is a former City employee, to the address listed with the City's retirement system.
 3. 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.
 4. 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.

- I. Voluntary Dismissal. At any time after the Probable Cause Determination has been issued, the Executive Director may voluntarily dismiss all or part of an enforcement action for good cause by filing a Request for Voluntary Dismissal with the Commission. The Commission must consider the Request for Voluntary Dismissal at its next regularly scheduled Commission meeting in open session.

Section 9. Hearing on the Merits

A. General Rules and Procedures.

1. **Commencement.** The Probable Cause Determination will be the charging document for the hearing on the merits.
2. **Public Hearing.** The hearing on the merits will 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 parties' witnesses from being present during the hearing at which they are not providing testimony. 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. After a final determination on the merits of a complaint, Commissioners may discuss matters in the public record.
3. **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 or caused the violation.
4. **Rules of Evidence.** All evidence admissible in an administrative proceeding governed by the California Administrative Procedure Act will be admissible in a hearing on the merits. The Executive Director and each respondent will 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.
5. **Request for a Translator.** Any party may request the presence of a City-approved translator for the Hearing on the Merits. The request must be made to the Executive Director in writing within 20 calendar days of the Hearing on the Merits, and the requesting party must immediately deliver a copy of the request to all of parties. The requesting party shall bear the cost of translation services.
6. **Exhibits.** Where both parties stipulate to the admissibility of an exhibit, the parties will so advise the Commission in advance of the hearing. For all other exhibits, each party must move to admit an exhibit at the hearing, and the other party will have an opportunity to object prior to the ruling on the admission.
7. **Witnesses.** Witnesses will be examined by the parties as follows: direct examination, cross-examination, re-direct. After the parties have concluded their examination of a witness, Commissioners will have an opportunity to pose questions to the witness.
8. **Oral Argument.** At the hearing, the Executive Director and each respondent will be allowed oral argument. Each party will be allowed a minimum of 15 minutes to make their case, with three minutes for rebuttal. The Commission may extend any party's argument time.

9. Oaths and Affirmations. The Commission, and individual Commissioners and hearing officers assigned to conduct hearings, may administer oaths and affirmations.
10. Extensions of Time and Continuances.
 - i. Whenever the Executive Director, a respondent, or a witness is required to complete an act or produce materials under this section, 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 10 business days before the deadline to complete an act or produce materials. The Commission Chair or designee will have the discretion to consider untimely requests. The Commission Chair or designee will approve or deny the request within 5 business days of the submission of the request. The Commission Chair or designee may grant the request only upon a showing of good cause.
 - ii. 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 10 business days before the date of the hearing. The Commission Chair or the individual Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to hold the hearing will have the discretion to consider untimely requests.
 - iii. The Commission Chair or the individual Commissioner or hearing officer assigned to hold the hearing will approve or deny the request within 5 business 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.
- B. Finding of Violation. If the Commission conducts the hearing on the merits, the Commission will determine, no later than 45 calendar days after the date the hearing is concluded, whether the respondent(s) has committed a violation of law.
 1. 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 will submit a report and recommendation to the Commission no later than 30 calendar days after the date the hearing is concluded. Thereafter, the Commission will determine, no later than 45 calendar days after the date the report and recommendation is delivered, whether the respondent(s) has committed a violation of law.
 2. The votes of at least three Commissioners are required to find a violation of law.
 3. A finding of a violation will be supported by findings of fact and conclusions of law and must be based exclusively on the record of the proceedings before the Commission. Each Commissioner who participates in the decision will 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.

4. Within 10 days of the Commission's finding that a respondent(s) has retaliated against a City employee in violation of section 4.115 of the San Francisco Governmental Conduct Code, the Executive Director will notify the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors by sending her a copy of the Commission's final order.
- C. Administrative Orders and Penalties. 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:
1. Cease and desist the violation;
 2. File any reports, statements, or other documents or information required by law;
 3. 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 \$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. Unless otherwise ordered by the Commission, any penalties imposed by the Commission must be paid in full by the respondent within 90 calendar days of the Commission's decision;
 4. Order forfeiture of campaign contributions that exceed the limits imposed by or that do not comply with the requirements of Section 1.114 of the Campaign Finance Reform Ordinance;
 5. Order forfeiture of campaign contributions prohibited by Section 1.126 of the Campaign Finance Reform Ordinance; and
 6. Any other relief the Commission deems appropriate and within its authority under Charter section C3.699-13.
- D. Penalty Factors. When deciding on an order and penalties, the Commission will consider all the relevant circumstances surrounding the case, including but not limited to:
1. The severity of the violation;
 2. The presence or absence of any intention to conceal, deceive, or mislead;
 3. Whether the violation was willful;
 4. Whether the violation was an isolated incident or part of a pattern;
 5. Whether the respondent has a prior record of violations of law;
 6. The degree to which the respondent cooperated with the investigation and demonstrated a willingness to remedy any violations; and
 7. The respondent's ability to pay will be considered a mitigating factor if the respondent provides documentation to the Director of Enforcement of such inability, which must include three years' worth of income tax returns and six months' worth of bank records or accounting statements, at a minimum.
- E. Finding of No Violation. If the Commission determines that there is insufficient evidence to establish that the respondent has committed a violation of law, or if the Commission determines that there is sufficient evidence to establish that the respondent has not committed a violation of law, the Commission will publicly announce this fact. No further action will be taken by the Commission to review or investigate the allegations contained in the complaint. If a complainant desires further review, the complainant must follow the procedures set forth in Section

1094.5(a) of the California Code of Civil Procedure governing judicial review of any final administrative order or decision.

- F. Default Orders. If the Executive Director followed the notice of hearing procedures identified in these Regulations, and the respondent(s) failed to appear before the Commission for a hearing on any matter, then the Commission may enter an order adverse to the interests of the respondent(s) who failed to appear, including but not limited to, a Default Order for injunctive relief and administrative penalties after a hearing on the merits. The Executive Director bears the burden of proving that the respondent(s) was properly served in accordance with these regulations. A default order is a final administrative order or decision. If a party desires further review, he must follow the procedures set forth in Section 1094.5(a) of the California Code of Civil Procedure governing judicial review of any final administrative order or decision.

Section 10. Enforcement of Referrals under the Sunshine Ordinance

- A. Willful Violations by Elected Officials and Department Heads. As identified in Section 3(E) of these Regulations, complaints involving allegations of willful violations of the Sunshine Ordinance, the Brown Act, or the California Public Records Act by elected officials or department heads of the City and County of San Francisco will be handled by the Ethics Commission pursuant to Sections 1-9, 12, and 13.
- B. Referrals. If a City officer or employee fails to comply with an Order of Determination by the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force or Supervisor of Records, then those agencies may refer the matter to the Ethics Commission for enforcement pursuant to its authority under San Francisco Charter Section C3.699-13 and San Fran. Admin. Code § 67.35(d).
 - 1. Show Cause Hearing. After receipt of a referral, the Commission will schedule a Show Cause Hearing on the matter at the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting, provided that the parties are given at least 15 calendar days' notice of the Show Cause Hearing. The Show Cause Hearing will be open to the public.
 - i. Standard of Proof. The respondent(s) will have the burden to prove that he or she did not commit a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, as documented by the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force's Order of Determination and referral or the referral from the Supervisor of Records.
 - ii. Standard of Review. Where appropriate, the Commission will defer to the findings of fact set forth in the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force's Order of Determination; however, any party may bring evidence to present or witnesses to testify on their behalf at a Show Cause Hearing. The Commission will review the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force's conclusions of law independently, or de novo.
 - iii. Hearing Procedures. Upon request, the complainant and respondent will each have 10 minutes to present their argument to the Commission during the Show Cause Hearing. Witnesses may speak for 3 minutes. The Commission, through the Chair, may extend any speaker's testimony beyond the timeframes identified here.

- a. **Participation of Referring Agency.** The Sunshine Ordinance Task or Supervisor of Records may send an authorized representative to deliver comment or argument in favor of its referral. The representative will have 5 minutes to make their presentation before the commencement of the Show Cause Hearing. The representative will not be considered a party to the proceedings but rather a third-party friend of the Commission.
 - b. **Additional Briefing Not Required.** The parties may, but are not required to, submit written evidence and argument in support of their position.
 - c. **Rules of Evidence Do Not Apply.** Formal rules of evidence do not apply to hearings on referrals to enforce orders of the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force.
 - d. **Newly Discovered Evidence.** If any party presents evidence to the Commission during the Show Cause Hearing that was not presented to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force during its proceedings, then the Commission may remand the referral to the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force for its further deliberation and review of the new evidence.
- iv. **Deliberations and Findings.** The Commission will deliberate in public. Public comment on the matter will be allowed at each hearing, in accordance with the Sunshine Ordinance and the Brown Act. The Commission's enforcement decision must be supported by findings of fact and conclusions of law and will be based on the entire record of the proceedings.
- v. **Available Remedies.** Upon finding a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission may impose any of the remedies set forth in San Francisco Charter Section C3-699.13, which is incorporated into these Regulations at Section 9(C). When assessing administrative penalties, the Commission will follow the penalty factors set forth in Section 9(D). Commission Staff may provide the Commission with a recommended penalty according to Section 9(D)'s penalty factors where appropriate.
 - a. **Willful Misconduct.** If the Commission determines that an elected official, department head, or managerial city employee willfully failed to discharge any duties imposed by the Sunshine Ordinance, Brown Act, or California Public Records Act, then the Commission may find that the City official committed official misconduct. *See* San. Fran. Admin. Code § 67.34. If the City employee or official is identified in Section 15.105 of the San Francisco Charter, then the Commission must refer its finding to the City official's appointing authority, as required by Section 15.105 of the San Francisco Charter.
- C. **Final Decision.** An enforcement decision made by the Commission pursuant to this Section is a final decision and represents the end of the administrative process. No further action will be taken by the Commission to review or investigate the allegations contained in the complaint. If a complainant desires further review, the complainant must follow the procedures set forth in Section 1094.5(a) of the California Code of Civil Procedure governing judicial review of any final administrative order or decision.

Section 11. Late Filing Fees

- A. Weekend Filing Deadlines. Except as identified in subsection (B), filings that are due to the Commission on a Saturday, Sunday, or City-recognized holiday but filed no later than the next business day will not be assessed late filing fees. Any late filing fees that would have accrued on a weekend or holiday deadline will be waived pursuant to applicable authority under the relevant ordinance as a matter of enforcement discretion. The Ethics Commission's electronic filing system, will recognize the next business day as the filing deadline where applicable.
1. Late filing fees will not be waived for Late Contribution Reports (Form 497) or Late Independent Expenditure Reports (496) due the weekend before an election.
 2. All electronic filings must be submitted to the Commission's electronic filing system by 11:59 p.m. Pacific Time on the deadline. All paper filings must be received in paper format or by facsimile by 5:00 p.m. on the deadline.
 3. City-recognized holidays include: New Year's Day, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veteran's Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Day After, Christmas Day.
- B. Waiver Requests. Persons owing late filing fees may respond to the Commission's initial, non-specific written notice by requesting a reduction or waiver of the fees in whole or in part. The request must be in writing, explain why the Commission should consider the late filer's filing non-willful, relate why enforcement of the late filing fee provision would not further enforcement of the applicable law, identify good cause to justify the requested reduction or waiver in late filing fees, provide adequate documentation to demonstrate the facts underlying the request for good cause, and be signed by the responsible party.
1. Deadline. The waiver request must be received by the Commission within 14 calendar days of the date on the Commission's initial non-specific written notice. The Commission will presumptively deny requests for reduction or waiver of late filing fees received past this deadline.
 2. Good Cause. The following factors will presumptively qualify as "good cause" and are therefore grounds for a waiver:
 - i. Incapacitation for Medical Reasons. Adequate documentation consists of a signed statement by a board-certified physician, psychologist, psychotherapist, or chiropractor identifying the filer, the nature of the filer's incapacitation, and the date(s) thereof. The statement must be on the medical provider's letterhead.
 - ii. Death. Adequate documentation consists of a copy of the filer's death certificate, published death notice, or obituary.
 - iii. Act of God. The loss or unavailability of records due to a fire, flood, theft, earthquake or similar reason. Adequate documentation will consist of a police officer, fire or insurance report indicating the date of the occurrence and the extent of the loss or damage.
 - iv. Other Unique Reasons. These include compelling reasons beyond the filer's control.

3. The following do not constitute “good cause” and therefore are not grounds for a waiver: first-time filer, not receiving notice of filing requirements, not being available to sign forms, not sending filing to proper official, not knowing where to get forms, not having complete information by filing deadline, not picking up mail, secretarial error.
- C. Conversion to Enforcement Action. The Executive Director reserves the right to convert matters involving candidates and committees with late-filed reports that have generated more than \$2,000 in late filing fees to enforcement actions to be handled pursuant to these Regulations.

Section 12. Stipulated Orders

- A. Stipulated Orders. Settlement saves time and resources for both the Commission and the respondent(s). At any time, the Executive Director may enter negotiations with a respondent(s) to resolve the factual and legal allegations in a complaint by way of a stipulated order. The stipulated order will 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. The stipulated order will also explicitly state that:
1. The proposed stipulated order is subject to approval by the Commission;
 2. The respondent knowingly and voluntarily waives 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 cooperating with or assisting any other government agency about 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 will 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 will be disqualified because of prior consideration of the stipulation.
- B. Non-Admissible. The details and supporting documentation for unsuccessful settlement negotiations are non-admissible in the subsequent administrative enforcement action.
- C. Installment Plans. As a rule, the Executive Director will not accept offers to pay assessed administrative penalties in installments without proof of inability to pay as set forth in Section 9(E). Upon proof of inability to pay, the Executive Director may consider accepting an offer to pay assessed penalties in installments, but installment agreements must require full payment before the expiration of 6 months.
- D. Assessing Administrative Penalties. When assessing administrative penalties for the purposes of settlement negotiation, Staff will follow the rules set forth in Section 9(E) of these regulations.
- E. Consent Calendar. Immediately after the Executive Director enters a stipulated order with a respondent, the Executive Director will inform the Commission of the proposed stipulation. Thereafter, any member of the Commission may request that the stipulated order be reviewed in public session by the full panel of the Commission during its next meeting. Requests for consideration before the full panel of the Commission must be received by the Executive

Director by 12:00 p.m. on the fifth calendar day prior to the Commission meeting. If no member requests review in public session by the full panel of the Commission, then the stipulated order will be placed on the public agenda for the next Commission meeting in a section titled "Consent Calendar." Members of the public will be permitted to comment on any stipulated order listed on the Consent Calendar.

- F. Commission Approval Required. Stipulated orders must be approved by the Commission and, upon approval, must be announced publicly. The stipulated order will have the full force of a final order of the Commission.
- G. Retaliation Notification. Within 10 days of the Commission's execution of a stipulated order finding that a respondent(s) has retaliated against a City employee in violation of section 4.115 of the San Francisco Governmental Conduct Code, the Executive Director will notify the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors by sending her a copy of the Commission's final order.

Section 13. Statute of Limitations

- A. Statute of Limitations. Unless otherwise stated in City 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 Director of Enforcement delivers the Probable Cause Report. 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 the alleged violation of law.
- B. Tolling the Statute of Limitations. The four-year limitations period is tolled:
 - 1. If the respondent(s) engaged in concealment or deceit, for the period of concealment or deceit. Concealment or deceit may occur as part of an alleged violation, such as with money laundering or the falsification of records, or may occur as conduct following a complaint.
 - 2. If the respondent(s) fails to comply with a subpoena or *subpoena duces tecum*, from the date the compliance was originally required until the date compliance is achieved.

Section 14. 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 will not be affected thereby.

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.

San Francisco
Ethics Commission



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ETHICS COMMISSION REGULATIONS FOR HANDLING VIOLATIONS OF THE SUNSHINE ORDINANCE

Effective Date: January 25, 2013
Includes amendments effective November 22, 2013

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CHAPTER ONE

I. PREAMBLE

Pursuant to San Francisco Charter, section 15.102, the San Francisco Ethics Commission promulgates these Regulations in order to ensure compliance with the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance, San Francisco Administration Code, section 67.1, et seq. These Regulations shall apply to complaints alleging violations of the Sunshine Ordinance. All complaints alleging violations of conflict of interest, campaign finance, lobbyist, campaign consultant or other governmental ethics laws shall be handled separately under the Ethics Commission's Regulations for Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings.

II. DEFINITIONS

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

- A. “Brown Act” means California Government Code section 54950, et seq.
- B. “Business day” means any day other than a Saturday, Sunday, City holiday, or a day on which the Commission office is closed for business.
- C. “California Public Records Act” means California Government Code section 6250, et seq.
- D. “City” means the City and County of San Francisco.
- E. “City officer” means any officer identified in San Francisco Administrative Code Section 1.50, as well as any City body composed entirely of such officers.
- F. “Commission” means the Ethics Commission.
- G. “Complaint” means a Task Force referral or a referral from the Supervisor of Records, a written document submitted directly to the Ethics Commission alleging a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, or a matter initiated by Ethics Commission staff alleging a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance.
- H. “Complainant” means a person or entity that initiated a matter with the Task Force, Supervisor of Records, or Commission alleging a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance. “Complainant” shall also mean the Commission if the matter was initiated by Commission staff.
- I. “Custodian” means a City officer or employee having custody of any public record.

J. “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 business day.

K. “Deliver” means transmit by U.S. mail or personal delivery to a person or entity. The Commission, the Executive Director, the Task Force, a Respondent, or the Complainant receiving material may consent to any other means of delivery, including delivery by e-mail or fax. In any proceeding, the Commission Chairperson may order that the delivery of briefs or other materials be accomplished by e-mail.

L. “Elected official” shall mean the Mayor, a Member of the Board of Supervisors, City Attorney, District Attorney, Treasurer, Sheriff, Assessor, Public Defender, a Member of the Board of Education of the San Francisco Unified School District, and a Member of the Governing Board of the San Francisco Community College District.

M. “Executive Director” means the Executive Director of the Commission or the Executive Director's designee.

N. “Exculpatory information” means information tending to show that the Respondent has not committed the alleged violation(s).

O. “Order of Determination” means: 1) an order from the Task Force that forms the basis of a show cause hearing for Task Force referrals made under Sunshine Ordinance section 67.30(c); or 2) a final recommendation issued by the Task Force, made pursuant to Sunshine Ordinance section 67.34, that a willful violation of the Sunshine Ordinance by an elected official or department head occurred.

P. “Public Records” means records as defined in section 6252(e) of the California Public Records Act, which includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of the public's business prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics, and/or Sunshine Ordinance section 67.20(b).

Q. “Referral” means a document from the Task Force or Supervisor of Records to the Commission finding a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance.

R. “Respondent” means a City officer or City employee who is alleged or identified in a complaint to have committed a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance.

S. “Sunshine Ordinance” means San Francisco Administrative Code section 67.1, et seq.

T. “Task Force” means the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force, established by San Francisco Administrative Code section 67.30.

U. “Willful violation” means an action or failure to act with the knowledge that such act or failure to act was a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance.

CHAPTER TWO

I. REFERRALS TO THE ETHICS COMMISSION

A. Matters to be heard in a Show Cause Hearing.

1. Under this Chapter, the Ethics Commission will conduct a Show Cause Hearing on any referral, as defined by these Regulations, finding:
 - a. willful violations of the Sunshine Ordinance by City officers and employees (other than elected officials or department heads), or
 - b. non-willful violations of the Sunshine Ordinance by elected officials, department heads, or City officers and employees.
2. Complaints alleging willful violations of the Sunshine Ordinance against elected officials and department heads shall be handled pursuant to Chapter Three of these regulations.

B. Scheduling of Show Cause Hearing.

1. After receipt of a referral, the Commission shall schedule a Show Cause Hearing on the matter at the next regular Ethics Commission meeting, provided that the Show Cause Hearing can be scheduled pursuant to the agenda and notice requirements as set forth in Sunshine Ordinance section 67.7 and the Brown Act.
2. In the event that four or more Commissioners will not be present at the scheduled Show Cause Hearing, the Commission may reschedule or continue to the next practicable regular Ethics Commission meeting.

II. SHOW CAUSE HEARING

A. Public Hearing. The Show Cause Hearing shall be open to the public.

B. Standard of Proof. The Respondent(s) shall have the burden to show that he or she did not commit a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance.

C. Hearing Procedures.

1. Each Respondent and Complainant may speak on his or her own behalf, subject to the following time limits: each Respondent shall be permitted a five-minute statement; each Complainant shall be permitted a five-minute statement; and each Respondent shall be permitted a three-minute rebuttal. At his or her discretion, the Commission Chairperson may allow additional testimony and may extend the time limit for the parties.

2. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, formal rules of evidence shall not apply to the hearing. Each Respondent and Complainant may submit any documents to the Commission to support his or her position. Each party's written submission shall not exceed five pages, excluding supporting documents. Any documents so provided shall also be provided to the opposing party and shall be delivered to the Commission no later than five business days prior to the scheduled hearing. Upon mutual consent of the Complainant(s), Respondent(s), and the Executive Director, a response may be distributed by e-mail. Commissioners may question each party or any other person providing testimony regarding the allegations. The Respondent(s) and Complainant(s) may not directly question each other.

3. If either party fails to appear and the Commission did not grant the party a continuance or reschedule the matter under Chapter IV, section I.E, then the Commission may make a decision in the party's absence.

D. Deliberations and Findings.

1. The Commission shall deliberate in public. Public comment on the matter shall be allowed at each hearing, in accordance with the Sunshine Ordinance and the Brown Act.

2. To determine that a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance did not occur, the Commission must conclude that, based on a preponderance of the evidence, the Respondent did not commit a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance. The Commission shall consider all the relevant circumstances surrounding the case.

3. The votes of at least three Commissioners are required to make a finding that a Respondent has not committed a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance. The finding that a Respondent did or did not commit a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance shall be supported by findings of fact and conclusions of law and shall be based on the entire record of the proceedings.

E. Ethics Commission Orders.

1. If the Commission finds that a Respondent committed a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission may issue orders requiring any or all of the following:

a. the Respondent(s) to cease and desist the violation and/or produce the public record(s); and/or

b. the Executive Director to post on the Ethics Commission's website the Commission's finding that the Respondent(s) violated the Sunshine Ordinance; and/or

c. The Executive Director to issue a warning letter to the Respondent and inform the Respondent's appointing authority of the violation.

2. After making its decision, the Commission will instruct staff to prepare a written order reflecting the Commission's findings. The Chairperson shall be authorized to approve and sign the Commission's written order on behalf of the full Commission.
3. After issuing an order or instructing the Executive Director to act, or upon a finding of no violation, the Commission will take no further action on the matter.

F. Public Announcement.

Once the Commission determines that the Respondent did or did not commit a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission will publicly announce this conclusion. The Commission's announcement may, but need not, include findings of law and fact.

CHAPTER THREE

I. COMPLAINTS ALLEGING WILLFUL VIOLATIONS OF THE SUNSHINE ORDINANCE BY ELECTED OFFICIALS OR DEPARTMENT HEADS **OR** **COMPLAINTS FILED DIRECTLY WITH THE ETHICS COMMISSION ALLEGING VIOLATIONS OF THE SUNSHINE ORDINANCE.**

A. Matters heard under this Chapter.

1. Pursuant to Sunshine Ordinance, section 67.34, the Ethics Commission shall handle complaints alleging violations of the Sunshine Ordinance by an elected official or department head.
2. Pursuant to Sunshine Ordinance, section 67.35(d), if the District Attorney and/or Attorney General take no action for 40 days after receiving notification of a custodian's failure to comply with an order made pursuant to Sunshine Ordinance section 67.21(d) or (e), then the person who made the public record request may file a complaint directly with the Ethics Commission relating to that failure to comply.
3. Ethics Commission staff may initiate a complaint to allege a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance against any City officer or City employee.
4. This Chapter will govern:
 - a. referrals alleging willful violations of the Sunshine Ordinance against an elected official or department head, and
 - b. complaints initiated under subsections A.2 or A.3 alleging violations of the Sunshine Ordinance by any City officer or employee.
5. Any referral that does not allege a willful violation of the Sunshine Ordinance against an elected official or a department head shall be handled pursuant to Chapter Two of these regulations.

B. Scheduling of Hearing.

1. When the Executive Director receives a referral alleging a willful violation of the Sunshine Ordinance against an elected official or a department head, or when the Executive Director receives a complaint filed under subsection A.2, or when staff initiates a complaint under subsection A.3, the Executive Director shall, within 15 business days of the conclusion of his or her investigation, schedule a public hearing at the next regular meeting of the Commission, unless impracticable, provided that the hearing can be scheduled pursuant to the agenda and notice requirements as set forth in Sunshine Ordinance section 67.7 and the Brown Act.

2. Within 15 business days of the conclusion of his or her investigation, the Executive Director shall issue a written notice and his or her report and recommendation pursuant to Chapter Three, section II.C, to each Commission member, each Respondent, and each Complainant, including the date, time and location of the hearing.

3. In the case of a referral, the Executive Director also shall provide a courtesy notice and a copy of the report and recommendation to the referring body.

II. INVESTIGATION AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Factual Investigation.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the Executive Director shall conduct a factual investigation. The Executive Director's investigation may include, but shall not be limited to, interviews of the Respondent(s) and any witnesses, as well as the review of documentary and other evidence. The investigation shall be concluded within 30 days following the Executive Director's receipt of the complaint. The Executive Director may extend the time for good cause, including but not limited to: staffing levels; the number of other pending complaints under these Regulations or the Ethics Commission Regulations for Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings; other Ethics Commission proceedings; other staffing needs associated with pending campaigns; or the cooperation of witnesses, Complainants or Respondents. If the Executive Director extends the time for the investigation to conclude, his or her reasons for the extension shall be included in the report to the Ethics Commission.

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.

C. Report and Recommendation.

1. After the Executive Director has completed his or her investigation, the Executive Director shall prepare a written report and recommendation summarizing his or her factual and legal findings. The recommendation shall contain a summary of the relevant legal provisions and the evidence gathered through the Commission's investigation. To support the report and recommendation, the Executive Director may submit evidence through declaration. The report and recommendation shall not exceed ten pages excluding attachments.

2. The report shall recommend one of the following:

a. that Respondent(s) willfully violated the Sunshine Ordinance;

b. that Respondent(s) violated the Sunshine Ordinance but the violation was not willful; or

c. that Respondent(s) did not violate the Sunshine Ordinance.

D. Response to the Report and Recommendation.

1. Each Complainant and Respondent may submit a written response to the Director's report and recommendation. The response may contain legal arguments, a summary of evidence, and any mitigating or aggravating information. In support of the response, each Complainant and Respondent may submit evidence through declaration. The response shall not exceed ten pages excluding attachments.

2. If any Complainant or Respondent submits a response, he or she must deliver the response to all parties no later than five business days prior to the date of the hearing. The Complainant or Respondent must deliver eight copies of the response to the Executive Director, who must then immediately distribute copies of the response(s) to the Commission and any other Complainant or Respondent. Upon mutual consent of the Complainant(s), Respondent(s), and the Executive Director, a response may be distributed by e-mail.

III. PUBLIC HEARING

A. General Rules and Procedures.

1. The hearing shall be open to the public.

2. Each Complainant and Respondent may speak on his or her own behalf, subject to the following time limits: Complainant shall be permitted a ten-minute statement; Respondent shall be permitted a ten-minute statement; and Complainant shall be permitted a five-minute rebuttal. At his or her discretion, the Commission Chairperson may allow additional testimony and may extend the time limit for the parties.

3. Unless otherwise decided by the Commission, formal rules of evidence shall not apply to the hearing. Commissioners may question each party regarding the allegations. The Respondent(s) and Complainant(s) may not directly question each other.

4. If either party fails to appear and the Commission did not grant the party a continuance or reschedule the matter under Chapter IV, Section I.E, then the Commission may make a decision in the party's absence.

5. Except when a complaint is staff-initiated or initiated pursuant to section 67.35(d), the Executive Director's role at the hearing will be limited to providing the report containing the legal and factual basis for his or her recommendation to the Commission and to respond to questions from the Commissioners.

B. Deliberations and Findings.

1. The Commission shall deliberate in public. Public comment on the matter shall be allowed at each hearing, in accordance with the Sunshine Ordinance and the Brown Act.
2. In determining whether a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance occurred, the Commission must conclude that, based on a preponderance of the evidence, the Respondent committed a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance. The Commission shall consider all the relevant circumstances surrounding the case.
3. The votes of at least three Commissioners are required to make a finding that a Respondent has committed a willful violation of the Sunshine Ordinance or that a Respondent has committed a non-willful violation of the Sunshine Ordinance. The finding of a willful violation or non-willful violation of the Sunshine Ordinance shall be supported by findings of fact and conclusions of law and shall be based on the entire record of the proceedings.

C. Ethics Commission Orders.

1. If the Commission finds that an elected official or a department head willfully violated the Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission shall so inform the Respondent's appointing authority, or the Mayor if Respondent is an elected official. In addition, the Commission may issue orders requiring any or all of the following if it finds that an elected official, a department head, or any City officer or City employee committed a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance:
 - a. the Respondent to cease and desist the violation and/or produce the public record(s); and/or
 - b. the Executive Director to post on the Ethics Commission's website the Commission's finding that the Respondent violated the Sunshine Ordinance; and/or
 - c. the Executive Director to issue a warning letter to the Respondent and inform the Respondent's appointing authority, or the Mayor if the Respondent is an elected official, of the violation.
2. After making its decision, the Commission will instruct staff to prepare a written order reflecting the Commission's findings. The Chairperson shall be authorized to approve and sign the Commission's written order on behalf of the full Commission.
3. After issuing an order or instructing the Executive Director to act, the Commission will take no further action on the matter.

D. Finding of No Violation.

If the Commission determines that there is insufficient evidence to establish that the Respondent has committed a violation of the Sunshine Ordinance, the Commission shall publicly announce this fact. The Commission's announcement may, but need not, include findings of law and fact. Thereafter, the Commission will take no further action on the matter.

CHAPTER FOUR

I. MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

A. Ex Parte Communications.

Once a complaint is filed with the Commission, no Commissioner shall engage in oral or written communications outside of a Commission meeting regarding the merits of the complaint with the Commission's staff, the Respondent(s), the Complainant(s), any member of the Task Force, the Supervisor of Records, any member of the public, or any person communicating on behalf of the Respondent(s), Complainant(s), the Supervisor of Records, or any member of the Task Force, except for communications, such as scheduling matters, generally conducted between a court and a party appearing before that court.

B. Access to Complaints and Related Documents and Deliberations.

Complaints, investigative files and information contained therein, shall be disclosed as necessary to the conduct of an investigation or as required by the California Public Records Act or the San Francisco Sunshine Ordinance. In order to guarantee the integrity of the investigation, internal notes taken by the Executive Director or his or her staff regarding complaints shall not be disclosed until the Commission has issued its final decision following the hearing.

C. Oaths and Affirmations.

The Commission 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 and the public of the designation no later than the next business day.

E. Extensions of Time and Continuances.

1. Any Respondent or Complainant may request the continuance of a hearing date in writing. The requester must deliver the written request to the Commission Chairperson, 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 Chairperson shall have the discretion to consider untimely requests. The Commission Chairperson shall approve or deny the request within five business days of the submission of the request. The Commission Chairperson may grant the request upon a showing of good cause.

2. The Commission or the Commission Chairperson may reschedule a hearing at their discretion for good cause.

At any time a hearing is placed on an agenda regarding a matter under Chapter II or III of these Regulations, four or more members must be in attendance. Otherwise, the hearing shall be continued to the next regular Ethics Commission meeting, unless impracticable.

F. 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 Complainant, 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 Chapter One, section II, subsection K, to an address reasonably calculated to give notice to and reach the Respondent or Complainant.
3. Delivery is effective upon the date of delivery, not the date of receipt.
4. Delivery of documents to the Commission may be conducted via electronic mail after a written request is made and approved by the Executive Director.

G. 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.

H. Conclusion of Hearing.

For the purposes of these Regulations, a hearing concludes on the date on which the Commission announces its decision.

I. Complaints alleging both Sunshine Violations and Violations Handled Under the Ethics Commission’s Regulations for Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings.

If a complaint alleges both violations of the Sunshine Ordinance and violations handled under the Ethics Commission’s Regulations for Investigations and Enforcement Proceedings, the allegations involving violations of the Sunshine Ordinance shall be handled separately under these Regulations. Staff shall initiate a complaint of the alleged violations of the Sunshine Ordinance under Chapter Three, Section I.A.3 of these Regulations.

J. Certification by participating Commissioner if he or she did not attend proceedings held under Chapter II or III in their entirety.

Each Commissioner who participates in a decision, but who did not attend the hearing in its entirety, 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.

II. 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.

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