



# San Francisco Ethics Commission

25 Van Ness Avenue, STE 220  
San Francisco, CA 94102-6053  
ethics.commission@sfgov.org  
415-252-3100 | sfethics.org

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To: Members of the Ethics Commission  
From: Gayathri Thaikkendiyil, Acting Executive Director  
Subject: Agenda Item 7 - Election of Ethics Commission Officers

## Summary and Action Requested

This memo provides information about the Ethics Commission's process for electing its officers to enable the Commission to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair for the coming year at its February 2023 Regular Meeting.

## Background

As detailed below, according to the Ethics Commission's Bylaws, Article IV, Section 1, the Officers of the Ethics Commission are Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson. Section 1 provides that the term of each office is one year, from March 1 to February 28. The Bylaws provide that no office holder shall serve for more than two consecutive one-year terms.

In early 2020, Commissioner Lee was elected by the Commission to serve as Vice-Chair through February 2021. In February 2021, Commissioner Lee was reelected to a second term as Vice-Chair and, in July 2021, became acting Chair, pursuant to ByLaws Article IV Section 4, following the resignation of Chair Noreen Ambrose. In February 2022, the Commission elected Commissioners Yvonne Lee and Larry Bush to serve as Chair and Vice-Chair, respectively.

## Responsibilities of the Chair and Vice-Chair

Commission Bylaws further provide that the Chairperson, among other duties, shall preside at all meetings of the Commission and serves as an ex-officio non-voting member of all standing committees except a nomination committee, if one is convened. The Chairperson is accountable to the Commission as a whole in setting policy and shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Commission. The Chairperson (and/or her/his designee) serves as the liaison to the media, the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force and other department/agency committees as necessary.

According to the Commission's Bylaws, the Vice-Chairperson shall perform the duties and responsibilities that may be delegated by the Chairperson, and the assignments traditionally assigned to that office. In the absence or disability of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall perform the Chairperson's duties.

## Election Process

The Commission's Bylaws do not provide for a specific method for the election of its Officers. The Commission has customarily employed the following procedure for the election of its Officers:

The Chair will open nominations for Chair. Any commissioner who wishes to nominate a candidate for Chair will state the name of that person. If that person agrees to run, that person is nominated. When there are no further nominations, and following any public comment, the Chair will close the nominations and take a roll call vote in which each Commissioner shall state the name of the nominee for whom he or she is voting. If a nominee receives three or more votes, that person is elected Chair. If no nominee receives three votes, the Commission may have further discussion, and proceed to another vote. This process shall repeat until one nominee has received three or more votes.

The Chair will open nominations for Vice-Chair. Any commissioner who wishes to nominate a candidate for Vice-Chair will state the name of that person. If that person agrees to run, then that person is nominated. When there are no further nominations and after public comment, the Chair will close the nominations and take a roll call vote in which each Commissioner shall state the name of the nominee for whom he or she is voting. If a nominee receives three or more votes, that person is elected Vice-Chair. If no nominee receives three votes, the Commission may have further discussion, and proceed to another vote. This process shall repeat until one nominee has received three or more votes.

## Article IV of the Bylaws of the San Francisco Ethics Commission

Article IV of the Commission's Bylaws may be viewed at <https://sfethics.org/commission/ethics-commission-by-laws>. Article IV provides the following:

### *Section 1: Officers*

The Officers of the Commission are a Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

### *Section 2: Term of Office<sup>14</sup>*

The term of each office is one year, from March 1 to February 28. No office holder shall serve for more than two consecutive one-year terms.<sup>15</sup>

### *Section 3: Chairperson*

The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Commission and is an ex-officio non-voting member of all standing committees except a nomination committee, if one is convened.<sup>16</sup> The Chairperson is accountable to the Commission as a whole in setting policy and shall also perform such other duties as may be assigned by the Commission. The Chairperson (and/or her/his designee) serves as the liaison to the media, the Sunshine Ordinance Task Force and other department/agency committees as necessary.

At the end of the fiscal year the Chairperson, along with the Executive Director, shall submit a written annual report to the Commission for approval, summarizing the activities, accomplishments and budgetary needs of the Ethics Commission during the term of office.

Upon receipt of a public records request for documents that may be in the custody of the members of the Commission, the Executive Director must promptly forward any such request to the Chairperson. As the Chairperson deems appropriate, in consultation with the Executive Director and the City Attorney's Office, the Chairperson may respond on behalf of the Commission. The Chairperson may also, in his or her discretion, calendar any such request for the next Commission meeting to allow for further consideration by the entire Commission. On a monthly basis, the Executive Director shall notify the Chairperson of the number of public records requests that the Commission Staff has received that month for which any responsive document was withheld by claiming attorney-client privilege.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Section 4: Vice Chairperson*

The Vice Chairperson shall perform the duties and responsibilities that may be delegated by the Chairperson, and the assignments traditionally assigned to that office. In the absence or disability of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall perform the duties as described in Article IV, Section 3.

#### Notes:

[14] Amended 3/22/02 to reflect changes made by Proposition E, adopted by voters in November 2001.

[15] Amended 5/13/96 to limit service to two consecutive terms.

[16] Amended 11/13/00 to clarify that the Commission may not necessarily convene a nominations committee.

[17] Amended 9/26/16 to establish a process regarding requests for public records directed toward Members of the Ethics Commission and a notification requirement for its Executive Director.