



San Francisco Ethics Commission

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NEWS

May 5, 2023

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Enforcement Update: Ethics Commission Approves Settlements in Five Separate Cases.

At its regular monthly meeting on Friday May 5, 2023, the San Francisco Ethics Commission approved five separate settlement agreements that levied a total of \$37,400 in penalties against five respondents for unrelated violations of conflict of interest, financial reporting, lobbyist, and campaign consultant laws.

Violations of Ethics and Personal Financial Disclosure (Form 700) Laws

In the Matter of Yakuh Askew – The Commission approved \$9,500 in penalties through a settlement agreement with former San Francisco Arts Commissioner Yakuh Askew for two conflict of interest counts and one count of contracting with the City while serving as a City officer. Askew sought to contract with the City through a subcontract with a City contractor. This was unlawful because Askew was currently serving as a member of the Arts Commission when he sought the contract. Askew also engaged in two separate conflicts of interest when he voted on two separate occasions to approve projects in which he had a financial interest.

In the Matter of Victor Makras – The Commission approved \$14,500 in penalties through a settlement agreement with former San Francisco Port Commissioner Victor Makras for one count of failing to report income from a reportable source as required on the Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700), four counts for conflicts of interest, and one count for failing to file the required recusal notification. The unreported income was the repayment of a loan Makras had made to two other City officers. The conflicts of interest occurred when Makras voted on a development project on Port property that was within 1,000 feet of real property owned by Makras.

In the Matter of Celine Kennelly – The Commission approved \$1,000 in penalties through a settlement agreement with San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commissioner Celine Kennelly for one count of failure to timely file the Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700) and one count of participating in matters at meetings of the IRC and IRC Executive Committee while disqualified from doing so because of failure to file the Form 700.

Violations of Contact Lobbyist Disclosure Laws

In the Matter of Michael Colbruno – The Commission approved \$8,600 in penalties through a settlement agreement with lobbyist Michael Colbruno for seven counts of failing to publicly disclose lobbying contacts and payments in violation of City lobbying laws. For each of the years 2015 through 2021, Colbruno failed to report all of the lobbying activity that he undertook on behalf of his clients.

Violations of Campaign Consultant Disclosure Laws

In the Matter of Bearstar Strategies – The Commission approved \$3,800 in penalties through a settlement agreement with Bearstar Strategies for one count of failing to register as a campaign



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consultant and failing to timely report campaign consulting activity. Bearstar Strategies served as a campaign consultant for a City officer who was running for state elected office. Bearstar Strategies failed to timely register and report this activity as a campaign consultant, but the company voluntarily self-report this violation and subsequently filed all six required reports.

As authorized by the City Charter, the resolution of violations through a public stipulated agreement enables Respondents and the Ethics Commission to resolve enforcement matters without the need of a lengthier process involving a public hearing. The Commission is authorized to assess a monetary penalty of up to \$5,000 for each violation or up to three times the amount that was improperly given or received or that was not properly disclosed.

The Commission's case resolutions, including copies of approved settlement agreements, are available on the Commission's [website](#).

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The San Francisco Ethics Commission was created directly by the City's voters with the passage of Proposition K in November 1993 and is responsible for the independent and impartial administration and enforcement of laws related to campaign finance, public financing of candidates, governmental ethics, conflicts of interests, and registration and reporting by lobbyists, campaign consultants, permit consultants, and major developers. Our mission is to practice and promote the highest standards of integrity in government. We achieve that by delivering impactful programs that promote fair, transparent, and accountable governmental decision making for the benefit of all San Franciscans. Public service is a public trust, and our aim is to ensure that San Franciscans can have confidence that the operations of the City and County and the decisions made by its officials and employees are fair, just, and made without any regard to private or personal gain.