



San Francisco Ethics Commission

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Date: March 10, 2025
To: Members of the Ethics Commission
From: Patrick Ford, Executive Director
Subject: **Agenda Item 3 – Executive Director’s Report**

Summary and Action Requested

This report provides various programmatic and operational highlights since the last report. No action is required by the Commission, as this item is for informational purposes only.

Staffing Updates

Personnel Update

Regretfully, March 28th will be Deputy Director Gayathri Thaikkendiyil’s last day with the Commission. Gayathri first joined the Commission in 2016 as an executive fellow. She was then hired to lead the Commission’s Engagement and Compliance Division and subsequently became the Commission’s Deputy Director and Chief Operating Officer. Gayathri has been an instrumental part of the Commission’s major initiatives in recent years, including securing budget, successfully completing many recruitments, renovating the Commission’s office space, ensuring continuity of operations during the COVID-19 pandemic, and standardizing the Commission’s financial and operational processes. Gayathri’s contributions to the Commission have helped the department achieve many milestones during her tenure and will be felt for many years.

Because of the hiring freeze enacted by the Mayor in January, the Commission will need special approval by the Mayor’s office in order to initiate recruitment for the deputy director role. I requested this approval on March 5th and will update the Commission on the status of this request and recruitment.

Staff Trainings

Following the large number of successful recruitments in recent months, the department is engaged in extensive staff onboarding and training. All new staff participate in a preliminary training session that teaches them the basics of the Commission’s laws, programs, learning resources, and disclosure systems. This session was provided in December and again in February to two cohorts of new staff members. Building on that introductory course, staff members are now being trained in greater depth on the Commission’s laws, programs, and systems. These trainings include:

- On February 10th, the Policy and EDDA Divisions trained staff on basic campaign finance rules and how to utilize the campaign finance dashboard and other resources to review financial disclosures.

- On February 20th, the EDDA Division delivered a training to Commission staff on how to use DataSF, the City's open data portal, which is used in a number of enforcement and compliance processes.
- On February 28th, Engagement and Compliance staff completed the Customer Focused Communication training presented by DHR that discusses best practices in providing services to the public.
- On March 7th, the Engagement and Compliance Division delivered an in-depth training on ethics laws to Commission staff. This training mirrored the one that is currently being provided to the City's directors and managers.
- On March 19th, the Policy Division will deliver an additional training to staff on campaign finance laws. This training mirrors the training that is provided to candidates and treasurers.
- The EDDA Division is currently scheduling training sessions to be provided by the Commission's technology vendor NetFile so that staff will be trained in the features of NetFile's systems.

Policy Updates

Interested Persons Meetings on Streamlining Various Ethics Policies and Programs

The Policy Division will be holding two interested persons meetings this week to discuss potential changes to the City's rules regarding major developers, campaign consultants, recusals, expenditure limits for candidates receiving public funds, and the reporting requirements for candidates in trustee elections.

Staff are inviting the public, advocates, and members of the regulated community to participate in one or both meetings to learn about their experiences with these program areas. These meetings will inform staff during the policy development process, as they evaluate the effectiveness of each program before making recommendations to the Commission.

The meetings will have the same agenda and be held on Tuesday March 11th and Thursday March 13th. More information on the meetings and how to RSVP is [available on the Commission's website](#).

AB-1170 – Statements of Economic Interests

As reported in the November Executive Director's report, the governor signed AB 1170 in September 2024. The bill went into effect January 1st, and it changed state laws governing how certain government officials are required to file the Form 700 Statement of Economic Interests. The new law requires that certain top local government officers begin filing the Form 700 with the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) through that agency's online filing system.

As previously discussed, the FPPC's implementation of AB-1170 currently requires some of the City's Form 700 filers to file twice. This double filing is currently necessary to ensure the City's Form 700 data is easily accessible to the public and integrated into the City's disclosure system with the rest of the Form 700 filer data.

Staff have continued to engage with the FPPC on this issue, both in private and through [public comment](#) during the FPPC's February meeting. A legislative amendment is likely needed to maintain the integrity of the City's disclosure system while removing the double filing requirement. Staff are working with the

Mayor's office and exploring what legislative paths are currently available at the State level. Staff continue to engage with the FPPC on this issue as well.

Audit Updates

As of March 7th, the Audits Division has received supporting documentation from 24 of the 27 candidate committees undergoing mandatory audits. Sixteen committees provided records by the deadline of February 14th, while 7 committees, which are all represented by the same treasurer, were granted staggered extensions upon request prior to the deadline. As part of an initial Scoping and Risk Assessment phase, auditors have analyzed campaign finance data, reviewed and organized the audit records, requested additional or missing records as needed, and reconciled transaction totals in bank statements and campaign disclosure statements for 24 committees.

For in-depth testing of contributions and expenditures, the 27 committees have been divided into three "tranches" with staggered start dates and target completion dates. Auditors have initiated the Contribution Testing phase for the 9 committees included in Tranche 1. The first step is for auditors to develop sampling plans for each committee, using a consistent Division sampling protocol aimed at selecting a representative sample of transactions for testing. The target report publication date for the Tranche 1 audits is June 6, 2025.

Engagement and Compliance Updates

Staff in the Engagement and Compliance Division have been administering a busy Statement of Economic Interest (Form 700) filing season. Citywide, there are roughly 6,000 officers and employees who are required to file the form each year to report their personal financial interests. Staff conducted two filing officer trainings in early February that were attended by a total of 65 attendees. Additionally, Staff held two filer information sessions for Form 700 Filers, with 257 filers attending to learn more about their disclosure requirements and how to use NetFile. Staff are currently in the process of planning trainings and resources to assist filing officers with the required post-deadline compliance reviews. These facial reviews are required under state, and the Commission will ensure that departmental filing officers have the necessary information to successfully complete the reviews.

The quarterly report of the Engagement and Compliance Division will be presented at the April meeting.