



San Francisco Ethics Commission

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Date: December 8, 2025
To: Members of the Ethics Commission
From: Patrick Ford, Executive Director
Subject: **Agenda Item 4 – 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.

Behested Payment Waiver Legislation Update

In October, the Commission voted unanimously to continue an ordinance introduced by Board of Supervisors President Rafael Mandelman that would amend the waiver provision of the City’s behested payment prohibition ([File #250947](#)). The most significant change brought by this ordinance is that it would allow for the Board of Supervisors to grant behested payment waivers to officers and employees of the Board of Supervisors, who are currently prohibited from receiving waivers.

In November, the legislation was considered again with additional research presented by Commission staff. During the meeting, the Commission voted unanimously to continue the ordinance to a future meeting, so that additional Commissioners could potentially be present for the vote and so that staff could have additional time review and consider the ordinance.

Staff are following up with President Mandelman’s office to discuss potential amendments and recommendations and are conducting additional research and outreach regarding this ordinance. We anticipate this item being considered again at the Ethics Commission meeting in January 2026.

We look forward to providing additional updates on this ordinance soon.

Employee Survey

In September and October, 22 out of 25 staff members (excluding the Executive Director and Deputy Director) completed the Commission’s Employee Survey. This will be an annual effort to identify strengths and weaknesses in the Commission’s operations.

The survey results provided meaningful insight into staff’s day-to-day experiences, including the following high-level takeaways:

- **Overall Culture:** 64% of staff believe the overall culture is excellent, while 36% believe it is good, and nobody believes it is fair or poor.

- **Strengths:** Staff repeatedly emphasized how much they enjoy their coworkers and the sense of community at the Commission. They also identified the sense of purpose and mission as a major positive of working for the Ethics Commission. Staff also enjoy facing new challenges, seeing the impact of their work, and participating in monthly staff meetings.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Staff want to see improvements to the Commission's office space and clarity on both departmental and Citywide policies.
- **General Direction:** Staff overwhelmingly believe that the agency is heading in a positive direction and that the Commission provides strong leadership for the department.

The Operations Division will be working to implement actionable feedback over the coming year, and will re-issue another survey in September 2026.

Budget

The FY27–FY28 is set to begin this month. The Mayor's Budget Office (MBO) anticipates issuing budget instructions to departments on Thursday December 11th. Although details about the instructions are unknown at the time of writing, the Mayor has [publicly indicated](#) that the City's budget deficit will be greater than in last year's budget process and could be as large as \$1 billion. This makes it likely that the Ethics Commission will be asked to cut its budget again. We will work collaboratively with MBO to identify all possible ways to reduce the Commission's budget without impacting staff positions or compromising the department's core functions. However, prior budget cuts have already reduced the Commission's staffing levels and required reductions to operations, and further cuts will likely be challenging to make without serious impacts.

City law requires that each department hold two public meetings to discuss the department's budget prior to submission of the department's budget proposal. The Ethics Commission will hold these public discussions at the Commission's regularly scheduled meetings on January 9th and February 13th. Budget instructions will have been issued by that time, and staff will provide information about how the department might respond to the instructions and what potential impacts would be. We encourage all stakeholders and members of the public who have an interest in the work of the Ethics Commission to participate in these discussions.