



# San Francisco Ethics Commission

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

---

Date: July 6, 2026  
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.

### Charter Reform

As reported in March, the City’s charter reform efforts are in their final stage. Signatures are being gathered for the three ballot measures promoted by Mayor Lurie and Supervisor Mandelman. The measures would make changes to how measures are placed on the ballot, enhance the executive authority of the Mayor and the City administrator, and change City procurement rules. Additionally, a fourth charter amendment and an accompanying ordinance are working through the Board of Supervisors that would make additional changes. These are primarily minor changes and would eliminate certain inactive commissions.

Crucially, none of the charter amendments nor the draft ordinance would make any changes to the Ethics Commission. This outcome reflects extensive work by Commissioners, staff, and community stakeholders to safeguard the independence and efficacy of the Commission, which was under significant threat as part of this process. During the proceedings of the Prop E Commission Streamlining Task Force, Task Force staff had recommended that Ethics Commissioners lose their for-cause removal protection and become removable at will by their appointing authorities. This would have undermined the Commission’s independence by making members removable for any reason, potentially including enforcement or policy actions that impacted appointing authorities.

Additionally, most Task Force members supported removing or significantly curtailing the Commission’s ability to place campaign finance and ethics measures before voters. This would have removed a core power of the Commission, which was used to create the City’s public campaign financing program and to reform ethics rules in the wake of the major corruption scandals that have taken place in the last six years.

### Budget Update

On June 1, the Mayor’s Office released its [Proposed FY27 and FY28 Budget](#). This budget proposed cutting the Ethics Commission’s total FY27 operating budget by 10.1%, from the projected FY27 baseline

of \$7.0 million to \$6.3 million.<sup>1</sup> This cut is comprised of the elimination of two staff positions totaling \$379,601, along with an additional cut of \$321,289 that the department is expected to cover through attrition savings. As a small department with limited discretionary funding, reductions like this have a significant operational impact.

The two staff positions cut in the FY27 budget are the 1222 Payroll Clerk (Operations Division) and one of the two remaining 1823 Senior Program Administrator positions (Engagement and Compliance). The Payroll Clerk position was filled by an incumbent, and on April 6<sup>th</sup> the Mayor's Office initiated a mid-year cut and issued a layoff notice to the Commission's Payroll Clerk. This employee's final day of work with the Commission was June 25, and she has since been reassigned to the City Administrator's Office. The Senior Program Administrator position was vacant at the time of the proposed cut.

On June 10, I appeared at the Board of Supervisors Budget and Appropriations Committee to discuss the Commission's proposed budget. In particular, [the presentation](#) noted some of the impacts that will occur from losing two positions. The impacts will be felt most acutely in compliance-related functions such as trainings, advice, and development of educational materials. But given the small staff the Commission has at present, the loss of two positions will have broader impacts across the department as work assignments have to be changed in order to absorb the essential functions performed by the two eliminated positions.

As part of the Board of Supervisors phase of the budget process, the Board's Budget and Legislative Analyst (BLA) recommended additional reductions to the Ethics Commission's budget on top of what the Mayor's Office had already recommended. This round of additional cuts is how the Board of Supervisors builds a pool of money that it can use to fund projects that are of personal interest to members of the Board. The BLA recommended cutting an additional \$188,750 from the Ethics Commission's budget, bringing the total proposed cut to \$6,140,533 (12.8%). In addition, the BLA is also cutting \$159,897 from the Elections Campaign Fund.

On June 26, the Budget and Appropriations Committee voted to approve the budget with this total cut to the Commission included. The budget will now be voted on by the full Board with the target of sending an approved budget to the Mayor for signature by August 1.

### End of Fiscal Year Planning

The Commission is currently carrying out end-of-fiscal-year review and planning activities. This includes the annual Performance Plan and Appraisal Report (PPAR) process, which is the City's annual goal setting and performance review process. The process for FY26 performance reviews is completed for most employees, with the remainder set for completion by mid-July. The division managers and

---

<sup>1</sup> The Ethics Commission's operating budget excludes the Election Campaign Fund, which is a separate fund that provides funding for the City's public campaign financing program.

executive leadership have been working to identify high-level project goals for FY27. These project goals, which are summarized below, will inform the staff's work during FY27 and will form the basis for the FY27 PPARs, which will be drafted and finalized during July. These project goals do not encompass all of the Commission's work. The execution of standard, ongoing work is not included in the project goals. The project goals are used to identify discreet projects to be conducted during the fiscal year that will further enhance the Commission's work and achievement of its mandates. Some of the main project goals identified for FY27 are:

- Officewide goals (many or all division will perform each of these goals):
  - Make a further round of improvements to the Commission's website (beyond the work completed in FY26, discussed below)
  - Review the Key Performance Indicators that were tracked in FY26 to identify trends and make any potential changes in how KPIs are measured
  - Further expand the use of technology in the Commission's work to broaden reach and increase efficiency
  - Implement business process changes that are necessitated by the State of California's transition to a new system for online filings (Cal Access Replacement System)
- Enforcement Goals:
  - Review and streamline complaint intake procedures
  - Review and streamline the process for issuing late fees for late filings
  - Implement amendments to the Enforcement Regulations
- Audits Goals
  - Complete the Audit Manual and related protocol documents
  - Complete lobbyist audits
  - Review the 2024 election audit process and identify any improvements to implement for the 2026 election audits
- EDDA Goals
  - Implement the new contract with NetFile
  - Support officewide implementation of AI and business process automations
  - Carry out systems changes to comply with changes in Citywide technology policy
  - Maintain the Campaign Dashboards for the November 3, 2026 election
  - Reduce customer service requests through technical and business process improvements
  - Contract with a service provider for electronic document review and investigations platform
- Policy Goals
  - Secure the approval of streamlining legislation to wind down certain programs to account for past years' budget cuts
  - Complete additional project to address problems in City laws, including the campaign finance legislation addressed in Agenda Item 12, the blanket exception for nonprofit lobbying activities, and the abuse of slate mailer organizations to obscure independent expenditure activity

- Engagement and Compliance Goals:
  - Finalize division protocols that were initiated in FY26
  - Revamp compliance document management system
- Operations Goals:
  - Finalize division protocols that were initiated in FY26
  - Guide Commission through business process changes and downsizing to react to ongoing budget cuts
  - Enact annual spending plan to ensure maximum utilization of budgeted resources

### Website Enhancements

In July the Commission will complete a project initiated in Q4 of FY26 to enhance content on the Commission's website. As part of the Commission's work to ensure the most comprehensive and useful information is made available to the public, staff performs periodic reviews of all webpages to make information clearer in response to stakeholder feedback and to made structural changes to make navigation easier and more intuitive for users. In the current project, staff identified some pages that were duplicative and could be consolidated to avoid confusion. Staff also worked on creating clearer paths for how people self-navigate to information on the website. During this project, opportunities to do more extensive reworking were identified for a handful of webpages. That work will be carried out over a longer period as a project goal during FY27. Also as part of this project, staff are developing a new system for tracking webpage updates so that needs can be catalogued and systematically addressed on a more rolling basis.

### Cal-Access Replacement System

The Policy Division is preparing for the launch of the Cal-Access Replacement System shortly after the November 2026 General Election. The Cal-Access system is a public website administered by the State of California that provides campaign disclosure data for the public to keep track of political contributions and spending, similar to our local campaign finance dashboards and campaign finance statement portal. This project was initiated by the California Secretary of State in 2016 and seeks to make the system more reliable, transparent, and accessible.

In tandem with the new system, there are pending changes to California's Political Reform Act and proposed updates to Fair Political Practices Commission campaign forms that will go into effect once the new System is live. The Policy Division is working closely with other divisions to determine any changes to program operations, published resources, or City rules that may be required as part of this project and will be supporting efforts to operationalize these changes. There will be additional updates in the coming months as this work progresses.