

**CITY OF LONG BEACH
ETHICS COMMISSION**

**Barbara A. Pollack, Chair
Chief Coleman, Vice Chair
Raul Añorve, Commissioner
Lani De Benedictis, Commissioner**



**Margo Morales, Commissioner
J.P. Shotwell, Commissioner
Susan Wise, Commissioner**

April 17, 2025

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
City Manager Tom Modica
City of Long Beach
411 West Ocean Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Ethics Commission FY26 Budget Letter

Honorable Mayor Richardson, Members of the City Council, and City Manager Tom Modica:

As indicated in our Mission Statement, the Ethics Commission (Commission) strives to advance public trust and confidence in the City's government through education and the development of policies and processes that promote each of the City's values of Accountability, Fairness, Impartiality, Diversity, Transparency, and Integrity.

We would like to thank the Mayor and Council for allocating the one-time funding in the FY 2025 budget for the development of an Ethics strategic vision. The Commission is strongly committed to fostering an environment where all decisions are made through an ethical lens. We recognize that instilling an ethical basis for decision making will require fiscal resources. As such, the following is to provide input from the Ethics Commission on the Proposed Fiscal Year 2026 Budget (Proposed Budget).

Request for Funding

As discussed more fully below, we request (1) \$10,000 for conferences and training for members of the Commission and \$50,000 for conferences and training of City ethics professionals; (2) one additional full-time professional in the Office of Ethics and Transparency (OET) as well as tools to operate effectively; and (3) additional resources in the Office of the City Attorney to provide integrative support for the OET and the Commission.

1. Training and Conferences:

The Commission respectfully requests an on-going allocation of \$10,000 for attendance at conferences and education opportunities for Commissioners and \$50,000 for education and conferences for employees in the City's Ethics Office of Ethics and Transparency (OET or the Ethics Office). The OET has been in place for just over 3 years. While staffed with exceptional personnel, on-going opportunities for staff to continue to expand their education regarding municipal government ethics programs is key to mature the organization and gain the confidence of the City's employees and the public. In order for staff to continue their progression, we request \$50,000.00 for training and professional development of the OET staff.

As the OET is entering a critical maturation phase, the Commission is in a time of transition. Former Mayor Robert Garcia's inaugural appointee, Margo Morales, and City Auditor Laura Doud's inaugural appointees, Susan Wise and J.P. Shotwell, will term out in June. In December 2023, the Commission selected Johnathan "Chief" Coleman to fill an at-large vacancy. As you may be aware, the Commission has been very active in developing and reviewing policies and procedures since our first meeting in 2019 and there will be resources required to bring the new Commissioners up to speed. Currently, specific funding is not available to support attendance of Commissioners at any training. Therefore, the Commission requests \$10,000.00 to assist in training of Commissioners, as to not interrupt the progression and knowledge base of the Commission.

2. Additional Resources for the OET:

Using the one-time funding allocated in the FY 2024 budget, the OET was able to engage the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (Markkula) to support the development of a strategic vision for ethics in the City. Markkula interviewed much of the City's leadership and conducted a series of community outreach programs to solicit input for the strategic roadmap. The Commission has received the input from Markkula and worked with the OET to identify and track actions assigned to the OET and to the Commission.

In the next one to two years, based on its strategic roadmap, the OET anticipates deploying:

- a framework for ethical decision-making,
- education and training initiatives that will address the low awareness and neutral perceptions of the ethics program by City employees,
- public meetings to promote engagement and community understanding of campaign finance, conflicts of interest, and governmental ethics, and
- development of operational policies that bridge disparate parts of the City government (e.g. City Manager departments, legislative branch, Port and Utilities).

It is essential that funding is available to develop an information program so that staff, the community, and leadership are cognizant of the strategic vision.

One critical staff member in the OET, Jorge Godinez, has been helping to launch the Long Beach program in support of the 2028 Olympics. The time needed to support the Olympics likely will grow in the next fiscal year. Mr. Godinez has been engaged with the OET and the Commission on implementation of the strategic roadmap and we very much want him to continue that work. Even if he could support the OET full-time, we would need additional personnel to fulfill the OET and Commission mission as implemented through the strategic roadmap. We are asking for one additional full-time staff member for OET in addition to the support we receive from Mr. Godinez.

As the OET implements the strategic roadmap and framework for ethical decision-making, and City employees increase use of the Ethics HelpLine, there may be software tools that enable more efficient and effective operation of the OET. We urge you to ensure the City Manager's office has sufficient funding to support procurement and deployment of such software.

3. Increased Staff in the Office of the City Attorney

The City Attorney and her staff are vital partners in the successful execution of policy and legislative recommendations drafted by the Commission for consideration by the Council and the City departments. As the OET implements its responsibilities in furtherance of the strategic

roadmap, many important legal issues arise. The current budget included funding for part-time support from one Deputy City Attorney along with her other significant responsibilities. The Commission partners closely with the City Attorney's office and recognizes the inevitable impact of our requirements on City staff. While the City Attorney's office meets all of the current requirements, there is a great deal of additional work needed to ensure effective roll-out of the strategic plan. Given the close relationship between legal compliance and ethics, we request sufficient resources in the City Attorney's office to provide unified support for the OET and the Commission. We value the attorney presently assigned to the OET and the Commission (Anita Lakhani), but the support model is "on-call" while effective implementation of the strategic roadmap requires an integrative team approach. We urge the City to provide additional resources in the City Attorney's office to relieve the significant workload on City Attorney departmental counsel.

Additional Consideration: Ethics and Good Governance Ordinance

The Commission has approved a proposed Ethics and Good Governance Ordinance for consideration by the City Council. If approved, the burden of drafting final ordinance language will fall on the City Attorney's office. In addition, the proposed draft would require additional resources in the City Clerk's office to implement changes to the lobbyist rules and educate the City staff and the public on the new requirements. We believe these revisions are necessary and appropriate and should be supported by adequate staffing. We are not asking for additional resources to support implementation of the Ethics and Good Governance Ordinance at this time but highlight this issue for future consideration.

Conclusion

The Ethics Commission has passed its 5-year anniversary. Our first two years were consumed largely by selection of the members of the Independent Redistricting Commission, appointment of the 3 "at-large" Commission members, and the challenges of operating during the COVID pandemic. With the support of the City Council, we now have a new Code of Ethics in place, an education portal and training materials, a HelpLine, and liaison partners throughout City government. We thank the City Council for its support and look forward to the next phase of accomplishments coincident with implementation of the strategic roadmap.

We appreciate your support of this request and look forward to collaborating with you to translate the important work of the Ethics Commission into positive and noticeable results. Our incoming Chair, Barbara Pollack and Vice Chair Chief Coleman are available to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Barbara A. Pollack
Ethics Commission, Chair



Johnathan Coleman
Ethics Commission, Vice Chair