

NEWS FROM THE OAKLAND ETHICS COMMISSION

CITY OF OAKLAND Public Ethics Commission

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How Open is Oakland City Government?

As State leaders wrestle with whether California cities must comply with the Public Records Act, Oakland City government forges ahead on the transparency front with a public hearing set for June 25, 2013 at 6:30 p.m. in the City Council Chambers at Oakland City Hall.

The Oakland Public Ethics Commission, in partnership with OpenOakland, will host the informational hearing to assess the City's current practices and explore innovations that could be applied to expand transparency in Oakland with speakers such as Tim O'Reilly, of O'Reilly Media, and others from the Sunlight Foundation, California Forward, OpenOakland, Oakland City Administrator's office, and the Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership.

The City of Oakland is part of a growing movement of cities across the country looking to upgrade, innovate and adapt their practices to better meet the needs of citizens through transparency and open government. Oakland's Sunshine Ordinance incorporates all of the California Public Records Act provisions and more, along with stricter Brown Act (open meetings) requirements. The Public Ethics Commission is charged with the duty to ensure compliance with the Sunshine Ordinance.

The Public Ethics Commission initiated a review of Oakland City government transparency in January and issued recommendations to City officials to improve the public's access to public records. Commission staff has been helping facilitate policy and operational changes that overlap with the Code for America project to create a public records request system for the City. Now the Commission is hosting this informational hearing to elevate the issue, learn from innovators, and facilitate a dialogue around what kind of transparency Oakland residents want in their City government. The Public Ethics Commission will take what is heard at the hearing and develop recommendations for City officials in the weeks following the hearing.

"The goals of the transparency hearing are to envision what kind of transparency we want here in Oakland and lay out a roadmap for how to get there," said Aspen Baker, Vice-Chair of the Public Ethics Commission. "Oakland has a unique opportunity to design a system that provides greater transparency, reflects 21st century thinking and technology, and better meets our community's needs."

The Commission invites the public to join the conversation via the following:

1. Text your input: How transparent is Oakland City government? Choose a letter grade (A-F) and text it to (510) 470-7852. Courtesy of *Textizen*.
2. Watch the hearing live online and comment real-time, thanks to *Vuact*; go to the Public Ethics Commission webpage on Tuesday at www.oaklandnet.com/pec/transparency.
3. Comment on the project at www.engageoakland.com and click on Transparency Hearing.

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