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Ethics Commission Appoints New Executive Director

Commission Appoints Nicolas Heidorn as the Executive Director.

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May 9, 2023 — The City of Oakland Public Ethics Commission today announced the selection of Nicolas Heidorn as its new Executive Director. As Executive Director, Mr. Heidorn will lead the administration and enforcement of Oakland campaign finance, lobbying, transparency, and government ethics laws and will manage a staff of six. He will also oversee the implementation of the city’s newly enacted Fair Elections Act, an innovative public campaign financing program for Oakland candidates, that will put Democracy Dollars vouchers directly into the hands of community voters during elections.

“After an exhaustive search, we are thrilled to have selected an exceptionally qualified Executive Director,” said Commission Chair Ryan Micik. “We’re excited to work with Nicolas to advance a more ethical, transparent, and equitable Oakland.”

Mr. Heidorn has over a decade of experience working on state and local democracy policy and reform. He is the former Staff Director and Chief Consultant of the California State Senate Elections and Constitutional Amendments Committee, where he advised Senate leadership and the Committee Chair and members on elections, campaign finance, and governance policy. Prior to that, he served as the Policy and Legal Director of California Common Cause. At Common Cause, he passed state legislation to establish campaign contribution limits at the local level and legalize public financing of campaigns, as well as local reform measures like an ordinance creating the City of Sacramento’s Ethics Commission. Currently, he runs a consulting firm advising good government and voting rights organizations with election reform policy and legal analysis. His consulting work included researching and evaluating different local public financing systems for the coalition of organizations that advocated for Oakland’s Measure W Democracy Dollars system.

“With his wealth of experience and track record working for good governance and campaign finance reform, the Commission is gaining a great asset in Nicolas. Our PEC team is looking forward to all the good work we are going to accomplish together with his leadership,” said Acting Executive Director Suzanne Doran.

“The PEC plays a critical role in maintaining and strengthening the health of Oakland’s local democracy. I am proud to join with the PEC’s exceptional and dedicated commissioners and staff to advance this important mission,” said Mr. Heidorn. “I am also grateful for Chair Micik and Suzanne’s leadership and am looking forward to partnering with them and the PEC team in this exciting work.”

Mr. Heidorn has a J.D. from Harvard Law School and a B.A. from Claremont McKenna College.

Mr. Heidorn succeeds Acting Executive Director Suzanne Doran, Lead Analyst for the Public Ethics Commission, who assumed the role in the interim after the departure of former Executive Director Kellie Johnson in November 2022.

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About the Public Ethics Commission

The Public Ethics Commission ensures compliance with the City of Oakland’s government ethics, campaign finance, transparency, and lobbyist registration laws that aim to promote fairness, openness, honesty, and integrity in city government.

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