THE METROPOLITAN WATER DISTRICT OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Committee Item
INFORMATION

Ethics Committee

10/12/2026 Committee Meeting

6d

Subject

Review of Ethics Office investigation procedures: A preview of January item and opportunity for input

Background

Item 6d provides a brief overview of investigation procedures the Ethics Office is currently reviewing for potential revision. Staff will solicit feedback from the Committee and will bring the item back to the Committee in January for a more detailed discussion.

Metropolitan's ethics investigation procedures were reviewed and overhauled after a multi-year review in the fall of 2021. After five years of applying the procedures, the Ethics Office is reviewing areas for potential amendment. The areas identified for review and analysis stem from staff's experience applying the procedures in ethics complaints and investigations and stakeholder feedback.

After receiving feedback from the Committee, staff will review additional procedures, if requested, draft a preliminary proposal, assess the proposal with outside counsel, and bring back to the Committee for further discussion in January. After the January meeting, staff will finalize the proposal, seek independent review from outside counsel, and discuss it with the department heads and bargaining units. After these steps are complete, this item is anticipated to return to the Ethics Committee for consideration and proposed action in spring 2027.

Provisions Identified for Review and Potential Amendment

- Amend language to reflect current practice that written investigation notices inform parties of Metropolitan's prohibition on retaliation and confidentiality.
- Clarify that if the General Counsel or other office handles an ethics-related complaint involving Ethics Office staff, the same Administrative Code complaint and investigative procedures applicable to ethics matters are required.
- Clarify the timeframe for completing investigations.
- Clarify the type of information the Ethics Office provides after an investigation to respondents and those responsible for deciding potential action.
- More expressly state that investigation-related information provided to the Executive Committee to resolve director violations must be provided publicly under the Brown Act.
- Provide clarifying language on the levels of violations.
- Identify where mandatory public information on ethics investigations is posted.

- Consider whether substantiated ethics violations involving directors should be referred to the full Board for consideration of further action instead of the Executive Committee. (If responsibility ends with Executive Committee, amend the Administrative Code language to make it more explicit.)
- Make explicit that in addition to reviewing and considering directors' substantiated ethics violations, the Executive Committee (or Board, if desired) also decides on further action, if any.
- Add Administrative Code language specifying that directors may provide comment during the public meeting in which their ethics violation is considered for further action.
- Continue discussions with Fair Political Practices Commission to assess whether there is any ability to coordinate certain ethics investigations.