



City of Sugar Land

Independent Ethics Review Board Agenda

Sugar Land City Hall
2700 Town Center
Boulevard North
Sugar Land, TX 77479

Thursday, July 17, 2025
Independent Ethics Review Board Meeting
Cane Room 161
5:00 PM

I. Attention

Members of the City Council, Board and/or Commission may participate in deliberations of posted agenda items through video conferencing means. A quorum of the City Council, Board and/or Commission will be physically present at the above-stated location, and said location is open to the public. Audio/Video of open deliberations will be available for the public to hear/view; and are recorded as per the Texas Open Meetings Act.

The meeting will live stream at <https://youtube.com/live/7pl4a8rWSfQ?feature=share>.

II. Call to Order

III. Public Comment

Pursuant to Texas Government Code section 551.007, citizens are permitted to address the City Council, Board and/or Commission in person with regard to matters posted for consideration on the agenda. Each speaker must complete a "Request to Speak" form and give it to the City Secretary or designee, prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Each speaker is limited to 3 minutes, speakers requiring a translator will have 6 minutes, regardless of the number of agenda items to be addressed. Comments or discussion by City Council, Board, and/or Commission members, will only be made at the time the subject is scheduled for consideration.

For questions or assistance, please contact the Office of the City Secretary (281) 275-2730.

IV. Minutes

A. MINUTES

Consideration of and action on the minutes of the April 7, 2025 meeting.

Linda Mendenhall, City Clerk

V. Recent Articles of Interest

A. ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Review of and discussion on recent articles of interest.

Krista Stegemiller, Chair

VI. Adjournment

The Independent Ethics Review Board reserves the right, upon motion, to suspend the rules to consider business out of the posted order. In addition to any executive session listed above, the independent ethics review board reserves the right to adjourn into executive session at any time during this meeting for the purpose of consultation with the attorney as authorized by Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 to discuss any of the matters listed above.

If you plan to attend this public meeting and you have a disability that requires special arrangements at the meeting, please contact the City Secretary, (281) 275-2730. Requests for special services must be received 48 hours prior to the meeting time. Reasonable accommodations will be made to assist your needs.

I hereby certify that the above notice was posted on the outside bulletin boards, a place convenient and readily accessible to the general public at all times, City of Sugar Land City Hall, 2700 Town Center Boulevard North, Sugar Land, Fort Bend County, Texas, 77479, and on the [City Website](#) under meeting agendas.



Independent Ethics Review Board Agenda Request July 17, 2025

Agenda Request No: IV.A.

Agenda of: Independent Ethics Review Board Meeting

Initiated by: Justin Perez, Agenda Coordinator

Presented by: Linda Mendenhall, City Clerk

Responsible Department: Admin

Agenda Caption:

MINUTES

Consideration of and action on the minutes of the April 7, 2025 meeting.

Recommended Action:

Consideration of and action on the minutes of the April 7, 2025 meeting.

Executive Summary:

Consideration of and action on the minutes of the April 7, 2025 meeting.

Budget

Expenditure Required: N/A

Current Budget: N/A

Additional Funding: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

Account Number (ORG-OBJ-Project): N/A

Attachments

1. April 7, 2025 IERB Minutes



CITY OF SUGAR LAND

MONDAY, APRIL 7, 2025

INDEPENDENT ETHICS REVIEW BOARD MINUTES

5:30 PM

Council Chamber

QUORUM PRESENT

The Independent Ethics Review Board meeting started at 5:43 p.m.
All members of the Board were present.

I. ATTENTION

A. Members of the City Council, Board and/or Commission may participate in deliberations of posted agenda items through videoconferencing means. A quorum of the City Council, Board and/or Commission will be physically present at the above-stated location, and said location is open to the public. Audio/Video of open deliberations will be available for the public to hear/view, and are recorded as per the Texas Open Meetings Act.

The meeting will live stream at https://youtube.com/live/t83oa5_I4-U?feature=share.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Pursuant to Texas Government Code section 551.007, citizens are permitted to address the City Council, Board and/or Commission in person with regard to matters posted for consideration on the agenda. Each speaker must complete a "Request to Speak" form and give it to the City Secretary or designee, prior to the beginning of the meeting.

Each speaker is limited to three (3) minutes, speakers requiring a translator will have six (6) minutes, regardless of the number of agenda items to be addressed. Comments or discussion by City Council, Board, and/or Commission members, will only be made at the time the subject is scheduled for consideration.

For questions or assistance, please contact the Office of the City Secretary (281) 275-

2730.

No members of the public addressed the Board.

III. MINUTES

A. Consideration of and action on the minutes of the January 30, 2025 meeting.

Linda Mendenhall, City Clerk

A motion to **Approve**, Item III-A, Approval of the minutes of the January 30, 2025 meeting., was made by Chris Crosby and seconded by Steve Tralie, the motion **Passed**.

Ayes: Bowen, Calobrisi, Crosby, Earle, Martinez, Stegemiller, Suhl, Tralie, Wolf

IV. RECENT ARTICLES OF INTEREST

A. Review of and discussion on recent ethics articles of interest.

Krista Stegemiller, Chair

Krista Stegemiller, Chair led the discussion. The Board discussed the recent articles that appeared in U.S newspapers regarding ethics and local governments.

V. ADJOURNMENT

A motion to **Approve**, Adjournment at 6:41 p.m., was made by Amy Suhl and seconded by Andrew Wolf, the motion **Passed**.

Ayes: Bowen, Calobrisi, Crosby, Earle, Martinez, Stegemiller, Suhl, Tralie, Wolf

THE INDEPENDENT ETHICS REVIEW BOARD RESERVES THE RIGHT, UPON MOTION, TO SUSPEND THE RULES TO CONSIDER BUSINESS OUT OF THE POSTED ORDER. IN ADDITION TO ANY EXECUTIVE SESSION LISTED ABOVE, THE INDEPENDENT ETHICS REVIEW BOARD RESERVES THE RIGHT TO ADJOURN INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT ANY TIME DURING THIS MEETING FOR THE PURPOSE OF CONSULTATION WITH THE ATTORNEY AS AUTHORIZED BY TEXAS GOVERNMENT CODE SECTIONS 551.071 TO DISCUSS ANY OF THE MATTERS LISTED ABOVE.

IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THIS PUBLIC MEETING AND YOU HAVE A DISABILITY THAT REQUIRES SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS AT THE MEETING, PLEASE CONTACT THE CITY SECRETARY,

(281) 275-2730. REQUESTS FOR SPECIAL SERVICES MUST BE RECEIVED FORTY-EIGHT (48) HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING TIME. REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS WILL BE MADE TO ASSIST YOUR NEEDS.

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE ABOVE NOTICE WAS POSTED ON THE OUTSIDE BULLETIN BOARDS, A PLACE CONVENIENT AND READILY ACCESSIBLE TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AT ALL TIMES, CITY OF SUGAR LAND CITY HALL, 2700 TOWN CENTER BOULEVARD NORTH, SUGAR LAND, FORT BEND COUNTY, TEXAS, 77479, AND ON THE CITY WEBSITE (WWW.SUGARLANDTX.GOV) UNDER MEETING AGENDAS.

Linda Mendenhall, City Clerk





Independent Ethics Review Board Agenda Request **July 17, 2025**

Agenda Request No: V.A.

Agenda of: Independent Ethics Review Board Meeting

Initiated by: mriede mriede, Senior Assistant City Attorney

Presented by: Krista Stegemiller, Chair

Responsible Department: Legal

Agenda Caption:

ARTICLES OF INTEREST

Review of and discussion on recent articles of interest.

Recommended Action:

Review and discuss recent articles of interest related to ethics and local governments.

Executive Summary:

Each quarter the Board will review and discuss recent articles appearing in U.S. newspapers regarding ethics and local governments.

Budget

Expenditure Required: N/A

Current Budget: N/A

Additional Funding: N/A

Funding Source: N/A

Account Number (ORG-OBJ-Project): N/A

Attachments

1. City of Irving to review ethics policy following campaign finance complaint
2. Cuba mayor fined for ethics violation tied to his gas station
3. Former councilmember Kevin de León faces ethics violation fines

City of Irving to review ethics policy following campaign finance complaint

KERA

By [Megan Cardona](#)

Published June 30, 2025 at 5:20 AM CDT

The city of Irving will review its ethics policy following a campaign finance violation complaint.

The complaint was made against former City Council Place 2 candidate Sergio Porres weeks after he [lost his runoff election to David Pfaff](#).

Porres received a \$40,000 contribution from the Texas Conservative Project PAC, according to a campaign finance report filed on May 30.

Irving's ethics code limits campaign contributions to \$25,000 for candidates running for mayor or city-wide seats.

Porres told KERA that the ethics complaint was a "nothing burger" and that the \$40,000 was used to pay expenses in the general and the runoff—not on one election.

"If [the mayor] decides there's a problem, he would send me a letter letting me know," Porres said, referring to Irving Mayor Rick Stopfer. "He hasn't asked me any questions." Stopfer said during Thursday's work session that he wants to review the policy so that it includes an accountability measure if it's violated.

"Otherwise, we really have a piece of paper that people sign in good faith that really doesn't hold them accountable other than we'll send them a letter and say they weren't accountable of what they did," Stopfer said.

He recommended that the policy have requirements that included a city attorney to review it and include "teeth" if it was violated.

Council members Pfaff and Mark Cronenwett will review the ethics policy and come back with recommendations.

Pfaff said he didn't see the merits of having an ethics policy without an accountability measure.

"Make it very clear that if you're running for a campaign, this is what's expected from you," Pfaff said. "And these are the consequences if you don't run a campaign like this."

Cuba mayor fined for ethics violation tied to his gas station

Target 7 investigation uncovers city directive that funneled taxpayer dollars to mayor's business

T.J. Wilham

Investigative Producer

Jason McNabb

Reporter

CUBA, N.M. — The New Mexico State Ethics Commission has determined Cuba Mayor Denny Herrera violated the Government Conduct Act by benefiting financially from city workers being directed to fuel up at a gas station he owns.

A recent settlement requires Herrera to pay \$2,500 to the Ethics Commission and another \$1,000 in restitution to the Village of Cuba. But a Target 7 investigation reveals that city departments spent more than \$102,000 at Herrera's station over a three-year period, making the financial penalties a small fraction of the revenue generated.

Higher Prices at the Mayor's Pumps

Cuba's mayor owns one of four gas stations in the village.

"His gas prices were regularly higher — 10 to 20 cents a gallon more," said former fire chief Rick Herrera, who refueled fire trucks at the station. "It was wrong, he was profiting from the village government."

Target 7 verified that Herrera's station had the highest price per gallon among the village's fuel providers during a recent visit it cost 18 cents more at his station.

The Email That Sparked It All

An email obtained by Target 7 revealed that village employees were instructed five years ago to “please fuel up at Denny’s Chevron.” At the time, Herrera had not yet been elected mayor.

The former village clerk who sent the email said it was because Herrera’s station was the only one willing to bill the village directly. Still, in the three years following that memo, city departments, including Parks and Recreation, Water and Sewer, Police, Fire and Housing, spent over \$102,000 on fuel at the station.

Ethics Commission Finds Misconduct

According to a news release from the Ethics Commission, investigators “found reason to believe Mr. Herrera benefited from a village directive requiring employees to exclusively refuel at his gas station.”

Legal analyst John Day said the commission’s findings suggest misuse of public office.

“The Ethics Commission said the mayor was basically using the city government to enrich his own pockets,” Day said. “They took action against it.”

Light Penalty Raises Questions

As part of the settlement, Herrera must:

- ◆ Pay a total of \$3,500 to the state and village
- ◆ Disclose his ownership interest in the gas station
- ◆ Clarify that city employees can purchase fuel anywhere

However, Day noted the Ethics Commission has no criminal authority and limited enforcement capabilities.

“They can't impose criminal penalties,” Day said. “The question is, did they have the teeth to make a difference?”

Mayor's Response

Target 7 made several attempts to speak with Mayor Herrera. He declined to comment in person, stating only, “Just look on our website — I posted the ethics stuff, my responses to the paper in Santa Fe.”

In an article in the Santa Fe New Mexican, Herrera maintains that the directive to fuel at his station came from previous administrations. He said he later issued credit cards to city employees and advised them they could fuel up at any location within city limits.

Retaliation Allegations Surface

After filing the ethics complaint, Fire Chief Rick Romero was removed from his leadership role. In a letter dated 11 days after the complaint, Herrera told Romero that the village was “moving in another direction” for the fire chief position.

Day said the timing raises potential legal concerns.

“If I was the fire chief, I'd think I've got a pretty good whistleblower complaint,” Day said.

Romero remains a volunteer firefighter for the village. His attorney, Tom Grover, confirmed that discussions are underway with the village council about possible legal remedies, including reinstatement or compensation.

“My client is a firefighting professional,” Grover said. “That's what he wants to do.”

Looking Ahead

Romero previously ran against Herrera in the last election and lost. The mayor is up for re-election in 2027.

LOS ANGELES CITY

Former L.A. Councilmember Kevin de León is fined \$18,750 for ethics violations

De León failed to disclose his ties to organizations benefitting from three of his votes as councilmember



BY **ALEX MEDINA**
APRIL 23, 2025



Kevin de León speaks at his campaign party in Los Angeles, on Nov. 5, 2024. Photo by Zaydee Sanchez/LAist.

Updated April 24, 2025

Kevin de León was fined \$18,750 for ethics violations during his tenure as L.A. City Council member.

The L.A. City Ethics Commission announced its decision to fine De León on Wednesday.

De León admitted that he “violated City law by making or participating in decisions in which he had a financial interest and failing to disclose income” while serving as Council District 14’s representative, according to a [report by the L.A. City Ethics Commission](#).

In June 2019, De León signed a yearlong contractor agreement with the University of California (USC), receiving a total of \$155,000, the ethics report says.

Less than a year after the university’s last payment, he voted to approve a city budget that included allocated funds of \$1 million for the USC Keck School of Medicine.

The report also states that in May 2020, De León entered a consulting agreement with the Healthy Housing Foundation (HHF) division of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation (AHF) and was paid a total of \$109,231. Less than a year after his last payment, De León participated in three separate city decisions affecting AHF.

On Nov. 25, 2020, De León voted on AHF’s application regarding a historical designation for the AHF-owned King Edward Hotel. On May 4, 2021, he voted on an item regarding a city lease of the AHF-owned Retan Hotel, voting again on the Retan Hotel’s city lease on May 4, 2021.

California state law dictates that elected officials must disclose income of \$500 or more received 12 months before taking office, a rule De León violated in these instances involving AHF and USC, according to the report. In total, De León was paid \$264,231 in consulting fees by AHS and USC.

A spokesperson for De León [told the Los Angeles Times](#) that the “matter centers on disclosure – not personal gain,” and that had “Councilmember De León been advised that he should recuse himself, he would have...”

De León served as CD 14 councilmember from 2020 through 2024. Before then, he served as a California Assemblymember from 2006 to 2010 and Senator from 2010 to 2018.

 English  Español (Spanish)

