

Real Estate Fraud Prosecution Trust Fund Committee Annual Meeting Minutes: FY 2025/2026

DATE: July 13, 2026

ATTENDEES:

Olivia Byron-Cooper – Director, Department of Health & Human Services
Richard Pesce – Chief Investigator, District Attorney’s Office
Simon Brown – Supervising Investigator, District Attorney’s Office
Alison Winter, Principal Management Analyst, CAO’s Office
(voting member-proxy for CAO Sue Phillips)
Undersheriff Eric Palmberg – El Dorado County Sheriff’s Office *(voting member-proxy for Sheriff)*
Justene Cline – Administrative Analyst Supervisor, CAO’s Office
Jeremy Apodaca – Agency Chief Fiscal Officer, CAO’s Office
James Clinchard – Chief Assistant District Attorney, District Attorney’s Office
(voting member-proxy for DA Vern Pierson)
Janelle Horne – Recorder Clerk, El Dorado County Recorder Clerk’s Office
Kimberly Beal- El Dorado County Association of Realtors
Catrina Christenson – Assistant Recorder Clerk, Recorder Clerk’s Office
Douglas Fransham – Deputy District Attorney, District Attorney’s Office

Absent Member(s):

Sue Phillips – CAO, El Dorado County (voting member)
Vern Pierson – District Attorney (voting member)
Jeffery Leikauf – El Dorado County Sheriff (voting member)

CALL TO ORDER: 2:05 P.M.

DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDA AND ANNUAL REPORT FY 2024/2025

Chief Assistant District Attorney James Clinchard welcomed everyone. Roundtable introductions were made.

DISCUSSION / REVIEW OF CASES:

DAI Brown discussed and summarized the 2025-2026 Real Estate Fraud Program statistics:

- Jake Herminghaus is now the assigned Investigator for the Real Estate Fraud Program.
- Working on a couple of big cases. Filed on an older case related to a disabled persons who was taken advantage of.
- As of June 30, 2026, a total of 30 cases have been reported to and investigated by the El Dorado County District Attorney's Office.

- Fiscal Year 25-26 saw reports of solar panel scams in El Dorado County, CA.
- The sales employees of solar panel companies reportedly targeted elderly persons for installation costs, long-term payments, and little or no return on investment. This trend is not unique to El Dorado County, and investigations into solar company sales will continue.

- Recorder clerk now utilizing the fund to offset costs related to fraud prevention. Example: "Proof of ownership" tactics. Contract services (Equity Protect) monitoring public realtor websites for fraudulent listings.
- Property owner gets notified that their property was listed for sale. And if its not confirmed, the listing is flagged and taken down.
- RC has a link on main page for this free service. Has requested the DA's office to have a link as well on their webpage. There is no reason why every single property owner shouldn't sign up.
- RC added a link to their webpage directing the public to the DA's complaint form.
- When Equity Protect sent out informational letters to county residents, it failed to mention the FREE program. RC believes this process can be approved upon as a form of outreach.
- Currently, there are about 2,000 properties that have signed up for monitoring. This is a result of social media posts and press releases. They also have pamphlets that are available at their counter and local title companies that include a QR code to the link.
- Additionally, they have coordinated with the Treasurer Tax collector's Office on including information on public tax notifications.
- On-going annual cost for monitoring is \$1,000 per year.

FY 25/26 EXPENDITURE REPORT:

- Discussion: Justene Cline reviewed the FY 25/26 Real Estate Fraud Summary. Total revenue of \$16,766.94 as accrued interest and expenses of 159,031.92 (*\$148,352.00 for District Attorney expenses and \$10,679.92 for Recorder Clerk*).

Trust Fund Beginning Balance as of July 1, 2025	\$396,724.88
Revenue from Recorded Documents	\$0.00
Interest	<u>\$16,766.94</u>
Total Revenue	\$16,766.94
 Total Expenditures FY 25/26	 <u>\$159,031.92</u>
 Adjusted Ending Fund Balance	 <u>\$254,459.90</u>

PROGRAM RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Real Estate Fraud recording fee suspension was discussed and it was determined, that based on the depleting fund balance, to extend the fee suspension through December 31, 2026 and reinstate the fee at \$2.00 per recording, effective January 1, 2027.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Vote approving transfer of estimated \$159,031.92 from Trust Fund:
 - Motion by: Alison Winter
 - Second by: Eric Palmberg
 - Approved by all voting members
- Vote approving the reinstatement of the recording fee at \$2.00 per recording effective Jan 2027. The current suspension will continue through December 2026:
 - Motion by: Palmberg
 - Second by: James Clinchard
 - Approved by all voting members
- This Report is scheduled on the Consent Calendar for the Board of Supervisors Meeting on July 28, 2026.

MEETING ADJOURNED: 2:37 P.M.