

City Council delivers stinging rebuke of Bonusgate

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Almost as soon as the scandal known as Bonusgate hit the pages of *The Fresno Bee*, Lee Brand has been openly seething in disappointment at a mayoral administration flogging city transparency laws.

Tuesday, Brand and City Council president Oliver Baines met with the press to discuss beefing up the city's Transparency in City Government Act.

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The presser was the platform for Brand and company to provide new proposals to “add teeth” to the transparency law, covering the 1% of city employees not covered by union representation, which are the most senior executives in city government.

Among Brand's proposals is a requirement that any form of employee compensation – such as bonuses or raises – that are greater than 5% of their base salary would require City Council approval.

The package of transparency reforms will be presented as a non-binding resolution on Thursday.

Bonusgate has opened a wide chasm between city's executive branch – largely the Mayor and City Manager – and the City Council. The near-unanimous decision by the Council to pursue reforms is seeing as a much-needed rebalancing of power given the blindsided decision by Mayor Ashley Swearingin to provide bonuses to top lieutenants.

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Already a frontrunner for mayor this election cycle, Brand made it clear that he would eliminate bonuses for employees, saying: “As a businessman, personally, I don't believe in bonuses. You pay the person what they're worth and what the City of Fresno can afford.”

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