



Vermont State Ethics Commission

Minutes of May 5, 2021 (approved)

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Interim Commission Chair Paul Erlbaum at 10:08 a.m. Also present for the meeting were Commission members Christopher Davis, Sarah Biolsi Vangel, Michele Eid, and Executive Director Larry Novins. Michele Eid, who had to attend another matter, left the meeting after it was clear a quorum would allow the meeting to continue.
- 2. Approval of Minutes:** On the motion of Sarah Biolsi Vangel second by Chris Davis, the minutes of the April 7, 2021 meeting were approved.
- 3. Public Comment:** None
- 4. Executive Director's Report:** Larry Novins reported on the Vermont Human Resource Association's efforts to find a successor to Commission member Chair Julie Hulburd.

Trainings: Larry Novins conducted an ethics training for Department of Libraries staff. He has two other trainings scheduled for May 2021.

Responding to an early request for an up-dated candidate disclosure form, Mr. Novins created one for use in 2022. It was sent to the Secretary of State's office where it should be posted after the end of this legislative session.

Office administration. Mr. Novins briefed the Commission on the most recent administrative challenges, including navigation of the new website platform.

5. Legislative Update: Larry Novins reported on the status of the two Ethics Commission bills, H.135 and H.384. H.135 is the resubmitted version of last year's bill. It includes a one-year funding mechanism. If this bill is not passed this session, funding for the Ethics Commission will cease on July 1, 2021. H.135 was stripped of the provision for an administrative assistant position by the House Appropriations Committee after a hearing to which the Ethics Commission received no notice. The provision was added back by the Senate Government Operations Committee. The bill is currently waiting for approval from the Senate Finance Committee which set, then re-scheduled a 15-minute hearing several times. Mr. Novins will monitor the bill's path to try to ensure that it can pass the Senate then go to a Senate/House conference committee to iron out differences in time to be passed into law this session.

H.384, the draft Code of Ethics, was not introduced until March 9, 2021. It has had no House hearings. The Senate Government Operations has held one hearing on it. A second expected hearing has not yet

been scheduled. There is no realistic hope for the Code's passage in either chamber of the legislature this year.

6. Executive Session to Discuss Complaints and Guidance Requests: On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Sarah Biolsi Vangel, the Commission went into executive session to discuss complaints and guidance requests. These matters are confidential per 3 V.S.A. §§ 1221(d), 1223(c), and 1225(a)(3). On the motion of Sarah Biolsi Vangel and Chris Davis the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session.

7. Other Business: Mr. Novins asked the Commission if it would move its June meeting from its normal "first Wednesday" time because he will be unable to attend on June 2. The Commission agreed to hold the Meeting on Friday June 4, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. when Mr. Novins can attend.

8. Adjournment: Sarah Biolsi Vangel moved to adjourn, second by Chris Davis. The meeting adjourned at 10:54 a.m.

Next Meeting: Next monthly meeting **Friday, June 4, 2021*** at 10:00 a.m.

* On the morning of the meeting, the needed Zoom meeting ID number and password will be posted on the Ethics Commission web site under "Meetings." Directions for attending the meeting via internet video or by telephone will be included.