

**Vermont State Ethics Commission**

**Minutes of August 7, 2019 Meeting**

**1. Call to Order:** The meeting, held at the Ethics Commission office in Room 315 at 6 Baldwin St. Montpelier, was called to order by Commission Chair Julie Hulburd at 10:06 a.m. Present for the meeting were Commission members Christopher Davis, Sarah Biolsi Vangel, Michele Eid, and Executive Director Larry Novins.

**2. Approval of Minutes:** On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Michele Eid, the minutes of the July 3, 2019 meeting were approved with one change.

**3. Public Comment**: None

**4. Website:** Larry Novins reported on changes to the website including a new web page with links to sources for Vermont ethics guidance. Among them are: Ethics Commission statutes, the Governor’s 2017 Executive Order, and DHR ethics related sections from its Personnel and Procedures Manual. See, <https://ethicscommission.vermont.gov/ethics-sources>. The Commission had planned a webpage link to an ethics video. Novins reported when he went to verify that the Commission had permission to use the video, it turned out that it did not. Permission to view the video does not extend to the general public. It may be made available for “intranet” viewing by state employees. Novins’ exploration of this option indicates that this may not be a viable option. He will follow up and report back to the Commission in September.

**5. Financial and Spending Policies**: The Commission considered an initial draft of a proposed spending policy presented by Michele Eid. She will revise the draft and present for review at the Commission’s September meeting. The Commission also authorized Larry Novins to continue work with the Agency of Administration to take whatever remaining action is necessary to roll over the FY 2019 surplus into the FY 2020 budget.

**6. Review of Forms**: Larry Novins shared revisions he has made to the Candidate Financial Disclosure Form and the Executive Officer Disclosure Form. They are close to completion. The Commission approved Novins’ re-formatted new Complaint form which will be posted on the website in the near future. The Commission authorized the purchase of a fillable pdf program so that the online forms will be easier for uses to complete.

**7. Advisory Opinions:** The Commissioners continued discussing whether and under what circumstances an advisory opinion may be withdrawn. The Commission discussed Executive Director Novins’ suggestion that AO 18-01 be withdrawn. Novins will prepare a statement of explanation for a withdrawal.

**8. Training Report:** Novins participated in the July 2019 CAPS ethics training. He will continue to collaborate with their trainers. The Executive Director of the Vermont Human Rights Commission discussed with Novins the possibility of providing ethics training to that commission. It may be possible in the future to provide trainings to other boards or commissions.

**9. End of Year Planning:** Executive Director Novins gave a preview what he expects to include in his end of year proposal for future legislation. His review of the ethics statutes and rules of other states will provide the basis for suggested changes to Vermont’s laws. Novins presented his most recent proposal to update the State Code of Ethics: General Principles of Governmental Ethical Conduct. Before a final version is presented for approval by the Commission, Novins will consult with the Department of Human Resources as required by statute.

**10. Executive Director’s Report**: Novins updated the Commission on his efforts to reach out to various state government entities to let them know what the Commission is doing and the direction it may take in the future.

**11. Executive Session to Discuss Complaints and Guidance Requests:** On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Michele Eid, 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). Commissioner Chris Davis recused himself from participation in the discussion of one complaint leaving the meeting until discussion of that matter concluded. On the motion of Michele Eid, second by Chris Davis, the Commission concluded its executive session.

**12. Other Business:** The Executive Director was authorized to participate and man a booth at the Fall Meeting of the Vermont League of Cities and Towns so that participants will be aware of the services the Commission may provide now or in the future. Novins will reach out to town clerks and offer to post their newly adopted ethics rules.

**13. Adjournment:** Sarah Biolsi Vangel moved to adjourn, second by Chris Davis. The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** September 4, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. at Room 315, 6 Baldwin St., Montpelier.