

**Vermont State Ethics Commission**

**Minutes of April 1, 2020 Meeting (approved)**

**1. Call to Order:** The meeting, held on-line via Zoom Meeting, was called to order by Commission Chair Julie Hulburd at 10:05 a.m. Also 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 Paul Erlbaum , second by Christopher Davis, the minutes of the March 11, 2020 meeting were approved.

**3. Public Comment**: None. No member of the public attended the meeting or contacted the office about it.

**4. COVID-19 Accommodations:** The Ethics Commission office continues to operate, but remotely. Larry Novins is able to check and respond to emails. He will go to the office every other week to check for USPS mail or in-state “pink mail” that may have been delivered to the office.

**5. Executive Director’s Report**: Larry Novins reported about the status of H.634 and S.198 which appear at this time to be sidelined while the Legislature attends to urgent matters of State. What may become of these bills is unknown. Of pressing concern to the Ethics Commission is the provision in both bills that extends the sunset provisions governing the Ethics Commission one year until July 1, 2021. Under Act 79, Sec. 13 the State Ethics Commission funding source is scheduled to be repealed on June 30, 2020. Although funds for the Ethics Commission are in the proposed state budget and have been reviewed by the House Appropriations Committee already, it is unclear what repeal of Sec. 13 would mean. Novins will write to House and Senate Government Operations Committees to ask that, if nothing else, the extension of the repeal date to July 1, 2021 be part of some bill that will receive consideration.

**6. Code of Ethics (statutes, Phase II), legislative update.** Given the state of affairs, Novins will continue work on a proposed statutory Code of Ethics, even if not mandated by statute. He will soon write to House and Senate Government Operations Committees to inform them of the Commission’s continuing efforts, then issue a release and schedule one or more public hearings to get input into what a statutory Code of Ethics should include. Vetting the code before submitting it to the legislature next session will permit questions and concerns to be addressed.

**7. Terms of Office Discussion:**  Larry Novins led a discussion about the need for a set term of office for the Commission Chair. On the motion of Christopher Davis, seconded by Paul Erlbaum, the Commission voted 5-0 to have annual Chair elections at the Commission’s January meeting. Since Julie Hulburd has been the Commission chair since March 2019, Chris Davis and Paul Erlbaum nominated her to serve until the next election. There were no other nominations. With Ms. Hulburd abstaining the Commission elected her 4-0.

**8. Executive Session to Discuss Complaints and Guidance Requests:** On the motion of Christopher Davis, second by Michele Eid, the Commission went into executive session to discuss complaints and guidance requests. [No one from the general public was attending the meeting at the time, so no special exclusions to the meeting were employed.] Complaints and guidance requests are confidential per 3 V.S.A. §§ 1221(d), 1223(c), and 1225(a)(3). On the motion of Paul Erlbaum and Michele Eid the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session.

**Other Business:** None

**9. Adjournment:** Michele Eid moved to adjourn, second by Paul Erlbaum. The meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

**Next Meeting:** Wednesday, May 6, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. on-line again.