



Vermont State Ethics Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 1, 2023

Remote Attendance*

1. Call to Order: The regular meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Paul Erlbaum at 10:01 A.M. Also present for the meeting were Commission members Sarah Butson, Michele Eid, Christopher Davis, Executive Director Christina Sivret, and Administrative Assistant Erin Smith. Commission member Sarah Biolsi Vangel arrived at 10:27.

2. Approval of Minutes: On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Michele Eid, minutes of the January 4, 2023, meeting were approved.

3. Public Comment: None

4. Executive Session: At 10:03 A.M., on the motion of Michele Eid, second by Chris Davis, the Commission went into Executive Session to discuss complaints and Guidance requests received over the last few weeks. At 10:14 A.M., on the motion of Chris Davis, second by Sarah Butson, the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session.

5. Executive Director's Report:

Legislative Update: Executive Director Sivret met with the Senate Government Operations Committee on January 17 and shared the Commission's annual report and recommendations for legislative action to address governmental ethics. After hearing the Commission's recommendations, the Committee expressed interest in further discussions on how to address municipal ethics at the state level, as well as potential penalties for filing required financial disclosure forms late or not at all. The Committee requested that the Ethics Commission draft statutory language on both topics, including instructions for the Ethics Commission to come back next year with a municipal ethics proposal. The commissioners then reviewed and commented on draft statutory language, presented by Director Sivret, that would impose penalties for the late, or non-filing, of financial disclosure forms. Commissioner Davis suggested that including a criminal penalty for the intentional non-filing of disclosure forms, or for intentionally filing false, incomplete, or misleading information, might have difficulty making it

through the legislature, and that a civil penalty might be a better course of action. The Director said she would research the issue more.

Training Update: Executive Director Sivret recently participated in a House ethics training for members and gave a presentation on Code of Ethics gift rules.

Media Update: Executive Director Sivret discussed recent media attention concerning municipal ethics following the release of the annual report, specifically reporting by WCAX, and a recent radio interview on WDEV.

Speaking Event Update: The Executive Director has begun to reach out to organizations that may be interested in co-sponsoring a speaking event on government ethics in the spring. Executive Director Sivret and Administrative Assistant Erin Smith will be following up with potential partners in the coming weeks.

6. Other: Commissioner Sarah Biolsi Vangel shared that she was recently elected to the Judicial Nominating Board and raised the possibility that, although unlikely, it could create conflicts of interest with her work on the Ethics Commission. The Commissioners then discussed possible scenarios in which a conflict of interest might arise and the process for recusal. Executive Director Sivret then mentioned that she will be on vacation during the next Ethics Commission meeting but should be able to attend remotely. The Commissioners decided to touch base over email in the coming weeks and consider canceling the March meeting if there is no urgent business to discuss.

7. Adjournment: Michele Eid moved to adjourn, second by Chris Davis. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 A.M.