



Vermont State Ethics Commission

Minutes of July 7, 2021 (approved)

1. Call to Order: The meeting, held in person and remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Acting Commission Chair Paul Erlbaum at 10:07 a.m. Also present for the meeting were Commission members Christopher Davis, Michele Eid, and Executive Director Larry Novins. Sarah Biolsi Vangel was absent. Also present was T.J. Jones, formerly with Connecticut and California state ethics bodies who is an adjunct professor at the University of Connecticut. Mr. Jones has been retained to assist and advise the Commission in its endeavors.

2. Approval of Minutes: On the motion of Michele Eid, second by Chris Davis, the minutes of the June 4, 2021 meeting were approved. Michele Eid, who did not attend that meeting, abstained.

3. Public Comment: None

4. Future Meetings, format: The Commission agreed that it would hold meetings in person at the Commission office, 6 Baldwin St. in Montpelier, but keep the Zoom option available for those who cannot easily make the meeting in person.

5. Executive Director's Report: Larry Novins reviewed his revisions of the Executive Officer Financial Disclosure form. The changes were prompted by passage of H.135 which went into effect on June 1. The changes reflect the Commission's suggested legislative changes. The Commission agreed that the revised form should be posted on the Commission website and replace the old form.

Novins reported that the search for a Human Resources successor to former Chair Julie Hulburd continues. He awaits notice that one has been selected.

Ethics Code: Novins updated the Commission on his continuing research into showing how legislative work is constitutionally protected from inquiry by other branches of government by Article 14 of the Vermont Constitution [Immunity for words spoken in legislative debate]. Cases from other states provide a good outline of how the issue has been addressed elsewhere under similar constitutional provisions.

6. Job description for administrative position: Larry Novins reviewed job descriptions for the anticipated administrative assistant. He also shared a job description for the Executive Director position for whenever it will be needed.

7. Commission member appointment update: see Executive Director report, above.

8. Other Business: Paul Erlbaum shared his participation in "Branching Out," a local public school program that matches students to community mentors to help educate youth in areas of their interest.

He hopes that in the Autumn an eighth grader he works with will be able to attend an Ethics Commission meeting.

9. Executive Session to Discuss Complaints and Guidance Requests: On the motion of Michele Eid, second by Christopher Davis, the Commission went into executive session to discuss complaints and guidance requests. Mr. Jones participated in the Executive session only for a discussion about a confidential guidance request on which he had earlier been consulted by the Executive Director. These matters are confidential per 3 V.S.A. §§ 1221(d), 1223(c), and 1225(a)(3). On the motion of Michele Eid, seconded by Chris Davis, the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session

10. Adjournment: Michele Eid moved to adjourn, second by Chris Davis. The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Next Meeting: Next regular monthly meeting August 4, at 10:00 a.m.* The meeting will be held both in person and remotely via Zoom.

*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.