



Vermont State Ethics Commission

Meeting Minutes November 1, 2023 Remote Attendance*

1. Call to Order: The regular meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Paul Erlbaum at 10:04 A.M. Also in attendance at the meeting were Commission members Christopher Davis, Sarah Vangel, Michele Eid, Executive Director Christina Sivret, and Administrative Assistants Erin Smith and Tina Wolk. Tina Wolk was introduced to the Commissioners as the newly hired Administrative Assistant. Erin Smith will be staying on for an undetermined time to assist Tina in getting started with her position. Commissioner Sarah Butson was absent.

2. Approval of Minutes: On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Sarah Vangel, minutes of the October 4, 2023, meeting were approved.

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Executive Session: At 10:11 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 on the motion of Chris Davis, second by Michele Eid, the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and to return to open session.

5. Executive Director's Report:

FY2025 Budget and Staffing Needs: In conjunction with the FY25 budget request, the Ethics Commission has asked to convert the current part-time Executive Director position to full-time and, assuming proposed municipal ethics legislation moves forward, to add a full-time staff counsel position focused on municipal ethics. Commissioner Chris Davis said that we should also stress that more money is needed for ethics training, which will help increase ethics awareness and stakeholder engagement.

Online Financial Disclosure System: Executive Director Sivret reported that NIC/Tyler Tech are near completion on an online, searchable financial disclosure portal which will be ready for testing this month. It is anticipated that the system will be fully ready for use by early December. The cost will be \$10,200 annually for two years, which includes the cost of building the system as well as ongoing support and maintenance. The system will be paid for with one-time funds allocated to the Commission upon its creation. In 2024, the Commission will invite other offices/branches of government involved in financial disclosures to share the system, which could help reduce future costs for the Commission.

Ethics Legislation: Executive Director Sivret met with Senator Ruth Hardy, Chair of the Senate Government Operations Committee, and Representative Mike McCarthy, Chair of the House Government Operations Committee, to discuss ethics legislation for the upcoming session, including recommendations for a proposed municipal ethics framework. The meeting was positive and it is anticipated that ethics legislation will be considered during the upcoming session.

Listening Session Update: Chris Sivret reported on the upcoming virtual municipal ethics listening sessions which will take place on November 7, 21, and 28. At least two commissioners will attend each session. Advertisements have been placed with statewide outlets Seven Days, Front Porch Forum and VT Digger, and press releases have been sent to several other media outlets. An announcement with information on the listening sessions was also shared with the VT League of Cities and Towns, the League of Women Voters of Vermont, Vote for Vermont, VPIRG, the Vermont Municipal Clerk Treasurer Association and other interested parties. The Commission will draft a survey to be shared with virtual attendees at the close of each listening session. Municipal officials and members of the public have also been asked to submit written comments, recommendations, and thoughts on municipal ethics directly to the Ethics Commission.

6. Other Business: Commissioner Michele Eid plans to attend the COGEL conference in Kansas City in December. Chris Sivret is unsure if she can attend the conference given the amount of work to be done in preparation for the legislative session.

7. Adjournment: Michele Eid moved to adjourn, seconded by Chris Davis. The meeting adjourned at 10:49 a.m.