



Vermont State Ethics Commission

Meeting Minutes

May 3, 2023

Remote Attendance*

1. Call to Order: The regular meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Paul Erlbaum at 10:22 A.M once a quorum was present. Also present for the meeting were Commission members Sarah Butson, Christopher Davis, Executive Director Christina Sivret, and Administrative Assistant Erin Smith. Commissioners Michele Eid and Sarah Biolsi Vangel were absent.

2. Approval of Minutes: On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Sarah Butson, minutes of the April 5, 2023, meeting were approved.

3. Public Comment: One member of the public, Alex Hilliard, was present and discussed their concern regarding a campaign finance report they submitted to the Attorney General's office. This report detailed an incident that they felt clearly violated campaign financial disclosure rules. They had received notification that the AG's office would not be pursuing the case, but no additional information regarding how the decision was made. Executive Director Sivret will continue the conversation with Mx. Hilliard, who will provide her with more information on the complaint.

4. Executive Session: At 10:59 A.M., on the motion of Chris Davis, second by Sarah Butson, the Commission went into Executive Session to discuss complaints and Guidance requests received over the last few weeks, including a draft Advisory Opinion. At 11:13 A.M., on the motion of Sarah Butson, second by Chris Davis, the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session. On the motion of Sarah Butson, second by Chris Davis, the Commission voted to approve the Advisory Opinion (AO_2_2023).

5. Executive Director's Report:

Legislative Update: The Commission discussed the H.125, which contains language instructing the Commission to submit a report on municipal ethics to the legislature by January 15, 2024. There was concern that the language the Commission originally submitted to the Senate

Committee on Government Operations, which referred to a “proposal” on municipal ethics, was changed to a “report” on municipal ethics. The Commission discussed whether this change indicated less interest on the part legislature to work on municipal ethics next year, and how to best focus the Commission’s time and resources as the Commission also plans to submit a proposal regarding enforcement powers for the Commission in 2024. Following discussion, the Commission decided to continue to work on both issues. The Executive Director noted that the Campaign Legal Center offered free research assistance on municipal ethics, and that TJ Jones, the Ethics Commission’s regular consultant, will also be available to provide assistance.

The Commission also discussed S.17, which now includes language requiring sheriffs and deputy sheriffs to submit annual financial disclosure forms to the Ethics Commission. It also states that sheriffs and deputy sheriffs are subject to the State Code of Ethics. The Executive Director then informed the Commission that she was scheduled to testify that afternoon on H. 429, a miscellaneous elections bill, which now includes language imposing financial penalties for the late filing or non-filing of candidate financial disclosure forms. The Ethics Commission would be responsible for notifying delinquent filers and collecting penalties.

6. Other: The Executive Director told the Commission that she had reached out to NIC, which the Commission contracts with for certain technology services, to see about the possibility of building a searchable database for the financial disclosure information submitted to the Commission, as the volume of information is expected to increase in coming years.

7. Adjournment: Chris Davis moved to adjourn, second by Sarah Butson. The meeting adjourned at 11:22 A.M.