

**Vermont State Ethics Commission**

**Minutes of December 4, 2019 Meeting (Unapproved)**

**1. Call to Order:** The meeting, held at the Ethics Commission office, 6 Baldwin St. Montpelier, was called to order by Commission Chair Julie Hulburd at 10:15 a.m. Also present for the meeting were Commission members Christopher Davis, Sarah Biolsi Vangel (arrived at 10:20 a.m.), Michele Eid (who joined the meeting at 10:40 a.m. by telephone), and Executive Director Larry Novins.

**2. Approval of Minutes:** On the motion of Paul Erlbaum, second by Chris Davis, the minutes of the November 6, 2019 meeting were approved.

**3. Public Comment**: None.

**4. Executive Director’s Report**:

Larry Novins reviewed “Phase I” the proposed revisions to the current ethics statutes in Chapter 31 of Title 3 and reported that the proposal has been submitted to John Gannon of the House Government Operations Committee who has agreed to be its sponsor. Novins will look for additional sponsors in hopes of obtaining bi-partisan or tri-partisan support.

Novins shared his most recent draft of what has been referred to as “Phase II”, a draft for a statutory code of ethics. The Commission suggested some minor stylistic changes which will be incorporated into the next draft. Novins has consulted with several individuals in and outside of state government. Preliminary support has been strong. Novins will continue to consult stake holders. The Commission authorized Novins to proceed to move forward to see if a draft ethics code can be discussed with the legislature soon, rather than waiting.

Novins discussed plans for having the revised ethics code adopted in November and possibly a new Ethics Commission pamphlet printed for distribution.

The Commission discussed whether an office cell phone would be advisable so that Larry Novins won’t miss important telephone calls. He will explore with ADS options for forwarding calls the technology the office has now.

**5. Website**

Novins discussed some minor additions and revisions to the website. Time permitting, he will propose a major revision of the site’s welcome page highlighting the Commission’s educational role. Novins told the Commission that the State will be changing its web hosting protocol, so the entire website may have to be re-done with new software to be mastered some time in the foreseeable future. This highlights the need for administrative support.

**6. Operating Procedures, Revision Commission Finances:**

On motion of Sarah Biolsi Vangel, second by Paul Erlbaum, the Commission approved with minor amendment Michele Eids proposed policy for office purchases.

**7. Statutes, draft revisions: Phase II:**

Discussed as part of Executive Director’s report, above.

**8. Annual Report: Outline and Ideas**

Novins reviewed his plans for the Annual Report to the Legislature. In addition to reporting on the numbers and types of complaints and guidance or advice rendered, he plans to discuss the situations where ethics complaints go without remedy under the current statute, the parts of state government for which there is no meaningful ethics oversight, and recommendations for the future. He hopes to have a draft done soon enough that the Commission can provide guidance to him and so that something close to a final draft can be ready for the Commission’s January 8, 2019 meeting. With the up-coming COGEL meeting in Chicago that Novins will attend and the holidays, finding time for this task is critical.

**9. Executive Session to Discuss Complaints and Guidance Requests:** On the motion of Chris Davis, second by Paul Erlbaum, the Commission went into executive session to discuss complaints and guidance requests. These matters are confidential per 3 V.S.A. §§ 1221(d), 1223(c), and 1225(a)(3). On the motion of Sarah Biolsi Vangel and Paul Erlbaum the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session.

**Other Business:** none

**Adjournment:** Chris Davis moved to adjourn, second by Paul Erlbaum. The meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Different Day: Second Monday, January 8, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.