



Vermont State Ethics Commission

Meeting Minutes December 6, 2023 Remote Attendance*

1. Call to Order: The regular meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Paul Erlbaum at 10:13 A.M. Also in attendance were Commission members Christopher Davis, Sarah Butson, Executive Director Christina Sivret, and Administrative Assistant Tina Wolk. Commissioners Sarah Vangel and Michele Eid were absent.

2. Approval of Minutes: The minutes of the November 1, 2023 were not approved due to the lack of a quorum of commissioners who were also present at the November 1st meeting.

3. Public Comment: None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Listening Sessions Report: Executive Director Sivret reported on the three virtual municipal ethics listening sessions that took place on November 7, 21, and 28. During the listening sessions several members of the public relayed concerns about retaliation for reporting municipal ethics concerns and expressed the need to have whistleblower protections in place at the municipal level. As a result, language adding whistleblower protections to proposed municipal ethics legislation has been drafted.

Upcoming Legislative Session: Executive Director Sivret shared draft language for two options for a statewide code of municipal ethics. Both versions have been shared with legislative counsel for the House Committee on Government Operations and other interested parties. One option amends the existing State Code of Ethics to include municipal officials, and the other is a standalone municipal code of ethics applicable only to municipal officials. Feedback so far indicates a preference for a standalone code of municipal ethics, which can be tailored to the issues that most frequently arise in municipal ethics.

Executive Director Sivret also noted that it is unclear whether the State Code of Ethics is being enforced by state agencies or whether they are only enforcing pre-existing ethics policies. She suggested it might be prudent to add a data collection and reporting requirement to future ethics legislation to better understand the number and types of ethics complaints being filed throughout state government. The commissioners agreed.

Online Financial Disclosure System: Executive Director Sivret reported that NIC/Tyler Tech has completed development of the new online filing system for financial disclosures. She is very pleased with the results, and it is expected to be up and running on or before December 15th.

Executive Session: At 10:30 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. At 10:35 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.

6. Other Business: Commissioner Michele Eid is currently attending the annual COGEL conference in Kansas City on behalf of the Ethics Commission.

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