



## Vermont State Ethics Commission

### Meeting Minutes January 3, 2024 Remote Attendance\*

**1. Call to Order:** The regular meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Paul Erlbaum at 10:07a.m. Also in attendance were Commission members Sarah Butson, Michele Eid, Jack Kennelly, Executive Director Christina Sivret, and Administrative Assistant Tina Wolk. New Commissioner Jack Kennelly was welcomed to his first Commission meeting. Sarah Vangel, outgoing Commissioner whose term expired December 31, 2023, dropped in briefly to say goodbye. The Commission thanked her for her six years of service. Commissioner Chris Davis was absent.

**2. Approval of Minutes:** The minutes of the November 1, 2023, and December 6, 2023 meetings remain unapproved because a quorum of Commissioners who were present at each of those meetings, respectively, were not in attendance.

**3. Public Comment:** None.

**4. Executive Director's Report:**

**Annual Report 2023:** Executive Director Sivret gave a brief overview of the draft annual report and asked for comments or suggestions. Chair Paul Erlbaum said he would send an email with suggested edits related to typos and grammatical corrections. Commissioner Chris Davis previously emailed two grammatical corrections. There were no additional comments.

**Online Financial Disclosure System:** Executive Director Sivret reported that the new online financial disclosure portal is up and running. Approximately one third of those who are required to submit Financial Disclosures with the Ethics Commission have so done so to date. Currently executive officers, sheriffs, and Ethics Commission members are required to file with the Commission. Executive Director Sivret said she anticipates that additional categories of public servants will be required to file financial disclosures in the future. The opportunity to use the online filing system will be offered to other government agencies, including the Office of the Secretary of State and the legislature.

**Legislative Update:** Executive Director Sivret reported that she met with Mike McCarthy, Chair, House Committee on Government Operations, and Chea Waters Evans, member, House Committee on Government Operations on Friday. They both expressed strong support for the passage of ethics legislation this session. There will be two ethics related bills, a miscellaneous ethics bill and a municipal ethics bill. Executive Director Sivret reviewed the key provisions of the draft miscellaneous ethics bill

with the commissioners, which includes the addition of a staff counsel position to the Ethics Commission; converting the part-time Executive Director position to a full-time position; financial penalties for the late or non-filing of financial disclosure forms; the addition of County officials to financial disclosure filing requirements; and the possible expansion of the Ethics Commission's authority to include ethics investigations and hearings.

The second bill will be a municipal ethics bill. The Executive Director had not seen a draft bill yet but expects it to include a municipal code of ethics, an expansion of the Ethics Commission's jurisdiction to include municipal ethics, and whistleblower protections for municipal complaints.

**Municipal Ethics Report:** Executive Director Sivret and Commission consultant TJ Jones are still working on the draft municipal ethics report, due to the legislature on January 15<sup>th</sup>. The commissioners only had a brief chance to review the current draft but said they were satisfied with the direction of the report.

**5. Executive Session:** At 10:51a.m., on the motion of Sarah Butson, seconded by Jack Kennelly, the Commission went into Executive Session to discuss complaints and guidance requests received over the past few weeks. **At 10:57a.m.**, on the motion of Sarah Butson, seconded by Michele Eid, the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session.

**6. Other Business:** Commissioner Michele Eid reported that she had found some very good suggestions regarding ethics enforcement at the COGEL conference. She requested to reserve her full report on the COGEL conference to the next Commission meeting. At 11:00a.m., Commissioner Sarah Butson left the meeting.

**7. Adjournment:** Michele Eid moved to adjourn, seconded by Jack Kennelly. The meeting adjourned at 11:03 a.m.