



Vermont State Ethics Commission
Meeting Minutes
March 6, 2024
Remote Attendance*

1. Call to Order: The regular meeting, held remotely via Zoom, was called to order by Chair Paul Erlbaum at 10:01a.m. Also in attendance were Commission members Michele Eid and Jack Kennelly, Executive Director Christina Sivret, and Administrative Assistant Tina Wolk. Christopher Davis and Sarah Butson were absent.

2. Public Comment. None.

3. Approval of Minutes: On the motion of Michele Eid, seconded by Jack Kennelly, the minutes of the February 8, 2024 meeting were approved.

4. Executive Director's Report:

Update on Legislative Session: Executive Director Sivret updated the commissioners on the ongoing testimony before the House Government Operations Committee on the municipal ethics bill and thanked Chair Erlbaum and Commissioner Eid for their testimony in support of the bill, which gave Committee members the opportunity to meet members of the Commission. Director Sivret relayed that testimony on both the municipal ethics bill and the miscellaneous ethics bill is due to resume on March 12, and that the prospects for both bills making it out of committee in time for crossover look good.

The Commission then discussed two recent action alerts sent out by the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) regarding the municipal ethics bill. Both alerts contained factually incorrect information about the bill, including statements that the bill would grant the Ethics Commission oversight and control over municipal ethics. Director Sivret said that recent testimony by two municipalities in opposition to the bill seemed to be based on misunderstandings about the content of bill that could be traced back to the misinformation in VLCT's action alerts. Director Sivret shared that she and Chair Erlbaum had sent an e-mail to VLCT requesting that they immediately make corrections to the action alerts but had not yet received a response.

Director Sivret and the commissioners then noted that the draft municipal ethics bill currently proposes that VLCT be given the authority to appoint a member of the Ethics Commission. The Commissioners agreed that the Ethics Commission should not be associated with an organization (VLCT) that knowingly disseminates false information. Michele Eid moved at 10:25am, seconded by Jack Kennelly, that the Commission propose to the legislature that two seats be added to the Commission, one seat to be appointed by the Executive Branch and one seat to be appointed by the Legislative branch, rather than the proposed appointment by VLCT.

This would provide equal representation for all three branches of state government since one seat is already appointed by the Judicial Branch. The motion was approved.

Director Sivret and the commissioners then discussed how to ensure the public had access to correct information about the municipal ethics bill and decided that a press release would be a good idea. Director Sivret also shared that she had been invited to appear on Pat McDonald's radio show on WDEV the next day and would use the opportunity to share correct information about the bill. Michele Eid moved at 10:23am., seconded by Jack Kennelly, that Director Sivret and Chair Paul Erlbaum prepare a press release. The motion was approved.

Michele Eid left the meeting at 10:30am. Chair Erlbaum, Director Sivret, and Commissioner Kennelly continued to discuss the content of the press release.

5. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 10:45am.