

**Vermont State Ethics Commission**

**Minutes of October 7, 2020 Meeting (approved)**

**1. Call to Order:** The meeting, held via Zoom, was called to order by Commission Chair Julie Hulburd at 10:08 a.m. Also present for the meeting were Commission members Sarah Biolsi Vangel, Paul Erlbaum, Michele Eid, and Executive Director Larry Novins. Chris Davis joined the meeting at 10:14 a.m.

**2. Approval of Minutes:** On the motion of Paul Erlbaum second by Chris Davis, the minutes of the September 2, 2020 meeting were approved. Sarah Vangel and Michele Eid who did not attend that meeting abstained.

**3. Public Comment**: None

**4. Executive Director’s Report**: Larry Novins updated the Commission on his work revising the proposed code of ethics. As part of his work he has consulted with T.J. Jones who worked with the Commission in 2019. Novins is working to see if the Commission can have another contract so that Mr. Jones can advise on the proposed code of ethics and on options for the future for ethics code enforcement. Novins also told the Commissioners that he will present an up-dated version of statutory amendments submitted to the legislature last year but side-lined (H.634) when the Covid-19 pandemic broke out. Also discussed: administrative hurdles to efficient bill paying, a meeting with a representative from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns regarding possible distant future local government ethics assistance or oversight, the up-coming December COGEL virtual conference, and training for use of Microsoft Word.

**5. Code of Ethics (Phase II) Comments received to date:**  The Commission reviewed Novins’ responses to comments received and revisions to the code prompted by those comments and overall review. Novins explained the changes he made to the sections on gifts, conflicts of interest, and outside/post-government employment. Commissioners were invited to contact Novins directly with any questions or comments they may have. Novins is working on a memorandum explaining why state employees in the judicial branch may properly be included with other state employees to whom the ethics code will apply.

**6) Terms of Office Discussion:** Commissioners whose terms of office end this year are willing to be re-appointed. Commission Chair Julie Hulburd will contact the appointing authorities to let them know that the current commissioners are willing to serve, if reappointed, and that the Commission appreciates their valuable service.

**7) Annual Report Discussion:** Novins has begun to think about the up-coming annual report. He will review last year’s report and notes from this year to see what changes should be made to the report format and content. Among possible topics of discussion: the need for ethics assistance to local government in Vermont.

**8. Other business:** The Commission voted to authorize the Executive Director to negotiate a contract with T.J. Jones for a maximum of $5,000 over one year, if there is room in the budget. Mr. Jones would assist review of the proposed statutory code of ethics and options for ethics enforcement that will be sent to the legislature later this fall. He may also assist in any legislative hearings when needed by the Ethics Commission.

**9. Executive Session to Discuss Complaints and Guidance Requests:** On the motion of Michele Eid, second by Chris Davis, 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 Michele Eid and Paul Erlbaum the Commission voted to conclude the Executive Session and return to open session.

**10. Adjournment:** Chris Davis moved to adjourn, second by Paul Erlbaum. The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

**Next Meetings:**  Next regular monthly meeting will be Wednesday, November 4,2020 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held virtually.