



NEW CASTLE COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION
MINUTES OF APRIL 12, 2023
PUBLIC MEETING

In attendance:

Commission Members:

Johanna Bishop; Sally Jensen; Brandon Brice; Robert Hicks; and Robert Ralston

Absent:

Kellie Tetrick and Charles Toliver

Ethics Commission Staff:

Julie M. Sebring, Legal Counsel
Alison Lewis, Confidential Assistant

Public Attendance:

The Honorable Valerie George; The Honorable David Tackett; and The Honorable Brandon Toole

Chair Bishop opened the Public Session of this meeting at 4:33 p.m. The meeting was advertised per State law and held both virtually via Zoom and at the anchor location of the Ethics Commission office, 77 Read's Way, New Castle, DE 19720.

Public Meeting Minutes: The Commissioners reviewed the draft minutes of the March 8, 2023, of the Ethics Commission public meeting. Commissioner Ralston made a motion to approve the draft minutes with date correction, and Commissioner Jensen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0, motion carried.

Executive Session Minutes: The Commissioners reviewed the draft minutes of the March 8, 2023, of the Ethics Commission Executive session of the meeting. Commissioner Brice made a motion to approve the draft minutes with date correction, and Commissioner Jensen seconded the motion.

VOTE: 4-0, motion carried.

Finance Reports: Commissioners reviewed the monthly Commission expense reports for the month of March 2023.

Committee Reports

Administrative Committee: As requested, Counsel revised the Administrative Committee's 'NCC Ethics Code Reset' power point presentation. The Commission decided that the Administrative Committee should discuss the revised version for later discussion and review with the full Commission.

Forms Committee: Ms. Lewis advised the Commission that some filers who are members of boards/commissions are having due to the wording of the questions on the form. The Commission suggested that any changes or updates to the form take place after the filing season is complete. Ms. Lewis also advised the Commissioners that a second 'reminder' mailing was sent to annual filers who have not yet filed their forms. SFI's are being submitted daily for review and approval in advance of the May 1st statutory deadline.

Training Committee: The last Ethics Code training session was held on March 21, 2023 (10 am to noon) and, as usual, was open to all County officials and employees. The feedback about the training sessions continues to be very positive and many attendees contact Counsel after the sessions with Ethics Code questions. Counsel advised the Commission that, recently, there has been an uptick in such phone calls and emails. The next Ethics Code training session is scheduled for April 20, 2023 (10 am to noon.)

Ethics Commission Office updates:

The next Commission meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, May 10, 2023, as a hybrid meeting, in compliance with applicable laws.

Some of the Ethics Commissioners' terms are expiring in 2023. Counsel asked the Commissioners to let her know if they would like her to contact the appointing authority (either County Council or the County Executive) to request their respective reappointments.

Old Business

The Commission's FY24 budget hearing before the New Castle County Council will be on Monday, April 17, 2023. The hearing will be held via Zoom. Presentations will start at 2:00 p.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. Ms. Lewis will email the Commissioners the link to Zoom and the Commission's FY24 Budget Presentation.

Public Comment:

Councilperson Valerie George stated that she is attending this meeting because she wants to stay on top of what is going on across the County.

Councilperson Tackett thanked the Commission for the hard work that they do on behalf of New Castle County and stated that the Commission plays an important role in the integrity of New Castle County government including County Council. He asked whether SFI filers receive a notification that their form has been filed successfully? Currently, filers who have filed their form successfully receive a screen notification that their form has been filed successfully. During discussion, the Commission decided that they would work with Delmarva Digital (the software developers) after the current filing season is over to have two emails sent to filers: the first one will be sent to filers after they have successfully submitted their forms, and the second one will be sent after their form has been reviewed and approved by the Commission.

AO23-02:

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed this Advisory Opinion request. Commissioner Brice made a motion to approve the draft of the advisory opinion and Commissioner Hicks seconded the motion.

VOTE: 5-0, motion carried.

At 5:21 p.m., Commissioner Jensen made a motion to move to Executive session and Commissioner Hicks seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

At 5:43 p.m., Commissioner Brice made a motion to return to Public session and Commissioner Hicks seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

At 5:45 p.m. Commissioner Jensen made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Commissioner Brice seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously, 5-0.

The draft minutes were prepared by Alison Lewis, Confidential Assistant, and reviewed by Julie M. Sebring, Esquire.