

Baltimore City Ethics Board
626 City Hall
Baltimore, MD 21202
December 6, 2013

Minutes of the Public Session

The Ethics Board met on December 6, 2013 in the Conference Room of the Office of Department of Legislative Reference, 626 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland.

Call to Order: Chairwoman Linda Pierson called to order the meeting of the Baltimore City Ethics Board at 9:40 a.m. with a quorum present. Present in person were Board members Linda Pierson, Dawna Cobb and Jennifer Burdick. Present on the telephone was Alicia Wilson. Also present was Thaddeus Watulak, Deputy Director of the Ethics Board.

A. Approval of the minutes: Minutes for of the November, 2013, meeting as amended, were approved by a vote of 4-0.

B. Chair's Report: There is no report.

C. Director's Status Updates

Ethics training cycle: Mr. Watulak reported that this cycle's training is concluded. He has already received expressions of interest for the next cycle.

D. On-line financial disclosure project: The Board heard a status report from Varghese Paraniyam, IT project manager for the Mayor's Office of Information Technology (MOIT). MOIT contracted with a company, Eastbanc, to create the online financial disclosure process. The project is nearly complete. The goal is to have it ready for the February 1 filing cycle. The forms will be searchable by name, agency and position.¹

D. Solicitation Requests – The Board approved by a vote of 3-0 the following requests:

- The Mayor's Office of Employment Development-Youthworks
- The Mayor's Office-Journey Home
- Zoe Michal-BARCS and Mayor's Anti Animal Abuse Commission
- Damion Cooper- Muscular Dystrophy Association

E. BoE Lobbying: Mr. Aisenstark joined the meeting and Ms. Wilson rejoined the meeting for this item. The issue before the Board is whether individuals who represent clients before the Board of Estimates (BOE) are engaging in lobbying and should be registered as lobbyists. The BOE wants to adopt a set of regulations that will address this situation. At its last meeting the Board requested its staff to research how other jurisdictions define lobbying. The resulting

¹ Ms. Wilson, who was participating by phone, had to momentarily leave the meeting.

research did not sufficiently clarify the issue for the Board. Mr. Aisenstark suggested forwarding his research to the City Solicitor for his feedback. The Board agreed to send the to him the letters it has received from lawyers who appear before the BOE.

F. Opinion Request on Board Member Hiring

The Board has received a request for its opinion about the ability of a City agency to hire a member of its board to be the board's employee. While the agency has not yet posted the position, a member of the board has indicated to the other board members his interest in the position. The State practice requires the interested party to recuse himself from any involvement in filling the position, but does not require resignation. The Board, by a vote of 4-0, instructed staff to advise the agency as follows: the position must be posted and if a board member applies for the position, the agency must create an independent screening committee to review the applications. The board member who applies for the position must recuse himself from the selection process.

G. New Business: The Lobbying registration fee of \$100 goes into effect in January; however the registration form is now available. It is possible that someone could register and pay the lower fee before then. The Board voted 4-0 to accept the lower fee up to the date of the effective date of the new higher fee. The Board will accept the higher fee as well and will address any concerns about that should that occur.

The Board voted to go into closed session at 10:20 a.m. to go into closed session to discuss pending and potential investigations. The Board returned to open session at 10:45 a.m.

The Board's next meeting is January 14, 2014 at 9:30 a.m.

The meeting adjourned at 11:50 am.