

Baltimore City Ethics Board
626 City Hall
Baltimore, MD 21202
January 16, 2015

Minutes of the Public Session

The Ethics Board met on January 16, 2015 in the Conference Room of the Department of Legislative Reference, 626 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland.

Call to Order - Chairperson, Lu Pierson, called to order the meeting of the Baltimore City Ethics Board at 9:45 a.m. with a quorum present. Present were Board members Lu Pierson, Guy Flynn, Dawna Cobb and Jennifer Burdick. Also present were Avery Aisenstark, Director of the Ethics Board and Thaddeus Watulak, Deputy Director of the Ethics Board.

A. Approval of Minutes from December 2014-The Board approved the December 2014 minutes as amended with by a vote of 4-0.

B. Chair's Report: Mr. Flynn and Ms. Pierson have received letters nominating them for re-appointment.

C. Director's Status Updates

1. Ongoing investigations-Re: J.P.-There has been an exchange of letters between the Inspector General (IG) and JP's attorney. For the first time since this inquiry began two years ago, JB's attorney asked for evidence of the Board's good faith in proceeding with its investigation. The IG will send a letter stating that if JB's attorney does not respond to its request for information the Ethics Board may issue subpoenas.

2. Gifts disclosure-Mr. Aisenstark received a letter from an employee of the City's towing agency disclosing three gifts he received. He was advised that two of the gifts were not permitted under Ethics regulations even if disclosed. The employee returned these two gifts.

D. Preparing for 2015 Financial Disclosure Season

1. **Electronic filing updates-** Board staff is preparing to advise coordinators about the upcoming filing season. The Mayor's Office of Information Technology (MOIT) will make remaining minor changes to the program next week. MOIT reports that last years filers' e-mail addresses can be extracted so that it will be possible to e-mail filers reminding them to file electronically this year.
2. **Scanned paper filings-**The paper filings from last year have been scanned and are all on line.
3. **Paper filing policy-**The Board discussed whether to require electronic filing. The State of Maryland recently approved such a regulation requiring electronic filing. The Board voted to approve charging paper filers a \$10 copying and storage fee. The Board then voted 3-0 to include in any regulation that requires electronic filing an exception for persons with disabilities that prevent them from filing electronically.¹
4. **Eliminating the Boards and Commission form.** This form originally was a significantly different form because it asked for less information about mortgages and homeownership. The current electronic form is the general form. The Board decided that members of a board or commission may file either the general form electronically or the paper form and pay the \$10 fee.
5. **Acceptance of State Financial Disclosure Filings-** A current law allows those who file a disclosure with the State to file that disclosure form with the City and satisfy the City's filing requirement. It's not a widely used exemption; only one was received. A motion made to request repeal of this exception was approved 3-0. This change will need to be accomplished by an ordinance.

¹ Mr. Flynn left the meeting during this discussion and did not participate in the vote.

E. Solicitation Requests all received from the Counsel's Presidents Office

- PLAY-The City Council President's Office -This organization's request was late. The Board approved this request with the caveat future late requests will not be approved. Approved 3-0.
- Suited to Succeed-Approved 3-0.
- Friends of Wyman Park Dell and Waverly Main Street-Approved 3-0
- Beat the Streets-A signature was missing from the solicitation and the solicitation will be returned for a signature. –Approved 3-0.

E. The next Board meeting will be February 20, 2015 at 9:30 a.m. Meetings in 2015 will be the second Friday of the month at 9:30 a.m.

F. A motion to adjourn was made and approved at 11:50 a.m.