

Baltimore City Ethics Board
626 City Hall
Baltimore, MD 21202
April 8, 2014

Minutes of the Public Session

The Ethics Board met on April 8, 2014 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 9:39 a.m. with a quorum present. Present in person were Board members Linda Pierson, Dawna Cobb, Alicia Wilson and Jennifer Burdick. Also present was Avery Aisenstark, Director of the Ethics Board, Thaddeus Watulak, Deputy Director of the Ethics Board.

A. Chair's Report: Ms. Pierson is continuing to communicate with the Mayor's office regarding re-appointment of Board members whose terms have expired.

B. Approval of Minutes from March 2014: The Board approved the minutes with minor corrections by a vote of 4-0.

C. Director's Status Updates:

1) **Ongoing investigation:** The IG reports that the respondent has received approval from the City Solicitor's Office to retain outside counsel.

Motion made at 9:55 to go into closed session to discuss a pending investigation.

Returned to Open Session at 10:22 a.m.

Director's Status Update con't

2) **Liquor Board Ethics Changes in State Ethics Bills:** The purpose of the bill is to revamp the entire liquor board, how it is appointed, board member qualifications, etc. The bill clarifies that board members and staff are subject to the City ethics code and that the Ethics Board may impose certain requirements over and above the State Ethics law. Mr. Aisenstark will obtain a copy of the signed law and become familiar with it.

D. Solicitation requests

- 1.) Mayor's Back to School Rally- This request was approved by a vote 4-0.
- 2.) Mayor's Office-Top Neighborhood Moms and Dads-This was approved by a vote of 4-0.

3.) Emerging Technology Center- ETC had a two-year approval previously. The need for a two year approval no longer exists. A motion to approve for one year was made and approved by a vote of 4-0.

E. Online financial disclosure project: Mr. Watulak reported that the financial disclosure form is out. 168 users are registered, 122 forms filed and a couple dozen paper forms have been filed. 24 coordinators within various City agencies have been trained. The most frequent concern/issue has been the use of temporary passwords, which will be shared with Eastbanc. The agencies are making adjustments to the on-line program, which has generated a number of questions for Mr. Watulak.

- **Late fees-**Because there was a slight delay in rolling out the electronic financial disclosure process, the Board approved by a vote of 4-0 that late fees will be waived for electronic filers who file after April 30 and have until June 30 to complete their filing.
- **Press release-**The Mayor is considering holding a press conference to discuss the new financial disclosure process. The Board voted 4-0 to a draft press release regarding this and to give the Mayor the first opportunity to make the announcement. If she declines, the Board will issue a press release..
- **Ongoing maintenance-** Maintenance of the financial disclosure program will be performed by MOIT. The Board will review process in June and discuss what if any changes need to be made.
- Mr. Watulak has contacted all the council members about filing.

G. Draft Annual Report: Ms. Burdick will share Mr. Aisenstark's edits for another review by the Board.

H. Travel opinion request: Mr. Watulak will ask ERS for follow up information regarding this request. The Board will invite ERS ED, Ms. Spence, to a future meeting to discuss the ERS request for an interpretation of the statute that bars them from attending certain meetings.

I. Board of Estimates lobbying issue: The Board will invite the City Solicitor to a future meeting to discuss this issue.

J. Complaint updates:

- **RG complaint-**The respondent has accepted the Board's finding on this issue. The matter is considered cured. In the course of resolving this complaint, the Ethics Board issued Opinion 14-001.
- **Complaint by SF-**Mr. Watulak reported on the results of his investigation.

Following a discussion, the Board concluded that it does not believe that an ethics code violation has been stated and voted to dismiss the complaint by a vote of 3-0. (Ms. Burdick left the meeting before the discussion of this agenda item.)

K. The next Board meeting will be May 13, 2014 at 9:30 a.m..

L. A motion to adjourn was made an approved at 12:15 p.m.