

ULSTER COUNTY BOARD OF ETHICS

DATE: December 10, 2024

TIME: 6:00 PM

PLACE: Ulster County Human Services Complex
100 Development Court, Building #2, Suite 400
(Veterans Agency Entrance)
Kingston, New York

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Nuzzo , Acting Chair
Stephanie Ellis
Taane Pegg
Paul Tully
Deborah Schneer
Brigid Walsh
Anne Zahradnik

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

OTHERS ATTENDING: Judy Riley, Secretary to the Board of Ethics

The Acting Chair Robert Nuzzo called the meeting to order at 6:05.

The Acting Chair asked if anyone had any revisions to the minutes from the November 12, 2024 meeting. No discussion. Motion to approve the minutes from the November 12, 2024 Board of Ethics Meeting, Anne Zahradnick 1st, Paul Tully 2nd, unanimously approved.

Old Business:

6:06pm A motion was made to enter into Executive Session to discuss the Request for Advisory Opinion with the new information provided which the Board requested, Taane Pegg 1st, Anne Zahradnik 2nd, unanimously approved.

6:15pm Motion was made to exit Executive Session, Anne Zahradnik 1st, Brigid Walsh 2nd, unanimously approved.

Motion was made that the Board of Ethics will draft correspondence that they have found no conflict of interest. Brigid Walsh 1st, Deborah Schmeer 2nd, unanimously approved.

Judy Riley gave an update regarding the status of the outstanding 2023 Financial Disclosure Forms: letters have been sent out on behalf of the Board to some of the late filers and she did receive many completed forms back. There are still several forms outstanding from members of the Human Rights Commission and the Electrical Licensing Board. The Commissioner of the Human Rights Commission has been working on trying to get the forms completed with his members however several people still have not filed their forms. Judy has also been working with the Account Clerk at the Electrical Licensing Board and has requested email addresses for members of both groups and will directly contact them and send them the letter from the Board. Also waiting for a form from an employee from the District Attorney's Office, the Jail, and a member of the Periodic Compensation Review Committee who is completing it. The Board wants them filed by December 31, 2024 and to have their Chair of their respective Board's copied. There are a handful of forms received that the Board needs to be reviewed. The Board will review them after the meeting.

The Board discussed how they want to proceed if a Board Member is out of Town for a Board of Ethics meeting. Paul Tully stated he will be in Florida during January – March 2025. When he is out of town, he can attend via zoom by either disclosing his location in a public space where the public can attend (Community Room or Library); or if not publicizing a public location – the Board would need to provide the zoom link to the public. Either would be included in the public notice. Taane asked about the Florida – Sunshine laws and public disclosure? Paul stated that alternately – he could just call in and not vote as long as there is a quorum in-person and he could stay up to date on matters. If there will not be a quorum without him, then the Board can consider the other options. This will be good for other members who also travel. Per Bob, if there is something that Paul would definitely want to vote on in a meeting – the Board could table it to the next month.

Anne brought up a letter template she drafted (not on the Agenda) – as it has been frustrating when people keep coming back to the Board after it is stated that there is no conflict of interest. She thinks it would be beneficial to have a more complete response and drafted a template for the Board to review. It could act as a form letter to those who complain that someone is serving on a non-profit – it is okay that they are on a non-profit. The Board reviewed the letter and agreed

that it should be used as a template. The letter is specific to not-for-profits. Also, the Board discussed adding a fillable form on the website – that if someone wants to submit a complaint - here is the information the Board needs to review. A lot of complaints are vague so it will help both the Board and the individual submitting the complaint. Taane stated that the draft letter does not specifically dismiss the complaint, however it could be put on the website so anyone who plans to file a complaint must read and initial it. Anne stated that if they want to file an Ethics Complaint the Board wants to know what specific sections of the Ethics Law are being violated. Maybe a drop-down menu would be best. Deb asked if the form letter would be sent out after the Board makes a decision, as an explanatory letter. Yes, they can include it as part of their response. Taane stated it could either be used as a template to dismiss complaints – just adding language that complaint is dismissed; or continue to do what the Board is doing by tailoring the denial of the complaint if there is no conflict of interest. The Board may want to consider having the letter on the website to serve as a barrier to making complaints in the first place and requiring a certification that complaint does not fall within letter and is substantial complaint.

Anne – wants to set up a form on the website, and as part of that, individuals will have to read the letter first. The Board would be able to provide a link to the people to complete the form. A lot of complaints are vague so it will help both the Board and the individual submitting the complaint.

Stephanie asked if there was IT that could help set up a form? Judy will check with IT Dept to see if they can assist with it. The Board could draft the form and we can send it to IT to see what they can do. Can also attach documentation. Deborah stated that if dismissing a complaint the Board could always staple a copy of the letter to it. Bob will breakdown the violations and what should be in the Form for review by the Board next month. Taane – it may be better to state please cite what section of the Ethics Law you are referring to where you believe a conflict of interest exists. Brigid – we could make it a drop down with just the header of the section of law that can link to that section. The letter is specific to not-for-profits. Any draft form should be reviewed first by the County Attorney's Office. Judy will contact IT to see if it is something they can assist with.

Stephanie asked about a follow-up email that someone sent the Board stating that the Board should looking into other actions. The Board had decided not to act on that because it really should be related to the Town Ethics Board. Tabled to discuss at the next meeting.

6:40pm Motion to adjourn meeting, Taane Pegg 1st, Brigid Walsh 2nd, unanimously approved.