



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS

CITIZEN'S ETHICS ADVISORY BOARD OFFICE OF STATE ETHICS 18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106

MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 17, 2020 REGULAR MEETING

The Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board ("Board") of the Office of State Ethics ("OSE") held a Regular Meeting on Thursday, December 17, 2020, by teleconference.

Chair of the Board, Dena Castricone, called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m.

The following Board members were present:

Dena Castricone, Chair
Mary Bigelow
Charles Chiusano
Karen Christiana

Jason Farrell, Vice-Chair
Cheryl Lipson
Nichelle Mullins
Laura Schuyler

The following staff members of the OSE were present:

Peter Lewandowski, Executive Director	Marc Crayton, Deputy Ethics Enforcement Officer
Brian O'Dowd, General Counsel	Diane Buxo, Assistant General Counsel
Mark Wasielewski, Ethics Enforcement Officer	Jennifer Montgomery, Assistant Ethics Enforcement Officer
Nancy Nicolescu, Director of Education and Communications	Melissa Hamilton, Paralegal Specialist/ Clerk of
Marianne Sadowski, Deputy General Counsel	The Board

The following topics were addressed during the meeting:

1. The minutes of the November 19, 2020 regular meeting were presented to the Board for approval.

On the motion of Ms. Lipson, seconded by Ms. Bigelow, the Board voted eight (8) to zero (0) to approve the minutes of the November 19, 2020 Regular Meeting.

2. Chair Castricone presented the Chairperson report and expressed gratitude to the Office of State Ethics staff for their achievements while teleworking and support to the Board with remote meetings.

A volunteer for the February 25, 2020 Uniform Administrative Procedure Act (“UAPA”) Hearing was requested and Board member Lipson volunteered. Chair Castricone reminded the Board that Vice-Chair Farrell volunteered to serve as the January UAPA Hearing Officer.

Chair Castricone discussed the COGEL conference and reminded the Board of the “on-demand” presentations and their availability through the end of the year.

3. General Counsel Brian O’Dowd presented the Legal Division report, remarking on the busy month the Division had, particularly towards the end of the reporting period. He informed the Board of two possible requests for formal advisory opinions coming its way. One request/petition from the incoming Speaker of the House and another request/petition regarding the “revolving door” provision which stemmed from an informal staff opinion the Division issued within this month’s reporting period (granting permission to engage in the requested activity).

Chair Castricone applauded the staff on the great job of advising the regulated community of the ethical obligations, and of encouraging them to reach out to the agency if they are unsure of answers. She pointed out one of this month’s requests for an informal staff opinion involving “a cutest pet competition” and noted that such request indicates that the topic of “ethics” is on many people’s minds.

4. Director of Education & Communications Nancy Nicolescu presented the Training and Media reports, highlighting the five-year overview of trainings. Since the submission of the Training report, Ms. Nicolescu conducted two trainings, bringing the total 2020 trainings to 49.

Ms. Nicolescu shared feedback on COGEL’s “live” presentations, noted the recipient of the “Outstanding Service Award,” and noted that this year’s registrations to the COGEL conference exceeded all prior years’ registrations.

Executive Director Mr. Lewandowski noted that this year’s COGEL “Outstanding Service Award” went to an organization: State and Federal Communications, Inc., as opposed to an individual. He and Ms. Nicolescu informed the Board that State and Federal Communications, Inc., is a political compliance firm and online guidebook service covering lobbying, campaign finance, and procurement lobbying compliance laws for the federal government, all 50 states, more than 300 local jurisdictions, Canada, Europe, and Latin America.

5. Ethics Enforcement Officer Mark Wasielewski presented the Enforcement Division report, highlighting that the Division has been busily closing out 2020, which includes conducting background checks and making solid progress on the Subcommittee on Audit Review proposals (on track to conclude next month, as proposed).
6. Deputy Ethics Enforcement Officer Crayton presented the lobbyist audit report for CT Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects, requesting approval of the audit and its finding. Mr. Crayton noted that the audit consisted of no findings.

On the motion of Ms. Mullins, seconded by Mr. Farrell, the Board voted eight (8) to zero (0) to approve the audit report for CT Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

7. Executive Director Lewandowski opened the presentation of his report with an apology to the Board for the delay of Board meeting reimbursements covering the last several months and thanked them for their patience, as fiscal staff at the State Election Enforcement Commission (“SEEC”) balance assisting OSE with financial matters (due to the resignation of OSE’s Fiscal Administrative Assistant) and performing campaign finance duties and other related financial matters.

Mr. Lewandowski provided an update regarding OSE’s Fiscal Administrative Assistant (“FAA”) vacancy. He informed the Board that while he received approval from the Office of Policy and Management and Connecticut State Department of Administrative Services to fill the position immediately following the departure of the prior FAA, the position must be upgraded to a Fiscal Administrative Officer (“FAO”). The reason for the upgrade is, the separation of locations of OSE, Freedom of Information Commission (“FOIC”) and SEEC (OSE and FOIC will be moving to 165 Capitol Avenue and SEEC will be moving to 55 Farmington Avenue), and the expectation of the new personnel to support not only OSE, but also FOIC. Mr. Lewandowski also wants the new position to focus on the financial reporting managed by the agency, including lobbyists’ financial reports and Statements of Financial Interest. Therefore, in September he sought a reclassification of the position from FAA to FAO and was recently advised of its approval. As of Monday, the FAO job opening has been posted and the announcement will run through December 28, 2020. It is Mr. Lewandowski’s hope to have the position filled by mid-January.

The Board was reminded that beginning in January, the new lobbyist registration biennium will commence. This event requires Connecticut lobbyists to re-register with OSE, causing the months of January and February to be very busy for the agency. Although the agency will be busy during these months, it will also be cognizant of the current wave of the pandemic and continue to adhere to safety guidelines, including no more than 50% capacity of staff in the office at a given time, but will have staff coverage in the office to answer any urgent calls and inquiries from the lobbyists concerning registrations and financial reports. Mr. Lewandowski thanked Mr. Wasielewski for raising the awareness among the lobbyist community about their financial reports that are due in January.

Mr. Lewandowski announced that there are no changes pertaining to OSE’s relocation and that the agency is still on track to relocate in May of 2021.

Concerning OSE’s legislative proposal, Mr. Lewandowski informed the Board that he will be submitting the proposals next week to the Government Administration and Elections Committee. He noted that, according to recent media reports, the legislature is planning to limit bills they will consider this upcoming session because of the restrictions placed upon its operations due to the pandemic. Mr. Lewandowski said that he will adjust, if needed, by advancing at least two bills: the bill concerning Municipal Ethics and the bill generally revising the Codes of Ethics.

The training to members of the General Assembly has begun. The first training took place on December 2, 2020, and the second installment is scheduled in early January.

On the motion of Ms. Bigelow, seconded by Ms. Lipson, the Board voted eight (8) to zero (0) to enter into an Executive Session to discuss strategy and negotiations with respect to pending claims

or pending litigation pursuant to General Statutes §§ 1-200 (6) (B) and 1-210 (b) (4) with respect to the status of the Charmane Thurmand matter.

The following Board members were present for the Executive Session:

Dena Castricone, Chair
Mary Bigelow
Charles F. Chiusano
Beth Cook

Jason Farrell
Cheryl Lipson
Nichelle Mullins
Laura Schuyler

The following staff members were present for the Executive Session:

Peter Lewandowski, Executive Director
Brian O'Dowd, General Counsel
Nancy Nicolescu, Director of Education &
Communications
Mark Wasielewski, Ethics Enforcement Officer
Marc Crayton, Dep. Ethics Enforcement Officer

Diane Buxo, Asst. General Counsel
Jennifer Montgomery, Asst. Ethics Enforcement
Officer
Melissa Hamilton, Paralegal Specialist/ Clerk of
the Board

On the motion of Ms. Lipson, seconded by Mr. Chiusano, the Board voted eight (8) to zero (0) to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,



Melissa Hamilton
Clerk of the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board
Office of State Ethics

Date approved
(By the Citizen's Ethics Advisory Board)