

**PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY OFFICE OF ETHICS AND ACCOUNTABILITY
BOARD OF ETHICS**

Board Meeting Minutes

September 8, 2017

Present: Covette Rooney, Board Chair
Sharon Theodore-Lewis, Board Member
Curtis Eugene (teleconference)

Robin Barnes-Shell, Esq., Executive Director (teleconference)
LaShanda Whaley, Legal Counsel
Roslyn Walker, Compliance Officer
Chelinda Bullock, Administrative Aide

Next meeting: Friday, October 13, 2017 at 5:00 pm
9201 Basil Court, Suite 155
Largo, Maryland 20774

OPEN SESSION

I. OPENING OF MEETING

The Board of Ethics Chair, Covette Rooney, opened the meeting at approximately 5:12 pm and welcomed all in attendance. There was a quorum present with three (3) Board Members. The meeting was held at the Office of Ethics and Accountability (OEA) located at 9201 Basil Court, Suite 155, Largo, Maryland.

II. APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES

The three Board of Ethics (Board) Members in attendance adopted the June 16, 2017 Meeting Minutes with a vote of 3-0.

One Board of Ethics (Board) Member was not in attendance to adopt the April 14, 2017 and May 12, 2017 Meeting Minutes. Vote to approve minutes was reserved until next meeting when a quorum is present with a vote.

III. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

None to report.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

The Executive Director informed the Board of OEA's collection efforts for the 2016 Financial Disclosure Statements. There are four (4) County employees and seventeen (17) board and commission members still outstanding. Notification will be sent to the County Executive regarding the board and commission members. Thirty (32) waiver requests were received and granted from nineteen (19) County employees and thirteen (13) board and commission members for late submittal of their 2016 Financial Disclosure Statement.

The Executive Director informed the Board that the County Council received mandatory ethics training with the attendance of fifty (50+) and OHRM with three (3) County employees. Mandatory ethics training was held for new employees of Prince George's County Government with the attendance of seventy-six (76) employees and there is ongoing on-line mandatory ethics trainings.

The Executive Director informed the Board that the completion of the OEA Annual Report has been delayed and the Board Chair will be provided a draft for final approval.

The Board was provided an update on the number of registered lobbyists, which is currently fifty (50) for 2017 and the number of ethics advice and information requests received by OEA for the months of June, July, and August.

The Executive Director informed the Board that the OEA is in the process of hiring a Quality Assurance Analyst, Investigator, and Law Clerk.

V. Reading of Written Statement for Closing Meeting Under the Open Meeting Act

At 5:21 pm a motion was made by Board Member Sharon Theodore-Lewis and seconded by Board Member Curtis Eugene to close the open portion of the meeting to comply with a specific constitutional, statutory or judicially imposed requirement that prevents public disclosures about a particular proceeding or matter and to consult with legal counsel. The statement was read by the Board Chair Covette Rooney. The motion was approved by a vote of 3-0. The reason for closing the meeting, and the topics discussed with legal counsel involved among other matters, investigations, an advisory opinion request and a complaint that was referred to the Board for a possible ethics violation in accordance with the State Government Article, §10-508(a). Those in attendance were as follows:

Covette Rooney, Board Chair
Sharon Theodore-Lewis, Board Member
Curtis Eugene (teleconference)

Robin Barnes-Shell, Esq., Executive Director (teleconference)
LaShanda Whaley, Legal Counsel
Roslyn Walker, Compliance Officer
Chelinda Bullock, Administrative Aide

CLOSED SESSION

Advisory Opinions (17-0226)

The Board discussed the draft response to a request for an advisory opinion regarding the reporting of a gift by an elected official on their annual Financial Disclosure Statement. A motion to require the disclosure was made and the Board voted 3-0 to approve the response. A final advisory opinion responding to the request will be sent to the requestor.

Advisory Opinions (18-0073)

The Board discussed the referral from the State Ethics Commission to review two newly established boards. The Board voted 3-0 to approve a resolution that the Workgroup on Transportation for Middle and High School Students in Prince George's County created by House Bill 1568 or the Prince George's County Pretrial Release, Work Release, and Diversion Programs Task Force created by House by 1574, during the 2017 Legislative Session are not a County Board or Commission subject to the authority of the Prince George's County Code of Ethics and therefore their members are not required to file a Financial Disclosure Statement.

Investigation – Case #17-0213

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of alleged abuse of prestige of office/conflict of interest of a County employee. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there was reasonable basis to believe a violation has occurred and that there does exist a conflict of interest pursuant to Section 2-293 of the Ethics Code. The Board will reserve taking action for 30 days to allow for management to take appropriate corrective actions and to respond to the identified ethics violations.

Investigation – Case #17-0040

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of misuse of County resources/gifts/disclosure of confidential information of a County employee. The Board reviewed the matter and voted 3-0 that there was a reasonable basis to believe a violation had occurred, and in lieu of conducting a hearing, the Board accepted the actions taken by the agency as appropriate to address the violation.

Investigation – Case #17-0109

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of alleged secondary employment with a County vendor. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there was insufficient facts upon which to base a determination of a violation and dismiss the complaint.

Investigation – Case #17-0156

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of misuse of County resources of a County vehicle. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there was a reasonable basis to believe a violation had occurred and in lieu of conducting a hearing, the Board accepted the actions taken by the agency as appropriate to address the violation and will take no further action.

Investigation – Case #17-0231

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of misuse of County resources and the disclosure of confidential information by a County employee. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there was insufficient facts upon which to base a determination of a violation and dismissed the complaint.

Investigation – Case #18-0030

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of allegations of misuse of County resources and prestige conducted in parallel with another County agency.

Investigation – Case # 18-0020

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of allegations of a County employee regarding soliciting bribes from a customer.

Investigation – Case # 17-0166

The Board was provided with an update on a complaint received regarding allegations that a County employee disclosed confidential information. A determination was made the matters falls outside the jurisdiction of the OEA and Board of Ethics and the matter was referred to the appropriate agency for further investigation.

Investigation – Case #17-0212

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of disclosure of confidential information by a County employee to a third party for financial benefit.

Investigation – Case # 17-0217

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of alleged disclosure of confidential information. The matter was referred to another agency for investigation.

Investigation – Case # 17-0130

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation involving abuse of prestige of office by a County employee.

At the conclusion of all business, a motion was made by Board Member Sharon Theodore-Lewis to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed 3-0. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:17 pm.

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