

**ETHICS BOARD MEETING  
MINUTES OF THE PUBLIC SESSION**

The Ethics Board (“Board”) met on Wednesday, March 13, 2024, at 2:30 pm by conference call via Microsoft Teams.

**Call to Order & Statement Concerning the Recording of the Public Session:** Chair Stephan Fogleman called the Board meeting to order at 2:34 pm with four Board members, a quorum, present.

Chair Fogleman read the following statement:

All participants in the Public Session of the Board meeting acknowledge and consent to the video and audio recording of the Public Session and the publication of the recording on the Board’s website and social media accounts.

**Statement Concerning the Administrative Session of the February, Board Meeting:** Chair Fogleman read the following statement:

Per the Open Meetings Act, the Board discloses that it adjourned its virtual open meeting on February 14, 2024 to enter the Administrative Session at approximately 3:21 pm. Four Board members were present. Members discussed administrative matters including complaints.

The Board may need to close some or all of this meeting to preserve the confidentiality mandated by the Ethics Code or as otherwise authorized by the State Open Meetings Act. Likewise, upon adjournment of the Open Session, the Board may reconvene for an Administrative Session to discuss non-public, administrative functions of the Board.

**Review of Schedules and Agenda.**

**Approval of Written Minutes for the Administrative Session of the February 14, 2024 Board Meeting:** The Board unanimously approved the minutes.

**Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Birds, Bourbon, and Bacon – Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:** Birds, Bourbon, and Bacon is a ticketed event meant to bring people into Baltimore's green spaces. Attendees go bird watching with experienced birders in one of BCRP's parks, then tour Cylburn Arboretum, and end with a brunch with a high-end whiskey tasting. Chair Fogleman inquired if donations would be placed with the Civic Fund. Chief Bush confirmed and explained that last year's event hosting was smaller, with only 40 attendees. BCRP hopes to triple that number this year. Board member McCauley asked how donations would be solicited and the process for identifying controlled donors. Chief Bush explained that there would be a donation page on the Civic Fund's website, and there would also be some outreach to some local and national companies to ask them to sponsor various parts of the event and verified controlled donor based on a list of entities. The Board approved the waiver application with a vote of 4-0.

**Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Charm City Wellness Expo – Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:** Charm City Wellness Expo is an event aimed at promoting health and fitness. The event would include live demonstrations, interactive fitness

classes, yoga sessions, nutrition workshops, and health consultations and aims to empower individuals to prioritize their health and adopt sustainable lifestyles. Chief Bush explained that national and local companies like GNC would be solicited to donate their time and offer products such as health shots. Board member Sampson inquired about the incentive for vendors to donate their products. Chief Bush explained that the incentive would be for companies to bring awareness to their brands and show support for community initiatives. The Board approved the waiver application with a vote of 4-0.

**Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Rainbow Run – Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:** Rainbow Run is an event that aims to celebrate diversity, inclusion, and healthy living through a colorful two-mile run through Patterson Park. The event will be held during Pride Month and will feature an official race, a kid zone, and a beer garden for adults after the race. Similarly to previous events, donations will be placed with the Baltimore Civic Fund, and it will be clearly stated that donors will receive no special treatment. The Board approved the waiver application with a vote of 4-0.

**Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Fête Champêtre – Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:** Fête Champêtre is a luxurious garden party scheduled to be held in the Middle Branch. BCRP is seeking to have a national recording artist for entertainment. Tickets will be sold. Food vendors, alcohol vendors, and merchandise vendors would be contacted to sponsor the event. Funding for this event is similar to the funding for AFRAM. Board member Newman asked what the proceeds from this event would benefit specifically. Chief Bush conveyed that proceeds would be used to help Baltimore City Recreation and Park fund 25-40 free events throughout the year. The Board approved the waiver application with a vote of 4-0.

**Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Cookies and Caboozes – Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:** Previously held at one of BCRP's rec centers, with a couple of hundred people, Cookies and Caboozes, a free event, has expanded to include a second location and has seen attendance for the event grow to 400 to 500 people. The budget for the event was originally \$2,500; however, due to higher turnout, more is needed for expenses. Chief Bush explained that \$10,000 for each site would be sought to continue to bring the quality event of Cookies and Caboozes. Bakeries have offered donations of cookies and other items to help with the event. A screening of the movie Polar Express is shown at both sites. The Board approved the waiver application with a vote of 4-0.

**Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Charm City Lights – Baltimore City Recreation and Parks:** Charm City Lights is a drive-through light display throughout Baltimore City. Funding is sought to extend the route of the lights and increase the number of displays. A competition will be held for youth from rec centers to design light displays and receive sponsorships for the youth who help create the displays. The Board approved the waiver application with a vote of 4-0.

**Staff Update:** Director Amberger and Assistant Bond provided the following metrics for February on the Board staff's recent work:

- Help Desk
  - 43 help desk requests were received and resolved by Board staff in February.
    - 6 help desk requests were from lobbyists.
    - 0 help desk requests were concerning gift solicitation waivers.
    - 15 help desk requests were concerning financial disclosure statements.
    - 18 help desk requests were ethics inquiries.
    - 1 help desk requests were concerning the Ethics Training.
    - 0 help desk requests were administrative (question about deadlines, forms, etc.).
    - 3 help desk requests were not within the Board's jurisdiction and were referred elsewhere.
  - FY24 requests: 525
  
- Ethics Training
  - 17 people completed the Ethics Training in February.
  - FY24 attendees: 239
  
- Complaints
  - FY24 Complaints: 21
    - Open: 0
    - Dismissed: 21
  
- Secondary Employment Waivers
  - Waiver Requests: 0
  - FY24 Granted Waivers:1
  
- Gift Solicitation Waivers

- 6 gift solicitation waiver applications were submitted to the Board for the March 13, 2024 Board meeting.
- 2 gift solicitation waivers expired since the last Board meeting.
- FY24 Active Waivers: 14
- FY24 Expired/Rescinded Waivers: 17
  
- Financial Disclosure Statements
  - Ethics staff is still sending out notifications to 60+ agencies informing them of the April 30, 2024, deadline.
  - Many public servants are already filing statements prior to the reminder.
  
- Lobbying
  - So far this year 86 lobbyist have registered.

Board member Sampson voiced his displeasure that, despite repeated requests to Ethics staff to publicize the Board's activities and achievements to local media, Ethics staff has not responded to that request. In particular, he strongly suggested that staff should take into consideration that citizens filing complaints are approaching the Board with genuine expectations at a resolution and that dismissing complaints for lack of jurisdiction does not reflect positively on the Board, without pointing out that the dismissal does not reflect on the merits of the complaint itself. Director Amberger pointed out that jurisdiction is indeed narrow, that there appears to be a distorted perception of the Board's powers in the community, and that currently, the web presence of agencies City-wide is still being reprogrammed, limiting the staff's ability to expand its coverage. Dir. Amberger agreed that language will be added to assure complainants that dismissal does not equate to lack of merit, and that he will provide content addressing common issues on the website. He also cautioned that the publication of statistics alone may not be newsworthy.

The Public Session adjourned at 3:10 pm.