

Baltimore City Ethics Board

635 City Hall
Baltimore, MD 21202
February 15, 2023

Minutes of the Meeting

The Ethics Board (“Board”) met on February 15, 2023 at 10:30 am by conference call.

Call to Order: Chairman Stephan Fogleman called the Board meeting to order at 10:41 am with all board members, a quorum, present.

Statement Concerning January’s Administrative Session: Chair Fogleman read the following statement:

Per the Open Meetings Act, the Board discloses that it adjourned its virtual open meeting on January 11, 2023 to enter into an administrative session at approximately 3:08 pm. All 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: Officer Romo stated that a guest at the meeting had another commitment at 11 am.

Board Discussion – Former Vice Chair Davis’s Resignation: Chair Fogleman stated that Vice Chair Donna Davis resigned from the Ethics Board and Fogleman thanked Davis for her service on the Board.

Approval of Written Minutes for January 11, 2022 Public Meeting: The Board approved the minutes with a vote of 3-0.

Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waivers

LEE Public Policy Fellow Gift Solicitation Waiver, Councilmember Cohen’s Office – Additional Fiscal Sponsor Request: Councilman Zeke Cohen and members of his staff, Fellow Franie Parker-Hale and Chief Maggie Master, were present at the Public Session. Councilmember Cohen explained that past gift solicitation waivers for the benefit of the LEE Public Policy Fellow used the Maryland Philanthropy Network (MPN) as the fiscal sponsor, while the fiscal sponsor for the current waiver is the Baltimore Civic Fund. Councilmember Cohen requested that the MPN serve as the fiscal sponsor the active 2022-23 LEE Public Policy Fellow gift solicitation waiver.

In response to Member Sampson’s inquiry about other Councilmembers’ use of MPN, Councilman Cohen responded, stating that was unsure if the other Councilmembers use MPN as a fiscal sponsor and providing additional information about MPN, which serves as the fiscal sponsor for Healing City Baltimore.

The Board approved the fiscal sponsor request with a vote of 3-0.

Helping Up Mission and Project PLASE Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Department of Real Estate, Comptroller’s Office: Real Estate Agent Sharon Kempa was present at the Public Session and provided an overview of the waiver application, which had been approved by the Board of Estimates on December 14, 2022. Kempa explained that her office collected in-kind donations for the Helping Up Mission and Project PLASE (People Lacking Ample Shelter and Employment), and will distribute the donations pending Board approval. Kempa explained that her office was unaware that the application had to be approved by the Board following approval by the Board of Estimates.

Officer Romo explained that the application is for a workplace campaign, which is governed by a distinct Board Regulation (R 06.26.2). Romo stated that it was unlikely that solicitation efforts reached controlled donors. Agent Kempa confirmed that donations were solicited from other employees within the Comptroller’s Office.

The Board approved the waiver with a vote of 3-0.

Baltimore Ravens Boys & Girls Club Charitable/Governmental Gift Solicitation Waiver Application – Department of Recreation & Parks (BCRP): Officer Romo provided an overview of the application, which requests permission for the Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP) and their partner, the Baltimore Ravens Boys and Girls Club, to broadly solicit donations to finance the renovation of the Hilton Recreation Center.

The Board approved the application with a vote of 3-0.

Director’s Update: Director Amberger stated that he would provide an update during the Board’s Administrative Session.

Board Discussion – Circuit Court Ruling on Case 24C22002632: Member Hengerer opined that the Board should convene separately prior to discussing Circuit Court Case 24C22002632 with the public. Chair Fogleman specified that a statement had already been provided to the public on the case.

Ethics Officer’s Update: Officer Romo updated the Board on the Board staff’s recent work:

- Ethics Training (since last Board meeting)
 - 24 people completed the Ethics Training.
 - **FY23 attendees: 221**
- Help Desk
 - 113 help desk requests were received and resolved by the Board Staff in January.
 - 27 help desk requests were from lobbyists.
 - 12 help desk requests were concerning gift solicitation waivers.
 - 32 help desk requests were concerning financial disclosure statements.
 - 30 help desk requests were ethics inquiries.
 - 5 help desk requests were concerning the Ethics Training.

- 3 help desk requests were administrative (question about deadlines, forms, etc).
 - 4 help desk requests were not within the Board’s jurisdiction and were referred elsewhere.
- **FY23 requests: 452**
- Complaints (since last Board meeting)
 - New Complaints: 1
 - **FY23 Complaints: 10**
- Advisory Opinions
 - Pending: 1
 - **FY23 Issued Opinions: 1**
- Secondary Employment Waivers
 - Pending: 0
 - **FY23 Granted Waivers: 0**
- Gift Solicitation Reports (since last Board meeting)
 - 2 gift solicitation applications were submitted to the Board.
 - 0 gift solicitation waivers expired.
 - **FY23 Active Waivers: 17¹**
 - **FY23 Expired Waivers: 12**
- Financial Disclosures
 - The Department of Human Resources provided Board staff with supplemental lists of required financial disclosure filers, pursuant to § 7-1.1(b) of the Ethics Law.
 - The Department of Finance posted a list of all entities that did business with the City in 2022 on their website, pursuant to § 7-1.1(c).
- Lobbying – All lobbyists registered in 2022 filed their annual lobbying activity report(s).

Board Discussion – Board Vacancies and Former Vice Chair Davis’s Resignation: Member Sampson expressed his hope that City officials will appoint new members to the Board to fill its vacancies. Member Hengerer agreed with Sampson and stated that former Vice Chair Davis’s resignation from the Board was due to her relocation.

The public meeting adjourned at 11:04 am.

¹ Officer Romo incorrectly stated that there were “seven” active gift solicitation waivers.