

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

Board Meeting Minutes

November 17, 2017

Present: Curtis Eugene, Board Member (teleconference)
Sharon Theodore-Lewis, Board Member (teleconference)
Cassandra Burckhalter, Board Member (teleconference)

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

Next meeting: Friday, January 12, 2018 at 5:00 pm
9201 Basil Court, Suite 155
Largo, Maryland 20774

OPEN SESSION

I. OPENING OF MEETING

Board Member Cassandra Burckhalter opened the meeting at 5:02 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 approved the October 20, 2017 Meeting Minutes with a vote of 3-0.

The Executive Director requested to post the minutes from November 3, 2017, on OEA's website with a disclaimer that the minutes have not yet been approved. The motion passed 3-0.

The May 12th minutes have already been posted on OEA's website with a disclaimer. Minutes require the vote of Board Chair Covette Rooney for approval and were reserved until the next meeting.

III. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

None to report.

IV. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

The Executive Director informed the Board that OEA entered into one (1) settlement agreement with an employee to reduce the assessed late fees for failing to timely file a 2016 FDS.

The Executive Director informed the Board that OEA has begun collection efforts for the 2017 calendar year. OEA is in process of obtaining updated lists of designated filers from County Agencies and the Board/Commission Liaisons. Notification letters for the 2017 calendar year Financial Disclosure Statements will be mailed in December 2017. The filers will be advised that 2018 calendar year notifications to designated filers will be sent electronically.

With respect to ethics training, the Executive Director informed the Board of OEA's training efforts that included Mandatory Ethics Training for thirty-two (32) new employees of Prince George's County Government through the New Employees Orientation Program and eleven (11) employees via the regularly scheduled monthly ethics trainings.

There are currently fifty-seven (57) registered lobbyists for calendar year 2017. The Board was informed of the number of ethics advice and information requests received by OEA for the month of October. The Board was informed of the increase in secondary employment filings that are being reviewed by Legal Counsel for conflicts of interest.

The Executive Director informed the Board that the budget process is still underway and OEA will meet the budget analyst in the next coming weeks.

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

At 5:14pm a motion was made by Board Member Cassandra Burckhalter 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 Board Member Cassandra Burckhalter. 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 and an advisory opinion request in accordance with the State Government Article, §10-508(a). Those in attendance were as follows:

Curtis Eugene, Board Member (teleconference)
Sharon Theodore-Lewis, Board Member (teleconference)
Cassandra Burckhalter, Board Member (teleconference)

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

CLOSED SESSION

Advisory Opinion (18-0171)

The Board was advised of a request from a former County employee appealing ethics advice issued by the Office of Law regarding post-employment restrictions.

Advisory Opinion (18-0113)

The Board reviewed a draft response to a request from a County Board seeking exemption from the Financial Disclosure Statement filing requirements. The Board voted 3-0 to approve the draft response and issue a Formal Advisory Opinion.

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 #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. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there are insufficient facts upon which to base a determination of an ethics violation and to dismiss the complaint.

Investigation – Case # 17-0130

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation involving abuse of prestige of office by a County employee. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there are insufficient facts upon which to base a determination of an ethics violation and to dismiss the complaint.

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. The Board reviewed the memorandum provided on the investigation and voted 3-0 that there are insufficient facts upon which to base a determination of an ethics violation and to dismiss the complaint.

Investigation – Case #18-0169

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation involving abuse of prestige of office and improper solicitation activities by 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 #18-0062

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of unauthorized access to a County email 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.

The Board was provided a copy of the signed settlement agreement with a County employee for failing to timely file a Financial Disclosure Statement. A motion to approve the settlement agreement was made and the Board voted 3-0 to approve.

A motion to adjourn the meeting passed 3-0. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:58 pm.