

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

Board Meeting Minutes

January 13, 2017

Present: Covette Rooney, Board Chair (teleconference)
Curtis Eugene, Board Member (teleconference)
Cassandra Burckhalter, Board Member (teleconference in @ 5:15pm)
Sharon Theodore Lewis

Robin Barnes-Shell, Esq., Executive Director
LaShanda Whaley, Legal Counsel
LaTonya Davis, Investigator
Chelinda Bullock, Administrative Aide

Next meeting: Friday, February 10, 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 5:05 pm and welcomed all in attendance. There was a quorum present with three (3) Board Members. A fourth Board Member joined the meeting at 5:15 pm. The meeting was held at the Office of Ethics and Accountability (OEA) located at 9201 Basil Court, Suite 155, Largo, Maryland.

II. APPROVAL OF 11/18/16 MEETING MINUTES

The four Board of Ethics (Board) Members in attendance adopted the November 18, 2016 Meeting Minutes with a vote of 4-0.

III. BOARD CHAIR REPORT

None to report.

IV. ELECTION OF BOARD CHAIR

The three Board of Ethics (Board) Members nominated Covette Rooney to be the Board of Ethics Chair for calendar year 2017-2018 with a vote of 3-0.

V. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

The Executive Director informed the Board that the Office of Ethics and Accountability's Mandatory Ethics Training Compliance Report reported employee compliance of 90%. The report was forwarded to Chief Administrative Officer, Deputy Chief Administrative Officers, and the Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM). Employees who are noncompliant with completing Mandatory Ethics Training will be informed by OHRM to complete the training within 30 days from date of notice and after that, a written reprimand will be issued.

The Department of Public Works and Transportation received Mandatory Ethics Training with the attendance of twenty-three (23) County employees and Mandatory Ethics Training was held for new employees of Prince George's County Government with the attendance of seventy-four (74) employees, each held in November and December. The Department of the Environment expressed an interest in receiving in-person ethics training for County employees. Ongoing Mandatory Ethics training will be conducted for Board and Commissions members.

The Executive Director informed the Board of OEA's diligent Financial Disclosure Statement collection efforts and communications with one (1) delinquent County employee. The Office has requested the Office of Finance to offset the employee's pay for the associated late fees.

The Executive Director informed the Board of two (2) new employees who started in December and have requested exemption to filing Financial Disclosure Statement for CY2015 upon filing their Financial Disclosure Statements for CY 2016 within 30 days of their hire date. They approved the request by a vote of 4-0.

The Executive Director informed the Board there were forty-three (43) registered lobbyists for 2016 with the submission of six (6) annual reports to date. Lobbyists have until January 31st to file their reports. There were fifteen (15) registered lobbyists for 2017.

The Executive Director informed the Board that the Office of Ethics and Accountability received five (5) Ethics Advice and Information Requests regarding Conflict of Interest, Post-Employment, and Gifts.

The Executive Director informed the Board that the Office of Ethics and Accountability (OEA) will receive a new Compliance Officer in January 2017.

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

At 5:26 pm a motion was made by Board Chair Covette Rooney and seconded by Board Member Sharon Theodore-Lewis 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 4-0. The reason for closing the meeting, and the topics discussed with legal counsel involved employees' disciplinary action for an ethics violation 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 (teleconference)
Curtis Eugene, Board Member (teleconference)
Cassandra Burckhalter, Board Member (teleconference)
Sharon Theodore-Lewis

Robin Barnes-Shell, Esq., Executive Director
LaShanda Whaley, Legal Counsel
LaTonya Davis, Investigator
Chelinda Bullock, Administrative Aide

CLOSED SESSION

Ethics Advice – Case # 17-0010

The Board was provided correspondence regarding the status of an organization that was the subject of previously rendered advice provided to an agency conducting a County approved fundraiser.

Investigation – Case # 17-0039

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of alleged Misuse of Prestige of Office by a County employee.

Investigation – Case # 17-0048

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of Misuse of Prestige of Office regarding the hiring process of an agency.

Investigation – Case # 17-0014

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of Prestige of Office/Fraud regarding a property manager of a Housing Authority owned property.

Investigation – Case # 17-0040

The Board was provided with an update on the investigation of and allegation of Misuse of Prestige of Office/Disclosure Confidential.

Investigation – Case #16-0263

The Board was provided with an update that the memorandum will be finalized with OEA and then presented to BOE for review.

Information Request – Case #17-0044

The Board was updated on MPIA request from media and coordination with the Office of Law to respond to the request. The redacted ethics opinion will also be forwarded to elected and appointed officials.

Ethics Advice – Case #17-0103

The Board was updated on correspondence received from a law firm related to ethics advice requested from a County agency and OEA’s response.

Ethics Advice – Case # 17-0124

The Board was updated on a request from a Council Member for a formal advisory opinion regarding ethical implications of campaign donations. The Board voted 4-0 to draft a response to seek advice from other entities as the request was outside of the jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics.

Financial Disclosure Statement

The Board was updated on (1) the status of a request for exemption to file for a board member of the Enterprise Road Corridor Development Review District Commission. The individual submitted their resignation letter in compliance with the Board of Ethics’ stipulations for granting an exemption of filing a 2015 Financial Disclosure Statement; and (2) the letters to the County Executive recommending removal or not reappointing two board members for their noncompliance with filing a 2015 Financial Disclosure Statement.

Information Requests and Investigations

The Executive Director advised the Board of pending meetings and coordination with appropriate authorities for ongoing ethics advice and investigations.

At the conclusion of all business, a motion was made by Board Chair Covette Rooney to adjourn the meeting. The motion was 4-0. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:05 pm.