

Town of Riverdale Park
Ethics Commission Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2021
6:30 p.m.

In Attendance

Andrea Huberty, Chair
Corey Beauford, Vice Chair
April Engram, Alternate
John Wells

Frederick Sussman, Town Attorney
Jessica Barnes, Director of Administrative Services/Town Clerk

Call to Order

Ms. Huberty called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Roll Call

Agenda Approval

Mr. Wells made a motion to approve the November 10th Ethics Commission agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Engram. Vote: 3-0 (Favorable)

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wells made a motion to approve the minutes for the September 29, 2021, Ethics Commission meeting as submitted. The motion was seconded by Ms. Engram. Vote: 3-0 (Favorable)

Unfinished Business

1. Review of CY2020 Financial Disclosure Statements

Ms. Barnes provided an overview of the outreach to former CM Dixon regarding the missing dates on the Financial Disclosure Statements that she submitted. Ms. Barnes reported that she did not receive a response from former CM Dixon.

Ms. Engram stated that since the only information that was missing from the Financial Disclosure Statements were the dates and outreach had been conducted, the forms were sufficient. Ms. Huberty agreed. There were no objections from Mr. Wells or Mr. Beauford.

Mr. Wells made a motion to accept the Financial Disclosure Statements as submitted. The motion was seconded by Mr. Beauford. Vote: 3-0 (Favorable)

2. Position Statement for Financial Disclosure Statements

Ms. Barnes provided background information from previous Commission meetings regarding the position statement for Financial Disclosure Statements. Ms. Barnes discussed recommendations regarding ways to address conflicts of interest.

Ms. Huberty asked the Commission if the position statement needed to be revised or if the Commission wanted to address including Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Beauford asked about Town employees and their awareness of conflicts of interest and ethics. Ms. Barnes discussed staff ethics training, the 5 E's initiative, and Ethics Awareness month recognition.

Mr. Wells suggested that the discussion regarding the position statement and the discussion regarding the inclusion of Boards and Commissions in the filing of Financial Disclosure Statements be separate discussions.

Town Attorney Fred Sussman discussed Chapter 32-6 Ethics of the Town Code as it related to those positions required to complete Financial Disclosure Statements. Mr. Sussman noted that revisions to the Town Code would be needed to include Boards and Commissions other than the Ethics Commission which was already included.

Mr. Sussman noted that revisions to the Town Code would be needed to require long form Financial Disclosure Statements instead of short form Financial Disclosure Statements for positions outlined in Chapter 32 of the Town Code.

Ms. Engram suggested a form, similar to the sample form from the Town of Chesapeake Beach, which was a combination of the short form and long forms. Mr. Sussman noted that revisions would be needed to the Town Code.

Mr. Sussman suggested that the Commission review Chapter 32 of the Town Code to determine if other revisions were needed. Ms. Huberty clarified that changes were needed to the Town Code in order to enact the changes requested by the Town Manager and Mr. Sussman replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Sussman suggested that the Town Manager and Ethics Commission could jointly present the proposed changes to the Town Code to the Mayor and Council. Ms. Huberty suggested that the Town Code revisions should be the priority. Mr. Sussman noted that there were several ways to address the changes to the Town Code. Ms. Barnes suggested that the Commission review options regarding potential revisions to the Town Code at the next meeting.

Mr. Beauford requested a copy of Chapter 32 of the Town Code and Ms. Barnes stated that she would send a link to Chapter 32 to the entire Commission.

By consensus, Item 2 (Position Statement for Financial Disclosure Statements) was deferred to a future meeting.

3. Discussion of Long Form Financial Disclosure Statements and recommended changes

Ms. Huberty noted that edits to the Long Form Financial Disclosure Statement were included in the meeting materials. Ms. Barnes provided an overview of the proposed revisions. The Commission discussed including instructions on Schedule A, Question 6 regarding the following questions only pertaining to property owners. Mr. Beauford discussed concerns regarding disclosure of landlords if they are unlicensed. Mr. Beauford stated that he did not want to make the form more complicated. Mr. Sussman discussed what “legal interest in property” meant with regard to other housing situations.

Mr. Wells cautioned that the Commission should not craft the Financial Disclosure Statement form to exceptions (rarely encountered issues) in order to avoid overreach. The Commission agreed.

Ms. Barnes discussed the inconsistency in the description of immediate family throughout the Long Form Financial Disclosure Statement. Ms. Huberty proposed the description “parents, siblings, spouse, domestic partner, children, or dependents.” The Commission discussed the proposed description. There were no objections to the recommended description.

Mr. Sussman suggested that the Commission review the revisions incorporated into the Long Form Financial Disclosure Statement at the next meeting.

Hearings

There were no hearings scheduled for the November 10, 2021, Ethics Commission meeting.

New Business

There was no New Business to be discussed.

Other Business

There was no Other Business to be discussed.

Next Meeting

The Ethics Commission will meet virtually on Thursday, December 9th at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment

By consensus, the meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.