

CITY OF STAMFORD
Board of Ethics
Stamford Government Center
(Meeting held virtually via Zoom)
January 18, 2023
Minutes

This Meeting was recorded, and the audio recording is available from the Board of Ethics and the City of Stamford. Such audio recording is intended to be the official public record of the Meeting and not these minutes, and such recording is incorporated into these minutes by reference and made a part hereof. These minutes summarize the proceedings and are not intended as verbatim notes.

Present Members:

Allan Lang, Chair
Fred Springer, Vice Chair
Myrna Sessa, Member
Monica Smyth, Member
Christine Dzujna, Member
Benjamin Folkinshteyn, Member
Laura Indellicati, Member

Other:

Stephen Conover, Counsel
Kimberly Hawreluk, Human Resources Processing Technician
Megan Cottrell, Member of the Board of Representatives
Various members of the public

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lang at 7:01 p.m.

1. Chairman Lang presented the December 21, 2022, Board of Ethics (the “BOE”) Meeting Draft Minutes for review and approval. Subject to a suggested edit by Ms. Dzujna, Ms. Smyth moved to approve the minutes, Ms. Indellicati seconded, Mr. Folkinshteyn abstained, all others in favor. The motion passed.
2. Chairman Lang invited Board of Representative member Representative Megan Cottrell to share the issue for which she is seeking an advisory opinion: her child will be in kindergarten at KT Murphy School in Stamford next Fall, and she and other parents approached the Stamford School Superintendent about creating a dual-language program at KT Murphy or another city school. She asked whether advocating for such a program and joining its steering committee could create a conflict of interest in connection with her roles with the City on the Board of Representatives and on the Education Committee. She asked the same about joining the Parent Teacher Association at KT Murphy. Ms. Cottrell addressed questions from the BOE and discussion ensued.

The BOE concluded that, because the program would benefit all school children and not only Ms. Cottrell's, there does not appear to be a risk of her receiving a benefit not common to the general interests of all city residents. The BOE did agree that it would be prudent for Ms. Cottrell to refrain from using her Board of Representative email address in all communications regarding the proposed school program to avoid any confusion or appearance of influence. Chairman Lang will draft the advisory opinion on this matter.

3. Chairman Lang raised the issue of the draft advisory opinion prepared for Board of Representative member Representative Ashley Ley. Ms. Ley recently informed the BOE that the potential for a conflict related to her inquiry has been removed and she no longer has the need for an advisory opinion from the BOE. Therefore, Mr. Springer moved that the BOE not issue an advisory opinion in this matter, Mr. Folkinshteyn seconded, all others in favor. The motion passed.

4. Chairman Lang noted that in a recent period of 14 days, five complaints were submitted to the BOE, adding to the one complaint already received and under investigation. This influx of complaints, along with the fact that there is one vacant BOE seat, has created an inability to form sufficient investigative committees to address all complaints. Chairman Lang moved that, under the present extraordinary circumstances, the time limits imposed by the Code for completing investigations are insufficient and, therefore, require that the BOE extend by 60 days (measured from the date of receipt of each complaint) the period within which to complete investigations on five of the six open complaints. After discussion, Mr. Springer seconded the motion, all others in favor. The motion passed.

Chairman Lang adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Dzujna, Secretary