

CITY OF STAMFORD
Board of Ethics
Stamford Government Center
(Meeting held virtually via Zoom)

July 15, 2020

Minutes

Present

Allan Lang, Chair

Thomas Hynes, Vice-Chair

Myrna Sessa, Member

Monica Smyth, Member

Christine Dzujna, Member

Fred Springer, Alternate (joined at 7:58)

Kevin Quinn, Alternate

Representative Philip Giordano

The meeting was called to order by Chair Lang at 7:11 p.m.

1. Tom Hynes moved to accept the minutes of the June 17, 2020, Meeting of the Board of Ethics ("BOE"), seconded by Monica Smyth, unanimously passed.
2. Mr. Lang reported Representative Philip Giordano's request for an advisory opinion on the potential for a conflict of interest in his participation in any upcoming Board of Reps discussions and/or vote on the proposed removal of the Columbus statue in Columbus Park and the renaming of the park in his brother's honor, Bruno, a former city mayor. Bruno Giordano's daughter, Esther, a member of the city Democratic Committee, wrote an Advocate article advocating against the statue removal and park renaming. Rep. Giordano's constituents are generally taking the same position and he is inclined to agree with them and his niece.

The BOE agreed that there is no material benefit to him if the statute is removed and, therefore, no potential conflict in his participating on that issue. However, the renaming of the park, while not a technical conflict under the Code, could create the appearance of a divided loyalty and of a conflict. The BOE advised Giordano that he may wish to recuse himself from participating on this sensitive issue.

Giordano requested a written advisory opinion; which Mr. Lang will prepare.

3. A motion to modify the agenda was made by Ms. Dzujna to move for an extension of time in the investigation being conducted by her, Ms. Smyth and Mr. Quinn of two recently filed and related complaints; seconded by Monica Smyth, passed unanimously. Ms. Dzujna explained that the investigating committee seeks a 30-day extension to continue and complete its fact gathering and investigation. Ms. Dzujna moved to approve the extension of time, seconded by Monica Smyth, unanimously passed.

4. Mr. Lang brought forth for discussion two recommendations for improvement to the Code of Ethics. On the initial processing of complaints option, it was agreed that the last sentence of the second paragraph should be amended as follows: “The Chairperson must *make reasonable efforts to* make this determination within ten (10) *calendar* days of receipt of a complaint, ” and that it be made clear that this instruction applies to both the Chair’s assessment that a timely allegation has been made that accuses at least one person of a Code violation, and that the alleged violation is not too minor to proceed.

For clarification on timing, Mr. Lang pointed out that the Code provides that the Complainant and Respondent are to receive notice of the receipt of a complaint within 7 days, and that the 10 days review time sought here is only a little longer but will offer the Chair sufficient time to make a determination as to the validity of a complaint.

The BOE also noted that the last sentence under the Comment is unclear. The BOE agreed to table the further discussion of these Code revision options until the next meeting when we can benefit from our counsel’s input and clarification.

Mr. Lang reported that the Annual Report submitted to the Mayor by the BOE included the suggested Code revisions we agreed on at our last meeting. He also advised Representatives McMullen and Zelinsky of the submission of those suggestions. We have received no feedback to date.

5. At 7:59 p.m. adjournment was moved by Ms. Smyth, second by Ms. Dzujna, unanimously passed.

Respectfully submitted.

Christine Dzujna, secretary