

MONTGOMERY COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION

Public Meeting, May 10, 2022

Conducted via Zoom call

Minutes

IN ATTENDANCE:

Commissioners: Susan Beard, Chair

Bruce Romer, Vice-Chair

Jennifer Collins

Rahul Goel

Mary Ann Keeffe

PUBLIC ATTENDEES:

Delegate Al Carr

Staff Members: Robert W. Cobb, Chief Counsel

Erin Chu, Program Manager

Item 1. The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m.

Item 2. The Commission approved the minutes from the April 12, 2022, meeting as presented.

Item 3. Ethics Education: Mr. Cobb briefed the Commission on the developments concerning employee training. In particular, Mr. Cobb noted that a 5 minute video had been provided to the Office of Human Resources for the new employee orientation (NEOP) and that the acknowledgement form that OHR had agreed to implement was being sent to new employees. Mr. Cobb communicated that it appeared the video was not shown at the NEOP. Mr. Cobb also raised the question of the implementation of the acknowledgement form and whether new employees were being told that executing the form is required as part of County service. In anticipation of involvement of the Ethics Commission in writing a letter regarding these matters, Mr. Cobb was directed to find out more about what new employees were being presented with in terms of the acknowledgement form.

Item 4. The Commission considered a change to the financial disclosure provisions governing candidates for County elective office. The changes would make the filings of candidates consistent with what County employees file, negating the variance between County employee annual filings and candidate filings. This would do two things: make candidate filings easier because the current requirements for candidate filings in terms of period covered by report has proved confusing to both candidates and the Board of Elections; in addition, it would make candidate filings by incumbent elected officials much easier; if such persons' annual filings have been made, then through coordination with the Board of Elections, confirmation can be provided that the candidate filing requirement is satisfied. In addition, the new proposed provision would add a failsafe provision that in the event of a failure to file as required, a candidacy is not immediately treated as withdrawn, and extend the time for resolution of the issue by 8 days.

The Commission voted to approve the proposed changes 5 to zero. Mr. Cobb is to take steps to see if the amended language can be added to the Commission's already submitted proposal for changes to the County's ethics laws.

Item 5. FY2024 Budget/Strategic Planning

The Commission discussed the potential for increases to the Commission's 2024 budget. In particular, the Commission considered what the needs were in connection with executing the training challenges in providing ethics training to public employees. Mr. Cobb is tasked with briefing the Commission on the scope of the training challenges in front of the Commission and examining how the County can best fulfill the training objective. The Commission expects that Mr. Cobb will discuss the objective with concerned parties in the County.

Item 6. New Business.

There was no new business.

Pursuant to GP Art. 3-305, at 8:25 p.m. the Commission voted unanimously to close the meeting to the public to discuss legal advice and confidential matters.

- a. The Commission deferred making a decision on a pending proposed revocation of outside employment approval.
- b. The Commission determined that a matter considered at a previous meeting is moot.
- c. The Commission approved outside employment, making a change to one proposed condition. Mr. Goel recused himself from one application for outside employment due to a business relationship with the outside employer.

The meeting reopened at 9:14.

Item 7. The meeting adjourned at 9:14.

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert W. Cobb

Chief Counsel