

Baltimore City Ethics Board
626 City Hall
Baltimore, MD 21202
September 10, 2013

Minutes of the Public Session

The Ethics Board met on September 10, 2013 in the Conference Room of the Office of Department of Legislative Reference, 626 City Hall, Baltimore, Maryland.

Call to Order: Chairwoman Linda Pierson called to order the meeting of the Baltimore City Ethics Board at 9:45 a.m. with a quorum present. Present were Board members Linda Pierson, Dawna Cobb, Alicia Wilson and Jennifer Burdick. Also present was Deputy Director of the Ethics Board, Thaddeus Watulak.

A. Approval of the minutes: Minutes for August 2013, as amended, were approved by a vote of 4-0.

B. Chair's Report: Regarding a recent *Sun* article about the Board of Estimates approval of a contract to hire the Mayor's cousin, the Ethics Regulations do not apply to cousins. Another *Sun* article detailed travel by city employee, Mr. Rudy Chow, that was paid in part by conference sponsors. A review of his disclosure form did not raise any conflict of interest issues. Mr. Watulak will call Mr. Chow to make sure he knows the gift reporting rules under the Ethics Code should such costs be covered in the future.

C. Director's Status Updates

1. On-Line Financial Disclosure Project: The project has been bid and a quote has been accepted.

2. Lobbying before the Board of Estimates: The Ethics Board has been asked whether people, many of whom who are lawyers representing companies before the Board of Estimates (BOE), are registered as lobbyists. Ethics Board staff has provided a list of names to Harriet Taylor of the Comptroller's Office and has asked her to confirm whether any of these individuals have appeared before the BOE.

3. Bill 13-0249: This bill proposes to increase the filing fee for lobbying registrations. Mr. Watulak has advised the City Council that the Ethics Board has no objection to the enactment of the bill. Staff will explore whether the fees received from lobbyist registrations and late fees can be tracked. Following receipt of that information the Board will explore whether these funds can be directed to the Department of Legislative Reference to support the Ethics Board staff.

4. Late Fee follow up: Letters were sent to the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Mayor's Office of Information Technology (MOIT), the agencies whose employees were recently assessed late fees for the late filing of their financial disclosure forms, stating that agencies responsible for late payments have in the past covered the late fee. MOIT said it will pay the late fee for its employee. The DOT employee whose fee was late filed a grievance with her union and the agency then agreed to pay the late fee.

D. Solicitation Requests

The Mayor's Office of Minority and Women's Business Development MBE awards: This request had been approved by four Board members via e-mail; that approval was ratified by a vote of 4-0.

E. City Officials Participation in Marketing Events: Disclaimer language suggested by Mr. Watulak was accepted by the Bank of America for use in a marketing presentation. The Board voted 4-0 to approve the language as standard language/template for future instances where a City official participates in a marketing event.

F. Review of Disclosure Forms by the City Solicitor Law Clerk: The clerk has reviewed financial disclosure forms filed by City Council members/staff and a sampling of forms filed by executive staff at the following agencies: Departments of Transportation, Health, Public Works and the Mayor's Office. The clerk identified mistakes primarily in Schedule 1 regarding ownership of real property. Filers identified their principal residences but then failed to identify these properties on Schedule 1. Follow up to correct filings will be necessary.

G. Ethics Board Training: The Board recommends that agency employees responsible for monitoring the filing of financial disclosure forms also monitor attendance by those employees and officials at the required Ethics Board training. Training for this additional responsibility will be formulated this fall and provided to agency coordinators in early 2014.

H. New business: A budget for Ethics Board staff was discussed and the Board will request a meeting with the Mayor to discuss the accomplishments of the Ethics Board and a request for additional support for dedicated staff.

I. A motion to adjourn the meeting was approved at 11.15 a.m. The next meeting is October 8 at 9:30 a.m.