

**City of Troy  
Ethics Commission**

**November 5, 2020**

**Minutes**

Attendance

Present: Thomas Hotte, Peter Kehoe, Ryan Manley (Chairman), Paul McCarthy, Stephen Muller, Raquel Velho.

Call to Order

Chairman Manley determined that there was a quorum and called the meeting to order at 6:05 pm.

Public Comments

None, as City Hall was closed to the public.

Minutes

Draft minutes of September 10, 2020, meeting, with changes proposed by Manley, were approved.

Update on Commission Membership

Manley noted that the Commission still had one vacancy, a Mayoral appointee, and added that he had raised this with the Mayor. Velho announced that she would have to resign from the Commission in early 2021 as she will be moving to Albany.

City Response to Comptroller Audit

Manley reported that he had coordinated with the Mayor and City Controller on a response to the New York State Office of the Comptroller audit of the Ethics Commission. The response came from the City and was signed by the Mayor. He noted that one of the areas that the audit criticized was the handling of the annual conflict of interest disclosure forms, and this is a topic of ongoing discussion between the City and the Commission.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure Forms

Disclosure forms that had been received by the City Clerk were distributed to Commission members for review at the September meeting. Those members commented that a recurring issue was that various sections of the form were left blank, rather than completed with required information or marked "Not Applicable" or "None." Velho noted that instructions could be clearer or emphasized better.

Another point of discussion was the possibility of digitizing the form. Manley said he had raised this with the Mayor, and the Mayor had agreed to ask the City's IT department to look into this.

The major issue discussed was how to handle the follow up for employees and others who are required to file the form but who don't file by the deadline. Currently the City Clerk sends one reminder only. Hotte said filers are required to provide email addresses, so additional follow up could be done via group email, but Muller pointed out this is still additional work for the City Clerk. McCarthy suggested that City HR could be designated to follow up with employees, with the Mayor responsible for appointees. Manley said he would raise these points with the City.

It was also pointed out that compliance could improve if there were consequences for not filing or not filing in a timely matter. Velho said that typically the only sanction for employees is these circumstances counseling by the supervisor.

Muller and Hotte also pointed out that at this stage in the filing cycle, any changes to the disclosure form or filing process would have to be discussed with the City with a view toward implementing them for the 2021 filing cycle.

#### Training

Manley and Muller said they participated in the November 5 Comptroller web training session on conflict of interest. Manley said he will send the PowerPoint slides to Commission members, and also noted that the Comptroller has a number of other training aids on its website. Manley also noted that the Comptroller audit criticized the City for not providing sufficient ethics training to employees, and said that the City was looking into improvements in this regard.

#### Annual Report

Manley said he will draft the 2020 Annual Report and send it to Commission members for comment.

#### Next Meeting

The next meeting will be in Q1 2021, but no specific date was proposed.

#### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 6:35 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Muller  
Secretary