

MILWAUKEE COUNTY ETHICS BOARD

Thursday, February 1, 2024, Ethics Board Meeting Minutes

1.0 Call to Order and Roll Call

Board Chair Christopher Meuler called to order a regular meeting of the Ethics Board at 2:14 p.m. on February 1, 2024. The meeting was held in Courthouse, Room 203-R.

The Ethics Board Executive Director, Adam Gilmore, conducted a roll call. The following Board Members were present: Christopher Meuler, Richard Donner, Dean Daniels and Elizabeth Lentini. Dana Guthrie and Clarence Nicholas were excused.

2.0 Resignation of Dana Guthrie, Vice Chair

Mr. Gilmore informed the Board that Ms. Dana Guthrie has submitted her resignation. Ms. Guthrie plans to join the Board for their meeting in May 2024 as her last meeting. The County Executive's Office has solicited Ms. Guthrie's nominating authority, the Greater Milwaukee Committee, to provide two nominees for appointment to the Board.

3.0 Election of Officers

Ms. Lentini moved, and Mr. Daniels seconded, to elect Christopher Meuler as the chair of the Ethics Board. The Board voted (3-0), with Mr. Meuler abstaining.

Mr. Meuler moved, and Mr. Donner seconded, to elect Elizabeth Lentini as vice chair of the Ethics Board. The Board voted (3-0), with Ms. Lentini abstaining.

4.0 Approval of the Minutes for the Meetings of November 2, 2023

Mr. Donner moved, Ms. Lentini seconded, and the Board voted 4-0 to approve the November 2, 2023, meeting minutes.

5.0 Report of the Executive Director

5.1 2023 4th Quarter Lobbying Report from the County Clerk, George Christenson

This item was informational only. No action was taken by the Board.

5.2 2023 Ethics Board Annual Report

Mr. Gilmore informed the Board that the draft 2023 Annual Report had been circulated to Board Members for review. Revisions from Board members can be accepted via e-mail. Once all Board members approve of the content, the report will be finalized and submitted to the County Board to be placed on file.

Mr. Donner moved, Mr. Daniels seconded, and the Board voted (4-0), to approve the 2023 Ethics Board Annual Report pending any further revisions.

5.3 2023/2024 Annual SEI Drive Report

Mr. Gilmore informed the Board that the 2024 annual Statement of Economic Interest (“SEI”) drive had been completed. There was an increase in the number filed by the deadline (80%) from the past few years. This year 414 County employees and officials were required to file an SEI, an increase from years past. Mr. Gilmore informed the Board of his intent to approach the Department of Human Resources regarding ways to secure filings from newly hired employees throughout the year when appropriate.

5.4 February Ethically Speaking Newsletter Content

Mr. Gilmore informed the Board that the next Ethically Speaking newsletter will be issued later in February 2024. The newsletter will focus on the results of the SEI drive, anonymous complaints, a reminder of the Board’s relocation, and guidance on how to identify unethical situations.

5.5 PRB/Ethics Board Office Relocation

The office and staff of the Board has successfully relocated to Suite 308 of the Courthouse. Staff are sharing offices with Department of Administrative Services.

5.6 Office Staff Performance Evaluations

Mr. Gilmore informed the Board that self-evaluations were completed by Board staff in January 2024. Final performance evaluations for the Administrative Assistant and Paralegal will be conducted by Mr. Gilmore. Drafts will be circulated to the Board for further input. Mr. Gilmore will coordinate with the Board Chair, the Personnel Review Board and the Chief of Staff for the County Executive’s Office regarding the completion of his evaluation.

6.0 Potential Revisions to M.C.G.O. §9.04 and SEI Reporting Requirements

Mr. Gilmore proposed revising M.C.G.O. §9.04(1) to reflect similar language in §9.14(2)(a), “preceding taxable year” instead of “15th day of the month preceding the month in which the statement is required to be filed”. One option is to change the language for the entire Statement of Economic Interest. A second option is to change the language by provision, as needed. The Board contemplated “preceding calendar year” versus “preceding taxable year”. The Board ordered the Board’s staff to find the minutes from the 2012 County Board of Supervisor’s Committee meeting in which the last changes to the Ethics Code were made and the history on the “taxable year” language.

The Board requested a report of the staff's findings from their research at the Board's meeting in May 2024.

7.0 Closed Session

At 3:13 p.m., Ms. Lentini moved, Mr. Daniels seconded, and the Board voted 4-0 to go into closed session.

19.85 (1) (g) The Board may confer with legal counsel concerning litigation strategy.

19.85(1) (h) The Board's deliberations on requests for advice under the ethics code shall be in closed session.

At 4:32 p.m., after discussion in closed session, Mr. Donner moved, Ms. Lentini seconded, and the Board voted 4-0 to reconvene in open session.

8.0 Adjournment

Mr. Donner moved, Ms. Lentini seconded, and the Board voted 4-0 to adjourn the meeting at 4:33 p.m.

Minutes submitted by: Alisha Terry, Paralegal, Ethics Board