

ST. MARY'S COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION

MINUTES OF AUGUST 18, 2003

Room 14, Commissioner's Hearing Room

Present: **Martha M. Neal, Ph.D., Chair**
 David Deaderick, Vice Chair
 George Baroniak, Member
 Viola Gardner, Member
 Zora Siemasko, Member
 Shirley Baldwin, Executive Secretary

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Neal at 2:00 p.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Dr. Neal announced that she had a call from a staff person of the Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission, inquiring regarding our ordinance and conflicts of interest. Dr. Neal referred her to our webpage and offered to have them attend one of our meetings or one of our members could attend their meetings to exchange support.

Mr. Dixon unable to attend today's meeting as he is out of town.

REVIEW/APPROVE MINUTES

Minutes of August 4, 2003. Mr. Deaderick made the motion to approve the minutes as submitted, seconded by Mr. Baroniak. Motion carried.

Mr. George Forrest, County Administrator

Dr. Neal entertained a motion to go out of order on the agenda to allow Mr. George Forrest, County Administrator, to speak to the Commission. The motion was made by Ms. Siemasko and seconded by Ms. Gardner. Motion carried.

Mr. Forrest personally thanked Mr. John Roberts for his service on the Ethics Commission and on a number of other committees Mr. Roberts has served on. Mr. Forrest spoke about how he sees his role in county government and how he can best support the Ethics Commission. The Ethics Commission is an integral part of the government, but there needs to be that distance between an official arm of county government and the important advisory role of the Commission.

Mr. Forrest discussed his management style, which is open and communicative, meeting with County employees on a monthly basis via brown bag lunches.

He sees the role of the Ethics Commission is to help County government identify issues that the Commissioners are concerned with and then find the right quality people to provide them with input. It is important that we tap into all resources in the community. Regarding the financial disclosure statement, the County is pushing to make sure that they are filled out, thanks to Dr. Neal's leadership. Mr. Forrest reiterated that he had an open door policy and would be open to any discussion.

Dr. Neal advised Mr. Forrest that the Ethics Commission still needs an alternate member to be appointed. She pointed out a letter was sent to the Board of County Commissioners in April, 2003 regarding two individuals who had failed to file financial disclosure statements for 2001. She requested that Mr. Forrest look into the status of this letter. Dr. Neal said she told the Commission members about Mr. Forrest's brown bag lunches and would like to offer assistance of the Ethics Commission in any way we can. Mr. Forrest said he would set something up with County employees for us to do an educational session.

Mr. Deaderick pointed out the outstanding job down by the Webmaster in putting Ethics Commission material on the webpage. Mr. Forrest asked us to continue using him and that they are working on getting more government online.

Mr. Forrest presented a plaque to Mr. John Roberts for his past service on the Ethics Commission.

FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

- Status 2001 Outstanding. No change in the status of 2001.
- Status 2002 Outstanding. There are still six outstanding for 2002. As cease and desist letters were sent on August 1, it is now time to send the names to the Board of County Commissioners and request their removal. Ms. Gardner and Mr. Deaderick agreed to make phone calls to two of these individuals. It was agreed to wait to see if any response received before sending the letter to the BOCC. A letter was received from Mr. John Savich, Director, Department of Economic and Community Development, regarding cease and desist letter sent Aug. 1, 2003, indicating the person referred to was not a member of the new Economic Development Council. A response will be sent to Mr. Savich indicating the individual still needs to file a Financial Disclosure Statement for 2001 and 2002 as any actions taken by that committee during that time could be in jeopardy.
- Review Session: One FDS for 2002 was reviewed and one was approved.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- Education Program: The offer was made to Mr. Forrest to be of assistance in his efforts to meet with County employees.
- Procurement Policy Review Committee: A formal request was received from the Chair, Procurement Policy Review Committee, requesting an advisory opinion from the Ethics Commission on clauses regarding a Commissioner's status as an employee and vendor, when selling supplies or services to the County. Dr. Neal gave a recap of discussion, which took place at the previous meeting regarding these two clauses. She reported that the way it is written now is very restrictive and they agreed to change the wording to be in concert with the Ethics Ordinance. Also we were going to offer some language so that if they wanted to broaden it, it could be broadened without having a conflict of interest. We also offered to the Procurement Policy Review Committee to participate in a review of their audit processes to see where there were checks and balances to avoid a conflict of interest.

Mr. Baroniak agreed to draft an Advisory Opinion and send it to Dr. Neal, who in turn will finalize it and send it to the other members of the Committee to be approved and signed at the next meeting Sept. 8, 2003.

NEW BUSINESS

- Budget Report Final budget report received for last fiscal year received. Total expenditures for last year was \$8893. This year budget is over \$8900 so there should be no problem.
- Plaque for Mr. Dixon: Dr. Neal will write a note to Mr. Dixon inviting him to attend another meeting in order for his plaque to be presented to him.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Siemasko made the motion to adjourn at 3:00 p.m. seconded by Ms. Gardner. Motion carried.