

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY ETHICS COMMISSION**  
**St. Mary's County Potomac Building**

**Minutes of January 10, 2011**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Robert W. Denning, Chair  
Robert E. Elwood, Vice Chair  
Karin Bailey, Member  
Elizabeth Long, Member

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Candace Butler, Alternate Member

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Sarah Cannavo, Staff Support  
George Sparling, County Attorney

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Denning at 2:00 p.m.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting will be held on February 7, 2011, in Conference Room 14 of the Potomac Building.

**REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

**Minutes for Open Session of December 6, 2010:** Mr. Elwood made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Motion was seconded by Ms. Long and carried.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**Regional Ethics Training:** Mr. Elwood stated that members from Anne Arundel, Calvert, and Charles Counties were agreeable to a training session in May 2011. Mr. Elwood contacted the Wicomico Shores Golf Course for pricing and was told there would be a \$6 fee per person for the room and a \$10 fee per person for lunch. This would bring the estimated total for the event to \$400 (based on 25 people), which is more than the Commission has to fund the event. Ms. Cannavo stated that she would call Mr. Rollins, Director of Recreation and Parks, to see if the room fee could be waived and the lunch fee reduced.

Mr. Denning stated that he had been in contact with Jennifer Allgair, General Counsel for the Maryland Ethics Commission. Ms. Allgair stated that their office is extremely busy with the changes brought forth by SB 315 and that she was unable to confirm State attendance at the regional training in May. Perhaps as the date drew closer, they (State Commission) would be able to confirm attendance.

Mr. Sparling said he would get an update from the State regarding the current status of the new Ordinance requirements. He will provide an update at the next regularly scheduled meeting on February 7, 2011.

## **NEW BUSINESS:**

Advisory Request 2011-01: A citizen contacted the Ethics Commission via email on January 4, 2011, concerning clarification on schedule E of the Financial Disclosure Statement. The citizen asked if 1) credit cards debt were considered retail accounts, 2) are car loans through a local bank considered retail accounts, and 3) are mortgages through national banks considered retail accounts.

Mr. Sparling provided a legal interpretation of the Financial Disclosure requirements and Ordinance. Members discussed the implication of such indebtedness as it would pertain to members of various boards, commissions, employees, and entities doing business with the County. Members discussed the inclusion of several types of financial obligations (student loans, car loans, mortgages, personal loans of over \$1,000, and retail accounts) in which the loan is held by a local financier and how these types of financial relationships could potential cause a conflict of interest.

Due to the fact that the 2011 FDS statements have already been mailed, members discussed options for expanding the description of "reportable indebtedness" on future FDS forms but not making it a requirement for the FY11 forms. Mr. Sparling suggested that the membership address these items again once the State provides guidance on the new Financial Disclosure Statement requirements and then incorporate any changes in the new form.

In response to the Advisory Opinion, Ms. Long made a motion "mortgages had to be reported on Schedule A, that car loans were within the definition of "retail credit accounts" but might have to be reported under the directions on Schedule E, and that credit card account were "retail credit accounts"." The motion was seconded by Ms. Bailey and carried 4/0.

## **FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS:**

15 Financial Disclosure Statements were reviewed.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

A motion was made by Ms. Long to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Bailey and the motion was carried. The St. Mary's County Ethics Commission meeting was adjourned at 3:05 PM.