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PRESIDENT, COOK COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SISAVANH BAKER
DIRECTOR



COOK COUNTY BOARD OF ETHICS

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BOARD OF ETHICS MEMBERS

DR. SUSAN GAFFNEY
VON MATTHEWS, VICE CHAIR
ANTARA NATH RIVERA
HON. MARCUS SALONE
THOMAS SZROMBA, CHAIR

**OPEN SESSION MINUTES – REGULAR MEETING
October 24, 2022**

OPEN SESSION I:

- A. Call to Order:** The October 24, 2022, Regular Meeting of the Cook County Board of Ethics (“Board”) was called to order at 2:03 p.m.

Board Members Present virtually: Antara Nath Rivera, Von Matthews, Judge Marcus Salone, and Thomas Szromba

Board Members Present at meeting location: Dr. Susan Gaffney

Staff Members Present: Director S. Baker, Deputy Director J. King, Investigator J. Brown, Investigator O. Cobbins, Investigator A. Cahn, Investigator J. Jones, Outreach and Training Coordinator J. Epplin-Zapf, Executive Assistant A. Sumpter and Office Manager K. Johns

B. Agenda Approval

A motion to approve the agenda was made and adopted by unanimous vote.

C. Statements by the Public

Todd Thielmann addressed the Board remarking that he noticed the actions taken by the Board to comply with the Open Meetings Act. He stated that he hoped the Ethics Board would remain a transparent public board. Chair Szromba stated Mr. Thielmann’s comments would be taken into consideration.

D. Approval of the August 25, 2022, Regular Meeting Open Minutes

A motion to approve the August 25, 2022, regular meeting open minutes was made and adopted by unanimous vote.

E. Director’s Report

Director Baker reported on ethics data through August 31, 2022. She stated Board staff increased the number of staff advisories during this period, surpassing the total number of staff opinions issued during FY2021. She also noted that staff also conducted several contract compliance reviews at that time. Chair Szromba asked for clarification on when staff advisories and board advisories are issued. Director Baker stated that staff advisories are issued when there has been a prior board determination whereas board advisories are issued in cases when requesters have asked.

Director Baker provided a status update on the ethics rules amendment. She stated the Rules Committee made some verbiage modifications to the dual employment rules and accepted almost all the other rules updates. She noted that the committee did not accept rule 8.1 regarding contribution limitations. Director Baker stated that the committee explained that requiring political campaigns to report overcontributions to the executive director is beyond the Board's responsibilities. The Rules Committee recommended instead that such affirmative action should be stated in the Ethics Ordinance. Chair Szromba suggested the language in the rule be changed to "strongly encourage" to comply with the Rules Committee's recommendation. Director Baker stated that she would address the Rules Committee via written statement to inform them of the Board's concerns and recommendations.

Deputy Director King provided a status report on the campaign contribution audits for Q2 and Q3 2022. She stated that Board staff was still in the process of collecting these data and that more information would be provided at the December meeting.

Outreach and training coordinator Julia Eppin-Zapf updated the Board on refining the Annual Vendor Familial Relationship process in partnership with the Department of Contract Compliance. She reported that by that meeting, the Board received about 100 responses to the initial notice sent on October 3, 2022. She further stated she anticipated completion of the Vendor Familial Relationship Disclosure form from about 700 vendors. She reported that an internal communication had been sent with updated guidance documents, online disclosure forms, and new training availability. Lastly, she noted that the Annual Ethics Training had been initiated by approximately 2,000 employees from the offices under the President.

F. Release Closed Session Agenda Item & Video from July 14, 2022 - Board Approval

Director Baker stated that the request for the July 14, 2022 executive meeting minutes and video was initiated by a complaint filed against the Board of Ethics with the Attorney General's office. She explained that this agenda item was moved to executive session because it related to drafted FAQ's that were associated with an open case the Board was investigating at that time. Director Baker further stated that she would agree to release that portion of the closed session video due to the agenda item being discussed in general terms. The Board approved the motion to release the video portion and meeting minutes by unanimous voice vote.

At 2:25 p.m., the Board voted unanimously to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss matters regarding specific investigations, litigation, and approval of minutes for prior closed sessions, pursuant to sections 2(c)(4) of the Open Meetings Act.

At 3:24 p.m., the Board voted unanimously to reconvene into open session.

OPEN SESSION II:

A. Approval of the Closed Session Minutes of the August 25, 2022, Regular Meeting

A motion to approve the August 25, 2022, executive session minutes was made and adopted by unanimous voice vote.

B. Voting Regarding Executive Session Items

A motion to open investigation 2022I004 was approved by unanimous voice vote. A motion to close investigation 2022I001 was approved by four “ayes” and one recusal.

Adjourn

The Board voted unanimously to adjourn at 3:27 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Board Staff.