

Ethics Committee Meeting

October 18, 2023

Via Zoom

In Attendance:

Committee members: Michael Roden, Lorie Mitchell, Alex Ghesquiere

Council members: Susan Fattig, Andrew Kauders (Council liaison)

Village Manager: Michael Silliman, Erin Byrnes (Assistant Village manager)

Residents: Naomi Naierman

7:01 p.m. – A quorum was established, and the meeting was called to order.

First-order of business – Welcome and review of the Maryland Open Meetings Act requirements and Committee responsibilities.

Second-order of business – 2024 Committee organization: Lorie nominated Alex to be chair, and Michael seconded. By unanimous vote, Alex was elected chair.

Third-order of business - Training: The Committee discussed whether to offer ethics training to all committees and task forces or limit training to the statutory committees currently covered by the Village Ethics Code. Alex suggested that since all committee and task force members must take the Oath of Office and complete the COI questionnaire, the Committee should invite all volunteers to training. Lorie voiced concern about offering training to non-statutory volunteers before the Council voted on whether to expand the applicability of the Code. Council member Susan Fattig and Council liaison Andrew Kauders were asked for their input. Both Council members saw advantages and challenges with either approach. After discussing the pros and cons of each course of action, Lorie motioned to delay training until early December after the Council votes on the ethics amendment. Alex seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Fourth- order of business- Lorie thanked the Village staff for facilitating the collection of oaths of office and COI questionnaires. Lorie reported that all required forms for statutory volunteers had been received, with one reported potential conflict of interest. During the review process, Lorie noted that several oaths had not been properly administered. The Village policy requires a Council member, the Village manager, or the Village attorney to administer the oaths. The Village manager was informed of the discrepancy and consulted with the Village attorney to address the issue. Based on the attorney's advice, the Village manager told the Committee that the non-conforming forms could be accepted as legally binding due to the lack of clarity on the form. The Village manager recommended that the oaths be accepted.

Alex motioned to recommend that the Council accept the non-conforming oaths and revise the Oath of Office form to include the administration requirement. Michael seconded. The vote was unanimous.

Fifth- order of business- Lorie reviewed the ethics-related Village policy, the ethics ordinance, and the proposed ethics amendment. She explained that passage of the amendment would remedy the current conflict between the policy that requires all committee and task force members to take an oath and submit a COI questionnaire and the Ethics Code, which is limited in its applicability to statutory volunteers. During the September Council meeting, at the suggestion of the Council chair, the Council

voted to reintroduce the ethics amendment. A public hearing and final vote on the amendment will be conducted at the November Council meeting.

Resident comments- Naomi Naierman questioned whether training was mandatory or optional for Committee members. Alex responded that training was optional.

Next meeting- The next meeting was scheduled for December 11th at 7:00 p.m.

Adjournment - Alex motioned to adjourn the meeting, and Michael seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 8:00 p.m.