



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION

DRAFT MINUTES
STATE ELECTIONS ENFORCEMENT COMMISSION
REGULAR TELEPHONIC MEETING

Via Webex
May 5, 2021
9:30 A.M.

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Stephen Penny was present via Webex and called the meeting to order at 9:33 A.M. Commissioners Michael Ajello, Salvatore Bramante, Andrew Cascudo and Shannon Bergquist were present via Webex. Agency staff was also present.

II. Approval of the Minutes

Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of April 21, 2021

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to approve the Minutes of the Meeting of April 21, 2021. So voted by a vote of 5-0-0.

III. Administrative Reports

Director Brandi Reported that regarding the budget we are on track this year to have a significant surplus. Closing out our books for June 30th but working with the fiscal officers to close out purchase orders and other items over the next few weeks. We'll have a better gauge of what our total surplus will be probably by the next meeting

Director Brandi advised that the SEEC is in the process of trying to fill positions. The SEEC just recently made and offer for our Fiscal Administrative Officer and Rhonda Tillman has accepted and will be starting with the agency on May 21, 2021. SEEC still has an Accounts Examiner position that we are hiring also. This is the final position that the SEEC will fill at this time. The posting on that just closed yesterday and SEEC staff is waiting on information from DAS to see how we are going to move forward with the selection of that candidate.

Director Brandi updated that staff is still aggressively trying to go through our materials and boxes from the move in December. Staff met yesterday with contractors to look at the multitude of boxes that is in the dead storage facility across the street at 92 Farmington Avenue. SEEC staff is waiting for a quote from them right now and my intent is to get a purchase order issued as soon as possible. They are going to remove somewhere close to 100 boxes of materials that are mostly decisions and enforcement cases that date back to 1974. So, what our process is going to be is to scan all of those documents into a database. It will be a searchable database for staff to use. SEEC staff is trying to get a lot of these historical documents that have been kept previously in our old facility, scanned and online so that we can then eliminate and destroy all the paper copies

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and make everything electronic. We are trying hard to make all the documents in this agency electronic. We simply don't have the storage facilities that we use to so, our push is to try and get everything into electronic formats so that we don't have to maintain the paper. We did that for the 2020 election cycle and in large part for the 2018 cycle. So we are keeping a close eye on our retention schedules, we are going back to look at our older files that can be kept electronically and get permission from the State Library to destroy the paper versions making sure that everything is available and accessible. But we need to get more into an electronic format. SEEC staff is working hard to try and do that while there is a little bit of time before the municipal cycle heats up. We have a team of people tomorrow basically pouring through boxes and getting things ready for both the contractor to handle and also other items that we're trying to prepare for physical destruction pursuant to state retention policies.

Director Brandi updated as to Legislative Session. The committee work is done and everything is now on the floor. SEEC staff expect some of the elections bills to begin moving through the House in the next week or two. There's talk about both the early voting constitutional amendment and the bills related to no-excuse absentee balloting and expecting to be heard on the floor within the next week or so. The early voting constitutional amendment, which just requires a simple majority vote looks pretty good and expected to get through. The no-excuse absentee ballot one looks more difficult at this point, so we will wait and see where the votes are. We are prepared to react and deal with whatever comes our way.

Director Brandi clarified that Campaign Finance wise there are very few bills. The one principal bill is the childcare bill to allow for CEP Grants to be used to pay for childcare expenses in a limited fashion. SEEC supported that bill and that has a really good shot at getting through in the next week or two. We're also watching things like FOI bills as it relates to potential changes to the FOI law for remote meetings, so we are looking at how it will affect the Commission and how the Commission conducts future hearings and meetings. We do expect that some of the Governor's executive orders will be lifted in the next few weeks. Some may also be continued under the emergency orders and some codified, we're just trying to keep our eye on all of those provisions to see what will happen to us in terms of conducting remote meetings and hearings going forward. I think Webex and the electronic formats that we are using for meetings like this are going to be more common. My guess is that some of the legislation is going to allow us to go back to our live meetings but also have a live stream component within the bills so that SEEC is actually going to be doing both. Some of that will pose some problems to our meeting rooms so there will need to be some upgrades. We'll keep our eye on that and adjust accordingly.

Director Brandi advised that this will probably be Commissioner Bramante's final meeting with us as his replacement candidate has received confirmation in the House the Senate is convening this afternoon. I just wanted to take just a second to say thank you for all of your years of service. You have been a great addition to the Commission, your perspective as a former registrar has been invaluable. Staff has appreciated and enjoyed all of our conversations and we hope you'll continue to send us all the articles you love to send to us to make sure we are keeping up on elections issues nationwide. You have been

a tremendous resource and a tremendous Commissioner for the SEEC. I wanted to take this opportunity to personally thank you and let you know that we will miss you.

Commissioner Bramante took a moment to reflect on conversations had during his time on the commission. Over the years, there was a misconception that the Commission was a paper tiger and all the votes coming out meetings should reflect the efforts put into the meetings. It's the quality of the Commissioners that came on board which engaged the staff. The independence of the SEEC is highly important and the agency needs to show that transparency to gain the public trust.

IV. Pending Complaints and Investigations

A. Public Session

1. In re. Commission Initiated Investigation – Bartlett 2012

File No. 2014-057

Proposed Findings & Conclusions

Respondent:

Attorney:

James M. Talbert-Slagle

Attorney James Talbert-Slagle summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2014-057. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Findings & Conclusions as to no further action in File No. 2014-057. So voted by a vote 5-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

V. Executive Session per General Statutes §§ 1-200(6)(B) and (E), and 1-210(b)(1), (3),(4),(10) and General Statutes §9-7a, as amended by Public Act 11-48 §300 (Preliminary draft and agency consideration of enforcement action and exempt records relative thereto)

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello at 9:52 A.M. to proceed into Executive Session pursuant to General Statutes , , 1-200(6)(B) and (E), and 1-210(b)(1),(3),(4),(10) to discuss strategy and negotiations with respect to pending claims and exempt records. So voted.

Commissioners Penny, Bramante, Bergquist, Ajello and Cascudo were present via Webex. Staff members present via teleconference were, William B. Smith, James Talbert-Slagle, Ryan M. Burns, Kevin Ahern, Alyssa Torres, Joshua Foley, Lindsey Leung, Chelsea Ruzzo, Stephanie Fish, Ronald Perry, Lisa Drew, Linda Waterman, Shannon Kief, Michael J. Brandi and Sheri-Lyn Lagueux.

Commissioner Cascudo left the meeting at 11:05 A.M.

The Commission returned to public session at 11:14 A.M.

Returning to public session the Commission took the following action:

1. Recommendation of Counsel: Necessary to Investigate Determination pursuant to General Statutes §9-7a, as amended by Public Act 11-48 §300

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the Recommendation of Counsel dated April 29, 2021 and requested that five (5) matters be moved to investigate.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to make a determination that it is necessary to investigate violations relating to five (5) complaint File Nos.: 2021-118, 2021-119, 2021-120, 2021-121 and 2021-122. So approved by the Commission, 5-0-0. So voted.

2. In the Matter of a Complaint by Steven Sheinberg, Fairfield
File No. 2020-046

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

William B. Smith

Legal Investigator:

Stephanie Fish

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Consent Order & Agreement in File No. 2020-046. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Consent Order & Agreement upon receipt in 10 days.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Consent Order & Agreement as amended to paragraph 6 in File No. 2020-046, contingent upon receipt in 10 days. So voted by a vote 4-0-0. The Consent Order & Agreement will be available on our website under Commission Decisions upon receipt.

3. In the Matter of a Complaint by Jeffrey Hall, Somers
File No. 2015-003

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

Ryan M. Burns

Attorney Ryan M. Burns summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Consent Order & Agreement in File No. 2015-003. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Consent Order & Agreement.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Consent Order & Agreement in File No. 2015-003. So voted by a vote 4-0-0. The Consent Order & Agreement will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

4. In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-061
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File No. 2021-062
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File No. 2021-063
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File No. 2021-067
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File No. 2021-068
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-070
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-073
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-075
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-081
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-089
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-091
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-093
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-095
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-098
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-100
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-105
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-108
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-111
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-113
In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szynkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-116
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney: Ryan M. Burns

Legal Investigator:

Scott Branfuhr

Attorney Ryan M. Burns summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File Nos. 2021-061, 2021-062, 2021-063, 2021-064, 2021-065, 2021-067, 2021-068, 2021-070, 2021-073, 2021-075, 2021-081, 2021-089, 2021-091, 2021-093, 2021-095, 2021-098, 2021-100, 2021-105, 2021-108, 2021-111, 2021-113 and 2021-116. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Findings & Conclusions as to a dismissal in File Nos. 2021-061, 2021-062, 2021-063, 2021-064, 2021-065, 2021-067, 2021-068, 2021-070, 2021-073, 2021-075, 2021-081, 2021-089, 2021-091, 2021-093, 2021-095, 2021-098, 2021-100, 2021-105, 2021-108, 2021-111, 2021-113 and 2021-116. So voted by a vote 4-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

5. In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szyrkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-054

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

Ryan M. Burns

Legal Investigator:

Scott Branfuhr

Attorney Ryan M. Burns summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2021-054. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Findings & Conclusions as to a dismissal in File No. 2021-054. So voted by a vote 4-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

6. In the Matter of a Complaint by Taras Rudko, Colchester

File No. 2020-031

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

Kevin M. Ahern

Legal Investigator:

Stephanie Fish

Attorney Kevin M. Ahern summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2020-031. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2020-031. So voted by a vote 3-1-0 with Commissioner Penny voting nay. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

7. In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szyrkowicz, Middletown
File No. 2021-051

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

Kevin M. Ahern

Legal Investigator:

Scott Branfuhr

Attorney Kevin M. Ahern summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2021-051. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Findings & Conclusions as to a dismissal in File No. 2021-051 as amended to the footnotes. So voted by a vote 4-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

8. In the Matter of a Referral by the Groton Town Clerk
File No. 2019-141

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

Kevin M. Ahern

Legal Investigator:

Stephanie Fish

Attorney Kevin M. Ahern summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2019-141. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt the Proposed Findings & Conclusions as to a dismissal in File No. 2019-141. So voted by a vote 4-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

9. *In re. Commission Initiated Investigation – Ganim for Governor*
File No. 2020-006

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

James M. Talbert-Slagle

Legal Investigator:

Stephanie Fish

The matter is continued.

10. Draft Audit Reports

1. “Hatfield 2018,” Susan Hatfield
Accounts Examiner: Dinorah Collado

2. “Friends of Bob Duff,” Bob Duff
Accounts Examiner: Krysta Palozie

Linda Waterman summarized the above referenced Draft Audit Reports and recommended the draft reports become final.

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and seconded by Commissioner Ajello to adopt as final 2 audit reports as listed above. So voted by a vote 4-0-0.

VI. Consideration of Matters Discussed in Executive Session

VII. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Bramante and Seconded by Commissioner Ajello at 11:27 AM to adjourn the meeting. Unless otherwise noted, all votes of the Commission are unanimous.

The next regular scheduled meeting is May 19, 2021 at 9:30 A.M. via Webex.