



REGULAR TELEPHONIC MEETING via Webex MINUTES

March 16, 2022 9:30 A.M.

I. Call to Order

Commissioner Penny was present via Webex and called the meeting to order at 9:34 A.M. Commissioners Michael Ajello, Shannon Bergquist, Andrew Cascudo and Greg Picuch were present via Webex. Agency staff was also present and present via Webex.

II. Approval of the Minutes

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Meeting of March 02, 2022

The Minutes of the Meeting of March 2, 2022 have been tabled.

III. Administrative Reports

Director Brandi updated that Session is in right now. There are not many recommendations for any adjustments to the SEEC's current budget, so we have not had to go through the appropriations committee. This is an unusual year where the state coffers are flush, so they are not looking for givebacks or to take away additional monies from our budget. SEEC staff will keep an eye on appropriations. Right now, we are trying to focus on the monies that we have available to start doing things like refreshing of our laptop units. Most of the laptops we purchased are reaching 2-3 years old right now and we are going to make sure that staff is fully equipped.

Director Brandi reported that the SEEC is facing 3 retirements that are coming up for the end of March. The way that OPM is looking to pay the accruals is out of our existing budget, so we will be closely monitoring budget numbers as the retirements start coming through. The SEEC has Amjad Mahmood, IT Analyst III, Douglas Frost, IT Manager, and Linda Waterman, Director of Audit & Disclosure retiring from state service. We have discussed with all of them the possibility of returning to the agency as a part time retiree workers.

Director Brandi advised that the SEEC has just made an offer to, and she accepted for, the Office Assistant who will start next Friday, March 25th. Her name is Joyce Figueroa and she will be a welcome addition to the staff. SEEC staff are also in the

process right now for the final interview for the IT analyst III to replace Amjad upon his retirement. We are looking to have a seamless transition in the IT unit. We have the process started in DAS also for replacements for Doug and Linda. Also resumes are being reviewed right now with regard to the 2 staff attorney positions. We hope to begin interviews on those in the next few weeks. So, personnel wise we are getting up to full staffing

Director Brandi updated that staff are actively engaged right now with a pretty busy Pre-Application Review season for the compliance and audit staff. 17 PARs came through for the March deadlines, so that gives us a good chance to see what the applications are looking like for the grant season. The ability to pre-qualify the applications is helpful once the season starts. We're offering PARs again for April 1st for any candidate committee in the General Assembly. The goal for the April PAR season is to hopefully get another 25 applications in the door in order to get a head start for the CEP season. Compliance and audit are doing a good job getting the systems in place and process the applications in an efficient way.

Director Brandi reported that for this current fiscal year all deposits have been made to the Citizens' Election Fund, which has a balance of approximately \$34 million. New deposits will start with July 1st with the new fiscal year. At this point we do not anticipate any gubernatorial candidates applying to the CEP. We'll be watching to see the number of CEP applications that we anticipate for both assembly as well as the other constitutional offices.

Director Brandi updated that staff is monitoring the GAE Committee. Currently three bills that were our sponsored bills are up for this Friday's public hearing and we are monitoring closely those bills right now. It's been a quiet session at GAE so far, so we'll see what comes up in the next week or two with additional public hearings. The SEEC is also actively engaged right now with the State Auditors for Fiscal years 2020 and 2021. The SEEC is always being audited and we are actively providing data to the State Auditors as a normal part of our state audit process.

Director Brandi reported that the SEEC received notice last evening that in the Sampson/Markley case, parties have filed an appeal of the Superior Court's decision. SEEC staff will give you further detail as to how the case progresses and can discuss that further as the deadlines get closer.

IV. Pending Complaints and Investigations

A. Public Session

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 Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piecuch at 9:44 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 by a vote of 5-0-0.

Commissioners Stephen Penny, Michael Ajello, Shannon Bergquist, Andrew Cascudo and Greg Piecuch were present via Webex. Staff members present via Webex were Michael J. Brandi, James Talbert-Slagle, Kevin Ahern, William B. Smith, Joshua Foley, Lindsey Leung, Stephanie Fish, Ronald Perry, Scott Branfuhr, Lisa Drew, Shannon Kief, and Sheri-Lyn Lagueux.

Commissioner Cascudo left the meeting during executive session.

The Commission returned to public session at 11:01 A.M.

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

Attorney Kevin M. Ahern summarized the Recommendation of Counsel dated March 16, 2022, and requested that four (4) matters be moved to investigate.

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piecuch to make a determination that it is necessary to investigate violations relating to four (4) complaints File Nos. 2022-010, 2022-011, 2022-012 and 2022-013. So approved by the Commission, 4-0-0. So voted.

2. In the Matter of a Referral by the Greenwich Registrars of Voters
File No. 2021-058

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

Kevin M. Ahern

Legal Investigator:

Scott Branfuhr

The matter is continued.

3. In the Matter of a Complaint by Margaret S. Cawley and Karen O. Linehan,
Stonington Registrars of Voters

File No. 2017-010

Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney:

William B. Smith

Legal Investigator:

The matter is continued.

4. In the Matter of a Referral to the Attorney General
File No. 2019-076SF
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: William B. Smith

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint in File No. 2019-076SF. He recommended referral to the Office of the Attorney General for collection.

That after a contested hearing held on June 30, 2021 regarding Commission File No. 2019-076SF, which resulted in a civil penalty being assessed against Respondent Paula L. Smith for her violation of General Statutes § 9-712; that such matter be referred for collection to the Office of Attorney General pursuant to the Commission's authority in § 9-7b (a) (9), as that penalty remains unpaid.

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piccuch to refer to the Office of the Attorney General File No. 2019-076SF. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

5. In re. Committee Initiated Investigation, "Vargas 2020"
File No. 2020-056
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Stephanie Fish

The matter is continued.

6. In re. Commission Initiated Investigation, "A Better Stamford Committee"
File No. 2020-063
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Stephanie Fish

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint and in File No. 2020-063. He recommended the issuance of an investigatory subpoena.

Pursuant to General Statutes § 9-7b and § 9-7b-28 of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, a motion to authorize investigatory subpoenas on Juan D. Ospina to appear at Commission offices for an interview regarding the investigation of issues raised by the solicitation and receipt of contributions to his candidate committee that appear to have been made using

the same credit card and otherwise raised in the investigation of File Number 2020-063.

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piecuch to authorize the issuance of the Investigatory subpoena as outlined above File No. 2020-063. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0.

7. In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szykowitz, Middletown
File No. 2021-076B
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Stephanie Fish

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2021-076B. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piecuch to adopt the Findings & Conclusions as to a dismissal in File No. 2021-076B and a footnote be made to the decision. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

8. In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szykowitz, Middletown
File No. 2021-082B
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Stephanie Fish

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Findings & Conclusions in File No. 2021-082B. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Findings & Conclusions.

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piecuch to adopt the Findings & Conclusions as to a dismissal in File No. 2021-082B and a footnote be made to the decision. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0. The Findings & Conclusions will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

9. In the Matter of a Complaint by Linda Szykowitz, Middletown
File No. 2021-087B
Recommendation of Counsel

Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Stephanie Fish

The matter is continued.

10. In the Matter of a Complaint by Philip S. Augur, Durham
File No. 2021-129B
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney: William B. Smith
Legal Investigator: Ronald Perry

Attorney William B. Smith summarized the above referenced complaint and Proposed Consent Order & Agreement in File No. 2021-129B. He recommended adoption of the Proposed Consent Order & Agreement.

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Picuch to adopt the Consent Order & Agreement in File No. 2021-129B. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0. The Consent Order & Agreement will be available on our website under Commission Decisions.

11. Recommendation of Counsel Regarding a Potential Commission Initiated Investigation
Attorney: James Talbert-Slagle

The matter is continued.

12. In the Matter of Complaint by Lucy von Brachel, Greenwich
File No. 2021-031
Recommendation of Counsel
Attorney: James Talbert-Slagle
Legal Investigator: Scott Branfuhr

The matter is continued.

VI. *Executive Session per General Statutes §§ 1-231 and 1-200(6)(A) and 1-210(b)(2) (Discussion of Personnel Matters)*

Consideration of Personnel Matter

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Picuch to enter into Executive Session at 11:11 A.M.

The Commission returned to public session at 11:28 A.M.


No action was taken.

VII. Consideration of Matters Discussed in Executive Session


VIII. Adjournment

It was moved by Commissioner Ajello and seconded by Commissioner Piecuch at 11:29 A.M. to adjourn the meeting. So voted by a vote of 4-0-0. Unless otherwise noted, all votes of the Commission are unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,


Sheri-Lyn Lagueux
Clerk of the Commission

Adopted this 6th day of April, 2022 at Hartford, Connecticut.



Stephen T. Penny
By Order of the Commission

The next regular scheduled meeting is April 6, 2022 at 9:30 A.M. via Webex.