

**CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ETHICS
REGULAR MEETING
MAY 26, 2016**

ATTENDANCE: Mr. Michael Church, Chair; Atty. Kara Murphy, Ms. Antoinette Williams, Mr. Haroldo Williams, Rev. Henry G. Floyd

ABSENT: Mr. Mikolos Koeszar

CALL TO ORDER.

Mr. Church called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. A quorum was present.

Mr. Church then introduced himself and gave a brief background. He welcomed Rev. Floyd to the Board. The other members present also introduced themselves at this time and gave brief summaries of their backgrounds.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION.

There was no one present from the public.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

**February 11, 2016
April 28, 2016**

Mr. Church said that there was not a quorum present to pass either sets of minutes at this meeting, and therefore both sets would be tabled at this time.

OLD BUSINESS

Mr. Church stated that at the previous meeting, the members had been given an assignment to review the Code of Ethics.

Mr. Church said he would like to re-engage the community, become comfortable with the code and create a strategy in order to make the City employees aware of the Board and the Code of Ethics. Another goal is to make sure that the City was operating ethically.

Mr. Church said he would like to review any recommendations that Atty. Murphy and Mr. Williams made.

Ms. Williams explained that she was not able to attend the last meeting due to a conflict in scheduling and wanted to know if there was a way to find out what happened at the meeting and any assignments.

**** MR. WILLIAM MOVED TO RECOMMEND THAT WHENEVER THERE WAS ANY ASSIGNMENT, THE MEMBERS ARE NOTIFIED BY EMAIL.**

Atty. Murphy said that she was open to this. Ms. Williams pointed out that it would be important to be transparent and maximize the talent on the Board.

**** MS. WILLIAMS SECONDED.**

Ms. William stated for the record that she would be willing to meet for a working session. Mr. Williams and Atty. Murphy agreed.

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Atty. Murphy said she had reviewed the Code to see if there were items that should be clarified or made more user-friendly. She pointed out that both the First and Second Taxing District have their own separate code of Ethics and their own municipal charters. Atty. Murphy gave a brief overview of the boundaries for the First and Second Taxing District. She explained that the Taxing Districts were similar to the boroughs in New York City. The Commissioners for the First, Second, Third, and Sixth District are elected by the residents of their respective districts. She also noted that before any changes are made to the City Code of Ethics, it would have to be submitted to the Corporation Counsel.

Atty. Murphy said that another issue was that no one would like their integrity questioned. Each year, the State employees answer a questionnaire about potential conflicts of interest. It is important to remember that people don't know what they don't know and by reviewing it annually, the Board would be more proactive. Mr. Williams agreed and said that the City employees would become more aware of the Code. Mr. Church said that one aspect of this would be contacting the Director of Human Resources regarding having the Ethics Code included in the contracts.

Ms. Williams asked if there were any municipalities that were using the Ethics Board in a proactive manner. Atty. Murphy said that she had looked at Greenwich because she had heard that Board was very pro-active. She said that the State employees have a test they are required to take for reference. Discussion followed.

Mr. Williams said that the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) offers training that the Board Members could attend. Ms. Williams suggested creating a binder for the working session.

Atty. Murphy then spoke about Chapter 32-4E subparagraph 8 which addresses situations when City employees are appointed to Boards or Commissions. There was a recent issue that arose regarding the various aspects of this portion of the Code. Atty. Murphy said that sometimes there are State statutes that may supercede the City's Ethics Code.

Under Chapter 32-12, there are "service of process by "sheriffs" and this should be changed to a "State Marshals". The State changed the title of the position and the Code should reflect this.

At the end of 32-12C subparagraph 9 about rules and procedures for public hearing, Atty. Murphy explained that the points H, I, & J have nothing to do with public hearings. Atty. Murphy reviewed them and suggested that they are pulled out of that section and separately numbered. This will make it easier for member of the public to find them rather than having them buried in the section on public hearings.

Atty. Murphy said that Norwalk does have a Board of Ethics page, but it is difficult to find. Once someone did locate it, there could be much more information for the public.

Chapter 32-8 addresses City employees receiving gifts. Mr. Williams noted that there is no time limit, so an employee could receive a gift every day, week, month, year. He also noted that the School employees have a different calendar.

Mr. Williams recommended that at the work session, they should review the Code line by line because it forces everyone to focus. Ms. Williams said that it would be good to learn about the different interactions that other municipalities have. Discussion followed.

Mr. Williams said that he was working to understand what the Code of Ethics were responsible for and referred to 32-1. He said that it does not include any kind of charge or mission statement.

He also referred 32-4 where it includes Ordinance List Employee, but does not identify who those employees might be. Discussion followed about a number of issues, such as the origins of the Board, the appointment of members and related subjects. Ms Williams said that it would be practices, policies and programs. She said that as as means, the the P's would give a map to attain the goal. Knowing what may have happened in the institutional history to prevent this would be valuable. Mr. Church said that crafting the right document that would educate the general public and raise the awareness of the employees. Discussion followed about various situations and how the Three P's might apply.

Ms. Williams pointed out that this is a three part package. The center is the Code, the second part is how it is put in practice and finally, what kind of programs the Board can provide. Mr. Church said that it would be important to have Department heads in the loop so they can give their employees guidance. Discussion followed.

Ms. Williams asked what kind of timeline the Board had. Mr. Church said he would like to have one or two working session between this meeting and the June meeting. Based on the outcome of those sessions, the Board should have a clearer idea of the timeline. He added that he would like to have something ready to present something to the Council by September.

Ms. William said that the Ethics Board had hired Atty. Trowbridge from Quinnipiac to help with the Code. Atty. Murphy said that she hates "legalese" and would like to see the Code written in a manner so that any resident of Norwalk could read the Code and understand the underlying concept. Ms. Williams pointed out that non-profits and major corporations use language for an 8th grader in their marketing. Mr. Church said that he thought the Citizen's Guide would probably need more attention because it is the marketing and educational aspect. Discussion followed.

Ms. Williams encouraged everyone to reach out to the Common Council Members to build a relationship with them.

The Board Members then discussed a date and times for a possible working sessions on June 6th at 3:30-5:30 p.m. and June 15th from 6:00-8:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT.

**** ATTY. MURPHY MOVED TO ADJOURN.**

**** REV. FLOYD SECONDED.**

**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services