CITY OF NORWALK
BOARD OF ETHICS
REGULAR MEETING
FEBRUARY 11, 2016

ATTENDANCE: Elizabeth Broncati, Chair; Michael Church, Vice Chair: Antoinette Williams, Haroldo Williams

ABSENT: Mikolos Koleszar, Eric Benitez

OTHERS: None

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Broncati called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Ms. Broncati called the roll. A quorum was present.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no one present from the public.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE MINUTES

**** MR. CHURCH MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MEETING MINUTES OF JANUARY 28, 2016.**

Ms. Williams noted that during the Common Council meeting when the appointments were being made, none of the Council Members spoke about the new members of the Ethics Committee.

**** MR. WILLIAMS SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 2016 AS SUBMITTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Broncati said that she would like to submit a calendar of meeting dates.

**** MR. WILLIAMS MOVED TO ACCEPT PROPOSED SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS.**
**** MR. CHURCH SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Williams said that based on her experience at the last meeting, she was trying to understand what was available publicly. She said that there were only two sets of minutes on the website. She said that she had requested a follow up on the minutes from the meetings from 2015. Ms. Broncati said that the Code of Ethics had been approved in 2009. Ms. Williams said that it would be important to track the minutes. Discussion followed.

NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Williams said that she had reviewed the code and that it would be helpful to have a conversation around what the course of actions would be when a complaint is filed. She also said that she would like to understand the confidentiality issues involved with the complaint, along with the potential recommendations to Ordinance. She added that she wondered how they would prevent abuse of the system.

Ms. Broncati directed everyone's attention to page 14, which outlines the consequences of an action. She then reviewed the process for a hearing. Ms. Broncati said that the code does not indicate who carries out the consequences. Ms. Williams said that she thought that the Common Council would be responsible for that.

Mr. Church said that he would like to come up with some improvements in the Code of Ethics. He encouraged everyone to review the Code and make notes of items that they thought could be improved. The Board can recommend a change to Corporation Counsel. Ms. Broncati said that in 2007 one suggestion was to offer some training, but cautioned everyone that often things can be stirred up.

Mr. Williams said that he had not only read the Norwalk Code but also had read the State's Code and found the State's Code to be simpler. He pointed out that there was a prohibition against gifts over $50.00 but there is no time period associated with that prohibition. Discussion followed.

Ms. Williams asked what the goal was for the Board. Ms. Broncati said that she would like to review the Code and help the new Board members understand the Code. Ms. Williams said that it would be important to be clear about who they were and what they were about. She said that she thought the Code of Ethics was great but was wondering how to make other residents aware of this.

Mr. Williams pointed out that when there is a new Council or Board of Ed, the new Board members should be presented with information from the Ethics Board.

Mr. Church gave out a document and said that it was from the November 6, 2014 public presentation of the Citizen's Guides. Mr. Church said that one of the reasons for the presentation was to make people aware of this, and all the City employees were notified, along with having notices posted in the paper. He said that he would like to see something like this event in the fall.

Ms. Williams asked if everyone had participated in the Connecticut Conference Of Municipalities (CCM) training. Ms. Williams said that she understood that there were new members and suggested that everyone participate in the CCM training. She added that it was also important to remember that the new Board may not follow in the steps of the previous members. Mr. Williams said that it would be good to have the discussions before issues arise so all the Commissioners are in agreement about what the Code means. Discussion followed about the timeline and the various strategies along with the intricacies of the $50.00 limit on gifts.

The discussion then moved to areas of conflicts of interest, gift giving and avoiding the appearance of political advocacy. The confidentiality code supersedes the FOI requirements.

Mr. Church then reviewed the legal ramifications for slander. He also reviewed the requirements for filing a complaint. Ms. Williams asked how an organization would file a complaint. There was also a question about the nullifying the confidentiality by going to the press.

The discussion moved to the Investigation process, and the hearing board. Ms. Williams asked how the Norwalk Code on the hearing Board lined up with the State's code. Ms. Broncati said that the Citizen's Guide had copies of the forms attached to the document.

Mr. Church said that this information had been presented to the public in the Community Room in 2014 and only one person had attended the presentation.

Ms. Broncati recommended that everyone review the Code and write down questions, their comments and other areas for clarification. Ms. Williams asked if there was a method to interact between meetings. Ms. Broncati suggested that the best method would be paper and pencil. She added that when the Corporation Counsel is present, he can often fill in the back stories on certain items. Ms. Broncati also suggested that the Board members look at the State site. Mr. Williams said that he would forward the documents that he discovered to the other Board members. Ms. Williams asked if there was a record of past recommendations that the Board members had made. Ms. Broncati said that they would get a copy of those to Ms. Williams also.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

There were no items requiring an executive session at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

**** MS. WILLIAMS MOVED TO ADJOURN.**
**** MR. CHURCH SECONDED.**
**** THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

The meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

S. L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Service