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**APPROVED MINUTES OF  
ETHICS COMMISSION OF THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT  
Division 18, Wyandotte County Courthouse  
710 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Kansas City, KS 66101**

**November 9, 2023**

**Regular Meeting:**

**Roll Call:**

- X Member Ricky Bragg
- X Member Ian Tomasic
- X Member Kimberley Partridge
- X Member Joseph Wittman
- X Member Adrienne Ford
- X Ruth Benien, Administrator

X (Present) E (Excused) U (Unexcused)

**Call to Order:**

Chairperson Bragg called the Meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. in the Wyandotte County Courthouse, Division 18, 2nd Floor of the Wyandotte County Courthouse. Commissioners Tomasic, Partridge, Wittman and Ford were present. Administrator Benien was present.

**Public Comment:** No members of the general public were present. Mayor Tyrone Garner was present at the request and invitation of the UG Ethics Commission commencing at approximately 4:10 p.m. through 5:05 p.m.

**Presentation and Discussion with Mayor Garner:** Mayor Garner was present along with John (J.D.) Rios from his staff to introduce himself to the UG Ethics Commissioners and to discuss his thoughts and requests with respect to additional changes or amendments to the proposed amendments to the UG Ethics Code which are to come before the UG Commission. During the discussion and presentation Mayor Garner outlined various areas and concerns he had with respect to issues that should be addressed by the UG Ethics Code including disclosures by elected officials, a waiting period for any UG elected official to work for the Unified Government. It was agreed that the Mayor would put together a written listing of the changes and language to be used or in the case

of disclosures, the form proposed to be used. The Ethics Commissioners agreed to promptly review, consider and respond to the requests.

**Old Business:**

**a). Approval of Minutes:**

The Minutes of the October 12, 2023 meeting were reviewed and approved with changes for which Administrator Benien will prepare additions with respect to certain topics discussed and forward for review. Commissioner Tomasic moved for approval with amendment and there was a second by Commissioner Partridge. The Motion passed unanimously.

**b). Monthly Administrator's Report:**

Administrator Benien orally provided a limited individual monthly report for the time period from August 1, 2023 through September 30, 2023 which outlined the training provided in the months and scheduled and the nature of the ethics opinions rendered, and complaints received.

Continuing Ethics training presentations by video have and are being provided by the Human Resources department for the police and fire department and are also used for a section of the sheriff's department and water treatment plant due to the shifts in each department. Continuing Ethics training is being transitioned back to in person.

A special training session is to be scheduled for the newly elected Mayor and UG Commissioners and any remaining UG Ethics Commissioners still needing training. Discussion was held regarding whether action should start being taken with regard to individuals who have not completed training. Ethics training will also be scheduled for the newly created citizen's committees created by the Mayor. A liaison for the Mayor is working on scheduling the same. A Basic Ethics training was held at 1:00 p.m., September 21, 2023 at George Myen Center. Ethics Commissioner Ford attended the same as did at least two representatives of the Mayor's Office. A Continuing Ethics training scheduled for September 6, 2023 in person at the HR Training Center at 1:30 p.m. and August 15, 2023 were cancelled due to lack of sign up. A Basic Ethics training for the new fire fighters class was held October 5, 2023 at the Human Resources Training Room at City Hall.

A request from the UG Legal Department was received to provide UG Ethics training for the Advisory Council on Aging. The same was coordinated and materials provided in advance for review. The training is still awaiting rescheduling as the legal liaison has left the legal department.

In the coming year a rewrite and update are planned for the UG Ethic's training materials and video once the amendments are approved.

Twenty new hotline complaints were received from September 30, 2023 through October 31, 2023. Four email complaints were received. Two in-person or verbal and one written complaint, six hotline and five email complaints were received in August, 2023. Thirty two complaints are pending awaiting additional information, referral or review. The two ongoing, recurring complaints from this point are simply going to be opened and closed if a new complaint is received. Twenty complaints were resolved due to lack of jurisdiction and referral or inability to reach. Five new email advisory opinions were requested in October, 2023, of those three informal opinions were provided. One verbal was requested and was provided. Twenty requests for advisory opinion are pending. One new request for information was received and information provided.

A request to have bold face used on the “closed” status when a matter is closed has been taken and will be observed.

**c). Status of Ethics Code Revisions and Amendments and Schedule for Review:**

Per instruction from the August, 2023 meeting, Administrator Benien contacted the Mayor’s Chief of Staff and requested that a date be provided for placement of the Ethics Amendments of the UG Commission Agenda. Administrator Benien on, September 21, 2023 she was advised by Irene Caudillo, Chief of Staff, that her request had been received and that the Mayor wanted to meet with Administrator Benien. It was agreed that Administrator Benien would schedule such a meeting as soon as possible and Chairperson Bragg agreed to attend. A meeting was scheduled and held between the Ethics Administrator, Ethics Commission Chairperson Bragg, the Mayor, and two liaisons, John D. Rios and Lavert Murray on October 3, 2023. The Mayor subsequently agreed and did appear at the November 12, 2023 Ethics Commission meeting to make a presentation and a specific request for additional additions, if any, he would like to see added.

**d). Ethics Training and Schedule:**

Administrator Benien advised the new ethics commissioners of the ethics training requirement. The final regular Basic Ethics Training was held September 21, 2023 at 1:00 p.m. at the George Myen Center. A final Basic Training is scheduled on October 5, 2023 for the fire fighter cadets at Human Resources. If a special session is necessary the same will be scheduled during the final quarter.

**New Business:**

Administrator Benien advised she met with department heads of the Unified Government with respect to the issues being raised with respect to consolidation and what if any limitations would apply to them if they were asked to do anything in regard to a suggestion for consideration of change. That meeting was held on October 13, 2023 at City Hall to provide background on the Ethics Code and consolidation.

Ethics Administrator Benien tries at each meeting to cover a limited provision of the UG Ethics Code to better help the UG Ethics Commissioners understand its provisions or answer questions they may have. No particular provision was covered this month due to the length of the Mayor's presentation.

An updated copy of the Political Memorandum was prepared and forwarded to UG Legal and the UG Court Clerk for distribution dated October 10, 2023 for the upcoming general election. A copy is provided to all employees and officials and posted on the UG Ethics website.

Arrangements have been made and instructions provided for the new commissioners to obtain badges allowing for entry into the Court House and City Hall through other exits. Parking areas and arrangements were also discussed. Photographs and biographies for the new commissioners were received and have been forwarded for posting on the UG Ethics Website. All UG Ethics Commissioners should review the same and advise if any corrections or additions are necessary.

The next monthly meeting will be on December 14, 2023, in person, at the Wyandotte County Courthouse in the Law Library. Masks may be required for courthouse entry for future entry.

**Executive Session:**

No Executive Session was held.

Adjournment:

Motion for adjournment by Commissioner Wittman

Seconded by Commissioner Tomasic

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:22 p.m.

Next Meeting is December 14, 2023 at 4:00 p.m. in person.

Respectfully Submitted,

s/Ruth M. Benien

Ruth M. Benien, UG Ethics Administrator