

APPROVED MINUTES
ETHICS COMMISSION OF THE UNIFIED GOVERNMENT
Courtroom No. 18, 2nd Floor, Wyandotte County Courthouse
710 N. 7th Street, Kansas City, KS 66101

September 8, 2022

Regular Meeting:

Roll Call:

- E Member Patty Orth
- X Member Emily Cisneros
- E Member Ian Tomasic
- X Member Kimberley Partridge
- X Member Ricky Bragg
- X Ruth Benien, Administrator

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

Call to Order:

Acting Chairperson Cisneros called the meeting to order at 4:15 p.m. Commissioners Cisneros, Partridge and Bragg were in attendance. Commissioners Orth and Tomasic were absent but excused. Administrator Benien was present.

Public Comment: No members of the public were present.

Old Business:

a). Approval of Minutes:

The Minutes of the July 14, 2022 meeting were reviewed and approved. Commissioner Partridge moved for approval with a second by Commissioner Bragg. The Motion passed unanimously. No meeting was held in August, 2022.

b). Monthly Administrator's Report:

Administrator Benien provided the individual monthly report for the time period from July 1, 2022 through August 31, 2022 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.

A special training session will be scheduled for the newly elected Mayor and UG Commissioners in the near future and any remaining UG Ethics Commissioners still needing training. Ethics training will also be scheduled for the newly created citizen's committees created by the Mayor. A Basic Training session for the UG Advisory Commission on Human Relations and Disability Issues was held in person at the HR department and by Zoom on May 2, 2022 at 5:30 p.m. A UG Continuing Ethics training was held in person for the fire department at HR on May 5, 2022 from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. A Basic Ethics training was held for the Police Academy, in person, from 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. on May 19, 2022. A Basic Ethics training, in person was held on June 30, 2022 at Memorial Hall from 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. and a Basic Training for Fire Recruits is scheduled from 2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. at Human Resources on July 1, 2022. Continuing Ethics will be held either July 25, 2022 or August 11, 2022, in person, at HR. A Basic Training was held on September 22, 2022, in person, at Memorial 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 will be rescheduled for a later date after COVID limitations are lifted.

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

Eleven new complaints, ten by email and two by hotline were received. Fourteen complaints are pending awaiting additional information, referral or review. Eighteen complaints were closed for lack of information or no jurisdiction and referral. Four were reviewed, investigated and appropriate action taken. Two new advisory opinion requests were received by email. Three requests for advisory opinion are currently pending. Four advisory opinion requests were closed by provision of a response or opinion provided.

c). Requests for Information:

No new Request for Information was received.

New Business:

Ethics Administrator Benien will try 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. The topic this month and in upcoming months will deal with the UG Ethics Code provisions being considered for review and/or amendment.

The review of the UG Ethics Code continued and was concluded with UG Ethics Code Sec. 2-271 through Sec. 2-272 reviewed and notes made for ultimate changes or action. A copy of the 2014 proposed amendments has been provided to the new UG Ethics Commissioners. All new commissioners have been provided with a hard copy of the current UG Ethics Code. The Ethics Administrator obtained a copy of the UG Human Resources social media policies and distributed those. Thanks to Commissioners Tomasic and Cisneros all Commissioners have been provided with a copy of the UG Ethics Code that includes red-lined and blue lined 2014 proposed changes and new changes. Sections to be reviewed and finalized at the next meeting are Sec. 2-265– Sec. 2-270 and finalization of Sec. 250-252 with provision of proposal by Commissioner Bragg to include language of the global purpose of ethics, etc. Review of the Ethics Code will continue and it was agreed to adopt the definition of “social media” contained in the HR codes in the definitional section. The hope is that a final version will be completed in the next few months.

Discussion was had with respect to the political activities section of the Code and potential responses or changes due to issues in the recent election cycle including adoption of a press release or other public dissemination with respect to the same perhaps similar to the recent press release or a limited version of the political memorandum.

The next monthly meeting will be on October 13, 2022, in person, at the Wyandotte County Courthouse in the Wyandotte County Law Library conference room. Masks required for courthouse entry.

Executive Session:

No Executive Session was held.

Adjournment:

Motion for adjournment by Commissioner Bragg

Seconded by Commissioner Partridge

Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

Next Meeting is October 13, 2022 at 4:00 p.m. in person.

Respectfully Submitted,

s/Ruth M. Benien
Ruth M. Benien, UG Ethics Administrator