

Minutes

DeKalb County Board of Ethics

August 7, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT: Susan Neugent
Thelma Grier
Edwinett Murphy
Bobbie Sanford
Isaac Blythers
John Ernst

OTHERS PRESENT: Andrew Cauthen
Kalifa Toure
O.V. Brantley
Viviane Ernstes
Trumondia Williams

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:12pm by Isaac Blythers, Acting Chair. Andrew Cauthen from the Champion Newspaper stated he was protesting the meeting. Mr. Cauthen stated the regular meeting was to be held the second Wednesday of August, not the first Wednesday. He also stated the public notice did not go out in a timely manner alerting people about the meeting that was to take place. Mr. Blythers then stated that this meeting was simply a planning meeting to get reorganize. Mr. Cauthen stated that the work session should have been made public with proper notice. Thelma Grier then recommended that Mr. Cauthen put the protest in writing and submit it to the Board of Commissioners.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

The Agenda was reviewed and approved as provided at 6:18pm.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

The Minutes, dated March 21, 2013 were discussed but there were no minutes to be reviewed and approved. Isaac Blythers will reach out to Teri Thompson to see if she has the Minutes from the meeting. Trumondia Williams will also reach out to Barbara Sanders to see if she has Minutes from the last meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Update on outstanding Board issues and concerns: Mr. Blythers spoke of the concerns of the Board not being fully staffed and the need to fill vacant positions. Mr. Blythers also spoke about a meeting he had with then Commissioner Lee May and Chief of Staff Hakim Hilliard. In that meeting he expressed the need for BOC support as well as CEO support in making sure vacancies are filled so that the Board can become fully functional.

Board Appointments: Mr. Blythers spoke about the reappointment of Teri Thompson whose term expired on December 31, 2010, the appointment of someone to fill vacant position which has been vacant for 3 years now, and the appointment of someone to fill Bryan Smith's position as he has accepted a job in Florida. Mr. Blythers stated he spoke with Mr. Smith regarding his resignation, but there has been no formal resignation letter filed with the DeKalb County's Clerk's Office.

Staff Support: Ashley Anderson was the staff support person for the Ethics Board. The current staff person is Trumondia Williams from the CEO's Office.

Legal Support: Steve Irving currently providing some legal assistance to the Ethics Board. Mr. Irving has received an email from County Attorney O.V. Brantley stating that his services in connection with representation of the DeKalb County Ethics Board will no longer be needed, effective May 31, 2013. Attorney Brantley stated that she had a face to face meeting with Mr. Irving regarding the email, and he refuses to believe she has the authority to fire him as legal counsel for the Ethics Board. A letter will be drafted by the Ethics Board to formally let Mr. Irving know that his services are no longer needed. There is a budget in place for legal support. The current budget is \$12,000 per year and the County pays a retainer fee of \$1,000 per month. Attorney Brantley stated that she has submitted 3 resumes for the Board to review to begin to fill the position of hiring legal support. John Ernst stated he has someone in mind for the position for the Board to interview for legal support.

Board Status: All Ethics Board actions have been suspended until all slots are filled, members are fully trained and appropriate staff and legal support is available. Mr. Blythers stated that before another hearing is set; all the above items need to be in place. The Board suggested that the meeting that is to take place on August 20, 2013 be cancelled and a posting notice will go out to state the meeting has been cancelled.

Budget: Attorney Brantley stated that the Board's current budget is at \$4,500. Susan Neugent stated she would speak with the CEO's Office about adding a line item to the 2014 budget to include the Ethics Board. This budget will possibly pay for any expenses the Board incurs including hiring a court recorder.

NEW BUSINESS

Board elections: Bobbie Sanford made the motion to elect Isaac Blythers as Chair and Susan Neugent as Co-Chair. This motion denied as the Board would like to become fully staffed before making any election decisions. Isaac Blythers was nominated to become Acting Chair and he accepted.

Set date for Legal counsel interviews: The Board has come up with 3 dates to hold an Executive Session in which the interview process will take place. Edwinett Murphy suggested that there be lead interviewer that has knowledge of what to ask and what is expected of the candidates. Thelma Grier had a preference to have the interviews the last week of August. Bobbie Sanford suggested that maybe doing the interviews on Saturday. Isaac Blythers made the suggestion that the dates should be back to back as to not draw the process out. The dates are Tuesday August 27th, Thursday August 29th, and Wednesday September 11th. It was stated by Isaac Blythers that all Board members that wishes to participate in the interview process must make themselves available to attend the interview process. An Executive Session meeting will be held to conduct these interviews.

ADJOURNMENT

The Board meeting was adjourned at 7:42pm.