

Minutes
Board of Ethics Special Meeting via Zoom
January 17, 2024, 7:00 pm

Members in attendance were: Vivian Hardison, Ben Lehberger, Mark Peyser, and Craig Sternberg
Members absent: Florisca Carter

Pursuant to the Agenda, the following items were taken up:

1. The Board of Ethics meeting was called to order at 7:03 pm by Vivian Hardison.
2. Minutes from the January 4, 2024 meeting were reviewed. No amendments were made. A motion to approve the minutes of January 4, 2024 was made by Vivian Hardison and seconded by Craig Sternberg. Vote was unanimous. The minutes of January 4, 2024 were approved.
3. Old Business: Ben Lehberger confirmed that the Board of Selectmen sent an email (11/9/23) granting approval for the Board of Ethics to look for outside counsel to assist in updating the ethics ordinance. Once identified, the Board of Ethics is to contact Chris Calvert to set a budget with the attorney.
4. New Business: None was discussed.
5. Discussion of FOIA requests: Ben Lehberger reported that the board of ethics received FOIA requests from two media outlets. However, it was unclear what specific information was being requested in one of the requests and whose responsibility it was to respond to FOIA requests when they are sent to multiple recipients in town. The First Selectman received one of the media requests and indicated that he already responded. The Board of Ethics will respond to the second media request. Another FOIA request sought information on complainants, personal information about board members, and affidavits from each board member. This request was a duplicate to the one that was sent to Dr. Bindelglass and the Board of Ethics in May of 2023. Dr. Bindelglass stated that he sent a response to Mr. Martin in June of 2023. Given the nature of the duplicate request, the person making the request, and recent doxing of Vivian Hardison's personal information by Ray Martin, the Board of Ethics determined this particular FOIA request warrants input from the office of the Board of Selectmen and possibly outside legal intervention by the Town of Easton. The Board of Ethics will not provide their personal information or prepare affidavits answering questions as called for in the request as these are not proper requests under FOIA. The board of ethics also has grounds to withhold personal identities of complainants. To do otherwise, puts complainants in harm's way. There were other issues in the FOIA request that infringed upon individuals' right to privacy that was being violated. The Board of Ethics will draft a response to the second FOIA request.
6. Public comments: The public made comments about the FOIA requests and the release of the identity of complainants and the concern that additional board and commission members have been targeted for retaliation. Mark Peyser stated that the nature of the FOIA request for

personal information is a harassment campaign that should be addressed with a letter from Easton legal counsel to Ray Martin to cease and desist targeting public servants of the Town of Easton, or further action will be taken by the town to defend the Board of Ethics and residents who filed complaints against him. Mark Peyser further stated that Ray Martin has reportedly threatened other people and it's time for the Town of Easton to put a stop to this type of activity.

7. Executive Session: With no additional business to discuss, Ben Lehberger made a motion to move into Executive Session to discuss complaints number: 09-11082023. The motion was seconded by Vivian Hardison. The vote was unanimous. The Executive session started at 7:41pm.

8. Motion was made by Vivian Hardison to move out of Executive Session and second by Mark Peyser. Vote was unanimous. The Executive Session ended at 8:16pm.

9. Outcome of Executive Session: Board of Ethics found cause regarding complaint # 09-11082023 and will relay findings to the complainant, the respondent and the Board of Selectmen.

10. Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Mark Peyser and seconded by Craig Sternberg. Vote was unanimous. Meeting of the Board of Ethics ended at 8:21pm.

VCHardison
Vivian Hardison

Ben Lehberger
Ben Lehberger