

**CITY OF SPOKANE ETHICS COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES - JANUARY 22, 2020**

1. Call to Order / Roll Call

Chairperson Dennis Cronin called the January 22, 2020 meeting of the Ethics Commission to order at 3:00 p.m. and asks that everyone introduce themselves.

Present for the meeting were Commission members Clayton McFarland, Sara O'Hare, Michelle Bleek, Dennis Cronin, Kenneth Hall, Clayton McFarland and Gail Heck Sweeney. Commission counsel Mike Piccolo and support staff Rebecca Riedinger were also present. Merle Iverson was absent. Also present for the hearing were Council Member Karen Stratton, her counsel for this hearing, Chris Wright, and the Complainant Neil Mueller.

2. Approval of Meeting Agenda

The Commission members reviewed the Agenda and there was a motion to approve by Commissioner McFarland and seconded by Commissioner O'Hare. The motion was approved unanimously.

3. Agenda Item II. a. Decision Approving Request for Authorization to Contact. Agenda Item II. a. is to approve the written decision of the Commission from its December 12, 2019 meeting regarding the request by the City's Public Works Director, Scott Simmons, for authorization to hire former City employee, Brandon Blankenagel, as an outside consultant pursuant to SMC 1.04A.030 O.3. Commission Counsel Piccolo presented the decision of the Commission approving the request. There was a motion and second to approve the written decision, which was signed and entered into the record.

4. Agenda Item II. b. Determination of the Chairperson of Complaint by Norbert Leute. Chairperson Cronin, pursuant to SMC 1.04A.110D.3, determined that the complaint was directed towards individuals not subject to the Ethics Code, that the Commission did not have jurisdiction and that the complaint was dismissed.

5. Agenda Item II. c. Hearing Regarding Complaint against City Council Member Karen Stratton by Neil Muller. Mr. Cronin stated that he has a conflict of interest in hearing this matter and has previously recused himself and turns the meeting over to co-chair, Sarah O'Hare. Clayton McFarland stated he also had recused himself from hearing this matter to avoid any appearance of impropriety.

There being no dispositive motions, the Commission proceeded with the hearing on the merits.

Commissioner O'Hare stated that the Commission would proceed with the full hearing regarding the complaint with each party providing their opening statement followed by

questions by the Commission and any follow up questions by Complainant and Respondent. Arguments are presented for both parties.

Upon completion of the presentment of arguments by the parties, the Commission addressed whether Council Member Stratton violated the Ethics Code as set forth in the complaint.

The Commission proceeded to rule separately on each issue.

Commissioner Hall moved the Commission that the letter, as written, violated the Ethics Code section SMC1.04.A.030 K. 1 and meets or exceeds the threshold. Commissioner Bleek seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

Commissioner Heck Sweeney moved that the letter, as written, violated the Ethics Code section SMC 1.04A.030 K.3 and that Ms. Stratton's action exceeded the threshold. Motion failed for lack of a second.

Commissioner Hall moved the Commission that the letter violated the Ethics Code section SMC 1.04A.030 K.4. as it exceeded the threshold of the ordinance. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Bleek and approved unanimously.

Commissioner Hall moved that the letter, as written, violated the Ethics Code section SMC 1.04A.030 K. 5 as it exceeded the threshold of the ordinance. Commissioner Heck Sweeney seconded the motion, which was approved unanimously.

The Commission considered the available penalties for non-compliance, which included the following factors: monetary cost, aggravating circumstances, and mitigation factors.

Commissioner O'Hare moved that since the violations were unintentional that a written reprimand pursuant to SMC 1.04A.040B5 was the appropriated penalty. Motion was approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

MINUTES APPROVED:

City of Spokane Ethics Commission.

