

BOWIE CITY ETHICS COMMISSION

Minutes

October 21 , 2014 - Open Meeting

A meeting of the Bowie City Ethics Commission was held on Tuesday, October 21, 2014 in the City Manager's conference room. Commission members in attendance were Benjamin Woolery, Chair, Vince Canales, Jim Holderbaum and Lee Weimer. Also in attendance was John Fitzwater, Assistant City Manager and liaison to the Commission. Betsy K. Dawson, Attorney to the Commission, was excused.

The meeting was called to order at 3:25 p.m. by Chairman Woolery.

The members reviewed and approved the Minutes as amended from the September 16, 2014 Ethics Commission meeting.

The Commission prepared for a meeting with City Council scheduled for October 27th to provide input from the Commission to the City Council on how the Commission is working and whether there are any suggestions from the Commission on how to improve its operation. The Commission reviewed a draft letter prepared by Chairman Woolery that addressed these matters, but decided not to use that letter. Instead the Commission decided to list in a bullet point fashion the following issues for Council consideration:

Membership - The Commission is currently authorized for five regular members and one alternate. The Commission currently has four active members. Getting people to fill the two additional vacant slots would allow the Commission to operate in a much more effective fashion. Any assistance that the Council can provide in finding residents to fill these slots is appreciated.

Attorney - Currently the Commission is served by Betsy Dawson, who is also the Executive Director of the Anne Arundel County Ethics Commission. Ms. Dawson is currently performing her services in a pro bono capacity. The Commission is very pleased with the services provided by Ms. Dawson. The Commission is concerned that Ms. Dawson cannot continue to perform these services indefinitely. Therefore, the Council needs to be aware that resources may need to be included for legal representation once Ms. Dawson is no longer able to serve in her current capacity. Because of the legal nature of issues that come before the Commission, it is important to have legal representation at Ethics Commission meetings.

Lobbying - One of the tasks of the Commission is to ensure that those who testify in front of City Council and who are generally paid more than \$100 to do so must be registered as lobbyists. The Commission has prepared a document entitled,

General Information About **Lobbying, as to who must register as a lobbyist.** The Commission would like to partner with City Council to have Council better communicate to those who testify before City Council the need to register as lobbyists when appropriate.

Public Information and Education Program - Another task of the Commission is to **conduct periodic public education programs.** The Commission has established a section on the City's **web page that contains a lot of educational materials.** The Commission has also held one separate workshop to educate the public on the roles and responsibilities of the Ethics Commission and also made a presentation to City Council earlier this year along the same lines. Ms. Dawson has also **conducted ethics training for City employees in two workshops.** The Commission would appreciate Council input on what other types of programs you may want to see to educate the public on the activities of the Ethics Commission.

Other Activities - While the roles and responsibilities of the Ethics Commission are outlined by City Code and mandated by the State of Maryland, the Commission is interested in whether the City Council has any other expectations for the Commission.

During the discussion of the above issues, Mayor Robinson stopped into the meeting and engaged in a discussion with the Commission about these matters.

The Commission discussed how frequently the Commission should meet. It was decided to continue meeting on a monthly basis, but to cancel the meetings when there are insufficient agenda items.

There being no further business to be conducted, Mr. Woolery adjourned the meeting at 4:20 p.m.

[The next meeting of the Ethics Commission will be held on Tuesday, November 18, 2014 at 3:00 in the City Manager's conference room.]

John L. Fitzwater
Staff Liaison to the Ethics Commission