

MINUTES OF ETHICS COMMISSION

DATE: August 29, 2008

Call to order: The Ethics Commission was held in City Hall-St. James Building, Jacksonville, Florida on August 29, 2008. The meeting convened at 12:07 p.m.

THESE MINUTES WERE TAKEN CONTEMPORANEOUSLY AT THE REQUEST OF THE CHAIR, AND REFLECT BEST EFFORTS AT VERBATIM NOTATION.

Attendees:

Jay Williams, Chair
Pat Plumlee
Mary Swart
Braxton Gillam
Gene Filbert, Vice-chair
Pat Sher
Kirby Oberdorfer
Bill Wilkens
Carla Miller, Ethics Officer
Tony Bates, concerned citizen
Glorious Johnson, City Council

There was no representative of the General Counsel's office or any media.

The Chair called the meeting to order. This meeting was called as an emergency meeting regarding the need to protect the Ethics Commission's budget. This became a concern following the decision by the Finance Committee of City Council to place our ten month old budget "below the line", and its questions regarding the efficiencies of the Commission's expenditures.

Councilwoman Glorious Johnson spoke in support of the Ethics Commission budget, explaining that she vocally opposed the creation of this office initially, as proposed by Mayor Peyton. Her concern arose from her perceived duplication by the Commission of the work of the General Counsel. Currently, however, after seeing the work of Carla Miller and the Commission, the Councilwoman fully supports the Commission and its budget. She further stated that the Office of the General Counsel is "not doing it's job" and that "if they were, the Ethics Officer wouldn't be necessary". Finally, the Councilwoman stated that the Ethics Commission now has the public's confidence and that the Ethics Office hotline is bringing forth important issues.

There was discussion and explanation by Councilwoman Johnson and Carla Miller re the meaning of "below the line".

Chair Jay Williams asked how the Commission can assist Councilwoman Johnson, and noted that Councilman Corrigan and the Mayor were invited but not in attendance at this meeting. Carla Miller responded that both the Mayor and Adam Hollingsworth were busy.

Discussion was held regarding the threat of the Ethics Office budget being cut and the status of the budget before the Finance Committee. A review of the excerpts from the Finance Committee budget hearing brought discussion regarding the particulars of the current budget proposal and the work and effort that Carla has put into the city's ethics program. Carla explained the line

items in the Ethics Office budget and noted that she personally pays for all of her own travel, and that the only printing involved was that of her business cards. She also described the nature of the Hotline calls that are now reporting genuine ethics concerns.

The Philadelphia Ethics Commission was discussed: 70 citizens serve, there is a Charter Amendment that guarantees independence of the Commission, and it has a budget annually of \$1 million. It was noted that Jacksonville's Ethics Office is the lowest funded Office in Florida.

Braxton Gillam inquired into the Finance Committee's concern re Ethics Office reporting, and Carla stated that the Committee had indeed received her annual report.

Gene Filbert initiated discussion re the confusion regarding the differing roles of the Office of the General Counsel and the Ethics Officer. The Commission recommended that the Mayor and the Office of the General Counsel should be called upon formally at the budget hearing to educate the Committee on the importance and need of the ethics office. Kirby Oberdorfer moved and it was unanimously agreed that a formal letter be drafted to this effect.

It is also suggested and unanimously approved that the Commission members contact each Council member and represent as a citizen and a Member that the ethics budget should not be cut.

The Commission adjourned.

Next meeting scheduled: September 22, 2008.

/s/ Christine Lyle
Christine Lyle
Ethics Commission Coordinator

9/22/08
Date of Approval

