



ETHICS REVIEW COMMISSION

MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, July 8, 2020

The Ethics Review Commission (“Commission”) convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, July 8, 2020, Austin, Texas via Videoconference.

Chair Luis Soberon called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Commissioners in attendance: Chair Luis Soberon, Vice-Chair J. Michael Ohueri, Secretary Kenneth “Tray” Gober, and Commissioners Debra Danburg, Betsy Greenberg, Mary Kahle, Donna Beth McCormick, and Nathan Ryan. Commissioners Raafia Lari, Robin Lerner and Pedro A. Villalobos were absent.

City Staff in Attendance: Lynn Carter, Commission Executive Liaison & Assistant City Attorney, Sue Palmer, Staff Liaison Kw Department and Tara Olson, Marketing and Communication Consultant, Communications and Public Information Office.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION

Each person who signed up to speak prior to the meeting being called to order and who designated this item on which to speak, or who did not designate an agenda item on which to speak will be allowed three minutes to speak.

There were no speakers for Citizen Communication.

1. OLD BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action regarding the following:

- a. 2020 Austin city council candidate forums update (by City staff, League of Women Voters-Austin Area, and ERC Candidate Forum Working Group) about forum logistics / set up and published information about the forums.

Tara Olson, Communications and Public Information Office, updated the Commission on the status of the 2020 City Council election candidate forums. Each moderated candidate forum will be held virtually by live streaming through the Webex platform and on the City of Austin’s Facebook live due to the pandemic. The forums will air on ATXN.TV, Channel 6, and KAZI FM radio. The September issue of the Austin Energy/utility newsletter will include updated candidate forum information. The City of Austin’s website provides information on candidate forums at: [Austintexas.gov/elections](https://austintexas.gov/elections) and austintexas.gov/CandidateForums. Carol Eckelkamp, League of Women Voters-Austin Area (LWV-AA), spoke about the process for the public to submit questions to the LWV-AA for consideration at candidate forums and the LWV-AA role as moderator in the candidate forums.

- b. Working group status reports and/or recommendations on the following.
- Working group one (Vice-Chair Ohueri and Commissioners Greenberg and Lerner) on the following subjects:
 - Commission sanctions including effectiveness, past cases, and recommendations.
 - Potential amendments to City Code, Chapter 2-7 (Ethics and Financial Disclosure).

Vice-Chair Ohueri and Commissioner Greenberg reported on the status of the working group's progress.

- Working group two (Chair Soberon, Secretary Gober, and Commissioner Lari) on the following subjects:
 - Commission procedures including effectiveness, past cases, and recommendations.
 - Scope of work of the Commission (powers, duties, and obligations), including effectiveness, past cases, and recommendations.
 - Potential amendments to the Rules of the Ethics Review Commission.
 - Best practices for city attorney opinions including effectiveness, past cases, and recommendations.

Chair Soberon Chair Soberon reported on the status of the working group's progress.

2. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion and possible action regarding the following:

- a. Setting up a Working Group on race, identity, and equity and identifying the subject matter for the working group, such as : (i) planning for the Equity Officer's presentation or training at a future Commission meeting; (ii) helping focus the Commission's evaluation of racial injustice and how the Commission can operate more fairly and effectively in light of racial injustice.

Commissioner Greenberg made a motion to create an equity working group made up of Commissioner Kahle and other commissioners who want to join, including Commissioner Lari if she is interested. Commissioner Ryan seconded the motion and added that he would like to serve on the equity working group. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of 8-0 of the members in attendance. Voting in favor: Chair Soberon, Vice-Chair Ohueri, Secretary Gober, and Commissioners Danburg, Greenberg, Kahle, McCormick, and Ryan. Commissioners Lari, Lerner, and Villalobos were absent.

- b. Transparency in the open meeting process in consideration of individuals without internet access or other technology challenges for virtual viewing and participation.

The Commissioners agreed to put this item on the August 12, 2020 agenda.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: JUNE 10, 2020 REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING.

Discussion and possible action regarding the minutes for the June 10, 2020 regular commission meeting.

Commissioner McCormick made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Commissioner Kahle. The motion passed on a unanimous vote of 8-0 by the members in attendance. Voting in favor: Chair Soberon, Vice-Chair Ohueri, Secretary Gober, and Commissioners Danburg, Greenberg, Kahle, McCormick, and Ryan. Commissioners Lari, Lerner, and Villalobos were absent.

4. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

The working groups will continue to be included as standing items on future agendas.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.