

## Meeting Minutes

March 15, 2023

**Pledge and Call to Order:** John Bowker, SEAC President called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

**Introductions:** In attendance were commission members John Bowker, Art Russell, Julie McElmurry, Cal Bellamy, Courtney Smith, Cecile Petro, Merlin Foresman, Mike McIntyre, Michael Suggs, Ken Zubeck, Karen Marben and Janice Malinowski. Marcia Hardison took the minutes.

**Approval of January 2023 Minutes:** After a motion by Cecile Petro, seconded by Merlin Foresman, the commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the January 2023 meetings as presented. These approved minutes will be uploaded to the website, [sharedethics.com](http://sharedethics.com) under the tab Info, Meeting Minutes.

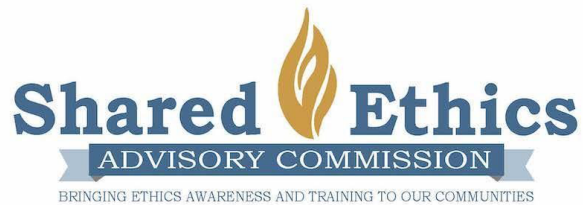
### OLD BUSINESS

**Membership Updates:** John Bowker presented Membership Updates. Two new commissioners have joined the SEAC, Julie Wendorf representing Crown Point and Dale Combs, representing Hobart. Also Mary Tanis will represent Dyer on the Joint Board of Delegates. Members missing commissioners are Burns Harbor, Lake Station, LaPorte County, Portage and St. John. Members missing a delegate is St. John.

**Financials:** John Bowker presented the SEAC Financials update. Total revenues as of Feb. 28, 2023, were \$252.26. There were no expenditures in January 2023 leaving a balance of \$29,257.57 in the budget. Total assets as of Feb. 28, 2023, were \$91,718.48. There are 2023 expenses for the Ethics Pledge of \$156.78 for stamps and envelopes that will show up in the March report.

**Summit Update:** Art Russell gave the Summit planning update. Currently he is planning for the Summit date to be Thursday, Oct. 26, 2023; it will be held at Avalon Manor. Cal Bellamy was working on getting Mitch Daniels to be the keynote speaker, but he declined. The group discussed potential Panel participants and landed on potentials of Brian Snedecor, Lee Morris and Clifford Johnson with Courtney moderating. Cal will contact these people to determine if they can participate. A 3rd person for LaPorte county could be Kevin Keel, county councilman. Should Clifford Johnson be unable to participate it was discussed to ask Bernie Carter, Lake County prosecutor, to fill his place. Summit case studies have been drafted by Cal, he will share with the Commission. Art will work with Avalon to get a contract to execute.

**Training Committee Update:** At the last meeting, SEAC was looking for someone to take over the Training Committee Chairperson vacancy. John asked the group for a volunteer on the call who might be interested in taking on the role of being the chair of that committee with possibly a co-chair. The responsibilities were briefly discussed, such as keeping track of and communicating with the community identified trainers. The Training Committee will also be preparing for 2023 to be the "Year of Ethics Training", encouraging the trainers to train all of their community's employees. If it was deemed necessary to hold another train the trainer session, John, Cal and Julie know the training materials and can offer support. The Training Committee Chair(s) are also responsible for working with each community's Commissioner to be sure that the Ethics Guides are provided



for each community employee. It was noted that in the next year or two, there will be a survey of all member community employees regarding ethics and ethics training. The last survey was done in 2019. Cecile Petro and Julie Wendorf accepted the roles to be chair and co-chair of the training committee. Julie McElmurry will help them get acclimated with their new roles.

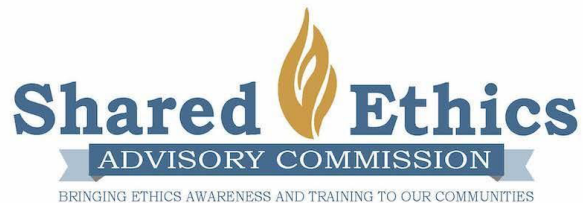
The group was asked to check if they've provided their communities Ethics Guides for distribution to employees, elected officials, board and commission members, and if they've identified community trainers and if those trainers have been through the "Train the Trainer" training.

John Bowker shared an email from Ogden Dunes regarding their recent training stating that employee training went well, and folks were pleased. Training lasted 2.5 hours - conversations were lively and informative. Overall, they rated the training more than satisfactory (video rating 4.4., discussion 8.8, trainer 4.9). They suggested extending the training and asking town council to address ethics related "gray areas" that came up in the training discussions. Overall, the training was received as positive.

**Communications Committee Update:** Julie McElmurry provided the Communications Committee update. Candidate ethics pledges were sent to all candidates in Lake, Porter and LaPorte counties. 255 emails were sent pointing to the SEAC website link to sign the pledge. 143 letters were mailed. Close to 40 candidates have signed - overall percentage of about 10%. She's expecting good results - may send a reminder email in coming weeks (mid-April is the date for pledge to be signed to be counted). She will compile names of people who have signed pledge and send a media release to media contacts. Cal will help with NWI Times - last two out of three elections had no media coverage. Due to the financial stability of SEAC, an ad will be done this year. Cal is meeting with Times on March 21 and will inquire if it's possible to receive special pricing for the ad. It was noted that judges should not be included as part of pledge, they have their own ethics processes. City/Town/County; council, mayors, etc. only to be included. It was noted the website needs to be updated with a due date to sign. The date is included within the letter that was mailed.

Julie will send the Commissioners an email with talking points or draft email that can be sent to their town/city leaders informing them of SEAC items. Julie asked the team to ask their elected leaders to sign the pledge. Her goal is to have 100% of candidates sign the pledge in 2023 because asking candidates to support education is not controversial and there is no reason why candidates shouldn't sign the pledge.

Cecile voiced concerns about the low percentage of those signed and it was noted that it's normal this early in the request process. General average is about 2/3 of total candidates signed. Most will wait until the last minute to sign the pledge, so there will be additional time given for those that state they haven't received a request to sign the pledge. In those instances, an email or letter will be resent. Cecile asked when people sign up to run for office are they given a packet and, if so, can we include SEAC info? It was explained that the SEAC has been told no - packets can only include what is statutorily required. In the last general election, Julie spent time putting together letters to party chairs in each county listing who had and had not signed and only two signatures were received back after she completed that process. She recommended the SEAC not do that again as it was a lot of work for little/no results. Open to other ideas from the group. Deadline is April 14.



Cecile asked about county ethics posters and whether additional posters need to be ordered. Specifically, she was looking for Lake County posters and reprint of ethics guide for summer employees. John stated several boxes of guides at the NIRPC office in Portage. Cecile can go through what's there and determine what may need to be ordered. Lithographics can help with reprints.

There was an inquiry about meeting in person versus meeting via Zoom. Several SEAC members noted the ease of meeting via Zoom versus in person but since the SEAC is a public entity, does that make a difference on the meeting format going forward (in-person v. virtual). Cal asked Janice to investigate whether any law applies to this group since the public can access and a quorum must be met.

Cecile asked when member community invoices went out - Janice said in late February. Clerk treasurer Mark Herak sent out to member community Clerk Treasurers. Julie said usually they were paid without any issues. Cecile had a request from her contact in Lake County. Janice will reach out to Jerry Tippy in Lake County.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

John Bowker did not have any new business to present to the Commission.

**Next Meeting:** The next SEAC Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 17, 2023. John Bowker will contact SEAC regarding whether the meeting will be held in person or via Zoom.

**Adjournment:** After discussion, and a motion by Julie McElmurry, seconded by John Bowker the commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 am.