

Meeting Minutes

May 17, 2023

Pledge and Call to Order: Art Russell (in John Bowker's absence due to technical issues) called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Introductions: In attendance were commission members Courtney Smith, Cecile LaCombe-Petro, Cal Bellamy, Joan Stewart, Art Russell, Julie McElmurry, Julie Wendorf, Karen Marten, Michael Suggs, Merlin Foresman, Janice Malinowski, Ken Zubeck, John Bowker and guest Justin Kiel (LaPorte County). The meeting was recorded on Zoom, Julie McElmurry helped take notes and the Zoom recording link of the minutes was sent to Marcia Hardison to transcribe.

Approval of March 2023 Minutes: After a motion by Courtney Smith, seconded by Michael Suggs, the commission voted unanimously to accept the minutes of the March 2023 meetings as presented. These approved minutes will be uploaded to the website, sharedethics.com under the tab Info, Meeting Minutes.

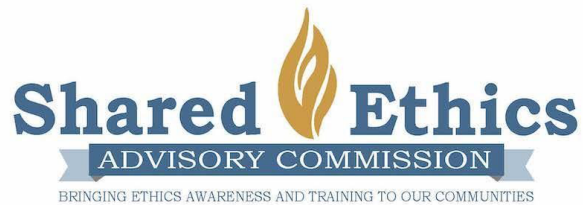
OLD BUSINESS

Membership Updates: Art Russell presented Membership Updates. Julie McElmurry provided a full list of the 23 communities and commissioners. We welcome Joan Stewart, Burns Harbor, as a new commission member. Joan received an email reviewing what the SEAC does as well as membership requirements.

Cecile reported on St. John. She spoke with members of the town council, the town manager and the clerk treasurer. She specifically spoke with the St. John clerk treasurer indicating that SEAC is eager to have St. John represented on the commission along with the Joint Board of Delegates (JBOD). Cal Bellamy voiced that's emblematic, like Porter and LaPorte counties due to this being an election year and that there is expected to be a big change of the makeup of the town council of St. John. We should expect little action until after November election. St. John Clerk Treasurer will stay in office and would be good choice for joining JBOD. Four of the five St. John council members will be new in the Fall. Cal has been working to get Beth Hernandez appointed to JBOD as St John's representative, but getting no response. Cecile will continue to try to get someone to join before election.

John Bowker is resigning as Valpo SEAC commissioner and therefore can no longer serve as President of the SEAC. He is working with the mayor of Valpo to get a new commissioner appointed. Art Russell would be next in line as Vice President of the SEAC, but instead of accepting the role, he nominated Courtney Smith to fill the President position as he would like more experience before taking that role on. Julie McElmurry seconded the nomination. Courtney accepted the role as new president of the SEAC. Nominations were closed with all members unanimously voting in Courtney Smith as new President of SEAC.

Financials: Courtney Smith presented the SEAC Financials update. Mark Herak provided the financial information. Not a lot of spending - \$356.78 spent since Jan. 1, 2023. \$156.78 was for postage and envelopes as part of candidate ethics pledge mailing and Marcia Hardison was paid \$200 for minute transcriptions for JBOD



February meeting and SEAC March meeting. Pending expenses of ads for ethics pledge of approximately \$2,039. The invoice was submitted for payment to Mark. Courtney asked if there were any printing jobs to be done - Cecile needs to know if posters need to be printed.

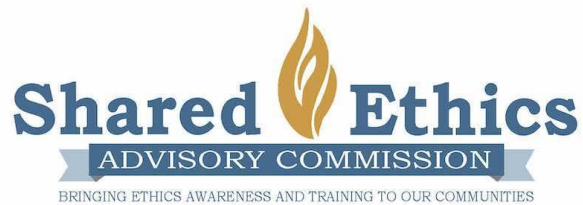
End balance as of April 30, 2023, was \$105,369.78. Budget was \$25,000 for 2023. Main expense is \$10,000 for the October Summit. Financials are looking good. Janice contacted three municipalities that have not paid their dues yet, totaling \$5,5850. Jerry Tippy from Lake County reached out, Peggy Catone has been out sick. Mr. Washington of Gary has not yet responded, and East Chicago (Gilda Orange) has not responded. Janice will work with Mark to help collect the outstanding membership dues paid.

Summit Update: The Summit date has been changed to Tuesday, October 24, 2023, as Avalon Manor could not accommodate the original date of October 26, 2023. The Summit will still be held at Avalon Manor. Panel participants confirmed so far include Brian Snedecor and Leigh Morris. Attorney Clifford Johnson will be unable to participate. Cal Bellamy has contacted Jeff Wood, former Porter County Commissioner - CEO of Good Hospitality. Jeff expressed interest, but Cal hasn't received confirmation yet. Cal also reached out to Alfredo Estrada who's a former past president of Lake County Bar Association. Could have a panel of four participants, but three will be the minimum. Looking for a diverse panel. Summit's goal is to get people with lots of practical, hands-on local government experience participating. Courtney Smith will participate as the moderator. Case studies are currently under review for presentation at the summit. Julie will review and have Art send out to the members.

Training Committee Update: Cecile and Julie Wedorf met to review the materials about requirements as co-chairs of Training Committee. At this point, they want to find out how many ethics guides, handouts and posters are needed. They also need to get trainer names, emails, and addresses. Need commissioners help in getting that info to them as soon as possible. Ethics guides, handouts and posters of codes not distributed to Cedar Lake, Chesterton, East Chicago, Gary, etc., as no trainers are identified for those communities. Cecile was told none of the guides, handouts, posters were available, but she found some that were set aside. Still needs good count for printing purposes. As Joan Stewart is new and Justin Kiel is a guest, Julie McElmurry explained the ethics guide being discussed is a 9-page pamphlet with information about the code of ethics that includes sample dilemmas and how to deal with them. It's all focused on municipal employees. SEAC wants all employees of member communities to have a copy of the ethics guide. It was mentioned that the number for Gary seems low compared to the number of employees of the city.

Cal Bellamy stated the commission would like Justin Kiel to help get more activity in LaPorte County to get ethics training completed. Cecile has more correspondence to send to the trainers to find out where they are with their training. Goal is to get trainers trained by August 31, 2023 and get all municipal employees trained by June 30, 2024. Cecile, Julie M. & Julie W. feel confident these goals can be met. Needs to know where trainers are in their training and encourage those that are involved to keep moving forward with training. April Daley, the past LaPorte County Commissioner is no longer in County government - she's a township advisory board member in north LaPorte County. She was the person the commissioners designated as their representative on the commission but she's no longer eligible as she's a public official.

Communications Committee Update: Julie McElmurry provided the Communications Committee update. Candidate ethics pledge process was completed. Final numbers have been adjusted based on receipt of ten



signatures after ads placed/after election. Total number of signers was 147 or 37% of total. Did send out media release April 24 and full-page ads with all names in The Times on April 26 and April 30. She has pledge available to sign on the website - Julie is notified and does track that. Anyone who signed during primary election process will be counted as signing for the general election as well. Cecile asked if low percentage was due to primary election. Julie thinks that could possibly be the case - comparable to past primaries. Cal stated that 50% of voters vote early - rather than one ad the Wednesday/Sunday before election - run ads earlier in voting period to get more signatures. Early voting begins first week in October. There were email address issues with incorrect names, some changes - still doesn't have 100% of email addresses. The SEAC sends one hard copy (where addresses are available) and then three reminder emails. Courtney would like the Communications Committee to step up to help Julie M. Maybe get a committee meeting set up as it's a huge undertaking to do solo. Needs members to step up to ask Julie M. if she needs help. Julie M. happy to partner up with others to walk through what's been done and needs to be completed - spreadsheet work, etc.

Cal Bellamy stated the Pledge project is like the Summit project - it's a finite activity. If someone would commit to overseeing that besides the Communications Chair, it would be a nice project to take on. Courtney thinks someone could get involved in the Fall to see what it's all about and they can reach out to Julie M. Courtney will help Julie M. get help if Julie doesn't hear from anyone by end of July. Julie M. will send out a reminder of those who have signed up to help.

Julie M. will put together talking points/email for commission members to send to commission member community leaders along with committee list with that, so you know what committee you've signed up for. What she would like them to do is share with municipal contacts, so they know what's going on with SEAC. They do try to send out information after every meeting, so people know what's going on.

NEW BUSINESS

Courtney Smith presented new business. Julie Wendorf sent Courtney a public law signed by Governor Holcomb in 2021 about governing bodies having part of their open-door law procedures change from virtual and remote meetings to 50% have to be in person. Isn't sure if SEAC is a governing body that falls under this law. Cal will contact the public access counselor Luke Britt and explain the SEAC's situation as we are kind of a public body and kind of not. We're the ethics commission and want to do everything right. Courtney stated that when the SEAC has tried to hold in-person meetings since COVID, there weren't enough present for a quorum. Her concern is how effective is the SEAC without a quorum. With online meetings a quorum is met and minutes are published on the website. We can create one link for shared ethics that doesn't have to have a passcode.

Janice contacted Rep. Hal Slager and he said he's not familiar with JBOD and SEAC and wanted to know if that's a function of or for a state agency. The SEAC is a private group not a function or public entity, so it doesn't matter. If the JBOD is an arm of the public entity it would be a question for the state inspector general. She has the site link and would be willing to do the research on this subject. If people want to participate in one, SEAC is being open to public participation. Courtney believes it's best served to hold one or two in-person meetings a year at NIRPC in Portage. Would be important to reach out to Luke Britt to clarify what our obligation is as ethics committee and get interpretation correct. New law effective July will require public streaming and archiving of public meetings. Not sure if SEAC falls within that law - libraries will be affected,



but unsure about where our group falls within the new law. Cal will meet with Janice to review her conversation with Rep. Slager and help get clarification.

Jim Pelligrini said the SEAC website looked stale and is willing to put together a proposal for redesigning SEAC website. Julie has mixed emotions; Les is doing best he can and we pay him with Red Lobster gift cards around holidays. His response time is excellent and immediate. He is a volunteer - we may want to investigate further in having an outside contractor help with redesign of website. Les would still be used to update website content. Also, we might want to look into possibility to get involved in social media - Cal asked to table it for now. Social media inclusion would require someone to be active and reactive constantly. Very time-consuming task.

Julie M. needs headshots for Courtney, Cecile and Julie W. to post to the website. She will send to Les to update the SEAC site.

Courtney sent a recurring Zoom link to Julie M. for July, Sept., Nov. meetings to get posted to website. At end of December 2023, she will create new Zoom link that can be posted to SEAC. Zoom meetings are setup to auto-record and will be open to the public. Anyone interested must sign into Zoom (or create a free account) to login and participate. Courtney will send out new Zoom link with meeting minutes and deck.

Next Meeting: The next SEAC Commission meeting will be held on Wednesday, July 19, 2023.

Adjournment: After discussion, and a motion by Merlin Foresman, seconded by Art Russell, the commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 9:25 a.m.