



## Meeting Minutes

July 10, 2023

**Pledge and Call to Order:** Courtney Smith, SEAC President called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and led the Pledge.

**Introductions:** In attendance were SEAC Commissioners Courtney Smith, Cecile LaCombe-Petro, Cal Bellamy, Joan Stewart, Julie McElmurry, Julie Wendorf, Burgess Peoples, Dale Combs, Ken Zubeck and Advisor Karen Marben. The meeting was recorded on Zoom.

**Approval of May 2023 Minutes:** After a motion by Julie McElmurry, seconded by Dale Combs, the commission accepted the minutes of the May 2023 meeting as presented. These approved minutes have been uploaded to the website, [sharedethics.com](http://sharedethics.com) under the tab Info, Meeting Minutes.

### OLD BUSINESS

**Membership Updates:** Courtney reviewed the member communities who do not have Commissioners, these include Lake Station, LaPorte County, Merrillville, Portage, St John and Valparaiso. Valparaiso is currently looking for a Commissioner to replace John Bowker. St John has neither a Commissioner nor a Joint Board of Delegates member. Courtney also discussed a group of Commissioners who are not attending the meetings, nor are they active in the Commission. If these folks do not engage soon, she recommended that we ask their community to replace them.

Courtney also shared that Art Russell, the Merrillville Commissioner and SEAC Vice President has resigned due to health issues. SEAC wishes Art well and thank him for his years of service. Given this resignation, Courtney asked for someone to step forward to take on the Vice President role. Burgess Peoples indicated interest in the Vice President role but wants to learn more. Courtney offered to meet with her before the next meeting to review the position.

Cecile LaCombe Petro indicated that she did speak to the St John Clerk Treasurer who is very interested in joining the Joint Board of Delegates. Cecile hopes to hear of her appointment soon, though it could happen after the November election. SEAC thanks Cecile for her tenacity in getting St John engaged. Courtney indicated that she will be approaching Chesterton leaders about potentially replacing their Commissioner who is not very active in SEAC.

Courtney then reviewed the need for all Commissioners to sign up for committees and reviewed the committees and their activities. Ken has agreed to be on the Summit committee. Dale agreed to join the Training Committee. Sandra Davis, the new Commissioner for Schererville could not join the meeting today, Janice and Julie Mc met with her and are thinking that she'll probably join the Training Committee.



**Financials:** Courtney Smith presented the SEAC Financials update. Mark Herak, the Highland Clerk Treasurer who is responsible for managing SEAC financials, provided the financial report as of July 9, 2023. The current overall SEAC account balance is just under \$107,000 with ~\$22,000 in the budget to spend this year. SEAC spent \$2,039 on NWI Times ads in April related to the candidate ethics pledge and have upcoming spending of around \$10,000 related to the Summit. The only outstanding dues are for Gary.

Courtney discussed a new potential expenditure related to a project that we are considering to refresh the SEAC website and brand (logo). She indicated that we have extra dollars due to not doing a Summit in 2020. Julie Mc told the group that the Joint Board of Delegates met a few weeks ago and they are interested in increasing how much money SEAC has invested. Janice Malinowski, the President of the JBOD will be working with Mark Herak to review that situation.

Dale Combs asked about how SEAC gets its income. Courtney explained that SEAC income comes from membership dues; SEAC does not do fund raisers. She also reminded everyone that the Summit is open to the public and free of charge. And Courtney explained that in the past SEAC was concerned about spending, but that has changed, and we are looking at using our funds to update and modernize our tools; like the funds spent in 2022 to upgrade the training videos and the potential project to fresh the SEAC brand and website.

### **Summit Update:**

The Summit is planned for the morning of Tuesday, October 24, 2023 at Avalon Manor in Merrillville. There is minimal work left to be done, i.e. getting key pads, asking the NWI Times for ads and getting handouts printed. Courtney reviewed the process around the day of the Summit and expectations for the Commissioners to share details with their communities ensuring that we have good turnout.

Panel participants have been confirmed to include Brian Snedecor, Mayor, City of Hobart; Leigh Morris, Former Mayor, City of LaPorte; Dan Klein, Former Mayor, City of Crown Point and Alfredo Estrada, Partner at Burke Constanza & Carberry LLP.

Julie Mc indicated that she would work with Les, the SEAC website person to get the registration page for the Summit on the SEAC website home page as soon as possible. She will also send a .pdf format of the Summit flyer to all the Commissioners to share with their communities.

### **Training Committee Update:**

Cecile LaCombe Petro and Julie Wendorf, the Training Committee Chairs gave the Training Committee update. Cecile shared with the group that she has left a message with NIRPC to see if any Commissioners have picked up the Ethics Guides for their community employees. She is waiting to hear back. Cecile also shared that she and Julie W are working to update the list of trainers for each member community with contact information. They are planning to send correspondence to Commissioners, and the identified trainers to find out where they are with their training.

Cecile indicated that she continues to work with Lake County regarding a “Train the Trainer” session to be held in September. The Lake County HR person indicated that there are around 10 folks that need the training and would like to do a luncheon around the training. Julie Mc will put together the agenda and the materials for the Lake County training and get that to the Training Committee. Dale indicated that he has a flexible schedule and would like to participate. Cal cautioned that we do not have too many SEAC folks attend... we don’t want to overwhelm the Lake County group.

After further discussion, it appears that there will be a need / want for a “Train the Trainer” session later this year for the other SEAC member communities. Cecile shared the idea that SEAC could offer “Train the Trainer” sessions by county. It will depend on the interest by each of the member communities. Julie Mc indicated that SEAC has held the training at the NIRPC building in the past, and it is easy to get to (right off I-94) and is a central location with larger conference rooms. The Training Committee will consider these ideas.

Dale asked 2 questions: First, where does he get the Ethics Guides for his community? Courtney indicated that the Ethics Guides are stored at the NIRPC building, but there can be issues getting someone at NIRPC to assist. She is encouraging the group to hold the September SEAC meeting in-person at NIRPC which would facilitate getting the Guides. Dale’s second question was about the trainers for Hobart, and whether he could be listed as a trainer. Courtney indicated that most communities choose to have community employees / managers as their trainers so that they can easily provide ethics training when onboarding new employees, as well as schedule the ongoing training as part of their employee training cycle.

### **Communications Committee Update:**

Julie McElmurry provided the Communications Committee update. Courtney, Cal and Julie Mc attended a session with the NWI Times, Lee Enterprises subsidiary called Amplified Digital in June around refreshing the SEAC website and branding. This would potentially be a new project for SEAC to consider. SEAC has received a proposal from Amplified Digital, and it seems a bit pricey with a one-time cost of around \$9000 and ongoing costs of \$150/month. Julie Mc is currently looking for other local resources to compare this proposal. Courtney is encouraging SEAC to use a vendor to do the refresh and then maybe have SEAC volunteers do the ongoing maintenance. Julie Mc asked those in attendance for local company options – Burgess said that she will send a vendor pricing sheet. Julie Mc has done some research online and found a few options, JWM Marketing, Via Marketing, BAC Marketing and Elcon Consulting, and Courtney mentioned WeCreate in Porter, County. Dale indicated that he has someone that we could consider. Julie Mc is also going to call Jim Pellegrini from the NWI Times about the rollout of the new brand and website. This project is in the beginning phases with vendor research and investigation... more to come. Julie Mc thinks the timing for the project, if SEAC chooses to move forward, would be late this year, or early next year.

Courtney indicated that she is looking to add photos of our group to the website. She asked the group for thoughts around adding head shots for each SEAC commissioner, maybe to be taken at the Summit. Julie Mc indicated that she would check with Pete Doherty about taking photos at this year’s Summit and to see if he could do head shots for SEAC.



Julie Mc indicated that she is in the early planning for the 2023 General Election Candidate Ethics Pledge process. She is drafting the letter to send to candidates and expects the final candidate list to be ready in mid-August. Cecile indicated that she's spoken to the Lake County election folks and they're indicating that the final lists won't be available until Sept 16<sup>th</sup>. Julie Mc indicated that should work because the General Election list of candidates is usually a smaller list, and is easier to work with compared to the Primary Election candidate list.

Julie Mc indicated that early voting starts Oct 11<sup>th</sup>, so we should have our ads in the NWI Times starting shortly around that time. SEAC found that the ads we used for the Primary Election were very effective in getting candidate and voter attention. As a reminder, the two ads cost ~\$2,000.

Julie Mc indicated that she is looking for SEAC volunteers to assist with the Candidate Ethics Pledge process. The gathering of the names of candidates that signed and keeping those lists current is really a one person job, so Julie Mc will continue to do that. She is looking for volunteer to take on the task of gathering each county's candidate lists once they are finalized and is looking for a volunteer to take on the NWI Times ad process (Cal did this for the Primary Election). Joan Stewart volunteered to get the candidate lists and Dale Combs volunteered to take on the ad process with Cal's assistance.

Finally, Julie Mc indicated that as she does after each SEAC meeting, she will send SEAC an email / talking points document that Commissioners can share with their community leaders. She will be presenting that update to the Dyer Town Council tonight and encourages all the Commissioners to do the same.

**NEW BUSINESS:** There was no new business.

**Next Meeting:**

The next SEAC Commission meeting will be held **in-person** on Wednesday, September 20, 2023 at the NIRPC building. This is an important meeting and will require a quorum as SEAC will be reviewing the 2024 budget with the goal of approving it. JBOD meets in October, and they will consider and provide final approval for the budget at that time.

**Adjournment:** Courtney adjourned the meeting at 9:30am.