



2020 Annual Report

**Bringing Ethics Awareness and
Training to our Communities**

Visit us online at: www.sharedethics.com



2020 Annual Report

January 21, 2021

Dear SEAC Member Community Leader,

Thank you for your membership and commitment in the Shared Ethics Advisory Commission (SEAC).

As a reminder, SEAC represents you, the local government entities of Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties who have voluntarily committed themselves to the Code of Shared Ethics and Values and who work together to achieve the Commission's primary goals of:

- Heightening awareness of ethical issues within municipal government.
- Assisting municipal employees with the practical tools to make ethical decisions.

We accomplish this mission through regular training sessions, training materials, advocacy articles and an ongoing collaborative effort to enhance ethical behavior within participating governments.

As required by Article 6(c) of our governing Interlocal Agreement, SEAC hereby submits this annual report to our member communities to share more details about our actions during 2020. I have organized the report into the following sections:

1. Structure and organization
2. Membership
3. Funding
4. Ethics Summit
5. Training
6. Candidate Ethics Pledge
7. Outreach and Media Coverage
8. 2020 and 2021 SEAC Goals

Thank you again for your membership and support of SEAC. Please feel free to reach out to me or your SEAC Commissioner with any questions.

Sincerely,

Daniel Klein, President SEAC
president@sharedethics.com
219-746-1445

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1. Structure and Organization

SEAC is working effectively and efficiently with the current committee structure established in 2019 including the Executive Committee, the Training Committee and Communications Committee. These committees along with regular Commission and Executive Committee meetings have proven valuable in ensuring SEAC stays on track toward meeting our goals, while also discussing possible future projects and activities.

SEAC also continues to utilize NIRPC for administrative assistance and meeting location (pre-COVID19; March-November meetings held virtually via ZOOM).

SEAC Committee Structure

Executive Committee (Chairperson: President, Dan Klein)

- Members include:
 - Vice President (Rich Weigel)
 - Training Committee (Jamie Ward)
 - Communications Committee (Julie McElmurry)
 - President Emeritus (Cal Bellamy)
- Focus on overall Commission management
- Strategic Planning

Training Committee (Chairperson: Jamie Ward)

- Focused on Train the Trainer, Trainer Refresh, Board and Commissions and Department Head training
- Conducts Employee Survey at least once every 3 years
- Updates training as needed

Communications Committee (Chairperson: Julie McElmurry)

- Manages the Candidate Ethics Action Pledge processes
- Drafts and manages distribution of Annual Report
- Manages website contractor
- Ensures all key documents are current
- Provides commissioners with communication schedule and materials

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2. Membership

During 2020 we saw little change to our Commissioners. There were some changes to the Joint Board of Delegates given elections and resignations. We have quite a few open slots in both groups. Below is the most up-to-date list of member communities and their appointed Commissioners and Delegates. We currently have 8 communities in the process of finding new Commissioners and 8 communities in the process of finding new Delegates. We encourage those communities to fill their vacancies quickly. Also, below we have included information regarding the duties of these roles for reference.

SEAC Commissioners and Joint Board of Delegates - Jan 18, 2021		
Community	SEAC Commissioner	Joint Board of Delegates Member
Burns Harbor	Howard Morgan	Jane Jordan
Cedar Lake	Bill Kuhn	Randy Niemeyer
Chesterton		Stephanie Kuziela
Crown Point		Andrew Kyres
Dyer	Julie McElmurry	Mary Tanis
East Chicago	Dick Morrisroe	Gilda Orange
Gary		
Hebron	Merlin Foresman	Don Ensign
Highland	Tim Huizenga	Michael Griffin
Hobart	Rich Weigel, Vice President	Deborah Longer
Lake County	Dan Klein, President	
Lake Station	Karen Curtis	
LaPorte County	Samantha Fife	Joie Winski
Lowell		Edgar Corns
Merrillville	Art Russell	Richard Hardaway
Munster	Michael McIntyre	
Ogden Dunes	Steve Grandfield	
Portage		
Porter County	Courtney Smith	Laura Shur Blaney
Schererville	Lynn Volkmann	Janice Malinowski, President
St John		
Valparaiso	John Bowker	Peter Anderson
Westville		Lori Mercer
Whiting	Keith Burke	Steve Spebar
President Emeritus, At Large	Cal Bellamy	--
At Large	Jamie Ward	--
Advisor	Karen Marben	--
Advisor	Tom DeGiulio	--

Shared Ethics

ADVISORY COMMISSION

BRINGING ETHICS AWARENESS AND TRAINING TO OUR COMMUNITIES

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Commissioners

Qualifications:

1. Not an employee of the appointing entity.
2. "... persons who live, work in or hold property in Lake, Porter or LaPorte Counties, Indiana." *
3. "These members should be persons of good character" *
4. Past and current members have included private citizens active in their community, such as retired officials or judges, lawyers, educators, and clergy.

Appointment:

Cities

Nominated by Mayor
Approved by City Council

Town

Nominated and approved by Town Council

Duties:

1. Faithfully attend regular Commission meetings (every other month) and also special meetings and Commission events as needed.
2. Actively participate in the discussion, planning and execution of the Commission's work.
 - Ethics Summit
 - Training activities
 - Ethics Pledge
 - Communication activities
3. Regularly update and maintain contact with community leadership and trainers serving your community.
4. Advocate and promote ethics in local government.
5. Committed to setting a strong example of integrity and high moral conduct.

*Interlocal Agreement



Board of Delegates Members

Qualifications: Preferably an elected official from the member community, but a senior staff member is acceptable.

Appointment:

Cities

Nominated by Mayor
Approved by City Council

Town

Nominated and approved by Town Council

Duties:

1. Faithfully attend Board of Delegates meetings (two to four meetings a year, called by the chairperson)
2. Elect a chairperson and determine which member community's clerk-treasurer will serve as fiscal administrator
3. Receive reports from the Commission on SEAC activities and programs
4. Review and set member community dues for the coming year
5. Review and approve SEAC's budget for the coming year
6. Advocate and promote ethics in local government.
7. Committed to setting a strong example of integrity and high moral conduct.

3. Funding

Member community dues continue to fund SEAC. During 2020 we had very few expenditures, so most of our 2020 budget will roll into 2021. Michael Griffin, Clerk-Treasurer of Highland, continues to support SEAC as the fiscal agent to manage fee invoices and issue all SEAC checks. We thank Michael for all of his service and advice.

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4. Ethics Summit

Our 2020 Summit scheduled for April 9, 2020 was cancelled due to Governor Holcomb's directive on preventative measures addressing the spread of the Coronavirus, COVID-19. This was disappointing as we were excited to celebrate our 10th Summit. Below is the flyer for the Summit. We are currently not scheduling an in-person 2021 Summit until we better understand the COVID-19 situation. We may consider a virtual Summit.




2020

Ethics Summit

<p>WHEN Thursday, April 9, 2020 8:00 a.m. Registration / Breakfast 8:30 a.m. Presentation</p> <p>WHERE Avalon Manor 3555 U.S. 30 Merrillville, Indiana</p> <p>KEYNOTE SPEAKER Violet Sistovaris President, NIPSCO Executive Vice President, NiSource</p>	<p>EVENT OPEN TO THE PUBLIC</p> <p>Pre-Register Online at: www.sharedethics.com</p> <p>RSVP: By Friday, April 3, 2020 Free event Registration required!</p> <p>SPONSOR </p>
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5. Training

The 2020 plan for training included Board and Commission Training. That training was cancelled due to the COVID-19 situation and we hope it to be rescheduled sometime in late 2021. The Training Committee was not idle though, spending time networking with other municipalities regarding their training options for ethics as well as investigating vendors that provide video content as well as online training options.

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6. Candidates Ethics Pledge

SEAC continued its practice of inviting candidates for all county, city, town and township offices in Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties to sign its Candidate Ethics Action Pledge for both the 2020 primary election in June and the 2020 general election in November. This included offering an online pledge process provided to all 2020 primary and general election candidates who provided their email addresses to their election boards.

We were disappointed by the results from the primary, with only 37% of candidates signing the Pledge. However, we saw much better results during the general election with 67% of candidates signing the Pledge. Below are copies of the media releases and statistics of those who signed the pledge.

2020 PRIMARY ELECTION - SEAC CANDIDATE ETHICS PLEDGE STATISTICS

County	Total # of Candidates	# of Candidates who signed the Pledge	% of Candidates who signed the Pledge
Lake County	19	10	53%
LaPorte County	27	6	22%
Porter County	14	6	43%
TOTAL	60	22	37%

2020 GENERAL ELECTION - SEAC CANDIDATE ETHICS PLEDGE STATISTICS

County	Total # of Candidates	# of Candidates who signed the Pledge	% of Candidates who signed the Pledge
Lake County	7	6	86%
LaPorte County	23	13	57%
Porter County	15	11	73%
TOTAL	45	30	67%



2020 Annual Report



6100 Southport Road Portage, Indiana 46368 (219) 706-9018

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MEDIA RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
May 27, 2020**

Contact: Dan Klein
Shared Ethics Advisory Commission
6100 Southport Road
Portage, Indiana 46368
Phone: 219-746-1445
Email: president@sharedethics.com

2020 Primary Election Candidates Sign Ethics Pledge

The Shared Ethics Advisory Commission invited candidates for all county, town, city and township offices in Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties to sign its Candidate Ethics Action Pledge.

The Pledge asks candidates to commit to providing ethics training for all employees whom they are responsible, to support a comprehensive ethics policy with vigorous enforcement, and to support whistleblower protection for employees filing ethics complaints.

Commission President Dan Klein said, "Response rates varied from county to county with 53% of Lake County candidates signing the pledge, 22% of LaPorte County candidates and 43% of Porter County candidates signing. Overall, the response rate was a disappointing 37% (compared to 43% in 2019), or 22 candidates out of 60 in our three-county area formally committing to ethics training for municipal employees. Although we are in unprecedented times, we continue to believe that ethics training is critical and valued."

President Klein noted, "SEAC has been asking candidates to sign the Pledge for the last 6 years and we will continue to further do so for the foreseeable future. We get feedback via our public employee survey that ethics training is worthwhile. In fact, in our most recent survey 78% of the respondents reported that they valued or highly valued ethics training and to a statistically significant degree, trained employees are more likely to know how to report unethical behavior, more willing to report such behavior and more confident that their superiors will respond appropriately."

Presently the following communities are members of the Commission: Counties: Lake County, LaPorte County, Porter County, Cities: Crown Point, East Chicago, Gary, Hobart, Lake Station, Portage, Valparaiso, Whiting, Towns: Burns Harbor, Cedar Lake, Chesterton, Dyer, Hebron, Highland, Lowell, Merrillville, Munster, Ogden Dunes, St John, Schererville and Westville.



2020 Annual Report



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MEDIA RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
October 20, 2020**

Contact: Dan Klein
Shared Ethics Advisory Commission
6100 Southport Road
Portage, Indiana 46368
Phone: 219-746-1445
Email: president@sharedethics.com

2020 General Election Candidates Sign Ethics Pledge

The Shared Ethics Advisory Commission invited candidates for all county, town, city and township offices in Lake, LaPorte and Porter Counties to sign its Candidate Ethics Action Pledge.

The Pledge asks candidates to commit to providing ethics training for all employees whom they are responsible, to support a comprehensive ethics policy with vigorous enforcement, and to support whistleblower protection for employees filing ethics complaints.

Commission President Dan Klein said, “We are pleased with the improved overall response rate of 67%, or 30 candidates out of 45 in our three-county area formally committing to ethics training for municipal employees. This compared to only 37% signing the pledge during the Primary this year and 56% signing the pledge a year ago. Though response rates continue to vary county to county with 86% of Lake County candidates signing the pledge, 57% of LaPorte County candidates and 73% of Porter County candidates signing, it is encouraging to see that most of our candidates believe that ethics training is essential.”

President Klein noted, “SEAC has been asking candidates to sign the Pledge for the last 6 years and we will continue to further do so for the foreseeable future. We get feedback via our public employee survey that ethics training is worthwhile. In fact, in our most recent survey 78% of the respondents reported that they valued or highly valued ethics training and to a statistically significant degree, trained employees are more likely to know how to report unethical behavior, more willing to report such behavior and more confident that their superiors will respond appropriately.”

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7. Outreach & Media Coverage

The work of the Commission has received relatively good media coverage in 2020. Thanks are owed to local media for their support of our efforts to promote ethical decision making. Articles in print and other citations of media coverage are listed below. Please note that the print articles and the same articles from the Internet, where links are provided, may have slightly different titles, and some online articles may only be provided for a limited period of time.

SEAC Media Coverage in 2020	
Date	Coverage
February 20, 2020	The Regional News and Westville Indicator article by Dan Klein and Cal Bellamy, titled, "Opinion: Time for Bold Action on Ethics." (LaPorte County newspapers available through Kiel Media).
February 23, 2020	NWI TIMES article by Dan Klein and Cal Bellamy titled, "GUEST COMMENTARY: Time for bold action on ethics." https://www.nwitimes.com/opinion/columnists/guest-commentary/guest-commentary-time-for-bold-action-on-ethics/article_5a18ccb7-3e8c-53f5-9076-e217ae11dec4.html?utm_medium=social&utm_source=email&utm_campaign=user-share
March 14, 2020	NWI TIMES article titled, "UPDATE: More NWI events canceled due to coronavirus threat." https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/illinois/update-more-nwi-events-canceled-due-to-coronavirus-threat/article_9196e232-da0e-5b14-9abf-399a9b05df5d.html
May 31, 2020	LaPorte County Herald-Dispatch article titled, "Only 22% of county candidates sign ethics pledge"
August 28, 2020	NWI TIMES article titled, "An abrupt end to Mayor Joe Stahura's celebrated career." https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/whiting/an-abrupt-end-to-mayor-joe-stahura-s-celebrated-career/article_5b7da5c1-c901-589a-b172-c4c048dbd76d.html
October 13, 2020	POST TRIBUNE article titled, "Veteran incumbent, newcomer meet in Senate Dist. 5 race" https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/post-tribune/ct-ptb-state-senate-5-st-1014-20201013-fbo5dkjrs5ewbnhs7gjwadcl34-story.html

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8. 2020 and 2021 SEAC Goals

As with most organizations, 2020 was a hard year for SEAC given the COVID-19 restrictions. That said, we were able to achieve most of our goals including the Candidate Ethics Action Pledge process. We have also made progress on researching potential updates to our training curriculum and hope to be able to implement those changes in 2021. We continue to be challenged by the filling of Commission vacancies but are encouraged by the increased engagement of all Commission members.

SEAC – Updated 2020 Goals

- ~~1. Host the Ethics Summit~~
2. Solicit signatures on the Candidate Ethics Action Pledge from primary and general election candidates and publicize the results
3. Provide quarterly updates via the media on Commission activities and goals
4. Initiate actions to reenergize our current member community trainers and host Train the Trainer training as needed
- ~~5. Host Board & Commission Training~~
6. Research and begin the process to update our municipal employee ethics training curriculum
7. Reconnect with members communities with newly elected leadership to encourage participation
8. Focus on filling Commission vacancies and expanding Commission membership to municipalities who have yet to join, especially in LaPorte County

July 2020

Shared Ethics Advisory Commission



2020 Annual Report

SEAC approved the 2021 Goals as listed below in our January 2021 meeting. While continuing our hosting of the Summit and training, in 2021 we expect to complete the refresh of our municipal employee ethics training.

SEAC – 2021 Goals

1. Host Ethics Summit
2. Provide regular updates via the media on Commission activities and goals
3. Host Board & Commission Training
4. Refresh our municipal employee ethics training curriculum
5. Initiate actions to reenergize our member community trainers and host Train the Trainer training as needed
6. Reconnect with member communities to encourage participation
7. Focus on filling Commission vacancies and expanding Commission membership to municipalities who have yet to join, especially in LaPorte County

January 2021

Shared Ethics Advisory Commission