

City of Hyattsville Ethics Commission
Tuesday, September 27, 2022 5:00 p.m.
VIRTUAL MEETING MINUTES

In attendance: Mark Graham, Michael Horlick (chair), T. Carter Ross, David Sip. Staff: Nate Groenendyk, Nicola Konigkramer, Laura Reams.

1. A quorum was noted and the meeting called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Chair Michael Horlick
2. Minutes for the meetings of September 13, 2022, were approved on a voice vote.

3. Update on Annual Reports

Clerk Reams provided an update on outstanding 2022 Annual Reports.

- Candace Hollingsworth, Carrianna Suiter, and Joanne Waszczak acknowledged the delinquent reports, but have not yet filed them. The Commission agreed to refer further action until after the Ward 2 Special Election.
- Joseph Solomon reported to the Commission that he believes his final report from the 2021 Election was complete and correct. The Commission will review the submitted reports and its prior concerns to see if any questions remain outstanding.

4. Review Outstanding Questions Regarding Electronic Payment Platforms and Reporting

a) Electronic Payment Platform Fees

The question arose in reviewing initial reports and their amendments about the transfer of funds via electronic payment platforms (in particular PayPal) that did not incur a fee. Chair Horlick noted that it appears some candidates did receive PayPal contributions that were not charged a platform fee, indicating they were sent as a transaction between friends, which might raise ethical questions. Commissioner Ross noted that most peer-to-peer payment platforms now provide this sort of option and such transfers may be the default. For example, Venmo requires a user to affirmatively declare a transaction a “purchase,” which could similarly be considered problematic when labeling a political contribution. In discussion, the Commission agreed that it is up to the candidate and their contributors to determine how best to effect electronic payments (so long as a non-partisan platform is used) and that all contributions and fees, if any, must be reported accurately.

b) Physical Addresses for Contributors Using Electronic Payment Platforms

The Commission affirmed the long-standing requirement that physical addresses be provided for all contributors, regardless of how the contribution was received. It also noted that this requirement is highlighted during candidate training, although it may be worth adding a reminder to the campaign finance spreadsheet.

5. Review of 2022 Ward 2 Special Elections Campaign Finance Reports

Prior to the meeting, the commission administratively reviewed and accepted the amended first reports from candidates Melendez Rivera and Strab. The commission reviewed in its meeting the amended first campaign finance report from Candidate Burrello and accepted it as amended.

The Commission then reviewed the second campaign finance reports received by the deadline of September 27, 2022.

- For Candidate Burrello, the commission noted that the report looked fine, except it was lacking the signature of the treasurer.

- For Candidate Melendez Rivera, the commission noted that while the report looked fine, the candidate was asked to provide a statement from PayPal documenting the amount of the fees charged.
- For Candidate Strab, the commission accepted the report as submitted.

6. Action on Annual and Campaign Finance Reports

In cases where the commission noted questions or concerns in the filings, letters were drafted for delivery by the City Clerk's office. The City Clerk will also send letters to those campaigns with open campaign accounts who did not submit annual reports.

7. Finalized Campaign Finance Ordinance

The Council approved on its September 19th meeting a third campaign finance report 45 days after election day. For the 2022 Ward 2 Special Election these reports will be due on November 18th. The Commission set a meeting for November 29, 2022, to review these reports. Deputy Clerk Groenendyk has informed all of the current candidates of this new requirement.

8. New Business

Absent an unanticipated need, the next Ethics Commission meeting will be held at 5 pm on October 18, 2022.

9. Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Horlick adjourned the meeting at 5:53 p.m. on a voice vote.