

MINUTES OF NORWICH ETHICS COMMISSION MEETING
October 17, 2022
VIRTUAL MEETING

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair Scott Camassar and Vice Chair Karen Lucas

MEMBERS ABSENT: Robin Lawson

ALTERNATES PRESENT: Robert Drozynski was seated as a regular member. Lori Ploof entered the meeting at 6:11 pm.

ALTERNATES ABSENT: All present

OTHERS PRESENT:

1. Call to order: Chair Scott Camassar called the October 17, 2022, meeting to order at 5:03 PM.
2. Determination of Quorum: It was determined a quorum was present.
3. Approval of Minutes: On a motion by Robert Drozynski, seconded by Karen Lucas, the minutes of the March 8, 2021, June 14, 2021, December 20, 2021, and March 14, 2022, meetings of the Norwich Ethics Commission were unanimously approved.
4. Citizen Comment: None presented.
5. Old Business: None presented.
6. New Business: Chair Camassar presented Request for Advisory Opinion 2022-02 which had been received by the City Clerk's Office on 9/15/22. The request and supporting documentation had been emailed to all members prior to the meeting.

Chair Camassar presented the Request for Advisory Opinion and an associated email from the requestor, Alderman Swarnjit Singh. The issue related to a potential conflict of interest for Alderman Singh with the September 6, 2022, City Council vote, and future votes, related to the State of Connecticut Department of Transportation's Route 82 Traffic Plan. Mayor Peter Nystrom, Alderman Stacy Gould and Alderman Grant Neuendorf raised the issue in writing to Alderman Singh. The potential conflict pertained to a gas station on Route 82 which could be adversely affected if the Traffic Plan was carried out. Alderman Singh owns a gas station in Norwich which would not be adversely affected by the Traffic Plan.

Chair Camassar asked the Ethics Commission members if the Request for Advisory Opinion should be treated as an Ethics Complaint. All members present responded in the negative.

Chair Camassar noted Alderman Singh's prior Request for Advisory Opinion.

Chair Camassar noted that no property acquisition was discussed in the September 6, 2022, City Council vote on the Traffic Plan. Chair Camassar asked all Ethics Commission members if Alderman Singh should have recused himself from the September 6, 2022, City Council vote on the Traffic Plan based on his ownership of a gas station. All members present responded in the negative.

Chair Camassar inquired if the members of the Ethics Commission felt the need for further understanding of the process on future votes on the Traffic Plan. Discussion ensued. It was determined additional guidance was not necessary.

Detailed discussion ensued regarding the relationship of the Code of Ethics to the Request for Advisory Opinion. Chair Camassar read the relevant sections of the Code of Ethics aloud. The members concluded Alderman Singh's September 6, 2022, vote on the Traffic Plan was not improper and did not constitute a Conflict of Interest. However, in an abundance of caution, Alderman Singh should recuse himself from votes relating to property acquisition of a gas station. The commission also determined the Advisory Opinion should address all city officials with business interests pertaining to similar votes.

The Ethics Commission agreed that Chair Camassar would draft a written response and send it to members for review. Chair Camassar gave the end of the week as a timeline for his draft of the letter.

7. Adjournment: On a motion to adjourn by Karen Lucas, seconded Lori Ploof, the meeting of the Ethics Commission unanimously adjourned at 5:35 PM.