

COMMISSION MEMBERS

James Hester, FAICP  
*Chair*

Toni Drake, Esq.  
*Vice Chair*

Robert Scaggs

Karen Lubieniecki

Lynne Sport

Gail Heath,  
*Alternate*



COMMISSION STAFF

Christian L. Pulley, CPM  
*City Administrator*  
*Executive Officer*

Dennis Whitley, III, Esq.  
*Counsel to the Commission*

Laura Christoplos  
*Administrative Assistant II*

**CITY OF LAUREL ETHICS COMMISSION**

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**Laurel Ethics Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, September 9, 2025  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom**

The Ethics Commission Meeting was called to order at 6:36 pm by Chairman James Hester. Roll was called with the entire Commission present. Chairman James Hester, Vice Chair Toni Drake, Commissioners Karen Lubieniecki, Lynne Sport, and Robert Scaggs were present. Also present were Counsel to the Ethics Commission Dennis Whitley III, and Administrative Assistant Laura Christoplos.

The Agenda was approved as written by unanimous voice vote.

The minutes were approved by voice vote, with Vice Chair Drake recusing herself since she was not present.

There was a discussion of action items from the last meeting. Commissioner Lubieniecki followed up on the request that Administrator Pulley speak to the Clerk about reading a statement at a Council meeting concerning former Councilmembers who were delinquent in submitting their Financial Disclosure Statements (FDS) and still owed fines. Staff had no follow up on that item.

Chair Hester apologized for not following through on things, since he has been dealing with health issues.

The request for an Ethics Briefing, including review of the long form FDS, was discussed. It was confirmed that it will be a Zoom meeting that will be recorded. Commissioner Sport suggested that it be done before a Council meeting, since the Directors will be there. Commissioner Lubieniecki asked if it would be up to the Mayor to set the date and time for the briefing? Staff

clarified that Administrator Pulley had suggested that it be after the new Councilmembers are sworn in in late November.

Commissioner Lubieniecki volunteered to write this memo. Chair Hester volunteered to write the memo asking the Mayor to have read into the record the fact that we have two people still delinquent in submitting their FDS and paying their fines.

Chair Hester described Council President Clark's request for an Ethics Opinion regarding the possibility of joining the Board of a new Kiwanis Chapter in Laurel, and his draft opinion concerning that request. He quoted two relevant sections from the Ethics Ordinance.

He feels there is the potential for the appearance of a conflict of interest by giving this organization preferential treatment in comparison to one which does not have a Councilmember on it's Board. Because of this, he recommends that President Clark respectfully decline the offer. She is welcome to join the organization as a dues paying member, but not be on the Board.

Commissioner Lubieniecki is concerned about this since she is a board member of the Historical Society, and feels that she would not be allowed to do this given the concerns that Chair Hester voiced. When she was appointed, Mayor Moe did not feel it was a conflict. Chair Hester stated that Mayor Moe overruled the Commission's recommendation.

Counsel Whitley stated that the facts are different since a Councilmember has more power, particularly concerning the budget, than an Ethics Commission member.

Vice Chair Drake had some edits to suggest. She also asked about the City's "indirect relationship with it's non-profits." Chair Hester explained that there are actions taken by the City that affect non-profits and their projects.

Counsel Whitley said that he would email his edits of the last sentence to staff.

It was moved that the draft, as amended, be adopted. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

The Commission moved on to the discussion of Commissioner Sport moderating a candidate conversation. Commissioner Sport described what the moderation would involve, and that she would not be offering any opinions.

Commissioner Lubieniecki did not feel that there was any conflict with Commissioner Sport's role on the Ethics Commission. Vice Chair Drake asked, and it was clarified, that no uncertified candidates would be included in the conversation.

Chair Hester felt that there was the potential for appearance of conflict if a candidate was mischievous and looked to find fault. That could be assuaged by making clear that you are in

no way acting as an Ethics Commissioner or allowing that title to be used. Commissioner Sport assured him that there would be no use of her title.

Counsel Whitley was concerned until he found that the candidates participating were all certified.

Chair Hester still feels that there is an unnecessary risk. There was not a request for an Advisory Opinion, so there was no motion or official finding.

The General Public Hearing was opened and closed at 7:21 pm, with no one wishing to speak.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 pm.