

COMMISSION MEMBERS

James Hester, FAICP
Chair

Maxene Bardwell, CPA
Vice Chair

Toni Drake, Esq

Kenneth P. Dahms

Robert Scaggs

Lou Ann Crook *Alternate*



CITY OF LAUREL ETHICS COMMISSION

8103 Sandy Spring Road • Laurel, Maryland 20707 (301) 725-5300

Internet Address: <https://www.cityoflaurel.org/boards/commissions/laurel-ethics-commission>

COMMISSION STAFF

Christian L. Pulley CPM
*City Administrator
Executive Officer*

Dennis Whitley III, Esq
Counsel to the Commission

Laura Christoplos
Administrative Assistant II

October 6, 2022

MEMORANDUM

TO: Craig A. Moe, Mayor
Brencis D. Smith, Laurel Council President
Laurel City Councilmembers

FROM: James Hester, Chair

SUBJECT: City of Laurel Ethics Commission Annual Report
September 2021 – September 2022



The City of Laurel Ethics Commission annual report to the Mayor and City Council is provided in accordance with City Ethics Ordinance. The Commission consists of the following members:

- a. James Hester, FAICP, Chair
- b. Maxene Bardwell, CPA, Vice Chair
- c. Thomas Scaggs
- d. Kenneth Dahms
- e. Toni Drake, Esq.
- f. Lou Ann Crook, Alternate

Regular meetings are scheduled quarterly with public notice provided. Special meetings are scheduled as required with public notice provided. One member was excused from three of the four meetings due to extreme medical hardship during this reporting period. The Commission met in its regular meetings four times during the calendar year.

- a. January 25, 2022
- b. April 26, 2022
- c. June 29, 2022
- d. September 21, 2022

Attached are the agendas and approved minutes of those meetings except for July 29 and September 21 minutes, which have not been approved. All 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements have been submitted, reviewed, and filed.

The primary activities of the Commission this year were the review of the 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements and providing guidance to the Mayor regarding social media and special event policies.

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Laurel Ethics Commission

Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Agenda

Tuesday, January 25, 2022

6:00 P.M.

1. Open Meeting, Take Roll Call, Determine if Quorum is Present
2. Discuss and Adopt Agenda for Tuesday, January 25, 2022
3. Discuss and Approve the Minutes from July 20, 2021
4. Invite any member of the public who are present who wish to address the LEC to come forward and speak
5. Work Session

Discuss and if needed edit and approve short and long Financial Disclosure Statement forms covering 2021. Request staff to email relevant FDS forms to appropriate elected and appointed officials and senior employees. Filers would also be given the option of having a paper copy of the form mailed to them.

- a. Request volunteers to serve on the Ethics Commission Subcommittee to review the 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements once they are received
 - b. Discuss whether we might offer to provide an Ethics briefing to the new elected officials and any new members of the relevant Commissions and Boards.
 - c. Announcement of the annual election of the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Ethics Commission at the upcoming April, 2022 meeting.
6. Other business Commissioners or Staff wish to raise
 7. Setting of the Date and Time for the next meeting of the LEC

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Meeting Minutes Tuesday, January 25, 2022 Virtual Meeting via Zoom

The Ethics Commission Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairman James Hester. Roll was called with the following Commissioners present: Chairman Hester, Vice Chair Bardwell, Commissioners Drake, Scaggs, Dahms and Alternate Crook. Also, present Dennis Whitley, Ethics Commission Legal Counsel, Joanne Barr, Deputy City Administrator, and Laura Christoplos, Administrative Assistant II.

Former City Administrator Lou Ann Crook was introduced and welcomed as the new Alternate on the Commission.

On a motion by Vice Chair Bardwell, seconded by Commissioner Dahms, the agenda for the January 25, 2022, meeting was unanimously approved.

On a motion by Commissioner Dahms, seconded by Commissioner Scaggs, the meeting minutes of July 20, 2021, were approved as amended.

No members of the public were present to address the Commission.

Delivery options for the 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements (FDS) were discussed, along with whether there needed to be a paper notification sent via US Postal Service if the FDS were sent by email.

Counsel was of the opinion that we should send a paper notification this year, as well as email and allow participants to opt in or out of getting the paper notification in the future. Chair Hester agreed.

No edits were suggested for either the Advanced FDS or the Simplified FDS.

Per Chair Hester's request, staff looked at whether some senior officials (City Administrator, Police Chief) needed to fill out the Advanced form. For the past five years, only elected officials, candidates for elected office, and former elected officials have filled out the Advanced FDS. Staff requested the opinion of Executive Officer Pulley about the requirements in the City code.

Chair Hester asked that the general instructions and definitions that are included in the Simplified FDS be included with the Advanced FDS as well.

On a motion by Vice Chair Bardwell, seconded by Commissioner Scaggs, the changes discussed above were passed by unanimous voice vote.

Commissioner Drake volunteered to serve on the subcommittee to review the FDS. Since there were no other volunteers, the issue was set aside until the next meeting.

Chair Hester made the offer on behalf of the Commission to offer an Ethics briefing to anyone who is covered by the Ethics Ordinance. The invitation was conveyed to the Mayor's office and the Clerk's office, and two of the Council members were interested in attending.

It was announced that elections would be held at the next meeting.

There was no additional business raised by Commissioners or staff.

Commissioner Crook suggested sending a letter, rather than a postcard to notify members that the 2021 FDS was being emailed to them this year. The rest of the Commissioners agreed.

Next meeting was scheduled for April 26, 2022, at 6:00 pm by zoom.

At 6:47 pm, Vice Chair Bardwell made the motion to adjourn, Commissioner Scaggs seconded, all present agreed.

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Laurel Ethics Commission
Virtual Meeting by Zoom
Agenda
Tuesday, April 26, 2022
6:00 P.M.

If you wish to provide written testimony on any agenda item, you may send by mail to the Laurel Municipal Center or email to Laura Christoplos at christoplos@laurel.md.us.

1. Call to Order
2. Introduction and Welcome to Executive Officer and City Administrator, Christian L. Pulley, CPM
3. Roll Call
4. Approval of April 26, 2022, Meeting Agenda
5. Approval of Minutes of the meeting of January 25, 2022
6. General Public Hearing
7. Annual Election of Commission Chair and Vice Chair
8. 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements
 - a. Status of Statements Received
 - b. Appointment of Financial Disclosure Statements Review Sub-Committee
9. Other Business
10. Announcement of next meeting date
11. Adjournment

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Meeting Minutes Tuesday, April 26, 2022 Virtual Meeting via Zoom

The Ethics Commission Meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. by Chairman James Hester. Roll was called with the following Commissioners present: Chairman Hester, Vice Chair Bardwell, Commissioners Drake, and Scaggs, and Alternate Crook. Also present were Dennis Whitley, Ethics Commission Legal Counsel, Christian Pulley, City Administrator, and Laura Christoplos, Administrative Assistant II.

City Administrator Christian Pulley was introduced and welcomed as the new Executive Officer.

On a motion by Vice Chair Bardwell, seconded by Commissioner Dahms, the agenda for the April 26, 2022, meeting was unanimously approved.

On a motion by Commissioner Dahms, seconded by Commissioner Scaggs, the meeting minutes of January 25, 2022, were approved as amended.

The General Public Hearing was opened at 6:11 p.m. As there were no members of the public present, it was closed at 6:12 p.m.

On a motion by Vice Chair Bardwell, seconded by Commissioner Scaggs, Chair Hester was nominated and unanimously re-elected as Chair of the Ethics Commission.

On a motion by Commissioner Drake, seconded by Chair Hester, Vice Chair Bardwell was nominated and unanimously re-elected as Vice Chair of the Commission.

Staff presented a report on the status of the 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements (FDS). Twelve have not been received. Two are missing a page or an answer. One is missing a signature, and one is waiting for a notary.

Commissioner Drake volunteered to be on the review sub-committee at the last meeting. No other Commissioner volunteered, so it will be a one-person subcommittee. Commissioner Bardwell volunteered to be a sounding board if Commissioner Drake had questions.

Commissioner Drake questioned whether "Not Applicable" was an acceptable answer since the questions apply to everyone who is required to fill out an FDS.

On a motion by Chair Hester, seconded by Commissioner Drake, the Commission voted unanimously to allow "Not Applicable" on this year's FDS and edit the instructions for next year so that "None" will be the only negative answer allowed for next year.

As requested in the January 25, 2022, minutes there was a discussion of whether senior officials should fill out the Advanced FDS in the future. Administrator Pulley will talk with the Mayor about what is required by the Code.

Chair Hester is of the opinion that the Code is silent on whether senior officials need to fill out the Advanced FDS. Counselor Whitley asked Administrator Pulley to research how other jurisdictions are handling this.

The next regular meeting was scheduled for July 26, 2022, at 6:00 p.m. by Zoom. Commissioner Drake will contact staff to arrange for a meeting once all of the FDSs are reviewed.

At 6:45 p.m., Vice Chair Bardwell made the motion to adjourn, Commission Scaggs seconded, all present agreed.

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Laurel Ethics Commission
Virtual Meeting by Zoom
Agenda
Wednesday, June 29, 2022
6:00 P.M.

If you wish to provide written testimony on any agenda item, you may send by mail to the Laurel Municipal Center or email to Laura Christoplos at lchristoplos@laurel.md.us.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of June 29, 2022, Meeting Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes of the meeting of April 26, 2022
5. General Public Hearing
6. 2021 Financial Disclosure Statements
 - a. Status of Statements Received
 - b. Recommendations to the Mayor
7. Social Media Policy Discussion
 - a. Review of sponsored event examples
8. Other Business
9. Announcement of next meeting date
10. Adjournment

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Laurel Ethics Commission

Virtual Meeting by Zoom

Agenda

Wednesday, September 21, 2022

6:00 P.M.

If you wish to provide written testimony on any agenda item, you may send by mail to the Laurel Municipal Center or email to Laura Christoplos at lchristoplos@laurel.md.us.

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Approval of September 21, 2022, Meeting Agenda
4. Approval of Minutes of the meeting of June 29, 2022
5. General Public Hearing
6. Changes to Ethics Laws
7. Other Business
8. Adjournment