

ALEXANDRIA AD HOC CODE OF CONDUCT REVIEW COMMITTEE

DRAFT MINUTES

Thursday, March 17, 2016

421 King St.

2nd floor conference room

7:00 p.m.

Present:

George Foote, Chair

Deb Roepke

Al Pierce

Herve Aitken

Randy Sengel

Frank Shafroth

Lynnwood Campbell

Mark Abramson

Jennifer Atkins

Staff:

Noraine Buttar, Special Assistant, CMO

Meghan Roberts, Assistant City Attorney

Jean Kelleher, Director, Human Rights

1. Chair Foote called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. He introduced Ms. Atkins to the group.
2. The group discussed the extension activities. Chair Foote encouraged them to consider the questions, “What should we do to foster the culture of ethics? How do we write documents that will continue to be relevant?” He also mentioned the coarsening of national ethics and how that may permeate Alexandria. Chair Foote emphasized the need to leave a legacy of work.
3. The group had a general discussion about professional development opportunities surrounding ethics. Mr. Pierce said there was no vaccine for ethics, and a wide variety of “booster shots” were necessary. You need to get people to think about ethics from time to time in the context of what they do day in and day out for the City. He suggested creating a comfortable environment where members could discuss ethics. However, it was noted, anytime more than two members of Council are present is considered a meeting, so the members would not be able to meet privately to discuss ethics. Mr. Pierce suggested sending regular emails and perhaps an ethical question of the month. Ms. Atkins suggested recommended readings for Council members that dealt with the issue of ethics. Other members suggested online training.
4. Mr. Shafroth said, in his experience, training is easily forgotten and sometimes ignored. He suggested having Council members attend civic/community meetings where they talk about ethics. Talking about a topic makes you think about it and frame it from your own perspective. Members also recommended that Council members speak at ethics courses offered at T.C. Williams. They felt this would create buy-in among Council and allow

them to take ownership and make the issue of ethics personal to each member. Another recommendation was to have speakers during council meetings who could talk about ethics and present hypothetical ethical dilemmas. They could even have a speaker series. Members thought it was important for the discussion around ethics to become institutionalized in the community.

5. Members discussed who should be responsible for ensuring appropriate training and other recommendations (if accepted) were implemented and carried out by Council. Members thought it could be housed under Human Resources under Training and Development. The City Clerk and Council aides would coordinate schedules for the speaking pieces at either the schools or in the community.
6. Overall there were three main pieces to the extension activities: (1) Professional Development opportunities (bringing in the speakers), (2) Teaching at T.C. Williams and (3) Discussion at a public forum. Mr. Abramson suggested a City Council member should be put in charge of the initiatives to ensure they are implemented. Regarding teaching at T.C., members emphasized the need for Council to really be prepared to engage in an active discussion with students about ethics.
7. Mr. Sengel reviewed his draft code of conduct. He revised AR 6-1, the employee ethics code, so it applied to Council, Boards and Commissions, the City Clerk and the City Attorney. Mr. Aitken said he thought Council was looking for something different. He outlined several principle categories. It was decided that Mr. Sengel would revise his draft based on committee members' comments and Mr. Aitken would create a draft based on his principles. Both drafts will be reviewed at next week's meeting.
8. There was a discussion about how to promote an ethics discussion in the community. Ms. Atkins suggested working with the libraries during "All Alexandria Reads" and picking a book that dealt with ethics. Mr. Pierce suggested showing films with plots involving ethical dilemmas. Chair Foote thought the group should consider ways to use social media to expand the discussion.
9. The meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.