

MINUTES OF THE MARCH 2, 2023 MEETING OF THE SKOKIE OFFICERS ETHICS COMMISSION

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 PM. There was a rolloall of members of the Commission (Chair Jonathan Minkus, Leonard Matanky, Richard Lanford), and attorney James Ferolo of Klein, Thorpe and Jenkins. Pursuant to the Open Meetings Act of Illinois, an agenda for the meeting has been on the Village website, as well as the date, time, and location of this meeting.

Mr. Ferolo laid out the two main questions facing the Commission regarding the ethics complaint filed by Trustee James Johnson dating back to last year. They are: Has the complaint been sufficiently pled to allege a violation of the Ethics Code? If so, then the Commission would determine if there is probable cause to proceed to hearing.

Trustee James Johnson, present (as were several members of the public) called for a chance to speak before the Commission entered Executive Session. Before this was granted, Chair Minkus asked that please, no new evidence regarding the complaint is to come from any of the speakers tonight.

Mr. Johnson reviewed his complaint. Part of the allegation is that between January and June, 2022, Skokie Mayor George Van Dusen, Corporation Counsel Michael Lorge and some other Village attorneys, conspired to commit what amounts to voter suppression. Mr. Johnson went on to elaborate, saying that voter suppression can include preventing people from putting referenda on a ballot.

The allegation includes that it was unethical of the Mayor to use public servants (Village attorneys) for a political aim. Chair Minkus said this is a new allegation not in the original complaint.

Trustee Johnson elaborated on his reasons for these allegations, referring to both what is alleged to have been done, and what is in the Code of Ethics. He urged us to interview fellow Village Trustees about the June action and referred the commission to his first complaint of April, 2021.

A motion was made to recess into executive session pursuant to Section 2(c)(4) of the Open Meetings Act to deliberate. The Motion was approved unanimously by a roll call vote.

The open portion of the Commission meeting reconvened at 8:04 PM.

Mr. Ferolo stated the Commission determined that the Complained failed to sufficiently plead a violation of the Code of Ethics. A motion was made and approved unanimously by the Commission to dismiss the Complaint for failure to sufficiently plead a violation of the Skokie Code of Ethics. A second motion was made and approved unanimously to authorize Chairman Minkus to execute a written decision drafted by Counsel for the Commission that was consistent with the Commission's deliberations and reasoning.

Public comments followed.

Former Trustee Ulrich went first and fired off a long list of questions impugning the integrity of the Commission and its decision. She wondered how the Commission is appointed and why there are no records of previous meetings. She expressed her belief that there is an appearance of impropriety. She suggested each of the members of the Commission have a conflict of interest in this matter because it involves the Mayor of Skokie, and we were all appointed by the Mayor.

Kim Pollack spoke and expressed that she was upset at the decision and its dismissal of Mr. Johnson's allegations.

Judy Mendel spoke. She referred to an alleged violation of the Open Meetings Act. She was upset at the Executive Session not being public.

Lastly, Mr. Johnson asked if he could speak again, not as the filer of the complaint but as a member of the public. This was briefly allowed. He repeated the allegations of his Complaint.

The Commission voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:27 PM.

Minutes Approved this 3rd day of May, 2023 Skokie Officers Ethics Commission

 Secretary
Rev. Richard Lanford, Secretary