

MINUTES OF THE
SANTA FE COUNTY
ETHICS BOARD

January 8, 2025

Santa Fe, New Mexico

1. This meeting of the Santa Fe County Ethics Board was called to order by Chair Jonelle Maison at approximately 4:30 p.m. on the above-cited date at the County Administration Complex, Grant Conference Room, 100 Catron Street, Santa Fe.

2. The following members were present and affirmed the meeting was properly called:

Members Present:

Jonelle Maison, Chair
Clifford Rees, Vice Chair
Tom Quaid

Member(s) Absent:

Frances Carlson
Jesse Guillen

County Staff Present:

Gabe Bustos, Staff Liaison
Peter Valencia, Assistant County Attorney

Others Present:

Hank Hughes, County Commissioner
Chris Mechels [via Webex]

3. **Approval of Agenda**

Mr. Quaid moved to approve the agenda as published and Mr. Rees seconded. The motion carried without opposition [3-0].

4. **Approval of the Minutes: December 5, 2024**

Mr. Quaid moved approval and Mr. Rees seconded. The motion carried by unanimous [3-0] voice vote.

5. Upcoming January BCC Presentation

Chair Maison distributed a draft of her proposed presentation. *[Exhibit 1]* She noted there had been disagreement about some of the items on the options list provided by Mr. Rees at the September meeting. She was not in favor of the option of the Commission eliminating this board.

Commissioner Hughes recommended keeping it concise, given that presentations come later in the agenda. It is valuable to introduce this board to the Commission and explain their role.

Mr. Rees said the questions are: Is this board worthwhile? Should it continue in its current form? Why has the Ethics Board never had a case? Would the County be better served by a panel arrangement?

Commissioner Hughes suggested the lack of cases could be due to the deterrent effect of the Ethics Board. He added some previous Commissions were less ethical.

Mr. Rees said another option would be to present the Commission with quarterly or semi-annual reports on complaints filed and their disposition. Commissioner Hughes stated that could be in a BoardDocs report.

Mr. Rees noted that other bodies, such as the City of Santa Fe, have jurisdiction over campaign finance questions, and that could be an expansion for this board.

Commissioner Hughes pointed out that after he was elected he consulted the Ethics Board about his position on a non-profit and was advised on that issue.

Mr. Rees reiterated his desire that this board serve the County to the degree possible, given the expertise available.

Chair Maison asked Mr. Bustos what became of the complaint form they worked on. Mr. Bustos indicated that will have to come before the Commission at a later meeting in the form of a resolution. Chair Maison said that could happen after the end of the legislature.

6. Matters from the Public

Chris Mechels, attending via Webex, complained that the public is not included in the discussions and that this board insists that the public have no voice. At the previous meeting his remarks were limited to three minutes. The public should be welcomed rather than abused. This board was created in 2010 by the County Manager with the assistance of the County Attorney with the aim of consolidating power. He said the members of the Ethics Board are not chosen by the Commissioners and two members of a previous board who believed the board wasn't working are no longer present. "Mr. Rees is currently the voice on the board and the rest of you sit there like four dummies."

Mr. Mechels indicated that board members are selected for their compliance. He expressed his desire to make some complaints on the Commission and the board, however, Mr. Rees is

“actively hostile to public input.” He suggested rebuilding this board to mirror those of other counties, since currently it serves no one but the County Manager. “Let the public speak.” The situation is totally corrupt and an abomination. “Shame on you all.”

5. Upcoming January BCC Presentation

Returning to the subject of the complaint form, Mr. Valencia has there has to be a form and it would be beneficial to have a member of this board to answer questions. Commissioner Hughes said it would be good to mention the form during the presentation. Chair Maison said she could provide a copy.

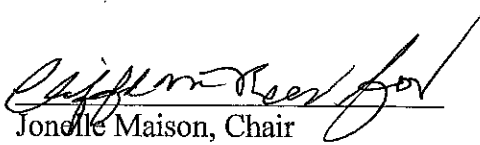
7. Date of Next Board Meeting: March 26 2025, 4:30

Chair Maison stated a discussion of the Commission’s feedback could be on the agenda, along with any relevant changes coming from the legislature.

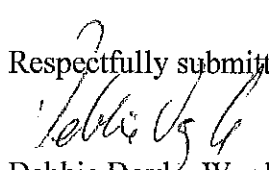
8. Adjournment

Upon motion by Mr. Rees and second by Mr. Quaid, and with no further matters to come before this body, the meeting was declared adjourned at approximately 5:13 p.m.

Approved by:


Jonelle Maison, Chair
Ethics Board

Respectfully submitted by:


Debbie Doyle, Wordswork



**Ethics Board Presentation
to
Santa Fe County Commission**

Mr/Madam Chair:

Thank you, Mr/Madam Chair, for this opportunity to present the work of your ethics committee.

I am Jonelle Maison, the chairwoman of the board. Cliff Rees is the vice chairman and the members are Frances Carlson, Jesse Guillen and Tom Quaid. I would like to thank our primary staffer, Gabe Bustos, for all his help with the board. We also have assistance from the county attorney's office, which has been much appreciated. And, thank you to Debbie Doyle and others at Wordswork for taking and transcribing minutes.

Since the county commission adopted the Santa Fe Code of Conduct, the ethics board has heard two presentations from the human resources department on the implementation of ethics training for county employees and volunteers, the first was an overview of proposed training material and the second was after the training had been established. As you know, ethics complaints against most county employees are handled by the human resources department.

The county attorney's office gave the board a briefing on the last several years of conduct complaints against county employees -- and there have been only a few. Between 2017 and 2023, the attorney's office reported only five complaints filed against employees; another one was not acted upon because the complaint was not sworn. Only one complaint went to the county contract ethics official.

The board has proposed and sent up the chain of command an easy county complaint form for people who want to make complaints against employees, volunteers and officials.

The ethics board has looked at other counties' ethics procedures and has discussed the idea of asking the state ethics commission to hold a training with local ethics boards.

After the heavy lift of drafting the code of conduct ordinance, the ethics board is definitely in a quiescent period. Our meeting schedule will be adjusted accordingly. However, if the commission would like us to undertake any projects, we will be happy to do so. Thank you. I'll stand for questions.