

MINUTES OF THE
SANTA FE COUNTY
ETHICS BOARD

July 25, 2025

Santa Fe, New Mexico

1. A. This meeting of the Santa Fe County Ethics Board was called to order by Vice Chair Clifford Rees at approximately 5:10 p.m. on the above-cited date at the County Administration Complex, Johnson Conference Room, 240 Grant Avenue Street, Santa Fe.

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

Members Present:

Clifford Rees, Vice Chair
Tom Quaid
Frances Carlson [virtually]

Member(s) Absent:

Jonelle Maison, Chair
Jesse Guillen

County Staff Present:

Peter Valencia, Assistant County Attorney
Gabe Bustos, Staff Liaison
Sara Smith, Operations Manager [virtually]

Others Present:

Chris Mechels [virtually]

C. **Approval of Agenda**

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

D. **Approval of the Minutes: March 26, 2025**

Ms. Carlson moved approval and Mr. Quaid seconded. The motion to approve the March meeting minutes carried by unanimous [3-0] voice vote.

2. **Discussion of the Santa Fe County Ethics Board Presentation to the Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners on January 14, 2025**

Vice Chair Rees stated that he and Mr. Quaid were present at the BCC meeting, and that he provided the presentation on behalf of the Ethics Board. Mr. Quaid said that it appeared to him

that the Commissioners were impressed by the information and presentation provided by Vice Chair Rees.

Vice Chair Rees said that he was pleased that the County Commissioners have a transcript of their meetings, and this transcript can be accessed on the County's website, 1/29/25 page 29. His presentation summarized the Ethics Board's accomplishments, and offered recommendations for more identifying information for the future.

6. Discussion of the Joint Meeting/Training with the State Ethics Commission and Local Ethics Boards

Vice Chair Rees recalled bringing this idea to the Board at its March 2024 meeting, at which time he brought up statutory and case law about ethics boards and commissions in New Mexico since July 2019, when the State Ethics Commission began its operations following the voters' approval of a constitutional amendment creating the Commission.

Vice Chair Rees said that he is interested in what other local jurisdictions do around ethics, particularly in light of an amendment to the state's Governmental Conduct Act, which expanded the jurisdiction of the application of the Governmental Conduct Act enacted by the state legislature, setting out ethical guidelines for state and local officials. Quite a few jurisdictions have enacted ordinances at the county and city level creating ethics boards, including the City of Santa Fe. Others use their human resources department as the place where ethics complaints could be filed and adjudicated.

At the March 2024 meeting, he recommended holding a meeting with the State Ethics Commission and interested local ethics board members, as well as other interested persons. One of the State's Ethics Commission's duties is to provide education on ethics law in general to interested parties. Jeremy Farris, the State Ethics Executive Director, fully endorses the idea of a joint meeting. He has been in touch with Chief Compliance Officer Chato and the deputy director, discussing when it may happen. The State Ethics Commission is onboard and willing to sponsor and organize a meeting. They have suggested a meeting in early December in Albuquerque. The idea of meeting in December is to overlap with the Municipal League and Association of NM Counties.

He added that he recently talked with Paul Biderman, chair of the City of Santa Fe's Ethics & Campaign Review Board, and discussed the notion of expanding the County's board to include campaign violations.

All of the cases filed with the County's attorney's office have been resolved before reaching this Board.

7. Discussion Process of Adopting Revised Complaint Form

It was Vice Chair Rees' recollection that Chair Maison was particularly interested in getting the form before the BCC for approval. Assistant County Attorney Peter Valencia said that the complaint form requires BCC approval. A memo and a resolution would need to be formulated,

approved by this body, and then presented to the BCC. A member from this board would be required to present to the BCC. He offered to have the resolution and memo prepared before this board meets again. The complaint form could either be approved as a resolution or an amendment to the original County ordinance.

Staff was directed to report back to this board on the process of making the complaint form an “official” document.

A copy of the revised complaint form was made available to the members.

8. Discussion on Information Report to Santa Fe County Board of County Commissioners and the Santa Fe County Ethics Board

Vice Chair Rees said that the de-identified information would include, within a specific period, how many complaints have been filed, how many complaints are pending, how many have been resolved, what types and what topics have been alleged to have been violated, and how the complaints were resolved.

Vice Chair Rees said that he would like the information, and recommended staff present it at the beginning of each meeting.

Mr. Quaid said that if the complaint has been settled and had not come before this board, he was not interested. However, if the complaint came before this board and is within their purview, yes, he would like additional information.

Ms. Carlson was having microphone issues, and Vice Chair Rees recommended keeping this item on the agenda for further discussion at the next meeting.

9. Discussion of Reappointments and Term Expirations

All the two-year terms expire September 12, 2025. Mr. Bustos said that those current members interested in reappointment send a letter of interest. Mr. Valencia said the board members are eligible for reappointment, and there would be a public advertisement for new members also.

10. Public Comment

Those wishing to speak were allotted three minutes.

Chris Mechels said that the meeting appeared to be a monologue of, and dominated by Mr. Rees. He said that the public should be allowed to speak throughout the meeting. He questioned whether there was a valid quorum since Ms. Carlson was having problems speaking. He said the Board was not serving the public, was wasting time, and then wished them all a good evening.

There were no other speakers and the public comment portion was closed.

11. Date of Next Board Meeting

Vice Chair Rees suggested meeting before the September 12th term expiration date. Staff was directed to survey the members on a possible meeting date.

12. Adjournment

Upon motion by Mr. Quaid and second by Mr. Guillen, and with no further matters to come before this body, the meeting was declared adjourned at approximately 5:56 p.m.

Approved by:

Jonelle Maison, Chair
Ethics Board

Respectfully submitted by:

Karen Farrell, Wordswork

D R A F T

SUBJECT TO APPROVAL