



**CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
MONDAY, APRIL 24, 2023 – 10:00 a.m.
Conference Room A
City Hall Complex, 1 Junkins Avenue
Portsmouth, NH 03801**

1. **Welcome and Call to Order** - 10:02 a.m.
2. **Roll Call** – Councilor Kate Cook, Councilor Vincent Lombardi, Councilor John Tabor all present. Also present was Deputy City Manager Suzanne M. Woodland and Of Counsel Robert P. Sullivan.
3. **Review and Approval of Minutes** – Councilor Tabor moved to approve the April 10, 2023 minutes. Councilor Lombardi seconded. All in favor.
4. **Old Business**
 - a. **Conflict of Interest** – The Committee Members provided general comment arising from the discussion last month. Councilor Tabor talked about the potential value of a preamble to the conflict-of-interest ordinance (with reference to the Charter). Councilor Tabor also mentioned perhaps needing more attention to travel and entertainment. Councilor Cook suggested that any rewrite should be sensitive to the roles – employees versus elected officials.

Robert Sullivan, Of Counsel and the Committee Members discussed various provisions of the existing ordinance and what changes might be made. The Committee provided Attorney Sullivan with guidance on sections that they would like to see him prepare proposed edits for consideration. Those sections include the following:

- Adding a preamble and consider creating a definition section which would define private interest.
- In addition, the Committee discussed possible amendments to Section B. Councilor Cook would like to see a change to this section to prohibit a City Councilor or other elected official from speaking to a matter before a land use or other board unless that Councilor has a direct interest (owner or abutter as defined by State law). There was substantial discussion but no direction to Attorney Sullivan. The committee members were going to reflect further for the next meeting.
- The Committee also discussed section C and whether to amend this section. One option, some type of language that states “No elected official or officer

who is a plaintiff against the City should participate in their official capacity in discussion or decisions relative to that same action.”

- Committee Members agreed Section D seems fine. But additional discussion evolved about whether to develop a disclosure form for elected officials and board members to complete upon election or appointment and to publish such completed form.
- Committee Members also discussed Section F relative to the acceptance of gifts etc. They discussed the \$100 limit, creating a waiver option, or otherwise. Suggestion to strike the campaign language in the last sentence as it is addressed elsewhere. The Committee Members will think about it and discuss further.

b. Administrative Ordinance – Anticipated Non-Public Session

This section was postponed for the next meeting.

Councilor Tabor was required to leave the meeting for another commitment at 11:25 a.m.

5. Public Comment:

Petra Huda (conflict of interest changes, disclosure and risks, councilors speaking to matters); Sue Polidura (look at other policies, federal government standards, disclosures); Esther Kennedy (State law relative to conflicts and disclosures and Local Government Center advice)

6. Announcements

a. Current Committee Schedule

- Conflict of Interest, BR Committee Conversions, Parks, Administrative Ordinance Clean-Up – May 22
- Conflict of Interest, BR Committee Conversions – June 12

Councilor Cook asked for a motion to adjourn. Councilor Lombardi so moved. Councilor Cook seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

Meeting Minutes prepared by

Suzanne Woodland, Deputy City Manager/Deputy City Attorney

Minutes Approved: May 22, 2023