

CITY OF LYNDON, KENTUCKY

ETHICS COMMITTEE WORKING GROUP MEETING

MINUTES

Date: Monday, October 7, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:27 PM

Location: Lyndon City Hall, 515 Wood Road

Members Present: Mera Corlett (Chair), Malick Diallo (Secretary), Calvin Shaak

Also Present: Dr. Erlene Grise-Owens (Open Floor), Council Member Vicki Stanley (brief)

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Corlett called the meeting to order, confirmed quorum, and led a moment of silence for a missionary's son killed on the frontlines in Ukraine. She reflected on civic responsibility and the importance of volunteer service to the community.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The committee reviewed minutes from August 5, August 27, and September 3, 2025 meetings.

Amendments Made:

- **September 3, Page 1:** Corrected reference from "city clerk" to "author of the referenced correspondence for transparency"
- **September 3, Page 3:** Struck the phrase "angry five" as incendiary and not reflective of the full discussion about council/mayor tensions

Discussion: Members debated whether minutes should reflect exact words spoken versus summarizing substantive discussion. The committee agreed these are summaries that should avoid inflammatory language while maintaining accuracy.

Note: Approved unanimously. Signed copies to be provided at next meeting.

Note: Minutes from the September meeting with Attorney Singler and the hearing remain pending.

III. ADVISORY OPINION REQUEST (CONFIDENTIAL)

The committee received its first advisory opinion request (submitted anonymously September 25, 2025) regarding safety concerns and police presence at council meetings.

Key Points from Request:

- Concerns about increased number of officers in uniform at meetings
- Questions whether presence creates intimidation versus safety
- Request for committee's opinion and suggestions for improvement

Committee Discussion:

Member Diallo: Disagreed that police presence creates an unsafe environment; acknowledged it may be uncomfortable when discussing police matters.

Member Shaak: Saw both sides; noted chief and second-in-command attend to answer questions; other officers may attend because they're on duty and want to stay informed.

Chair Corlett: Acknowledged police presence can signal both safety and intimidation; emphasized committee's responsibility to enhance public trust through transparency.

Action: Secretary Diallo will have an informal conversation with the Police Chief regarding department policy on meeting attendance and whether officers are required to attend, then report at the next meeting.

IV. ETHICS COMPLAINT FINDINGS LETTER

The committee reviewed the draft letter containing findings, conclusions, and notice of mootness for the ethics complaint regarding Council Member Vicki Stanley.

Key Additions to Draft:

- Context about uncertainty regarding the letter's purpose and intended use
- Clarification that City Clerk's response lacked full context
- Note that Stanley was concerned inclusion could be inflammatory given existing tensions
- Addition that during Open Floor, the complainant questioned Stanley, who committed to ensuring all members received copies
- Emphasis on Stanley's initiative to correct the situation and unintentional nature of actions

Minor Corrections:

- Timing of letter delivery noted as "not firmly established" (approximately 4:00 PM)
- Clarified actions were "in full view of the public" though before meeting officially started
- Noted Stanley had consent from "some but not all" council members

Vote: Approved unanimously. Letter to be sent to complainant and respondent.

V. PUBLIC LETTER TO CITY CLERK

The committee approved a letter to City Clerk Stacy Woodward recommending improvements to council packet transparency.

Recommendations:

1. Include brief table of contents listing all packet materials with context (e.g., "Resident correspondence," "Reference report")
2. Use existing agenda as outline, with additional materials under "Miscellaneous Materials" section
3. Consistently post full or redacted packets publicly when feasible

Rationale: Reduce confusion, ensure all council members and residents understand what materials are being considered and why.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Distribution: Letter will be sent to City Clerk, posted publicly, and read at a council meeting.

VI. OPEN FLOOR – DR. ERLENE GRISE-OWENS

Dr. Grise-Owens opened by thanking the committee for their volunteer service and clarifying that her intent is to help the process be fair, transparent, and maintain public trust.

Concerns Raised:

1. Public Distribution of Committee Actions

Question: How will the public letter to City Clerk be distributed?

Committee Response: Will be posted on Ethics website, included in council minutes, and read at council meeting.

2. Findings Letter Observations

- Appreciated contextual additions Chair Corlett made
- Questioned why City Clerk wasn't required to attend hearing as "pivotal person"
- Noted the complaint itself contained false/inflammatory statements
- Suggested multiple points where process could have stopped, "saving everyone a lot of pain"

Committee Response: The complaint wasn't filed against the City Clerk; committee believed and considered Stanley's testimony about clerk's actions; this context informed the mootness determination. The committee cannot insert new respondents into complaints.

3. Decision to Proceed with Hearing

Dr. Grise-Owens disagreed that the committee had "no choice" but to proceed, arguing the real issue was City Clerk's process, which could have been addressed differently.

Committee Response:

- Thoroughly reviewed ordinance multiple times, consulted KLC attorney, verified interpretation
- Dismissal only permitted for procedural reasons per current code
- Initial KLC advice suggesting dismissal was based on outdated (1995) code; attorney agreed committee was correct after reviewing complete current code
- Committee's goal: be "fair, transparent, and trustworthy" by following code as written
- When complaints are properly substantiated and filed through official channels with specific code citations, timelines and procedures must be followed

4. Role of City Attorney John Singler

Dr. Grise-Owens raised significant concerns about conflicts of interest and impartiality.

Concerns:

- Attorney Singler advised complainant that Stanley's actions were "improper"
- Same attorney then played active questioning role in hearing
- He refuses to meet with Dr. Grise-Owens and her husband Larry
- Lacks "public trust" that he represents full interests of city including council members
- Would not feel comfortable bringing complaints if he remains involved

Committee Responses:

On advice to complainant:

- Singler did NOT advise committee to take the case
- Chair Corlett interpreted his use of "improper" (non-legal term) as intentionally avoiding a legal opinion
- Distinguished between one-off comment and formal consultation/conflict of interest

On his hearing role:

- Committee developed all questions, not the attorney
- He checked in regularly about question parameters
- Committee directed which complaint sections to address

- While he asked more questions than individual members, each member also questioned, and he was not the final questioner

On general role:

- Committee acknowledges this needs to be addressed in code revisions
- Will add language defining attorney's specific responsibilities
- For serious cases (multiple or severe code violations), committee would hire outside counsel
- Current case didn't meet that threshold given preliminary assessment of corrective action

5. Public Safety and Meeting Atmosphere

Dr. Grise-Owens connected advisory opinion to broader concerns about public trust.

Key Statements:

- She prefaced that she was not the author of the earlier mentioned letter requesting an advisory opinion on police presence during meetings.
- "I do not feel safe" at meetings despite being "a 69-year-old white woman with all the privilege I carry"
- Has spoken with neighbors, especially people of color, who also feel unsafe
- Would not bring grandchildren to meetings despite their interest in governance
- Referenced Facebook group led by non-resident with "mob-ish mentality" that "spills out into council meetings"
- "There is not public trust because people cannot come here"
- Fears retaliation (has been fired in past for speaking up)

Questions about police:

- Are officers being paid? Is it overtime?
- These are taxpayer-funded resources
- What is appropriate role of police at meetings?

Committee Response: Will not judge anyone's feelings of safety; will proceed with planned inquiry to Police Chief for transparency about policies.

6. Process Improvements

Dr. Grise-Owens emphasized respect for committee's "expertise, time, and energy in a volunteer capacity" and suggested lessons learned could reduce future burdens.

Committee Acknowledgment:

- Chair Corlett: "I wish we didn't have to learn it this way. I wish we didn't have to learn on the job"
 - Committee was working in "theoreticals" when building code and hoped never to use it
 - Committed to reviewing processes in upcoming code work
 - Member Shaak: "This is the first time we did this...we needed all" the structure and support
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VII. FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

Chair Corlett's Proposal:

- Add Dr. Grise-Owens' concerns to next meeting agenda
- Determine additional action items needed
- Already identified: public letter to clerk (completed) and defining attorney role (upcoming)

Process Clarification:

- Advisory opinions don't have formal submission rules beyond what's on website
- Open floor presentations can constitute formal submission
- Committee considers Dr. Grise-Owens' remarks as formal advisory opinion submission

Philosophical Point (Chair Corlett): "Our goal as a committee is to be fair, transparent and trustworthy, and part of being fair and transparent and trustworthy is following the code as it is intended to be read."

VIII. UPCOMING AGENDA

Next Meeting (October 21, 2025):

1. Follow-up on Dr. Grise-Owens' concerns
2. Communications review (emails, open meetings, social media, messaging apps)

Subsequent Meetings:

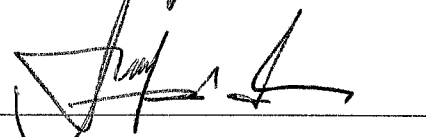
- Complaints, hearing processes, and procedures
 - Continued Code of Ethics revisions
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IX. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Member Shaak | **Second:** Member Diallo | **Vote:** Unanimous

Time: 12:27 PM


Mera Kathryn Corlett


Malick Diallo


Calvin Shaak