



Office of the Ohio Consumers' Counsel

MINUTES OF THE OFFICE OF THE OHIO CONSUMERS' COUNSEL GOVERNING BOARD

November 16, 2021

Members Present: Mr. Michael Watkins, Chair
Mr. Stuart Young, Vice-Chair
Ms. Cheryl Grossman
Mr. Dorsey Hager, Jr.
Ms. Kelly Moore
Ms. Connie Skinner

Members Absent: Mr. Tim Callion, Mr. Charles Newman, Ms. Jan Shannon.

CALL TO ORDER BY CHAIR:

Chair Watkins called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 A.M. Interim Board Secretary (Deputy Consumers' Counsel) Larry Sauer called the roll, with members present as shown above.

Chair Watkins stated the Board would be going into Executive Session at 11:15 A.M., and that the meeting would conclude shortly thereafter.

MEETING MINUTES:

Chair Watkins asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2021 Board meeting. A motion was made by Ms. Grossman to approve the minutes. Ms. Skinner seconded the motion. Mr. Sauer called the roll. The September 29, 2021 Board meeting minutes were approved unanimously.

FUTURE MEETING SCHEDULE:

The members reviewed the proposed meeting dates for 2022. Members attempted to minimize schedule conflicts but noted there were some minor conflicts. The consensus was to move forward with the following dates until further notice:

January 18
March 15
May 17
July 19
September 20
November 15

The Chair reminded everyone to finish their annual ethics training as soon as possible.

Mr. Young asked if anyone wanted to consider changing the time of the Board meeting, because sometimes it seemed rushed to conclude by noon. After a brief discussion the Board reached a consensus to begin future meetings at 9:30 A.M. instead of 10:00 A.M.

Consumers' Counsel Weston asked the Board whether they were satisfied with the current format of the Board meetings and what meeting format would they like in the future. Ms. Grossman stated that Board members need to be informed of the "high-profile situations." She noted that there "has been a multitude of topics in that regard recently." Therefore, she would prefer to be informed of "high level analysis and summaries on some of the most offensive things and solutions." Consumers' Counsel Weston expressed appreciation for the input. Vice-Chair Young stated he would like to have more open dialog between Board members during the meetings. Ms. Moore would like to see more forecasting or trends that could go forward, such as where generation of power will be coming from in the future and how are we preparing for these changes.

GUEST SPEAKER – MR. DALE ARNOLD, DIRECTOR OF ENERGY DEVELOPMENT, OHIO FARM BUREAU:

Vice Chair Young introduced Mr. Dale Arnold, Director of Energy Development, of the Ohio Farm Bureau. Mr. Young stated he had known Mr. Arnold for 25 years, and the Farm Bureau has 200,000 members. Mr. Young had invited Mr. Arnold to speak to the Board to provide an update as to the work of the Farm Bureau and its membership with regard to energy development.

Mr. Arnold stated he has been with the Farm Bureau for 37 years, 28 of which has been in the area of energy development. He stated that energy providers do planning and forecasting for energy development in 30-year time blocks at a minimum. He explained that eminent domain provisions do not apply to energy generation development, and that farmers and landowners have a responsibility to be involved in the process with government leaders, consumer groups and others. Mr. Arnold explained energy relationships with agriculture and how the demand for electric power has grown over the years. Mr. Arnold described the history of energy generation and the transition in the Ohio Valley from coal plants to wind, solar, biomass, fuel cell and other energy resources. He said that the need for education and outreach to local government leaders, consumer groups, energy service providers and others is vital. Mr. Arnold reviewed the Farm Bureau's policies with regard to energy development.

Mr. Young asked how the Board could help direct the agency to be part of the process. Mr. Arnold responded that there is a huge need to educate consumers and local community groups and local government leaders regarding energy development projects in their community.

RECOGNITION:

Deputy Sauer discussed the recent hire of Livinus Isioma as a legal intern. He stated that Livinus graduated with honors from Indiana State University with a bachelor's degree in Political Science, currently attends the University of Notre Dame Law School and plans to graduate in May of 2022. Livinus has been a law clerk for two judges. He will be working remotely for OCC from the Indiana

campus at Notre Dame. The Deputy noted that OCC has a long-standing legal internship program for law students interested in pursuing a career in public interest work. He noted that the current Consumer's Counsel served as an OCC Legal intern when he was in law school and it's been a successful program for many years. With the current state of remote work, OCC is able to expand opportunities for legal intern candidates such as to those attending school outside the Columbus area.

Next, Mr. Weston informed the Board that Jennie Long has transitioned toward retirement by taking a part-time position at Ohio State. He noted that her work with the Board and OCC is appreciated. Mr. Weston thanked Ms. Long for her work.

Mr. Weston was pleased to advise that OCC exceeded its assigned goal, by about 20%, for the 2021 Combined Charitable Campaign. He thanked Ms. Long for her role as OCC coordinator of the charitable campaign, and thanked Laurie Knight who also later served as coordinator. Mr. Weston relayed his appreciation to the OCC staff for their contributions to help others through the charities.

Mr. Sauer introduced Caitlyn Johnson, who is with the Attorney General's office and will now be providing legal services to OCC (as a client agency). He stated the OCC had worked with Ms. Johnson in the past when she was the Deputy of the AG's Special Counsel section and looks forward to working with her again. The Deputy introduced Bryan Lee, also with the Attorney General's office, who will work with Ms. Johnson to provide legal services to OCC. The Deputy thanked Ann Yackshaw, who was the predecessor from the Attorney General's office and who has been reassigned elsewhere in the Attorney General's office. Mr. Weston also expressed thanks to Caitlyn Johnson for her past work with the office regarding special counsel.

Mr. Weston introduced Susan Loe, OCC's new and recently hired Operations Director. He explained that Ms. Loe brings a combined expertise in HR and fiscal matters that OCC was seeking. He appreciates her interest in working for Ohio consumers.

Mr. Weston then explained that, due to time constraints, other distributed materials would not be presented orally so as to allow time for the Board's executive session. (The Operations Report, including the fiscal update, was distributed.)

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Vice-Chair Young made a motion, with a second by Ms. Moore, to go into Executive session to consider the employment and compensation of two public employees. Mr. Sauer called the roll. The Board members voted as follows: Ms. Grossman – yes; Mr. Hager – yes; Ms. Moore – yes; Ms. Skinner – yes; Vice-Chair Young – yes; and Chair Watkins – yes. The following Board members were not present for the roll call: Mr. Callion, Ms. Shannon and Mr. Newman. The Board went into executive session at approximately 11:15 A.M.

The Board returned from executive session at approximately 11:40 A.M.

Mr. Young moved that the Board set the salary for the Deputy Consumers' Counsel for the next year at \$139,000 even. The motion was seconded by Ms. Grossman. Mr. Weston asked if the motion could allow for rounding in order for OCC Operations to set the nearest hourly rate. Mr. Young amended the motion to allow for rounding, and Ms. Grossman concurred. Mr. Sauer called the roll. The Board members voted as follows: Ms. Grossman – yes; Mr. Hager – yes; Ms. Moore – yes; Ms. Skinner – yes; Vice-Chair Young – yes; and Chair Watkins – yes. The motion was unanimously approved. The following Board members were not present for the roll call: Mr. Callion, Ms. Shannon and Mr. Newman.

Mr. Weston thanked the Board members for the work they do and expressed his gratitude to Deputy Sauer. He stated that he is appreciative of the opportunity to work with Mr. Sauer. He stated that so much of what OCC does is a reflection of what Deputy Sauer does and he described Mr. Sauer as a wonderful public servant. Mr. Sauer thanked Mr. Weston and the Board and stated that it has been a great opportunity to do this public work at OCC. He added that it is a challenge given the high dollar stakes involved and that OCC does its best to represent consumers and obtain favorable outcomes for them. Mr. Watkins expressed gratitude to Mr. Weston and Mr. Sauer and the OCC staff for the work they do.


Ms. Grossman made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Ms. Moore. Mr. Sauer called the roll. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 11:45 A.M.

I verify that the above meeting minutes have been approved and ratified by the Consumers' Counsel Governing Board on January 26, 2022.



Michael Watkins, Board Chair



Larry Sauer, Interim Board Secretary
Ohio Consumers' Counsel Governing Board