



DEMOCRACY FUND BOARD MEETING Minutes

6:00 pm Wednesday, November 29, 2023

Meeting Room 3 / Virtual via Zoom

New Haven Democracy Fund Board, Sergio Rodriguez, Chair; William Wynn, Vice Chair

Members: Aaron Goode, James O'Connell, Lesley Heffel-McGuirk, Sarah Ficca, one vacant seat.

Democracy Fund Administrator: Alyson Heimer

To join the meeting please use one of the options below:

Web Browser: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82382679039> ; Meeting ID: 823 8267 9039

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+1 301 715 8592 US (New Haven, CT) Meeting ID: 823 8267 9039

+1 312 626 6799 US (Outside New Haven) Meeting ID: 823 8267 9039

- I. Call to Order & Attendance
- II. Motion to approve minutes of the Regular meeting October 18, 2023. 4-0-1.
- III. Motion to approve minutes of the Emergency meeting November 6, 2023. 4-0-1.
- IV. Public Comment
 - A. Mayor Justin Elicker let the board know that his campaign team was available for any questions that may come up during the discussion of the fines.
- V. Old Business:
 - A. Discussion of claim from John Carlson against Elicker for Mayor
 Administrator Heimer read into the record the response and supplemental documents submitted by the Elicker Campaign to the Board including a copy of the receipt for the mailer and the communication between the campaign consultant and the SEEC.
 Administrator Heimer references two complaints that were reviewed previously by the NHDF:
 2013 Kermit Carolina was publishing political cartoons
 2017 Marcus Paca sent negative political mailers and the Harp campaign took issue with their receiving public funds to run a negative campaign.
 Member Ficca wanted to make sure in the future we formalize the advice we give to campaigns and formalize the complaints process moving forward. Candidates that do their



New Haven Democracy Fund

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due diligence shouldn't be punished for trying their best. The board members are volunteers and their time is valuable. This should be a board that is used a model nationally and we cannot rush to decisions without due diligence investigation.

Jim O'Connell noted that CT Gen. Stat. Sec 9-369 D(4) stated that no state or municipal funds shall be made to influence any person to vote for or against a referendum. Section 5 states that penalties for such action might be imposed and they shall not be reimbursed by the city for those fines.

Mayor Elicker was permitted to speak and reminded the Board members that they set some funds aside to be returned to the Democracy Fund.

Member Heffel-McGuirk noted that the ordinance language states that NHDF rules disallow the use of funds to promote a referendum, but perhaps that language is unclear. As it is related to the Elicker campaign there does not seem to be a clear infraction.

Member Wynn stated that he wanted to act on any complaint expeditiously. We should address complaints as immediately as possible because this is the people's money. This should be a board that is used as a model nationally and we should not drag our feet.

Chair Rodriguez said there was some issue with the piece and that it can be taken as a call to action and we should make sure that the information we provide is the best information to give. The information that the refund will be coming back does change the conversation in a way because the campaign is going above.

Motion made by Heffel-McGuirk: It is the determination of the Board that there is no violation by the campaign. There is an agreed upon mediated resolution of donating their campaign overage to the Democracy Fund. The complaint will be dismissed upon receipt of funds.

Goode: yes

Ficca: yes

Heffel-McGuirk: Yes

O'connell: no

Rodriguez: yes

Wynn: yes

Motion Passes 5-1-0.



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VI. Administrator's Report

A. Invitation to speak in Kansas City, MO at the COGEL Conference

Ficca will connect with the Administrator to pull salient points from Zoe Becker's report.

B. 2023 Election Update - General Election concluded with the Elicker campaign participating in the general election and qualifying for the grant and matching funds.

VII. Subcommittee Reports

A. Proposed changes to NHDF Regulations and subcommittee development.

Heffel-McGuirk volunteered to chair, Goode volunteered.

VIII. New Business

A. Annual Report

Motion by O'Connell Heffel-McGuirk seconded to request the annual report and annual request for funding.

Meeting ended at 7:54 pm.