

# STATE OF TENNESSEE



## BUREAU OF ETHICS AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE TENNESSEE ETHICS COMMISSION

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BOARD MEMBERS  
Tammy S. White, Chair  
Duane Gilbert, Secretary  
Charles Traughber  
Stacey Floyd-Thomas  
Martin G. McCain  
Lynn Richardson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
Bill Young

### TENNESSEE ETHICS COMMISSION Public Meeting Minutes April 22, 2025

The Tennessee Ethics Commission met on Tuesday, April 22, 2025, for a specially scheduled meeting. The meeting began at 9:00 AM and was held at the W.R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower at 312 Rosa L. Parks Ave., Nashville, TN, in the Nashville Room.

Executive Director Bill Young, Assistant Director Lance Frizzell, General Counsel Lauren Topping, and Chief of Staff Janet Williams were in attendance. The Commission's meeting was recorded for the public, and the video recording will be available on the Commission's website.

Executive Director Young presided over the meeting. Commissioners Tammy White, Charles Traughber, Martin G. McCain, Duane Gilbert, Lynn Richardson and Stacey Floyd-Thomas attended and participated in the meeting by telephone.

At the outset of the meeting, Director Young addressed several preliminary matters, including an explanation of the purpose of the meeting, the special setting of this meeting, the Respondent's waiver of confidentiality in this matter, and the establishment of a quorum of members participating electronically.

Counsel for the Commission presented the following Statement of Necessity, pursuant to Tenn. Code Ann. 8-44-108(b).

The Tennessee Ethics Commission ("the Commission") conducted a public meeting on April 22, 2025 with all 6 members participating by electronic means. The Commission is composed of 6 members and a quorum exists when 4 members are present. As a result, there was not a physical quorum of members physically present at this meeting; however, the members determined that participation by electronic means was necessary.

Specifically, the following facts, when considered together, were determined sufficient to justify conducting the meeting without a physical quorum: 1) the members of the Commission reside across all three grand divisions of Tennessee, meaning that a majority of members are physically located outside of the Nashville Metro Area; 2) the business necessary to be conducted at this meeting consists of only one matter, a preliminary hearing

regarding a sworn complaint filed against a State Representative, which was expedited for a Special Meeting due to the sensitivity of the matter at the request of the Representative against whom the complaint was filed; 3) as this matter is a preliminary review, focused on determining whether the Commission has jurisdiction over the complaint, the time necessary to conduct the meeting was expected to be relatively short in comparison to the Commission's usual meeting agendas; 4) because the time necessary to complete the business was expected to be small, the conduct of the meeting by electronic means was determined to be a much more prudent use of resources in order to complete the Commission's business and to avoid the necessity that members travel to the Nashville Metro area.

All other requirements of the Open Meetings Act were observed and met in the conduct of this meeting. A formal Statement of Necessity was filed with the Office of the Secretary of State on April 22, 2025.

**1. Sworn Complaint C2025-002: Jeri Brittain, Catherine Garrigan, Katherine Lawson, Karen Reynolds and Joy J. Rice v. Aron Maberry**

Director Young presented a summary of the procedural status of the complaint and then presented a Complaint Summary prepared by the Commission's staff. As a part of this summary, the Commission's staff recommended that the Complaint be dismissed for lack of jurisdiction and merit.

After this presentation, Director Young yielded the floor to Chairman White for the remainder of the meeting. Chairman White then requested comments and discussion from the other members of the Commission.

Commissioner Gilbert moved to dismiss the complaint, based upon Staff's recommendation, as outside of the Commission's jurisdiction and lacking any meaningful claims over which the Commission has the authority to act. Commissioner Richardson seconded the motion. Commissioner Gilbert further noted his concerns regarding the political nature of the complaint and the complainants' attempt to weaponize the Commission's sworn complaint process by releasing the Complaint to the media before the complaint was filed with the Commission despite the confidential nature of the complaint process. Commissioners Floyd-Thomas, McCain, and Traugher commented in agreement with the motion. Chairman White also commented on her agreement with the motion and called for a roll call vote. The roll call vote was conducted, and the motion was approved by 6-0.

Commissioner White commented on her concerns that the Complaint had been filed for a political purpose and constituted an unsubstantiated complaint filed in reckless disregard for the truth and the confidentiality of the complaint process. Commissioner White issued a warning to the Complainants that any further efforts to pursue this method of weaponizing the Commission's process would very likely result in the Commission's consideration of whether or not to assess civil penalties against the Complainants for filing an unsubstantiated complaint.

Commissioner Floyd-Thomas also expressed her concerns with the Complainants efforts to weaponize the Commission's process, and moved to specifically note these concerns in the Commissions meeting minutes, specifically stating that further attempts to pursue this course of action would necessitate the consideration of sanctions in this mater, in an effort to dissuade others from pursuing the same abuse of process. Commissioner Gilbert seconded the motion. Commissioner Traugher commented in agreement with the motion and asked that the Complainants be provided a written statement regarding the Commission's concerns and the Commission's authority to assess civil penalties for unsubstantiated complaints. Commissioners Floyd-Thomas and Gilbert accepted the amendment to the motion. Chairman White called for a roll call vote. The roll call vote was conducted, and the motion was approved by 6-0.

With no further business or discussion, the meeting was adjourned.