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Meeting for Cook County Board of Review
September 10, 2024

Cook County Board of Review

COOK COUNTY BOARD OF REVIEW

MEETING

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2024 at 9:00 a.m.

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS before CHAIRWOMAN

SAMANTHA STEELE, upon the meeting of the above-entitled cause taken at the Cook County Board of Review, 118 North Clark Street, Room 601, Chicago, Illinois 60602 held on the 10th day of September, 2024 at the hour of 9:00 a.m.

APPEARANCES:

MR. GEORGE A. CARDENAS, Commissioner

MR. LARRY ROGERS, Commissioner

ALSO PRESENT:

MS. LILIANA ESCARPITO, Secretary

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Good morning. Thank
3 you for joining us. This meeting of the Cook County
4 Board of Review is called to order. I will now call
5 the roll call. Commissioner Rogers?

6 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: Present.

7 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Commissioner Cardenas?

8 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Present.

9 COMMISSIONER STEELE: I'm present,
10 Commissioner Steele. Let the record reflect that all
11 Commissioners are present. We will now proceed with
12 the Pledge of Allegiance.

13 (PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE)

14 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Transitioning on to
15 Public Comment, the Board's public comment policy
16 limits public speakers to two minutes and prohibits
17 profanity or abusive language. And do we have any
18 public comments?

19 MS. ESCARPITA: Chairwoman, one person signed
20 up for public comment, Mr Frank Calabrese.

21 Mr. Calabrese, are you in the building?

22 (NO RESPONSE)

23 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Are there any
24 additional speakers?

1 MS. ESCARPITA: No one else signed up.

2 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Seeing that we have
3 concluded the public comment period, under old business
4 the first item on the agenda the approval of the
5 minutes from the July 8, 2024 public meeting. If there
6 is no corrections, is there a Motion to Approve the
7 minutes for July 8, 2024 public meeting?

8 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: So moved.

9 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Second.

10 COMMISSIONER STEELE: All in favor indicate
11 by saying "aye".

12 (A CHORUS OF AYES)

13 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Those opposed say
14 "nay".

15 (NO RESPONSE)

16 COMMISSIONER STEELE: The ayes have it.
17 Under New Business, the first item under New Business
18 are Amendments to the Employment Plan. These
19 amendments were designed to make sure we remain fully
20 compliant with all relevant hiring practices while
21 streamlining our process for greater efficiency. By
22 implementing these changes, we create a consistent
23 framework which produces and aligns with legal
24 requirements and capacities over all experience. Our goal

1 is to maintain a balance between adherence with
2 compliance standards and the practical need for a more
3 efficient uniform approach across all departments.

4 Is there a Motion to Adopt the Employment
5 Plan as amended?

6 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: I Motion to Adopt the
7 Employment Plan.

8 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Is there a second?

9 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: I second.

10 COMMISSIONER STEELE: All in favor.

11 (A CHORUS OF AYES)

12 COMMISSIONER STEELE: The ayes have it.

13 So I have something that I would like
14 to read in regards to some of the amendments that we
15 have made to the Employment Plan during the last
16 meeting, the July 8th meeting. As a woman in the
17 property evaluation industry, I have observed first hand
18 that this field lacks diversity. This lack of
19 diversity limits perspective and community innovation.
20 Bringing in a diverse voice and background not only
21 enriches the decision making process, but often ensures
22 that our work is more inclusive and reflect the
23 diverse communities we serve. And embracing diversity
24 is crucial in fostering a more equitable industry and

1 better addresses the needs of our constituents.

2 We source our employees out of Cook County,
3 particularly those from a minority background with
4 exceptional credentials in property valuation. It is
5 crucial for both ethical and operational -- it is
6 important we grant these waivers.

7 In the two years that I served as Board of
8 Review Commissioner, I observed that there have been a
9 lack of applicants with the quality of credentials and
10 breadth of experience to fill our vacant positions.

11 In order to not put the Board's future at
12 risk for undermining our commitment to equitable
13 treatment of -- and possible litigation for unfair
14 labor practices. It is essential that we support and
15 retain valuable team members.

16 So being that there are no additional
17 businesses before the Board --

18 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: I have a comment.

19 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: Can we comment?

20 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Madam Secretary, did
21 we amend the Employment Plan?

22 MS.ESCARPITA: We did not amend the
23 Employment Plan. We are amending the Employment Plan
24 today. But what we amended at the last meeting was the

1 Personnel Rules to include the residency requirement to
2 conform with the Cook County residency requirement.

3 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Mr. Cardenas, that is
4 not entirely true.

5 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Madam Chair, I'm just
6 trying to ask a question to the Secretary. That's all.
7 It was from an informational stand point. I need to be
8 informed as to what is going on at the Board. Now, we
9 did introduce an Employment Plan.

10 MS. ESCARPITA: Amendment to date.

11 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Right. But the last
12 meeting, can you explain what happened in the last
13 meeting, because I was here, but I don't believe these are
14 amendments to that plan at that time.

15 MS. ESCARPITA: No amendment to the
16 Employment Plan. I think Commissioner Steele might
17 have meant to refer to the Personnel Rules that were
18 amended, as that is the only place where we amended,
19 essentially we amended the Personnel Rules to conform
20 with the residency requirement. Nothing further.

21 COMMISSIONER STEELE: There were other
22 amendments made that day.

23 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: For the record, there
24 is no amendments in our last meeting to the Employment

1 Plan, whatsoever, none. I want to make that clear. So
2 that it is on the record. There was no amendments made
3 in the last Employment Plan. Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER STEELE: In your opinion.

5 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: No, it is not an
6 opinion. It is a fact.

7 MS. ESCARPITA: The meeting minutes are
8 before you all for the last proceeding. So they are in
9 your packet.

10 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Let's refer to the
11 notes. Absolutely. Thank you for noting that.

12 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: Just yielding to my
13 colleague. When he finishes, I'll reply.

14 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: You want me to read
15 the entire --

16 MS. ESCARPITA: Sure. Also, I mean there is
17 30 plus pages, but the Agenda is something that we can
18 also refer to. The Agenda delineates the policies that
19 were amended at the last public meeting that is public
20 domain. It is on our website and it is delineated that
21 we amended the telecommuting policies, the Personnel
22 Rules. We also amended the Dual Employment and that is
23 all.

24 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Well, for me I just

1 want the facts to be straight here. For me it is just
2 about the business of the Board and to be factual, to
3 be transparent and to have these conversations out in
4 public. So if there are any questions about that, I
5 can definitely read the entirety of our last meeting
6 verbatim, if necessary. So I certainly wouldn't mind
7 doing that to refresh everyone's exactly what
8 transpired in the last meeting, because I know -- I
9 can't remember what we ate yesterday. But I think it's
10 important for us to recognize the ongoings of the Board
11 and take -- very seriously, very much. So factual
12 information is very important.

13 Last meeting Page 2, this is "Commissioner
14 Steele, Good Morning, everyone. This meeting of the
15 Board of Review is called to order. I now call the
16 roll. Commissioner Rogers, Here, Commissioner
17 Cardenas, here. Commissioner Steele, present. Let the
18 record reflect that all Commissioners are present. We
19 will now proceed with the Pledge of Allegiance.
20 Mr. Cardenas -- I said the Pledge of Allegiance."

21 Do we have to?

22 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: I don't think we need
23 to read the minutes from the last meeting. We have the
24 record and what occurred to establish that.

1 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: If anybody wants
2 copies, they are here.

3 Q (By Commissioner Rogers) I just wanted to
4 make a comment in light of Chairwoman Steele's
5 remarks. I don't have a copy of them and I didn't
6 memorize them. But a couple of things stood out.

7 There is a comment about the importance
8 of diversity. And I know you are reporting the meeting
9 here today, which is perfectly fine. If the camera
10 spanned the room, you would see probably one of the
11 most diversified agencies in Cook County both racially,
12 and gender-based diversities. And that's something
13 that I'm very proud of about this agency. I think it
14 is a testament to the value of diversity. And I think
15 the agency reflects that simply by what is in the room.

16 I would also say it reflects that by the
17 elected Commissioners. We have an African-American,
18 myself. A Latino, Commissioner Cardenas and a White
19 woman, Commissioner Steele. That is the epitome of
20 diversity. While we can also strive to do better, I
21 think it is a good reflection of how government works
22 with diversity, both racial and gender-based.

23 I'll also mention that we have an
24 African-American female serving as the Chief Deputy

1 Commissioner. We have a Latino woman, Lilian Escarpita
2 serving as Secretary of the agency and Christine Duffy
3 serving as General Counsel and Allen Manuel,
4 African-American male serving as the Clerk of the
5 agency. That is the reflection of the extent of
6 diversity that this agency represents, both racial and
7 gender-based.

8 So I just wanted to put that on the
9 record, because I think it's important, the issue that
10 the Commissioner raised. I think it's also a testament
11 to what diversity can look like and how successful and
12 effective it can be.

13 The last thing I wanted to mention was
14 the issue of residency. Having been here for 20 years
15 now. This is my 20th year serving as a Commissioner
16 and with my background as a lawyer, I can appreciate
17 the importance of complying with all rules. We live in
18 the State of Illinois, but we live in the United States
19 of America. We have to comply with Federal Rules and
20 State of Illinois Rules. And I view county government
21 similar, we have county government Ethics Rules. We
22 have county government Residency Rules. We have county
23 government Employment Rules. And we as an individual
24 agency also have our own rules, both of which have to

1 be complied with. And our objective in amending any
2 policy, be they Ethics policies or Employment policies,
3 is to make sure that they are consistent across all
4 governing bodies and to make sure that everyone is
5 aware of them so that they can be compliant.

6 That being said, there are waiver
7 opportunities that can come into play where you
8 sometimes have specialty knowledge and you have to go
9 outside. And I appreciate that. I'm opened to that.
10 But it is not simply because you want to hire someone
11 outside of the jurisdiction.

12 We are a Cook County agency. We serve
13 Cook County residents. And where we can and should
14 provide employment opportunities to the residents in
15 Cook County. I'm open to the waiver where it is
16 appropriate and necessary. I'm not open to a blanket
17 waiver extending opportunities to persons outside of
18 Cook County where we have competent and capable and
19 experienced people here.

20 So I just wanted to put that on the
21 record so my position is clear. I stated I think
22 something similar at the last meeting and I stand by
23 that.

24 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Thank you, Commissioner

1 Rogers.

2 Can you tell me how many open vacancies we
3 have at the Board of Review?

4 MS. ESCARPITA: We have 23 openings.

5 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Is there a motion to
6 adjourn?

7 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: How many of those
8 have been posted?

9 MS. ESCARPITA: I believe we have about five
10 positions posted at this time. They are actively being
11 filled. So out of those 23 now, we do have folks that
12 are in the process of onboarding.

13 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: What's the Employment
14 Plan for the rest of the year in terms of --

15 MS. ESCARPITA: We have a hiring plan. We
16 are adopting the Employment Plan today in an effort to
17 expedite that process and being in compliance and
18 conforming with all best practice hiring procedures.
19 We intend to fill those vacancies by November 30th.

20 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: What is the time line
21 to onboarding --

22 MS. ESCARPITA: Well, before -- anywhere from
23 30 to 60 days. As you know, we implemented the
24 background checks. There are some things that are

1 outside of our control, since we do have to partner
2 with, not only just Human Resources, but also the
3 Department of Budget Management. So hoping with these
4 amendments we are able to streamline that process even
5 more so. We are hoping anywhere from 30 to 45 days we
6 would be able to onboard folks. And as we go also
7 particularly focus on promoting our current employees
8 into other positions. So that process of internal
9 hiring is also something that is new to the Board. And
10 building that infrastructure to provide those
11 opportunities for upper mobility of our current staff
12 is also a priority.

13 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Thank you. Obviously
14 it is on the record and I'm glad this is being
15 videotaped. There is approximately 60 million
16 residents in Cook County. The Cook County Board of
17 Review is hiring. So if you are listening and you are
18 going to pass the information on to others, please have
19 them visit boardofreview.com and go under the Section
20 "About" and then scroll down to "Employment" and there
21 you will see the positions that are being opened. For
22 sure we can find qualified individuals in a population
23 of approximately 6 million people. I assure you of
24 that. We have many excellent, wonderful, educated,

1 qualified with very good skills as I see before me with
2 everyone here that works for the Cook County Board of
3 Review or Cook County. We have the people. We have
4 Olympians in Cook County. Make sure that we honor
5 them. Thank you.

6 COMMISSIONER STEELE: One more question. We
7 had a budget hearing about two months ago. There were
8 70 vacancies in your office. Where are the
9 vacancies --

10 MS. ESCARPITA: Excuse me. Vacancies from my
11 office?

12 COMMISSIONER STEELE: For the Board. I
13 believe they were broken down.

14 MS. ESCARPITA: So we had 24 vacancies at
15 that point. And as you know, Commissioner Steele, we
16 have been aggressively trying to recruit. We have sent
17 various job offers and people have in turn declined,
18 particularly District 2. I'm not sure why. But those
19 instances are obviously setting us back because we
20 spend a lot of time through the recruitment process,
21 onboarding process, for a candidate just to come back
22 and say they are no longer interested.

23 COMMISSIONER STEELE: Correct. And we do
24 compete with the Assessor's Office. I really do

1 appreciate all the efforts to make sure that we do have
2 a full staff, because we'll have an extra load this
3 year. Thank you very much.

4 Let me go back. If there is no additional
5 business before the Board, can I get a Motion for
6 Adjournment of this meeting so that the Board can
7 continue in session for the purpose of education appeal
8 and other matters as required by the Property Tax Code?

9 COMMISSIONER ROGERS: So moved.

10 COMMISSIONER CARDENAS: Second.

11 COMMISSIONER STEELE: All in favor?

12 (A CHORUS OF AYES)

13 COMMISSIONER STEELE: The meeting of the Cook
14 County Board of Review is hereby adjourned. Thank you
15 all for coming.

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17 (WHEREUPON the meeting was
18 adjourned at 9:35 a.m)

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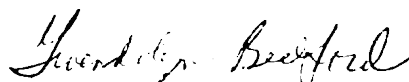
STATE OF ILLINOIS)
)
COUNTY OF C O O K)

C E R T I F I C A T E

The within and foregoing meeting was taken before GWENDOLYN BEDFORD, Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public, in the City of Chicago, County of Cook and State of Illinois.

The undersigned is not interested in the within meeting, nor of kin or counsel to any of the members.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 10th day of September, 2024.



GWENDOLYN BEDFORD, C.S.R.
No. 084-003700

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