

MINUTES
BOARD OF ETHICS PUBLIC MEETING

May 29, 2026

10:00 A.M.

In-Person at the Dutchess County Department of Law

Present:

Peter M. Forman, Chair
Paul Piastro
Rex Bridges
David Lemon
Caroline E. Blackburn, Counsel
Rachel Whispell, Confidential Secretary

From the Public:

Kimberly Hunt-Lee, Esq., Sokoloff Stern
Steven Engelhardt
Robert W. Robinson

Item 1. Meeting Opened

The meeting was called to order by Chair Peter Forman at 10:00 a.m. A quorum was present.

A moment of silence was held for the late County Attorney, James M. Fedorchak.

Item 2. Approve and adopt prior meeting minutes

Paul Piastro moved to accept the minutes of the May 1, 2026 meeting, seconded by David Lemon.

The motion carried unanimously. The minutes were adopted.

Item 3. Review any complaints or inquiries for Ethics Board Opinion

First, members discussed and deliberated on an anonymous complaint received via email on May 20, 2026 alleging violations of the Code of Ethics by a former Deputy County Executive as it relates to the Leadership Prayer Breakfast.

Dutchess County Attorney, Caroline E. Blackburn, recused her office from this matter as it relates to a matter anonymously brought and disposed of in 2025. In anticipation, the Board of Ethics asked special counsel Kimberly Hunt-Lee to attend this meeting and provide guidance on the matter. County Attorney Blackburn excused herself from the meeting.

The members discussed with Ms. Hunt-Lee the allegations. Ms. Hunt-Lee opined that the 2026 complaint alleges that an employee used County resources in violation of the Code of Ethics, but the complaint acknowledges these actions were functions of the position. The 2026 complaint is similar to the 2025 complaint, including similar exhibits, except that the 2026 complaint also seeks civil sanctions.

The members discussed the 2025 complaint allegations, which were dismissed as it did not violate the Code using County offices for purposes of raising money for a not-for-profit.

Rex Bridges moved to dismiss the 2026 complaint. Some members having not had an opportunity to fully review, the 2026 complaint is tabled for further discussion at the next meeting.

Further discussion was held concerning the next meeting date and confirmed June 26, 2026 at 10:30 a.m.

Ms. Hunt-Lee was excused and Ms. Blackburn returned for the next complaint.

The members then discussed and deliberated on a complaint received on May 12, 2026 from Michael McCormack alleging violations of the Code of Ethics against an employee of the Legislature as it relates to a “Delivering for Dutchess Leadership Breakfast”. Ms. Blackburn provided legal guidance.

Chair Forman requested of the County Attorney to invite the complainant as well as those named in the complaint to attend the meeting on June 26, 2026.

Rex Bridges moved to table for further discussions on June 26, 2026, seconded by Paul Piastro.

The motion carried unanimously.

The members will contemplate a regular meeting schedule.

The members further discussed the requirements of a fifth member and finding volunteers.

The meeting adjourned at 10:46 a.m.