

*Stephan W. Fogleman, Chair
Melodie Hengerer
Arnold Sampson
Vacancies*



Director: J. Christoph Amberger

BALTIMORE CITY BOARD OF ETHICS

April 14, 2023

Via Electronic Mail

The Honorable President
Members of the City Council
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary
Room 409, City Hall
100 N. Holliday St.
Baltimore, MD 21202

Re: City Council Bill 23-0363 (“Land Bank Authority”)

Dear President and City Council Members:

The Ethics Board has reviewed City Council Bill 23-0363 (“Bill”). The Bill establishes the Land Bank Authority of Baltimore City (“Authority”) as an independent entity, provides for the appointment of a Board of Directors consisting of eleven (11) members, and authorizes the Authority to employ an Executive Director and Staff and retain consultants as employees or agents. Among other provisions concerning the administration of the Authority and Board, the Bill also amends the Ethics Law—specifically, Sections 2-2 and 2-3 (to include the Land Bank Authority of Baltimore City and the Authority’s Board of Directors, respectively) and Section 7-8 of Article 8 of the City Code—to require all Members of the Board, the Executive Director, and all non-clerical employees¹ of the Board to file financial disclosure statements.

The Ethics Law requires many City officials and employees to file annual financial disclosure statements, including the members of many City boards and commissions. City Code, Article 8, Subtitle 7. The public disclosure of public servants’ financial and other interests furthers the purpose of the Ethics Law, which is “[t]o guard against improper influence or even the appearance of improper influence, and to ensure public trust in government.” City Code, Art. 8, § 1-2(2). The process of financial disclosure assists in identifying potential conflicts of interest between City duties and private interests. Because individuals within the Commission will be involved in the development and implementation of City policy and programs, among other responsibilities, it furthers the purpose of the Ethics Law to require these individuals to disclose their financial interests.

There is likely minimal fiscal or administrative impact in requiring these additional individuals to file financial disclosure statements. The Ethics Board, in collaboration with Baltimore City Information

¹ The term “non-clerical employee” means any City official or employee “who: (1) is compensated for his or her services; and (2) is not employed solely in a secretarial, clerical, or custodial capacity.” City Code, Art. 8, § 7-6(b).

Baltimore City Board of Ethics

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Technology, provides an online financial disclosure portal. City officials and employees, including members of City boards and commissions, can easily create an account and file financial disclosure statements online, which are then viewable by Ethics Board staff and members of the public who have registered for viewer accounts.

Accordingly, although the Ethics Board does not take a position on the Bill, the Bill's financial disclosure requirements are consistent with the Ethics Law's substance and administration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

J. Christoph Amberger
Director, Ethics Board

Cc: Stephan Fogleman, Ethics Board Chair
Members of the Ethics Board
Nina Themelis, Deputy Director, Mayor's Office of Government Affairs