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Public Meeting Cook County Board of Review
September 9, 2022

Cook County Board of Review

PUBLIC MEETING
COOK COUNTY BOARD OF REVIEW

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS of the Public Meeting of the Cook County Board of Review taken remotely on the 9th day of September, 2022, between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:48 a.m., before Valeri Bleyer, Notary Public and Certified Shorthand Reporter, CSR No. 084-002678 for the State of Illinois.

1 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: I'll call the
 2 meeting of the Cook County Board of Review to order.
 3 We'll begin with roll call. Commissioner Cabonargi.
 4 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Present.
 5 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Commissioner Wendt.
 6 Commissioner Rogers -- let the record reflect that
 7 Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Cabonargi are
 8 present and Commissioner Tammy Wendt is absent.
 9 Item number two, the Pledge of Allegiance.
 10 This -- I will ask Colin Brady, on behalf of
 11 Commissioner Wendt, to take the lead on the Pledge of
 12 Allegiance.
 13 MR. BRADY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
 14 I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States
 15 of America, and to the Republic for which it stands,
 16 one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and
 17 justice for all.
 18 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Thank you,
 19 Mr. Brady.
 20 Moving on in the agenda, has anyone signed
 21 up to participate publicly or if there is anyone
 22 present who would like to make a public statement,
 23 please indicate so by raising your hand. Let the
 24 record reflect Todd Theilmann has raised his hand.

1 We'll call on Mr. Theilmann.
 2 MR. THEILMANN: Thank you, Chairman
 3 Rogers. My name is Todd Theilmann, former employee
 4 of the Cook County Board of Review, former Chief of
 5 Staff for Commissioner Tammy Wendt. I'm going to
 6 finish my statement I tried to read at the 31st
 7 meeting that was cut off. I just had two more points
 8 to make. Fortunately this one is a little too late,
 9 but prior to that meeting there was a -- part of the
 10 agenda was to appoint a secretary. And I'm not going
 11 to read that part of the statement because it's a
 12 moot point right now.
 13 But one last thing I did want to say was I
 14 had spoke before the Cook County Board of Ethics last
 15 week or a week and a half now in regard to their
 16 investigation on Commissioner Wendt. This involves
 17 the Board of Review, because Commissioner Cabonargi
 18 publicly asked for the investigation. What I found
 19 was the eight-year working relationship between
 20 Commissioner Cabonargi and Ethics Chair Szromba at
 21 the SEC would be a conflict of interest that was not
 22 disclosed. I also found that four of the five board
 23 members had not completed their OMA's training, as
 24 required by law. Since they were supposed to set the

1 standard for ethical behavior I asked at that meeting
 2 that they all resign.
 3 That will finalize my statement. Thank
 4 you.
 5 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Let the record
 6 reflect that, as Mr. Theilmann indicated, he's the
 7 former chief of staff and cousin of Commissioner
 8 Wendt and the subject matter, I believe -- do you
 9 want to describe the subject matter of the ethics
 10 complaints and the finding, Mr. Theilmann?
 11 Mr. Theilmann?
 12 Just for context and completeness, the --
 13 as I understand it the Board of Ethics launched an
 14 investigation into Commissioner Wendt's hiring of her
 15 cousin, Todd Theilmann, as the chief of staff and
 16 it's violation of the ethics ordinance. There was a
 17 finding that, in fact, she had hired her cousin. She
 18 was instructed to terminate him and there was an
 19 order that his salary be refunded to the county. As
 20 I understand it, because she did not comply, the
 21 Board of Ethics filed a lawsuit against Commissioner
 22 Wendt regarding those issues. I don't know the
 23 current status of that beyond the fact that
 24 Mr. Theilmann apparently resigned and/or was

1 terminated after that lawsuit was filed. Just to
 2 give it some context.
 3 Any other public comment? Hearing none, we
 4 will move on in the agenda to approval of the minutes
 5 from the August 31, 2022, meeting.
 6 For the record, those minutes have not been
 7 transcribed as of yet. We do have a video record of
 8 those meeting minutes. If anyone -- what I would
 9 suggest is that we table approval of those minutes
 10 until the next meeting, which is expected to occur
 11 within the next 30 days. I would move that we table
 12 approval of those minutes from August 31 to the next
 13 formal meeting of the board. Is there a second for
 14 that motion?
 15 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Second.
 16 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: There being a motion
 17 and a second, all in favor indicate so by saying aye.
 18 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Aye.
 19 MR. BRADY: Aye.
 20 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Respectfully,
 21 Mr. Brady, you can't vote on behalf of Commissioner
 22 Wendt.
 23 MR. BRADY: Okay.
 24 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: There being two

1 votes in favor of the motion, the motion passes.
 2 The next item on the agenda is a call for
 3 old business. Item number one being an update on
 4 outside counsel for the Cook County Board of Review's
 5 internal investigation. I believe we're going to
 6 discuss that matter -- excuse me, I believe we're
 7 going to discuss that matter in executive session
 8 initially, so we will table it at this time.
 9 Is there any new business before we go into
 10 executive session that anyone wishes to raise?
 11 Hearing none, the board will resign to executive
 12 session to discuss the update on outside counsel and
 13 then we'll return shortly. I would ask that our IT
 14 staff remove Mr. Cabonargi and myself to -- as well
 15 as our outside counsel, Kelly Warner, to a private
 16 room so that we can go in executive session. I would
 17 like the court reporter to be present to record the
 18 discussions in executive session. So remove her as
 19 well.
 20 MR. BELZ: And you require secretary
 21 of the board as well, Chairman Rogers?
 22 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: We can have the
 23 secretary of the board as well, as well as the Chief
 24 Deputy Commissioner, if he's still available. I know

1 there are some hearings today.
 2 MR. BELZ: Okay. I'm going to add the
 3 room and start breaking you out. You should all be
 4 there in about three minutes. If there's an issue --
 5 make sure you take attendance, Chairman, and then if
 6 there's someone missing, just text me. Okay?
 7 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Will do.
 8 MR. BELZ: Okay. Great.
 9 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Looks like the court
 10 reporter is present. Outside counsel Kelly Warner is
 11 present. Jonathan Chapman is present. Is there
 12 anyone else that needs to be present from your
 13 standpoint, Commissioner Cabonargi?
 14 COMMISSION CABONARGI: No, I know
 15 you're going to call the roll so we have a record of
 16 who is in the room --
 17 (Break in video/audio connection)
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1 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Let the record
 2 reflect that we have resigned to executive session.
 3 I will take a roll call. Commissioner Cabonargi.
 4 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Present.
 5 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Commissioner Wendt.
 6 Let the record reflect Commissioner Wendt is not
 7 present. Myself, Commissioner Rogers, is present.
 8 We also have the secretary of the board Jonathan
 9 Chapman.
 10 MR. CHAPMAN: Present.
 11 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: And our outside
 12 counsel from the Riley Safer Law Firm Kelly Warner
 13 present, as well as our court reporter to transcribe
 14 the minutes from the executive session. With that I
 15 would ask Ms. Warner to present us with an update on
 16 their investigation.
 17 REPORTER: I'm sorry, Ms. Warner,
 18 you're on mute.
 19 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Let me also indicate
 20 the Chief Deputy Commissioner, William O'Shields, is
 21 also present.
 22 MR. O'SHIELDS: Present.
 23 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Ms. Warner, you --
 24 you may have some connectivity issues because your

1 image is a bit choppy and we can't hear you.
 2 Ms. Warner, can you hear me?
 3 MS. WARNER: Can you hear me?
 4 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Now we can hear you.
 5 MR. PHELPS: Okay. Let's hope that
 6 sticks. I was pressing the button for several
 7 minutes, but I'm not sure what's happening, but let's
 8 hope we can continue. Good morning everyone.
 9 The Cook County Board of Review retained
 10 Riley Safer Holmes and Cancila, which I will refer to
 11 today as counsel, to conduct an independent internal
 12 investigation into bribery allegations involving a
 13 single board employee, who I will refer to today as
 14 Employee A, as originally reported by the Chicago Sun
 15 Times. Counsel's work was led by Patricia Brown
 16 Holmes. Let me just pause for a moment and make sure
 17 everyone can hear me.
 18 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: We can hear you.
 19 MS. WARNER: Okay. Terrific.
 20 Counsel's investigation into potential employee
 21 misconduct was conducted pursuant to the
 22 attorney/client privilege and is confidential.
 23 Counsel was not directed in any manner by the board.
 24 Counsel was able to identify documents for review and

1 individuals to interview without restriction.
 2 Ultimately conducting interviews, reviewing emails
 3 and other communications and analyzing extensive
 4 exports of data from the board's on base database,
 5 through which the property tax appeal process is
 6 conducted. Counsel also established a hotline to
 7 elicit information regarding the investigation. The
 8 board was fully cooperative and complied with all
 9 requests for documents and information. Counsel was,
 10 however, limited by our lack of subpoena power and
 11 our subsequent inability to obtain any data outside
 12 of the board's possession, including personal bank
 13 records or data found in personal email accounts or
 14 in personal cell phones. We did not have access to
 15 the federal agent's affidavit that triggered the Sun
 16 Times article, the identity of the properties at
 17 issue, the recordings of Employee A made by the
 18 government or the confidential informant referred to
 19 in the article. Employee A declined to be
 20 interviewed by counsel. In addition, counsel was
 21 unable to review data stored on the cell phone issued
 22 to Employee A by the board due to Employee A's
 23 inability to recall the pass code for the phone.
 24 Subject to the limitations set forth above, counsel

1 multiple leadership levels, including at each staff
 2 meeting.
 3 The board should consider hiring a general
 4 counsel, ethics officer who can, among other tasks,
 5 invest proper time and resources in the ethics
 6 function, including considering additional ethics
 7 training, the development of an investigations
 8 policy, the enhancement of the auditing function and
 9 taking ownership for the overall management and
 10 enforcement of ethical standards within the board.
 11 The board should consider implementing, for
 12 example, a biannual review of board policies and
 13 procedures with implementation of updates to policies
 14 as needed.
 15 The board should consider revisions to
 16 annual ethics training to create comprehensive
 17 situational training that includes discussion and
 18 hypothetical scenarios.
 19 The board may also consider periodic
 20 updates to keep the training fresh and engaging.
 21 The board may consider circulating orderly
 22 compliance communication addressing an aspect of the
 23 ethics policy in order to further educate staff.
 24 The board may consider enhancing the

1 did not find any evidence of Employee A's
 2 solicitation or acceptance of bribes as reported by
 3 the Chicago Sun Times. Counsel did, however, find a
 4 strong compliance culture within the board with a
 5 high transparency and safeguards inherent in an on
 6 based system, all of which protect the property
 7 appeals process. The board also asked counsel to
 8 consider recommendations for enhancing the compliance
 9 function within the board, including, if applicable,
 10 additional resources, enhancements to procedures and
 11 modifications to policies to ensure that the board's
 12 employees are knowledgeable and prepared to act
 13 ethically and in compliance with the board and the
 14 county's expectations. Counsel recommended that the
 15 board consider the following suggestions to further
 16 support the organization's compliance program.
 17 Commissioners should continue to recognize
 18 their important role as leaders on compliance issues.
 19 Commissioners set the tone of the organization and
 20 should continue to stress ethics and compliance in
 21 all of their communications with the public and the
 22 staff.
 23 Managers at all levels should consider
 24 furthering more opportunities to discuss ethics at

1 accessibility of the ethics policy, including posting
 2 the policy on an intranet site or some other similar
 3 type of forum in which to make that policy easily
 4 accessible to employees.
 5 The board may consider creating an ethics
 6 email address or an online forum for employees and
 7 potentially outsiders to report anonymously, if
 8 desired, possible ethics violations or questions.
 9 The board may consider requesting annual
 10 updates to disclosure statements instead of relying
 11 on employees to update such statements when needed.
 12 The board may consider changing the
 13 complaint file distribution in on base from a pull
 14 system to a push system.
 15 The board may consider enhancing the
 16 auditing function, such as possibly formalizing the
 17 internal audit processes that are currently taking
 18 place through a written audit protocol for the
 19 completion of a township's appeals.
 20 The board may consider maintaining an
 21 active roster of on based permissions and ensuring
 22 that users only have the necessary level of
 23 permissions.
 24 The board may consider performing regular

1 audits of on based access and permissions.
 2 The board may consider performing regular
 3 audits of requests to modify user permissions to the
 4 on basis system.
 5 The board may consider prohibiting shared
 6 credentials for manager access.
 7 The board may consider additional oversight
 8 and controls for users who have enhanced access to on
 9 base, such as a secondary signer on all changes.
 10 The board may consider implementing
 11 consistent annual performance reviews across
 12 commissioner staffs with an assessed component for
 13 ethical conduct.
 14 The board may consider conducting annual
 15 surveys requesting employee feedback about the work
 16 culture within the board and how to improve.
 17 And the board may consider implementing an
 18 internal reporting structure for incidences of
 19 compliance and ethical concerns, discrimination,
 20 harassment or workplace bullying, including a
 21 standard operating process for how the board will
 22 review and address incidents, including the
 23 implementation of formal discipline.
 24 Thank you, Commissioners. We appreciated

1 the opportunity to work with you all. We enjoyed
 2 getting to know the folks at the board and also
 3 the -- the systems and ethics culture that you have
 4 put into place thus far.
 5 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Thank you,
 6 Ms. Warner. And I want to thank the Riley Safer firm
 7 for their diligent efforts to investigate this matter
 8 and both you and former Judge Patricia Holmes did a
 9 thorough investigation, from what we can tell, and we
 10 appreciate your report and your efforts. There may
 11 be a couple of questions.
 12 I do have one, just to start things off. I
 13 know at our last meeting we opened up the opportunity
 14 for anyone at the board or otherwise outside the
 15 agency who knew of any issues that they wanted to
 16 raise or had complaints, we provided a number that
 17 they could call to report any such concerns or
 18 complaints. Were there any calls or complaints
 19 reported?
 20 MS. WARNER: There were not.
 21 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Okay. And that was
 22 not limited to, again, staff or commissioners or
 23 former employees, but individuals both in the agency
 24 and about the agency and there were no such

1 complaints?
 2 MS. WARNER: Correct. The number was
 3 publicized and, you know, available to anyone who
 4 wished to call and we received no communications to
 5 that number.
 6 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: And was there an
 7 effort to reach out to the US Attorney's Office to
 8 see if they were willing to share any of the
 9 information that they had available to them about
 10 this employee's misdeeds so that we could include
 11 that -- you could include that in your investigation?
 12 MS. WARNER: Yes, to some extent. We
 13 wanted to ensure that we were respectful of their
 14 ongoing investigation. We did inquire as to the
 15 identity of the properties at issue so that we could
 16 do, you know, a more detailed investigation of those
 17 particular properties. But they declined to share
 18 the information of those properties.
 19 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Commissioner
 20 Cabonargi, do you have any questions?
 21 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Just a couple.
 22 I'm going to start at the top by echoing what
 23 Commissioner Rogers said. Ms. Warner, you and Judge
 24 Holmes were professionals throughout and really led

1 an exhaustive and comprehensive investigation here,
 2 as evidenced by the fact you got up to speed quickly
 3 as to how we work files at the Board of Review and
 4 what our processes and procedures are, as evidenced
 5 also by the recommendations. I only speak for
 6 myself, but I know I want to take those under serious
 7 consideration, and if it requires us to have
 8 additional resources, I know Commissioner Rogers and
 9 I will call the County Board and inform them that we
 10 support these recommendations and if they require us
 11 to receive additional funding in future fiscal years,
 12 then that's what we need to do.
 13 I am pleased, but not surprised, that the
 14 story in the Sun Times, or whatever allegations were
 15 backing it up, when it was investigated, merited
 16 nothing. That, in effect, this employee may have
 17 been engaged in puffery, or what have you, but,
 18 again, through a combination of factors, first of
 19 which is the integrity of our employees. Second of
 20 which is the fact that the system involves three
 21 independent reviews by three separately elected
 22 officials' staffs, and then I would also say that the
 23 investment be made in our technology so that we have
 24 transparency in what we do, probably all attributed

1 to the fact that it makes it very difficult for these
 2 allegations to bear fruit.
 3 I did have a couple of questions. You
 4 mentioned that Employee A was -- you sought to
 5 interview Employee A, but he refused to cooperate
 6 with the investigation by giving direct testimony and
 7 speaking with you. Were there any other employees of
 8 the Board of Review who you wanted to speak with who
 9 made themselves unavailable or refused to cooperate?
 10 MS. WARNER: We did -- we did request
 11 a discussion with Commissioner Wendt, who declined
 12 based on the fact that the conduct, as reported in
 13 the Sun Times article, occurred prior to the time
 14 when she was a commissioner with the organization and
 15 so we -- we, you know -- we agreed with that position
 16 and we did not -- we thought that that was a
 17 reasonable explanation for her declination of
 18 participation. Otherwise, no. All employees agreed
 19 to participate.
 20 COMMISSION CABONARGI: That's good to
 21 note. Did Mr. Theilmann offer himself up to speak to
 22 you as well or make himself available?
 23 MS. WARNER: No.
 24 COMMISSION CABONARGI: And I think

1 that's the only questions I have offhand,
 2 Commissioner Rogers.
 3 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Thank you. Anyone
 4 else have any questions? I'll extend the opportunity
 5 to Mr. O'Shields or Mr. Chapman, if you have
 6 questions.
 7 MR. CHAPMAN: No questions. I don't.
 8 MR. O'SHIELDS: No, I don't.
 9 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Hearing none.
 10 Again, I want to thank you, Ms. Warner and Judge
 11 Holmes for your thorough report.
 12 Because of the public interest and the
 13 allegations that have been made being so serious I
 14 think it's important that we release this report and
 15 so I would recommend and even move that we release
 16 this report publicly when we resume to the general
 17 open meeting. Do you have any objection to that,
 18 Mr. -- Commissioner Cabonargi?
 19 COMMISSION CABONARGI: No. I agree
 20 completely with you, Commissioner Rogers. I think
 21 there's been a public allegation, a news report of
 22 misconduct at the board and I think we -- we took the
 23 leadership here to bring in a talented third party to
 24 do an exhaustive investigation and review and I think

1 we should share their findings, and I also agree with
 2 you, I think we should share their recommendations
 3 because, I don't know about you, I don't think we're
 4 afraid of some criticism and it's good, constructive
 5 criticism here that will only make our agency
 6 stronger. So I think I'm in favor of sharing the
 7 findings and the recommendations for further
 8 improvement.
 9 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Wholeheartedly
 10 agree. With that we will conclude our executive
 11 session. I'll do it by formal motion. I move that
 12 we conclude executive session. Is there a second?
 13 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Second.
 14 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Call the question.
 15 Commissioner Cabonargi, are you an aye for motion --
 16 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Yes.
 17 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: -- moving from
 18 executive session into open session?
 19 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Yes, I vote to
 20 close executive session and return to regular
 21 session.
 22 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: I likewise vote.
 23 Let the record reflect the motion carries. We will
 24 resume to our general open meeting. Let me

1 communicate that to our IT staff and once we return,
 2 we will resume the meeting.
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1 MR. BELZ: Chairman Rogers, looks like
2 the executive session is closed. We have
3 Commissioner Cabonargi. We have the court reporter,
4 Mr. Chapman and Mr. O'Shields are back in this
5 general meeting.

6 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: All right. Let the
7 record reflect that we are returning to our general
8 meeting after concluding our discussions in executive
9 session. In executive session we heard from our
10 outside counsel, Ms. Kelly Warner from the Riley
11 Safer firm, who reported on the result of that firm's
12 investigation led by retired Judge Patricia Brown
13 Holmes. There was a motion in executive session to
14 release the report and findings publicly by
15 Commissioner Cabonargi and myself, who were in favor
16 of that release. So at this time I want to invite
17 Ms. Warner to report publicly the findings of their
18 investigation.

19 Again, just to give this some context,
20 there was a report in the Sun Times of one employee
21 of the Board of Review engaging in some elicit
22 behavior, criminal behavior. As soon as we learned
23 of that through the Sun Times report Commissioner
24 Cabonargi and myself sought to retain outside counsel

1 attorney/client privilege and is confidential. We
2 were not directed in any manner by the board. We
3 were able to identify documents for review and
4 individuals to interview without restriction,
5 ultimately conducting interviews, reviewing emails
6 and other communications and analyzing extensive
7 exports of data from the board's on base electronic
8 database through which the property tax appeals
9 process is conducted. We also established the
10 hotline to elicit information regarding the
11 investigation. The board was fully cooperative and
12 complied with all requests for documents and
13 information. We were, however, limited by a lack of
14 subpoena power and a subsequent inability to obtain
15 any information outside of the board's possession,
16 including personal bank records or data found in
17 personal email accounts or on personal cell phones.
18 We did not have access to the federal agent's
19 affidavit that triggered the Sun Times article, the
20 identity of the properties at issue, the reportings
21 of Employee A made by the government or the
22 confidential informant referred in the article.
23 Employee A declined to be interviewed by counsel. In
24 addition, we were unable to review data stored on the

1 to conduct a thorough and complete investigation.
2 That law firm that was selected to do that
3 investigation was the Riley Safer Law Firm. The
4 investigation, led by judge or retired Judge Patricia
5 Holmes. They have now updated us with a report that
6 concluded their investigation, and while we received
7 that in executive session, we now are going to hear
8 it publicly, their findings. With that,
9 Ms. Warner -- Chris, can you tell me if Kelly
10 Warner --

11 MS. WARNER: I am. Sorry, it's just
12 taking me a minute to come on. Bear with me here.

13 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Sure.

14 MS. WARNER: Okay. Do you have me?
15 Okay. Terrific. Good morning. The Board of Review
16 retained Riley Safer Holmes and Cancila to conduct an
17 independent internal investigation into bribery
18 allegations that were initially reported in an
19 article published by the Chicago Sun Times, which
20 involved a single employee of the Board of Review. I
21 will refer to that individual today as Employee A.
22 Counsel's work was led by Patricia Brown Holmes.

23 Our investigation into potential employee
24 misconduct was conducted pursuant to the

1 cell phone issued to Employee A by the board due to
2 Employee A's inability to recall the pass code for
3 the phone. Subject to these limitations, we did not
4 find any evidence of Employee A's solicitation or
5 acceptance of bribes as reported by the Sun Times in
6 the interview -- in the information to which we had
7 access. We did, however, find a strong compliance
8 culture at the Board of Review with a high level of
9 transparency and safeguards inherent in the on basis
10 system, which protect the property appeals process.
11 The board also asked us to consider recommendations
12 for enhancing the compliance function within the
13 board, including, if applicable, additional
14 resources, enhancement to procedures and
15 modifications to policies to ensure that the board's
16 employees are knowledgeable and prepared to act
17 ethically and in compliance with the board's and
18 county's expectations. We have identified a list of
19 recommendations, which I just shared with the
20 commissioners in the executive session, in which we
21 will provide, by a written document, to the board.
22 Commissioner Rogers, do you want me to go through
23 those here or shall we just let the document serve as
24 those recommendations?

1 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: I think we can
 2 allow -- Commissioner Cabonargi, do you have a
 3 preference?
 4 COMMISSION CABONARGI: I'm sorry, Ms.
 5 Warner, you were saying do you want to leave -- you
 6 want to walk through the recommendations now or just
 7 present them in writing later?
 8 MS. WARNER: Correct. Correct. What
 9 would you prefer?
 10 COMMISSION CABONARGI: I'm fine with
 11 hearing you read them out to us and then we'll
 12 receive them in hard copy as well. I know that
 13 Commissioner Rogers and I would probably like to see
 14 those shared publicly as well. Ms. Warner, please.
 15 MS. WARNER: Sure. Absolutely.
 16 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Just for context, we
 17 did ask that you make any recommendations that could
 18 enhance -- enhance the agency. There's always room
 19 for improvement with any agency. So if you had
 20 recommend -- well, you told us in executive session
 21 about those. We have no problem with those being
 22 made public.
 23 MS. WARNER: Okay.
 24 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Thank you. You may

1 updates to policies as needed.
 2 The board may wish to consider revisions to
 3 the annual ethics training to create comprehensive,
 4 situational training that includes discussion and
 5 hypothetical scenarios.
 6 The board may wish to consider periodic
 7 updates to keep the training fresh and engaging.
 8 The board may wish to consider circulating
 9 orderly compliance communications, addressing an
 10 aspect of the ethics policy to all staff.
 11 The board may wish to enhance the accessibility
 12 of the ethics policy, including posting the policy on
 13 an intranet site or a similar location, which is
 14 easily accessible to all employees of the board.
 15 The board may wish to consider creating an
 16 ethics email address or an online form for employees
 17 and possibly others to report anonymously desired
 18 possible ethical violations or questions.
 19 The board may wish to request annual
 20 updates to disclosure statements of employees
 21 affirmatively, instead of relying on employees to
 22 update such statements when needed.
 23 The board may wish to consider changing the
 24 complaint file distribution in the on based system

1 proceed.
 2 MS. WARNER: We recommend that the
 3 commissioners continue to recognize their important
 4 role as leaders on compliance issues. The
 5 commissioners set the tone for the organization and
 6 should continue to stress ethics and compliance in
 7 all of their communications with the public and with
 8 staff.
 9 Managers at multiple levels -- at all
 10 levels within the organization should consider
 11 furthering opportunities to discuss ethics at
 12 multiple leadership levels, including at every staff
 13 meeting.
 14 The board may wish to consider hiring a
 15 general counsel or ethics officer who can, among
 16 other tasks, invest proper time and resources in the
 17 ethics function, including considering additional
 18 ethics training, the development of an investigations
 19 policy, the enhancement of the auditing function and
 20 taking ownership for the overall management and
 21 enforcement of ethical standards within the board.
 22 The board may wish to consider implementing
 23 periodically, for example, biannual review of board
 24 policies and procedures with implementation of

1 from a pull system to a push system.
 2 The board may wish to consider enhancing
 3 the auditing function, including by formalizing the
 4 internal audit processes that are currently
 5 undertaken through a written audit protocol for the
 6 completion of a township's appeals.
 7 The board may wish to maintain an active
 8 roster of on based permissions ensuring -- ensuring
 9 that users only have the necessary level of
 10 permissions.
 11 The board may wish to perform regular
 12 audits of on based access and permissions and regular
 13 audits of request to modify user permissions.
 14 The board may wish to prohibit shared
 15 credentials for manager access and consider
 16 additional oversight and controls for users with
 17 enhanced access to on base.
 18 The board may wish to consider implementing
 19 consistent annual performance reviews for all
 20 employees across commissioners' staffs, including an
 21 assessed component on ethical conduct.
 22 The board may wish to consider annual
 23 surveys requesting employee feedback about the work
 24 culture on the board and how to improve.

1 And, last, the board may wish to implement
2 an internal reporting structure for incidences of
3 compliance and ethical concerns, discrimination,
4 harassment or workplace bullying, including a
5 standard operating process for how the board will
6 review and address reports and incidents, including
7 the implementation of formal discipline.

8 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Ms. Warner, I want
9 to thank you again, as well as retired Judge Patricia
10 Holmes and the Riley Safer firm for your thorough
11 investigation. I want to thank you for complying
12 with our request to make any recommendations that
13 could improve the agency. I will say that many of
14 the things that you have suggested in terms of
15 retaining an independent ethic formal -- formal
16 independent ethics officer, meaning an individual
17 dedicated to that responsibility, is something that
18 Commissioner Cabonargi and I have talked about and
19 wanted to do, but because of governmental constraints
20 in our budget have been unable to do, but we will be
21 reiterating that request, in light of your
22 recommendation, as well as the others.

23 We work very hard at our agency to have an
24 honest and ethical agency that meets the needs of the

1 recommendations for further improvement with the
2 county finance officials to explain -- just at first
3 glance at these, these are not large investments. So
4 we can -- really much of them is doing what we do in
5 a better way, which we certainly can do. And if
6 there's additional resources that are needed for
7 additional staffing, we'll support those as well.

8 A couple things stood out. I'm very
9 pleased that you received access to all of the
10 people, paper and email that you needed at the board.
11 I'm glad that everyone at the board cooperated with
12 you in your investigation. I appreciate the fact
13 that, you know, you didn't interrupt the operations
14 of the board investigating this while you were
15 working in a compressed schedule. Again, the
16 analysts and attorneys of the board have been working
17 mandatory 60-hour workweeks now for weeks at a time
18 and you've managed to do a comprehensive
19 investigation that wasn't disruptive, which I can
20 imagine isn't always easy to do. And, again, I know
21 I made myself available to you. I understand
22 Commissioner Rogers did as well. Leadership starts
23 at the top. So I appreciate you taking the time to
24 talk with us and get our thoughts on it and -- and,

1 residents of Cook County. That being the case, this
2 employee apparently was alleged to have done some
3 things, but it doesn't appear that there was any
4 evidence of untoward activity within the agency,
5 which is a good thing, which we're happy to hear.

6 So on behalf of myself, my staff and the
7 employees of the Board of Review, as well as the
8 citizens of Cook County, I want to thank you for your
9 investigation and work on this matter. Commissioner
10 Cabonargi.

11 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Thanks,
12 Commissioner Rogers. I'm going to echo what you
13 said. Ms. Warner and Judge Holmes were professionals
14 throughout. They -- as evidenced by their findings
15 and their recommendations, they really invested
16 themselves into understanding the operations of the
17 Board of Review, our existing policies and
18 procedures. I agree with Commissioner Rogers, we can
19 always improve, and these are good, constructive
20 recommendations for further improvement. If they
21 require the board to receive additional resources
22 from the county board in terms of funding, the timing
23 is good because we're building out our budget for
24 fiscal year 2023 and we'll be sure to share these

1 again, I'm pleased that we're able to get your
2 findings and just move forward. So I appreciate
3 that.

4 MS. WARNER: Thank you.

5 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Commissioner
6 Rogers, I think you're on mute.

7 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: With that, there's
8 nothing else on the agenda in terms of old business.
9 We made a call for new business with nothing being
10 reported. I think it's time to go into adjournment.

11 Is there a motion for adjournment of the meeting with
12 the Board of Review remaining in continuous session
13 for the purposes of continuing to adjudicate appeals?

14 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Motion to
15 adjourn.

16 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Let the record
17 reflect that's seconded by myself, Mr. Rogers. All
18 in favor.

19 COMMISSION CABONARGI: Aye.

20 CHAIRMAN ROGERS: Aye. Let the record
21 reflect the board shall remain in adjournment per the
22 move. Thank you everyone for attending. The meeting
23 is concluded.
24

1 STATE OF ILLINOIS)
) SS
2 COUNTY OF WILLIAMSON)
3

4 I, Valeri Bleyer, do hereby certify:
5 That the foregoing Public Meeting of
6 the Commissioners of the Cook County Board of Review
7 was held remotely using audio-visual conference
8 technology;

9 That the said proceedings is a
10 transcript of the testimony that was taken via video
11 conferencing in shorthand writing by me to the best
12 of my ability;

13 That I am a Certified Shorthand
14 Reporter for the State of Illinois; that the said
15 proceedings was thereafter under my direction
16 transcribed into computer-aided transcription; that
17 the foregoing transcript constitutes to the best of
18 my ability a full, true and correct report of the
19 proceedings which then and there took place;

20 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto
21 subscribed on this 10th day of September, 2022.

22
23
24

VALERI BLEYER, CSR# 084-002678

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