

Meeting Minutes
(Unapproved and Subject to Change)
Fair Political Practices Commission
Public Outreach and Technology Committee Meetingⁱ
April 7, 2020 10:00 a.m.

The Public Outreach and Technology Committee was called to order at 10:01 a.m.

1. Public Comment for items not on the agenda.

2. Approval of March 11, 2021 minutes.

MOTION: To approve March 11, 2021 minutes. Moved by Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Chair Miadich. The motion was approved 2-0.

3. Discussion of FPPC Website.

Jay Wierenga, Communications Director, gave an update regarding the outreach to external stakeholders for input on website redesign or changes. He has received a reply from a number of those groups, and Mr. Wierenga has an upcoming meeting with a CPAA representative and expects some direction by the next meeting about the possible updates. Mr. Wierenga introduced Larry Crabtree to discuss the potential costs for changing items on the website and the search functions.

Larry Crabtree, Chief Information Officer, discussed the search functions and the possible changes IT could make. Mr. Crabtree stated that the current website uses an “or” Search that populates pages with all the terms or parts of the search terms. He stated that they can implement an “and” search that only populates pages with all the terms, thus cutting down on the return items and narrowing search results.

Commissioner Wilson made a comment that zeroing in on targeted searches is the ultimate goal and it encompassed what he was proposing.

Chair Miadich asked Mr. Crabtree how easy it is to change from an "or" function to an "and" function, as well the cost associated with it. Mr. Crabtree stated that they need to build a new component that could use the "and" searches.

Commissioner Wilson stated that he believes an "and" function populates a greater targeted search.

Chair Miadich asked Mr. Crabtree if they would be able to use search within paragraph or quotations around an exact phrase. Mr. Crabtree stated that it would be a proximity search and a quoted search and both are possible, but the difficult part is to teach the public how to use those search methods. Mr. Crabtree also stated that they could include instructions for advance searches on their landing page.

Chair Miadich asked if we were able to build the technology internally. Mr. Crabtree stated that they do not have the expertise or components to build the technology internally. He also said that once they obtain the product, IT would be able to make adjustments to it.

Chair Miadich asked for a timeframe for discussing the suggestions with vender. Mr. Crabtree stated that the bids take up to a week, and they will take up to a week maximum to create a statement of work. He expects this to return to the May Committee meeting.

Mr. Crabtree reiterated that they will be focusing on changing the main search to include the "and" search and proximity searches. Chair Miadich stated that they are more focused on the enhanced search capabilities. Commissioner Wilson agreed with what Chair Miadich stated and stated the goal for the search function to mirror popular search methods to generate greater ease for the public's use.

Galena West, Executive Director, asked if there were any questions about the results of the searches as they are not categorized. Mr. Crabtree stated that the search engine has no knowledge

of what each document is and each document has to be categorized by hand for that to function. Mr. Wierenga included that the categorization request has been received in the feedback he's collecting.

Commissioner Wilson stated that Executive Director West's suggestion is in line with what has been envisioned. Mr. Crabtree reiterated that they do have searches for all the different document types, but inclusion in the top level search will not be a small task to categorize the documents since they need to be done by hand.

Chair Miadich asked about using the search function on the landing page to search for someone in an advice letter. Mr. Crabtree stated that the advice letter will populate.

Chair Miadich asked if they could use a filter to search for certain categories. Mr. Crabtree stated that search is different from the other ones, and that the website cannot differentiate the types of documents. Everything must be categorized by hand. Furthermore, publishing new documents need to be updated as well.

Mr. Wierenga stated that he anticipates he will be able to report to the Committee with the feedback from the external stakeholders, executive staff, and IT. Chair Miadich asked for an anticipated timeline, and Mr. Wierenga stated that he anticipated the feedback will come to the Committee in May and to the full Commission in June.

4. Campaign Filing Location Reference Sheet Update

Dave Bainbridge, General Counsel, presented a webpage with a chart for where and when to file campaign statements that is currently in development. Staff based the website on the Committees recommendations, and the page lists each of the types of forms available to file. The tables show the types of forms that need to be filed based on what type of candidate a person is. Mr. Bainbridge stated that the CARS system is expected to go live in July, which will change some

items because all the filings with the Secretary of State will move to be electronic. He stated that their work reflects the current law, but it should be changing in a few months.

Chair Miadich asked about the paper and electronic filing options on the webpage. Mr.

Bainbridge stated that with current law electronic filer means that they file their campaign statement electronically but they would still be filing the 501 and 410 on paper. Those will be going away, and after July 1st the “what to file” section will indicate that it is an electronic filing.

Commissioner Wilson asked if they would wait to implement the webpage until after CARS is implemented. Mr. Bainbridge stated that is his recommendation and that they will be publishing the page after CARS rolls out.

5. Discussion of Advice Letters that are Housed on the FPPC Website

Dave Bainbridge, General Counsel, stated that the issue was brought by Commissioner Wilson at the last Commission meeting about what to do about old advice letters that are out of date or discussing a law that is no longer in effect. Mr. Bainbridge stated that they had an internal meeting, and currently they include a rescinded header for the letters. He states that they do not recommend removing the letters from the website, because they are required to maintain the letters in perpetuity and have them available to the public. They do not have to keep them on the website and in the past, they removed old letters or letters regarding laws that have been changed. He stated that Staff found that they received a lot of public records act requests for those letters. It created a workload issue, and they found it easier to keep the letters on the website. Their recommendation is to add to the advice letter search page an explanation that the letters are intended for the recipient and applies the law as it exists at the time of the request or the conduct in which they're asking the question about. Mr. Bainbridge stated that they want to make it clear in the search so that people who are looking at them know that the previous letters

are specific to the facts of the person requesting it, that it was advice to that person on how to comply with the law, and that it doesn't create precedent like reading case law. He advises against removing the letters currently on the website to avoid inadvertently removing information that is still possibly relevant, and they may still be useful because the interpretations may still be the same. He suggests emphasizing and clarifying their posted warning and disclaimers on their website.

Chair Miadich asked what the anticipated timeline is for adding the improved warnings onto the website. Mr. Bainbridge stated that it would take a couple weeks to draft and review it, then to report it back next month after they have applied it to the website.

MOTION: To adjourn. Moved by Commissioner Wilson, seconded by Chair Miadich. The motion was approved 2-0.

The meeting concluded at 10:42 a.m.
