

Southern Association of Forensic Scientists – Executive Board Meeting

Meeting Minutes

February 21, 2025 – virtual (Teams)

Present: President Amanda Venable; President-Elect Tanja Kopp; Secretary Karlie McManaman, Past-President Allison Galassie; Members-at-Large Erin Tracy, Collin Shuford, April Brown

Next Meeting: April 11th @ 11am

Meeting called to order at 11:02am, meeting adjourned at 11:25am

- Email complaint for possible ethics violation – Amanda
Can/should ethics committee contain members of a complainant or subject’s direct chain of command?
 - Discussed in general terms – this decision should not be specific to the current committee members, but should be a decision for all future complaints as well
 - Conflict of interest not explicitly forbidden in current Admin Rules unless committee member is the subject or complainant
 - Other organizations allow President to make decision on conflict of interest prior to forwarding all complaints
 - Motion to change Admin Rules to prevent someone in a chain of command from participating in an ethics review
 - Board decided to take time to review Admin Rules/Bylaws individually and send decision to President email by 3pm
 - Should we remove committee members in someone’s chain of command?
 - Is an amendment needed?

Final amendment:

RULE P-3. PROCEDURE.

- a. An electronically written complaint alleging violation(s) of the Code of Ethics must be submitted to the President.
- b. The President shall acknowledge the receipt of the complaint electronically, within 10 business days of the individual submitting a complaint (complainant). Upon receipt, the President shall review for any potential conflicts of interest between the respondent or complainant and any committee member, to include the Chairperson. Should a conflict of interest arise, the committee member(s) involved shall be removed from the committee for the entire life of the complaint. The President shall notify any member being removed and appoint temporary Ethics Committee member(s) as needed, and the complaint will then be electronically forwarded to the Ethics Chairperson or designee.
- c. The Ethics Chairperson shall evaluate the complaint to determine whether additional information or clarification is needed to ascertain the nature and circumstances of the alleged violation. The chairperson may request the complainant to provide additional or clarifying information. The chairperson shall forward the complaint to all Ethics Committee members, who will determine whether the Committee has jurisdiction and whether the complaint alleges a violation of the SAFS Code of Ethics. If the chair-Committee finds that the Ethics Committee does not have jurisdiction or that the complaint does not allege a violation of the Code of Ethics, a summary of the complaint shall be presented to the Board at the next board meeting with a recommendation to the Board to dismiss the complaint. The Board shall not be advised of the identity of the complainant or the respondent. In the event of dismissal, the complainant shall be notified of the dismissal in writing, and the respondent shall be notified that a complaint was made, the nature of the complaint, and that the complaint was dismissed. The respondent shall not be advised of the identity of the complainant.
- d. If the chairperson or Board finds that the Ethics Committee finds that it has jurisdiction and that the complaint alleges a violation of the Code of Ethics, the respondent shall be notified of the filing of the complaint and provided with a copy of the complaint and all materials submitted with the complaint. The respondent shall be advised that he/she may submit, within 30 days of notice, an electronically written reply, and any documents the respondent desires to have considered by the Ethics Committee for the purpose of a preliminary determination of whether probable cause exists to proceed with a hearing on the matters raised in the complaint. After the expiration of the reply period the response shall be sent to the complainant and the complainant given 30 days to comment in writing about this response. The Ethics Committee shall consider the complaint, any reply, and all materials submitted by the complainant or the respondent, and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that the allegations of the complaint are true (probable cause means that it is reasonable to believe that the complaint is true). If probable cause is not found, a detailed summary of the complaint and response shall be presented to the Board at the next board meeting with a recommendation to the Bboard to dismiss the complaint. In the event of dismissal, the complainant and the respondent shall be notified. If probable cause is found to exist, the Ethics Committee shall schedule and conduct a hearing as provided in section P-4 of these Rules.
- e. If probable cause is found to exist and a hearing is, or is to be, scheduled, the Ethics Committee may appoint a member of SAFS to conduct an investigation of the matters raised in the complaint and secure written statements and documents for consideration by the Ethics Committee. Copies of any materials submitted to the Ethics Committee by any person so appointed shall be made available for inspection by the complainant and the respondent.
- f. This process may be suspended at any time at the discretion of the Ethics Committee if it becomes known that the circumstances surrounding a complaint are being dealt with by any court or other competent body, pending its resolution. The complainant, the respondent, and the Board shall be notified of this action.