

THE STATE TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REFORM (STAR) COMMISSION

State Transparency and Accountability Reform (STAR) Commission Meeting January 29, 2021

11:00 AM

Held via Zoom and Live Streamed on

www.governor.maryland.gov/star-commission

Summary of Points

- The STAR Commission will act as a highly transparent entity to establish standards for quasi-government agencies to follow in order to ensure proper and consistent structure and ethical function
- Surveys to evaluate agency structure and function will be sent out to agencies ASAP and the commission will begin meeting with agencies by April
- Experts will be brought in in March to provide commentary about what agency oversight and accountability look like
- The commission will meet monthly until June when it will break before returning in September
- Public comments will be collected in September
- Findings will be presented to the Governor by December 1st

Minutes

Chairman of the commission Andy Serafini begins the meeting at 11:00am

- Chair Serafini begins the meeting by welcoming and thanking the commission members
- Chair Serafini notes that this is a public forum
 - This commission should maintain a high level of transparency, especially because of its subject matter
- Chair Serafini introduces the commission members and takes attendance
 - No one from the Department of Budget and Management (DBM) is currently present, but Secretary David Brinkley joins a few minutes later
 - Rhonda Ray, Managing Director from Commerce is present
 - Michael Harrison, Policy Director from Labor is present
 - Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is present
 - Bobbie James, Senior Advisor from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is present
 - Kathleen Birrane, Insurance Commissioner for the Maryland Insurance Administration (MIA) is present

- Senator Brian Feldman is not currently present
- Minority Whip Kathy Szeliga, House GOP is present
- Senator Addie Eckardt, Senate GOP is present but leaves momentarily
- John Williams, Ethics is present
- Karen Srylo, Financial does not respond but Serafini notes that she should be present. Karen joins the meeting a few minutes late.
- Dr. Linda L. Singh, Public is present

Chair Serafini gives an overview of the commission

- He explains that the commission wants to ensure that every quasi-government agency is structured well and in a consistent manner with each other in order to function ethically
- He declares the mission: to work with quasi-government agencies by examining their existing policies and procedures, understanding what is universal about these policies and procedures, even though these groups are diverse, and determining what the best consistent measures are to make efficient and effective agencies in order to ensure accountability and transparency among quasi-government agencies
- Chair Serafini stresses the importance of ensuring that the public has confidence that these agencies are doing the right thing with the funds that they receive.
- Chair Serafini notes that one of the issues that he has already identified is that the agency chairs change frequently, thus maintaining consistent practices may be more difficult, however, the commission must not restrict the agencies in carrying out their missions

Chair Serafini explains the process by which the commission will conduct information gathering

- The commission will send out surveys requesting informations about agency origin purpose, viability, replacement, training, financial accountability features and ask agencies to come back and present their responses
- The commission will then meet with the agencies, review their surveys, and bring in experts to talk about what oversight and accountability look like
- He suggests that we come up with a framework that serves as a guide tool on how to evaluate future agencies - establishing a precedent
 - Future commissions will be able to use this framework to evaluate agencies to determine that they are operating in the best way to maximize benefits for the public
- He notes that it is often an issue of omission; our founding fathers stressed the importance of putting the common good over one's own interest
 - The commission will need to bring a passion for the public interest
- He acknowledges the importance of examining the past, but emphasizes that he wants this commission to be forward-looking in order to best serve the public

Chair Serafini invites the commission members to introduce themselves

- Secretary David Brinkley from DBM briefly introduces himself
- Rhonda Ray from the Department of Commerce introduces herself
 - She has been with the department for 25 years
 - She is a student of public policy and government and is pleased to be part of this productive dialogue
- Micheal Harrison from the Department Labor introduces himself
 - He serves as the Policy Director at the Department of Labor
 - He has been with the Department for 5 years and currently works with a couple of quasi-government groups
- Secretary Haddaway-Riccio from DNR introduces himself
 - She notes that the achievement of DNR's mission is dependent on many of the agencies that are subjects of the commission
- Senior Advisor James from MDE introduces herself
 - She is an attorney by training
 - She notes that MDE also works closely with quasi-government agencies
- No one is on the line to speak for Del. Korman
- No one is on the line to speak for Sen. Feldman
- Commissioner Birrane from MIA introduces herself
 - She is an insurance regulatory compliance lawyer
 - She was chair of Governance and Nominations Committee under the government committee and served 5 years in the Office of the Attorney General
- Del. Szeliga briefly introduces herself and stresses the importance of the mission statement that Serafini described earlier in the meeting
- Sen. Eckardt is no longer present
- Del. Korman joins the call and briefly introduces himself
- John Williams introduces himself
 - He is a native Texan who moved here about 20 years ago
 - He served on a University of Maryland Medical System special committee that looked into misdeeds of prior groups, he was on the audit committee, and is now Chairman of the Conflict of Interest Committee
- Karen Strylo introduces herself
 - She is a certified public accountant, has worked with various groups, and served on CPA's Legislative Committee and State Tax Committee
- Dr. Linda L. Singh introduces herself
 - She is retired out of the National Guard
 - She has 21 years of experience working for a large consulting company, Accenture, where she gained operational experience, helping clients look at their systems and revamp their organizations - she notes that she tackled similar issues that this commission will face

Serafini defers to Erin Chase to review housekeeping.

- Chase notes that the commission's meetings are recorded and live streamed so members should be mindful of that
- She asks members to please keep their microphones on mute and, if they are able to, keep their cameras on
- She also asks members to let staff know if they will be calling into a meeting or if they will be unable to attend a meeting

Chair Serafini goes over the commission's schedule.

- He notes that the schedule is tentative; he was thinking of hosting commission meetings on Monday's at 10 AM or 11 AM
- Meetings will take place monthly through June when the commission will break before returning in September
- He also notes that surveys will be distributed ASAP and agency meetings will ideally begin by April
- He encourages members to let him know if there are any schedule issues - Del. Szeliga notes that April 12th is Sine Die - that meeting date will be changed
- Chair Serafini states that subject matter experts will be brought in in March, public comments will be collected in September, and final findings will be presented to Governor Hogan by December 1st

Chair Serafini goes through the list of quasi-government agencies that will be the subjects of the commission- he notes that the list will also be sent out to the commission so members can further familiarize themselves with the agencies

- He notes that the office of legislative audits has a searchable website where anyone can search any of the agencies, thus, a significant amount of information that the commission will need is likely already publicly accessible
- He also notes that Erin Chase will send more information on the agencies and how to search them

Chair Serafini opens the meeting up for comments or questions

- Michael Harrison asks what the process will be if there is an agency that is not listed in the executive order
- Chair Serafini explains that the commission will be focusing on the listed agencies but they may expand this focus to other groups
 - However, he stresses that the important thing is that the commission creates standards and recommendations to set strong precedents for transparency and accountability and gain the confidence of the public - therefore, many current or future agencies, even if the commission does not focus on them, will have these new standards with which to structure themselves

Chair Serafini notes that the commission is a diverse group and that he wants to hear from every member

He also notes that he is sure the members of the commission will occasionally disagree but will not be disagreeable

Serafini thanks everyone again and closes the meeting. Meeting adjourns at 11:39am.

Commission Members

Andrew Serafini, Commission Chair, Retired Senator; President, Serafini Financial Services, Public

David Brinkley, Secretary, DBM

Rhonda Ray, Managing Director, Commerce

Michael Harrison, Policy Director, Labor

Jeannie Haddaway-Riccio, Secretary, DNR

Bobbie James, Senior Advisor, MDE

Kathleen Birrane, Insurance Commissioner, MIA

Marc Korman, Delegate, Speaker of the House

Brian Feldman, Senator, President of the Senate

Kathy Szeliga, Delegate, Minority Whip, House Republican Caucus

Addie Eckardt, Senator, Senate Republican Caucus

John Williams, CEO, Jamison Door; UMMS, Conflict of Interest Subcommittee Chair, Member of Audit and Compliance Committee, Ethics

Karen Strylo, MD CPA Legislative Committee Member, Financial

Dr. Linda L. Singh, PMP, PCC, Major General (retired), Public

Staff

Erin Chase, Deputy Legislative Officer

Andrew Cassilly, Senior Advisor

Anna Weiler, Legislative Coordinator

Don Hogan, Policy Director