

Edgar County Watchdogs

"Shining the light on local governments"



TO: Heartland Community College Board of Trustees,

I am John Kraft, cofounder of the Edgar County Watchdogs / Illinois Leaks. Our website is located at www.illinoisleaks.com and you are welcome to browse our many articles focusing on public corruption, and centered on honest, open, and transparent local governments.

The reason I am writing to you today is for the purpose of discussing (1) Trustee Compensation, and, (2), Public Comment at board meetings.

I. Trustee Compensation.

We were provided information stating that during your December 2014 regular board meeting, some chocolates were given to the members of the Board of Trustees as “*a token of appreciation.*” See Exhibit B.

While reading the published minutes of that meeting, I noticed this item was annotated in those minutes under item “Recognition and Correspondence” on page 1.

The Board operates under the Public Community College Act. In Article III, Section 7, Paragraph (e), the Act defines Trustee compensation, in part (emphasis mine), that:

(e) Members of the board **shall serve without compensation** but shall be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses incurred in connection with their service as members. **Compensation, for purposes of this Section, means any salary or other benefits not expressly authorized by this Act to be provided or paid to, for or on behalf of members of the board.**

Full text of this paragraph is located in exhibit A.

I have failed to find any language in the remainder of the Act that expressly authorizes gifts of any kind, to include chocolates, purchased by the College or not, to be provided or paid to the Trustees.

This gift is also in violation of the Illinois Constitution, Article VIII, Section 1 (a), which reads “*Public funds, property, or credit shall only be used for public purposes*” and the Community College Act ultimately defines “public purposes” in its definition of trustee compensation.

I am asking that each and every Trustee promptly reimburse the cost of the chocolates back to the College, and make a policy that forbids future actions of this type. Please provide me with this proof of payment.

Additionally, please update Policy 2.6, Expense Reimbursement:

Paragraph B – It is not possible to have an event where attendance of a Board member's spouse or guest is required. What makes the College think they can expend public funds for spouses and guests of board members? I refer you back to Section 7(e) (above) on this one.

II. Public Comment at Board Meetings

The Public Comment Policy, section 2.2.11, page 2-12 of the Board Policy Manual Revised 11-18-2014 includes in it items that could be considered violations of the Open Meetings Act.

These include:

- Submitting written requests indicating topic to be discussed
- Submitting the request at least seven days prior to a regular meeting
- Mandating that all requests to speak by faculty, staff, or students be directed to the President's Office
- Requiring the use of internal procedures or policies prior to submission of a written request to comment
- Claiming the board can refuse recognition to those who wish to speak that may use repetitive or harassing language

Please review this policy and change it to reflect the legislative purpose of the Open Meetings Act, which gives any person the right to address the public body at open public meetings. Any restrictions placed on that right must be reasonable, and should enhance the right to public comment. Typical rules include 3 or 5 minutes per person, stand at the podium to speak, etc.

Thanks for your consideration,

John Kraft
Edgar County Watchdogs
7060 Illinois Highway 1
Paris, Illinois 61944

Ph: 217-808-2527

Email: john@illinoisleaks.com

HIGHER EDUCATION

(110 ILCS 805/) Public Community College Act.

(110 ILCS 805/Art. III heading)

ARTICLE III. COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICTS;
ORGANIZATION; POWERS AND DUTIES;
ELECTIONS

(110 ILCS 805/3-7)

(e) Members of the board **shall serve without compensation** but shall be reimbursed for their reasonable expenses incurred in connection with their service as members. **Compensation, for purposes of this Section, means any salary or other benefits not expressly authorized by this Act to be provided or paid to, for or on behalf of members of the board.**

The board of each community college district may adopt a policy providing for the issuance of bank credit cards, for use by any board member who requests the same in writing and agrees to use the card only for the reasonable expenses which he or she incurs in connection with his or her service as a board member. Expenses charged to such credit cards shall be accounted for separately and shall be submitted to the chief financial officer of the district for review prior to being reported to the board at its next regular meeting.

EXHIBIT B

SEARCHED
SERIALIZED
INDEXED
MAY 12 1964
FBI - MEMPHIS

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MONITOR IT
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HEARTLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE 1500 West Raab Road Normal, IL 61761	REGIONS BANK 70-138/810	060186
Date 12.Dec.2014		Pay Amount \$92.72***
Pay	***NINETY-TWO AND 72 / 100 DOLLAR***	
To The Order Of	MARY BETH TRAKINAT [Redacted] Normal, IL 61701	
s617015s		Authorized Signature
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COFFEE 1914.99
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CARDS \$44.50
CARDS \$82.99
GIFTS \$24.00
NOISE \$159.15
TAX1 \$0.15
TAX2 \$11.17

MC/VISA \$170.47
ITEM COUNT 14

More gifts for Trakinat

Invoice Number	Invoice Date	Voucher ID	Gross Amount	Discount Taken	Late Charge	Check No.	Check No.	060186	060186
4403203773	12/3/2014	00110475	92.72	0.00	0.00				92.72

Check Number	Date	Total Gross Amount	Total Discounts	Total Late Charges	Total Paid Amount
060186	12.Dec.2014	\$92.72	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$92.72

Please call Accounts Payable at (309)268-8076 with any questions