

In spite of family ties, Inman remains on county Ethics Committee

By Catherine Dominguez, cdominguez@hcnonline.com Published 5:28 pm, Wednesday, April 12, 2017



Photo: Jason Fochtman, Staff Photographer

Montgomery County Precinct 1 Commissioner Mike Meador speaks during a recent meeting.

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Montgomery County commissioners unanimously agreed to keep Dale Inman on the county's newly formed Ethics Committee amid concerns brought to the County Attorney's Office regarding his relationship with other county and state employees. County Attorney J D Lambright spoke to the court Tuesday after receiving several inquiries about Inman, who is the son-in-law of Judge Olen Underwood, of the Second Administrative Judicial Region of Texas. Lambright also noted that while Underwood is a state employee, he does have staff members on the county payroll and has been in a long-term relationship with a Montgomery County elected official.

"When it came to the ethics board, we were trying to avoid any appearance of impropriety or relationships that might be a problem," said Lambright, noting he did not have an opinion regarding Inman's placement on the committee but did encourage the court to avoid placing members on the committee who might be related to county employees or were former county employees. "After all, it is an ethics committee." Lambright said it is the court's decision whether to leave Inman on the committee or replace him.

"It's a bit of an overreach, I move to leave him," Precinct 1 Commissioner Mike Meador said.

In four separate votes during their March 28 meeting, commissioners approved the five-member committee only after a handful of nominees were struck from consideration due to possible conflicts. In a 3-2 vote, the court selected Dorothy Woodall and Larry Foerster as the court's appointments. Precinct 3 Commissioner James Noack and Precinct 4 Commissioner Jim Clark were the no votes. Noack opposed because Foerster is a former county employee; and Clark was a nay vote because he was dissatisfied with the selection process.

Next, in three unanimous votes, the court appointed Inman, Kelli Cooper and Matthew Koppleman as the three additional members.

Inman was nominated by the County Auditor's Office. He is the owner and primary agent of Nationwide Insurance Agency, a senior pastor at Calvary Road Baptist Church and an adjunct faculty member at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. During the selection process March 28, Inman answered commissioners' questions regarding his possible aspirations to run for a county-elected position and volunteered information about a real estate endeavor in New Waverly. However, Inman never mentioned that he is related to Underwood. "I am thinking about it, but it is four years away," Inman said of his possible candidacy. "Right now, I am focused on land development. That's where my mind and my money is heading right now."

The court agreed Inman did not have a conflict.

Noack asked that anyone who decides to run for an elected county position and is serving on the Ethics Committee to step down immediately.

The committee was created under the county's new ethics policy, which was adopted in January and went into effect Feb. 1. The new policy was crafted by Lambright's office. Committee members will serve two-year terms.