

2019 Annual Report

Ethics Board

Town of New Canaan

2019 was another productive year for the Town's Ethics Board. The Board met seven times and handled the following matters:

The Board received, evaluated and responded to an inquiry from a member of the public about matters that fell outside the scope of the Ethics Code. The Board also received and responded to a Freedom of Information Act request from the same member of the public and fielded questions from the press about matters raised by that citizen. (The Board's response to the FOI request is lodged with the Town's Administrative officer.)

In response to a request from a candidate for Town public office, the Board issued an Advisory Opinion to that candidate who had asked if his business would pose a conflict of interest with the Town position for which he was a candidate. (A copy of the Board's Advisory Opinion is attached to the Board's minutes for September 23, 2019).

No Ethics Complaints were filed in 2019.

The revised Whistleblower Policy, which the Board had prepared for the Town's consideration, was approved by the Selectmen, after input from the Board of Education, the Audit Committee, the Schools' Superintendent, the Selectmen, and the Human Resources Director. The Ethics Board presented the revised policy to Town employees as part of two Town Emergency Preparedness meetings. Thereafter, the Board updated its webpage to include links to the revised Whistleblower Policy and to reflect the Ethics Code formal incorporation into Title 17 of the Town Code.

The Board updated the Town's "Statement of Disclosure of Interest in Transaction" form and created a "Statement of Disclosure of Interest in Municipal Legislation" form. Both are being used by the Town Clerk as part of the materials given to newly sworn in Town officials and employees. Links to these forms were also added to the Ethics webpage.

The Town's Employee Grievance Procedure was discussed with the Human Resources Director, and suggestions were made for corrective legislative action by the Town Council.

Two members of the Board attended the Town's Freedom of Information workshop in January, 2019, and a member attended an "Ethics, Accountability and Conflicts of Interest" seminar in Norwalk in March, 2019.

As part of the Board's mission to increase awareness of the Town's Ethics Code and the role of the Ethics Board, several members made presentations on the Code and the Board's Advisory Opinion functions at meetings of the Historical Commission, the Democratic Town Committee and the Planning & Zoning Board.

As the year ended, the Board re-elected its two officers and saw inaugural members Tammie Garner and Steve Simon stand for another three-year term on the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

Thomas F. Clauss, Jr., Chair
Tammie C. Garner, Secretary
Margaret Jay
Robert Schott
Steven Simon

February 10, 2020