

Raymond Ethics Committee

March 22, 2005

Final Minutes

**I. Call to Order**

Co-chairman Pat Larney called to order a meeting of the Raymond Ethics Committee on March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2005, at 6:30pm, in the High School Media Center.

Committee members also present:

Frank Bourque  
Sandra Ellis  
Marilyn Semple  
Pam Turcotte

Members of the Public present:

Gretchen Gott  
Joyce Wood

The meeting was televised by RCTV. The cameraman was Ron Edgar.

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

Mr. Larney led the attendees in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**III. Proof of Posting**

The Proof of Posting was confirmed by Ms. Semple for today's meeting. The meeting was posted both at the High School and at the Town Hall.

**IV. Election of Officers**

Mr. Larney opened the floor to nominations.

*Chairman:* Ms. Ellis nominated Mr. Larney as Chairman, and Mr. Bourque seconded. There were no other nominations, nor volunteers. The vote to confirm was unanimous in the positive.

*Vice-Chairman:* Mr. Larney nominated Ms. Semple; Ms. Ellis seconded. There were no other nominations, nor volunteers. The vote to confirm was unanimous in the positive.

*Secretary:* Ms. Semple nominated Ms. Turcotte; Ms. Ellis seconded. There were no other nominations, nor volunteers. The vote to confirm was unanimous in the positive.

**V. Public Forum**

The Committee welcomed Members of the Public Gretchen Gott and Joyce Wood.

Ms. Wood indicated that she hoped that ethics training of public servants would be a high priority of the Committee, and that it was important to raise awareness of the Code. She would like the Committee to offer more thorough, in depth training. Ms. Gott hoped that the committee would do the training, and not have the boards train themselves. Ms. Ellis agreed to send out the PowerPoint Training presentation to all board members for their review and thoughts.

The Committee gave Ms. Gott a small token of thanks for her previous service as a member of the Ethics Committee.

As there was no other Public input, the Committee moved on to *Agenda Item VI, Approval of Minutes.*

## **VI. Approval of Minutes**

*February 8, 2005:* The draft of these minutes was reviewed; one small change was made - the spelling of Mr. Bourque's last name. Ms. Semple moved that they be approved as amended, Ms. Ellis seconded; there was no discussion. The vote was two in the affirmative and three abstentions due to absence from the referenced meeting; so moved.

## **VII. Old Business**

There was evidently no old business to discuss, so the Committee moved on to *Agenda Item VIII, New Business.*

## **VIII. New Business**

### **A. Future Meeting Dates**

There was some discussion about the site and frequency of future meetings. The Committee will be sure to book the Media Center for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesdays of the upcoming months. There was some discussion about going to monthly rather than bi-weekly meetings, after all the boards have been trained. No firm decisions were made.

As new boards have been elected, training needs to begin as quickly as possible. Two committee members need to be available for each training session. Mr. Bourque suggested the Committee begin by training the Planning Board on Thursday, March 31<sup>st</sup>. The Committee members will consult their calendars as to their availability and decide on a plan of action before March 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **B. Ethics Documents**

Ms. Ellis handed out copies of all previously produced Ethics Committee documents to the new members, and they were all reviewed. Ms. Wood asked if the Committee was planning to insert these documents into the Code of Ethics manuals when they are reprinted. The discussion went back and forth, with some feeling the documents are for internal use and had not been voted on by the Town, therefore did not belong in the Code of Ethics; and others pointing out that the Inquiry and Complaint forms were also not voted upon by the Town, but that they are in the Code. Perhaps a delineating page could be inserted between "voted on by town" and "voted on by Committee" sections. Ms. Ellis will make changes to the manual, and it will be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting. We will be asking the Town Hall staff to put the forms and documents on line.

There was some discussion as to whether all Committee members should be copied on the Respondent Letter when it's sent out after a complaint is filed, and whether or not video is acceptable evidence at a hearing. In general, the answer to both queries was yes.

### **C. Bookkeeping-Expenditures**

Ms. Semple feels that one Committee Member ought to track the budget. Ms. Ellis agreed to be that person. Evidently the Ethics Committee now has to pay for the printing of new Code of Ethics manuals. Mr. Larney will email Town Manager Rick Bates and ask for the going rates for internal reproduction, and will also price external reproduction. Ms. Ellis mentioned that many persons do not remember to bring their Manual to training sessions and as a result must be given a second copy, which is wasteful of resources.

The discussion moved onto the upper limit for gifts and favors, which needs to be voted on annually. Ms. Semple mentioned that she has heard townspeople mention both that it should be raised to \$50 and that it should be lowered to \$0. Ms. Turcotte pointed out that the current upper limit, \$25, is the same as the IRS limit. Ms. Semple then moved that the upper limit of the Gifts and Favors portion of the code remain at \$25 for the upcoming fiscal year, and Mr. Bourque seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The vote was unanimous in the positive; so moved.

### **D. Yahoo! Site Management**

Mr. Landis was maintaining the Yahoo site. Mr. Larney has taken over that job with Mr. Landis' help. Mr. Larney

passed out new physical and e-mail addresses for all Committee members.

#### **E. Document Storage/Management**

Although the Committee has a file cabinet drawer, it's not well organized. Ms. Ellis volunteered to perform that task during April school vacation. We are unclear on what the law specifies for retention of documents, other than minutes, which must be retained for eternity. Mr. Larney will attempt to find an answer to this question.

#### **F. Training Sessions**

All Committee members agree that training needs to be done more effectively, and opened the floor to suggestions. Training is mandatory for town employees, but not for volunteers or for elected persons, and there has been some trouble in the past compelling volunteers/board members to actually attend the training sessions. Ms. Wood suggested that the Committee communicate training dates/times directly to board members and not just to the Chairperson, with dates/locations set and published in advance so that people who have missed their own board's session can go elsewhere. Perhaps a slide on Channel 22 would be helpful for advertising purposes. Mr. Bourque suggested perhaps having Kevin shoot a training video. This idea was popular. The Conflict of Interest/Ethics Committee of Plaistow will be coming to the next meeting, and perhaps they will have helpful suggestions. They are interested in developing a Southern New Hampshire Ethics Networking Group.

#### **G. Clarification of Inquiry Process**

Ms. Semple wanted to discuss the Committee receiving specific pre- or post-event queries, designed as preventive maintenance. Although members of the Committee appreciate the spirit behind these queries, the Code of Ethics does not specify a way to handle them. Ms. Wood indicated that the drafting committee was afraid that voting or ruling on these sorts of inquiries would cause a problem should the same subject then come up later as a complaint. The Committee would have then already rendered their decision. However, on the other hand, the purpose of the Committee is to render advice and counsel. Ms. Wood suggested that the Committee could lead the person to make the right decision by asking them questions about the event rather than coming down on one side or the other of the issue. This subject was tabled for the time being.

Ms. Semple had received a letter from a townspeople asking the Ethics Committee about the recommended process for asking a board member to recuse themselves totally from a matter in which they might have a conflict of interest. This question falls outside of the scope of the Code of Ethics. Mr. Bourque mentioned that there is a process in the Land Use manual for a member of the public to question an official who has a conflict of interest, and he would be glad to bring the book for perusal. Ms. Wood pointed out that the Land Use manual contains many RSAs in it and would be applicable to other boards. Ultimately, the townspeople can ask the Board Member to step down, but the Board Member is not compelled to do so.

Ms. Ellis and Ms. Turcotte will not be available for the next regularly scheduled meeting date of April 12<sup>th</sup> 2005, so that meeting will be cancelled. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be Tuesday, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2005.

#### **IX. Adjournment**

Ms. Semple moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:42pm; Ms. Ellis seconded. The vote was unanimous in the affirmative; so moved.

Respectfully submitted,  
Debra H. Doda