

**Ethics Committee Meeting**  
**19 May 2003; 6:30 PM**  
**Raymond High School Media Center**

**Present:** Emery Landis, Sandra Ellis, Gretchen Gott, Pat Larney, and Marilyn Semple.

**Election of Officers:** Gretchen suggested that Raymond follow Dunbarton's example and elect co-chairs. A motion was made and seconded to elect Sandy and Pat as co-chairs; all voted in favor. The committee next discussed who should be Secretary. The Committee could opt for one of the members to serve as Secretary after tonight. Sandy will approach town manager Rick Bates About assigning one of the town office clerks to the Ethics Committee. The committee discussed a number of reasons why it is preferable to have a town employee as Secretary rather than one of the Committee members. In the first year, at least, the committee will need to meet often and minutes will be important, as will the development of written procedures and quick turn around on inquiries and, if necessary, complaints. Meetings must be posted 24 hours in advance at Town Hall, and possibly, at the meeting location. Minutes must be posted in compliance with RSA 91-A. Also, the committee wants to strive for high visibility. Getting minutes and other committee materials posted on the town web site would serve this goal. An employee would be better positioned to cover these important tasks than a committee member. It is also more difficult for a member to participate in the meeting and take minutes at the same time.

**Budget:** The Town did not budget for the Ethics Committee because the voters had not yet adopted the Raymond Code of Ethics at budget time and the Ethics Committee had not yet been established. Also, there was no track record to use as a basis for a budget. Sandy will talk to Rick Bates about funding the budgetary needs of the Ethics Committee.

**Meeting Nights:** By consensus the committee decided to schedule its meetings initially on the second and fourth Tuesday nights of each month at 6:30 PM. Sandy will check with the Recreation Department to see if the Media Center is available on Tuesdays and whether that space will continue to be available after school closes for the season.

**Education:** One of the most important tasks of the Ethics Committee will be to establish training for covered individuals. The Committee members must familiarize themselves with the Code of Ethics so that they are in a position to provide guidance. They must establish procedures for conducting training. Dunbarton prepared a pamphlet summary that includes contacts and information on the process for inquiries and complaints. They also printed up a business size card listing the objective of the Code of Ethics. Pat Larney suggested that videotaped training, while not a substitute for face-to-face training could be used if someone cannot attend or when there are new employees. Video tape training would be an interim measure until the next face-to-face training session.

**Meeting Process:** Meetings are public. Three members present makes a quorum; actions may be taken by the affirmative vote of the majority of the members present. Meetings will run from 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM, with the potential to extend by majority vote. Minutes will be distributed to committee members via e-mail. The committee needs to arrange for broadcast on Channel 22.

Generally, there will be a place on each meeting agenda for public input and inquiries. All public inquiries for guidance must be couched in general terms or as a hypothetical, without specific names or situations. The public will be reminded of this requirement at the beginning of each meeting. The policy could also be printed on the agenda. Any person who stands up and starts to complain about a specific situation or person should be stopped immediately. Pat Larney will draft a press release for publication in local papers to educate the public on process. Agendas do not have to be posted, but they typically are as a courtesy and for efficiency.

The Ethics Committee will need legal resources for reviewing its written procedures. An intern may be available through Franklin Pierce or the committee could seek the use of the town's law firm. Emery will talk to Andy Harmon. The Committee should have independent access to legal advice.

**Inquiry/Complaint Process:** The Committee needs a way of taking input from the public and for the public to contact the committee for inquiries and complaints. Complaints and inquiries should be kept confidential. The committee should have a secure e-mail address, a voice mail box, and a mail box at Town Hall. The town had set up a telephone extension for the Raymond Code of Ethics Drafting Committee; this same extension may be available for the Ethics Committee. Sandy will ask Rick Bates about the voice mail box. The voice mail message should note the frequency with which the mail box will be checked and note the period of time before the Ethics Committee may respond. Pat Larney will check the voice mail messages with Gretchen as backup. Emery will set up a yahoo e-mail address for the Ethics Committee, [RaymondEthicsCommittee@yahoo.com](mailto:RaymondEthicsCommittee@yahoo.com), if that address is available.

The Committee needs written procedures not only for the conduct of hearings, but also for the conduct of public meetings and inquiries. It needs to establish a time line for calling a meeting and responding to complaints. The Committee must acknowledge the receipt of complaints immediately and responded to the complainant with a date for initial action. A complainant must exhaust all other avenues of appeal before they bring a complaint to the Ethics Committee. The Committee may have to provide guidance as to what the other avenues of appeal are. The members discussed how they should deal with informal, direct ethics inquiries or complaints. Committee members must not discuss inquiries and complaints individually. They can help individuals with process questions, however, the Ethics Committee is serving in a quasi-judicial role and must take extraordinary care to remain impartial.

**Other Tasks:** Emery will keep track of the costs incurred by the Ethics Committee to use as a basis for next year's budget. The Committee must establish the definition of the "nominal value" amount for the gifts policy. It must also decide the priority ordering of tasks. Education is a high priority, but processes need to be established before the Committee can train covered individuals in those processes. The Code of Ethics went into effect on May 10. Those processes must be in place as soon as possible.

**Report on Dunbarton's Complaint Hearing:** The Town of Dunbarton is in the middle of hearing its first complaint. The hearing began last Tuesday, May 13 and will continue on Thursday, May 22. Gretchen and Marilyn attended the last session. Emery and Marilyn will cover the hearing this week.

**Next Meetings:** The next meetings have been scheduled for June 10 and June 24 at 6:30 PM; the tentative location is the Raymond High School Media Center. By consensus, the committee agreed to invite Nick Holmes of the Dunbarton Ethics Committee to attend the June 10 meeting to talk about start up tasks, procedural logistics, and training. If he is not available for June 10, he will be invited to June 24.

The meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Joyce M. D. Wood, Secretary Pro Tem