

## Ethics Committee

June 10, 2003

- I. The Ethics Committee meeting was called to order at 6:30pm, June 10, 2003 at the Raymond Town Hall by Co-chair, Pat Larney.

Committee members present were:

Gretchen Gott  
Emery Landis  
Pat Larney  
Marilyn Semple

There was one member of the public for a brief time.

The meeting was televised by Raymond Cable Committee.

Sandy Ellis was excused.

Guest Speaker - Scott Ives, Dunbarton Ethics Committee

- II. The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. A proof of posting was reviewed. At 6:40pm, we took a 5 minute break to allow the cable crew to set up for the evening.

- III. Old Business:

- A. Review of minutes of the May meeting.

The minutes were posted in the Town Hall and Library. Marilyn Semple made motion to accept the minutes as drafted, seconded by Gretchen Gott. Motion passed.

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The review of old business was suspended so that the committee could hear the guest speaker, Scott Ives, Dunbarton Ethics Committee. He outlined the process that Dunbarton engaged in to write and pass an ethics document and the work of the Ethics Committee to date. He stated that the purpose of initiating an Ethics Code and Committee was to "stem the tide of scandal du jour" and to provide education and guidance for public servants as they proceed in the completion of town business. He discussed the manner in which their code allows the public to access ethics information.

First, the committee is available for people to seek opinions on ethical questions. The requests for opinions are framed in a general manner, with no personal information given or asked for during the process. The committee walks the questioner through the code using a "Socratic method." This means that the committee asks the questioner about sections of the code and may ask questions such as "did this happen, or if this happened then did this happen", etc. Scott states that this helps the questioner identify pertinent sections of the code and then determine in their own mind if they wish to go the next step to the formal process.

Scott cautioned the committee against "grocery store" consultations and said that the public should be encouraged to use the process outlined by the Ethics Code.

Scott discussed the education aspect of the Code and stated that he felt that this was the most important component. He stated that in Dunbarton, as public servants are sworn in, they receive a copy of the code. He stated that the Ethics Committee holds training sessions annually. In addition, they go to the various committees and boards as a means of outreach to public servants.

He discussed voice mail and e-mail messages and stated that they encourage people to come to an Ethics Committee meeting to receive general guidance regarding how the process works.

Scott stated that the most difficult thing so far is the first complaint that the committee received, the subsequent fact finding and finding that there had been a violation of the ethics code. He did state that as time goes on, there have been fewer complaints and stories around town. He states that he feels that this is because complaints come with less or impaired communication and that the code makes for better thinking and communication.

Scott advised the committee to become very familiar with the Right To Know Law and to be careful to follow the provisions in the law.

He reviewed the forms that the Dunbarton committee uses for complaints. He discussed the general question form and the opinion form.

He suggested that there be a cautionary statement read at the beginning of meetings stating that the questions should be general with no accusations made and no names used.

Scott said "The code doesn't seek to change what is good in the town."

He was asked how the committee would function without having an attorney (Dunbarton does have an attorney). Scott suggested that if we follow the code, use good judgment to dictate decisions, and ask town counsel or the NH Municipal Association questions as needed, then we should be able to administer the code well.

He stated at the end of his discussion, that he and Dunbarton Ethics Committee member, Jackie Kennedy, will attend our next meeting on June 24th.

The Ethics Committee thanked Scott for being available to help the committee as we begin.

The committee then returned to Old Business.

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A motion was made by Emery Landis to table asking for outside legal help, seconded by Marilyn Semple. Motion unanimous in the affirmative.

There was discussion about the proposed press release. The e-mail address was corrected and some spelling corrected. Members felt that it should be sent to the local papers for immediate release.

A sample letterhead for the Ethics Committee was reviewed and accepted for use.

There was a discussion regarding the room to be used for Ethics Committee meetings and the process for posting the meetings. Kevin Woods from the Cable Committee stepped out from the cable room and stated that the Town Hall meeting room is preferable for their ease in covering meetings. It was decided to continue to use the Town Hall. There was discussion about the potential for conflicts with other committees.

The committee discussed and recognized the need for secretarial help since accurate minutes are essential and difficult to do while engaging in the meeting business.

Pat gave the members a proposed form for complaints and inquiries. These will be discussed at the next meeting.

Emery will procure the town hall for the meeting on the 24th, and will notify Scott of the location. Pat will change the posting.

#### IV. New Business

- A. Education - Emery will give the committee copies of 91:A.
- B. Codes for Public Servants - they will need to be printed for all. Along with a cover sheet for the public servant to sign and return, saying that they have read the code. There was discussion on whether or not we should keep a master list of all those covered by the code and where the signed covered sheets should be maintained. Emery suggested keeping such a master list would be a daunting task. Marilyn stated that she would like to know who is covered by the code.
- C. Coverage - the question was asked about whether or not a public servant has to be sworn member to be covered by the code. Kevin Woods, again briefly joined the meeting, and stated that there are some committees that are not sworn in, but that have budgets and decisional capacity and he feels that they are covered by the code.
- D. Rick Bates, Town Manager, will be at the next meeting. He will be asked to bring a list of covered committees, boards, etc.
- E. Email - The committee members received an email from a citizen asking about the donation of goods for a town sponsored event. The committee was asked about the appropriateness of a large TV as a door prize. The person also asked the committee to establish the nominal value for gifts as required by the code. There was discussion about whether such gifts could be received by a public servant and Emery

cited III:A and D as the means to allow the acceptance of a gift. There was a continued discussion of gifts with no decisions reached.

- F. Acceptance of gifts - the committee discussed the acceptance of gifts and whether or not the Board of Selectman should approve the acceptance of gift prior to, not after the fact as is the case at times, currently.
  - G. Reply regarding gifts question. Pat will send a letter of receipt of the question and an invitation to the next meeting.
- V. Adjournment - A motion was made by Gretchen and seconded by Marilyn to adjourn the meeting. The vote was in the affirmative and the meeting was adjourned at 8:50pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Gretchen Gott