

TOWN OF WOODSTOCK ETHICS BOARD 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

The Ethics and Disclosure Law of the Town of Woodstock (the “Ethics Law”), Section VIII Ethics Board, C Powers and Duties, number 8 requires the Ethics Board to “... prepare and submit and annual report to the Town Board summarizing the activities of the Ethics Board, listing any recommended changes to the text or administration of the Local Law.” Herewith is our 2022 annual report:

CURRENT MEMBERS AS OF JANUARY 23, 2023:

Allison Dodd - Serving 3-year term (2022-24)
Paul Washington – Serving 3-year term (2022-24)
Neil Ratner – Serving 3-year term (2021-23)
Iris York – Serving 3-year term (2023-25)

ELECTION OF OFFICERS:

There is no obligation under the Ethics Law to have a secretary, but we are required to elect a Chairperson. The Ethics Board decided, once again, not to appoint an official Secretary, but to continue rotating the responsibilities for taking minutes and to ask Iris York to be responsible for a number of responsibilities such as interacting with the Town Clerk’s office with respect to scheduling meetings, providing finalized copies of minutes, etc. Paul Washington was re-elected as the Chairperson in January 2022.

ANNUAL DISCLOSURE FORMS:

The Ethics Board performed its review of disclosure forms. The Ethics Board is pleased to report that the vast majority of Town Employees submitted disclosure forms. But it is concerning that several employees – including members of Town entities that have responsibility for the use as appearance of property within the Town -- did not submit completed disclosure forms. Attached as Appendix A to this report is the list of Town employees from whom the Ethics Board did not receive disclosure forms during the year, but who were requested to do so.

ETHICS INQUIRIES:

The Ethics Board addressed four cases during 2022. The Ethics Board was not required to notify the Town Board of any matters pursuant to Section 71-8C(6) of the Ethics Law.

ETHICS LAW UPDATES:

As noted in our report for 2021, in September 2021 the Ethics Board proposed changes to the Ethics Law (1) to conform the Ethics Law to the resolution adopted by the Town Board on June 22, 2021 and to shift most of the Town Clerk’s administrative responsibilities under the Ethics Law to the Town Supervisor’s Office; (2) to clarify that all Town Employees, as defined in the Ethics Law, are covered by the Law and which Town Employees are required to submit disclosure forms; (3) to strengthen the provisions in the law relating to the confidentiality of matters and forms submitted to the Ethics Board; and (4) to clarify the respective responsibilities of the Ethics Board and the Town Board under the Ethics Law.

Following additional exchanges between the Town Supervisor and the Ethics Board Chair, the Town Board submitted proposed changes, largely reflecting the recommendations of the Ethics Board, for discussion at a public hearing in November 2022 and approved those changes in December 2022.

In addition to recommending changes to the Ethics Law, the Ethics Board also approved a revised Disclosure Form in November 2022.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

As noted in our reports to the Town Board for the past four years (2018, 2019, 2020, and 2021), the Ethics Board receives complaints alleging conduct that did not violate the Ethics and Disclosure Law, but that may violate the Town's Employment Practices Compliance Handbook (the "Handbook").

As underscored in our presentation to the Town Board in December 2020:

- The Ethics Board urges the Town (1) to provide the Handbook to all those who are covered by it (which includes not only paid employees, but also those who serve voluntarily on Town boards, committees, and commissions); (2) to provide comprehensive training to all Town employees on the Handbook and the Ethics Law, including the different types of conduct covered by the Handbook and the Ethics Law, and processes for reporting violations of each.
- We encourage all Town Board members to complete the annual disclosure forms on a timely basis, to set an example for Town employees.

The Ethics Board stands ready to work with the Town Board in updating the handbook for Town *volunteer* employees (which is in addition to the general Handbook noted above) and in providing training for all Town employees on the Ethics Law.

2022 MEETINGS:

The Ethics Board met eight times during 2022: January 24, March 28, April 25, May 23, June 27, September 27, October 24, and November 28.

Respectfully submitted by the Woodstock Ethics Board – January 24, 2023

APPENDIX A to 2022 Annual Report of the Ethics Board

Climate Smart Task Force

Jim Hansen

Ken Panza,

Comeau Stewardship Advisory Committee

Jim Hansen

Commission for Civic Design

Joan Elliott

Geoff Hardin

Complete Streets Committee

Kevin Smith

Human Rights Commission

Gayle Two Eagles

Senior Recreation Committee

Daisy Furth

Edwina Henderson

Agnes Tomaselli

Diana Wilkinson

Ron Zukor

Zoning Board of Appeals

Joseph Belluck

Michael Castiglione

Marcia Zwilling

Zoning Revision Committee

Michael Castiglione

Jeff Collins

Conor Wenk