

TOWN OF WOODSTOCK ETHICS BOARD 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

The Ethics and Disclosure Law of the Town of Woodstock, 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 2019 annual report:

MEMBERS:

Allison Dodd - Serving 3-year term (2019-2021)
Paul Washington – Serving 3-year term (2019-2021)
Neil Ratner – Serving 3-year term (2018-2020)
Iris York – Serving 3-year term (2020-2022)
James Dougherty – Serving 3-year term (2019-2021)

OFFICER ELECTION:

There is no obligation under the Ethics and Disclosure Law to have a secretary, but we are required to elect a Chairperson. The Ethics Board decided 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 administrative responsibilities. Paul Washington was elected as the Chairperson.

VOLUNTEER DAY, AUGUST 2019:

Members attended the Town’s Volunteer Day.

ANNUAL DISCLOSURE FORMS:

The Ethics Board performed its review of annual disclosure forms. It noted that most Town employees were provided with the incorrect form. The Ethics Board re-confirmed with the Town Clerk’s Office the correct form to provide.

ETHICS INQUIRIES:

There were no cases carried over from prior years into 2019. The Board received complaints in nine matters during 2019 and resolved seven of them, with two matters (Cases 2019-8 and 2019-9) carrying over into 2020. The Ethics Board was not required to notify the Town Board of any matters pursuant to Section 71-8C(6) of the Ethics and Disclosure Law, but did send a letter to the Town Board dated July 24, 2019 regarding the Town Supervisor communicating with other Town agencies.

ETHICS LAW UPDATES:

During 2019, the Ethics Board did not recommend any changes to the Ethics and Disclosure Law.

ETHICS LAW TRAINING:

The Ethics Board has had discussions with the Town Clerk’s office regarding in-person and video training for Town employees regarding the Ethics and Disclosure Law. The Ethics Board will work with the Town Supervisor’s office to explore online training and FAQs.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

As we noted in our 2018 annual report, 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"). To reiterate our recommendation from last year: The Ethics Board believes it would be helpful for the Town 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). This would help to ensure that individuals are not only aware of the standards applicable to them, but also know the process for reporting a violation of the Handbook.

We also encourage the Town Clerk's office to provide newly appointed Town employees, including those who serve on newly-formed Town committees and commissions, with an annual disclosure form on a timely basis in accordance with the requirements of the Ethics and Disclosure Law,

2019 MEETINGS:

The Ethics Board nine times during 2019: January 25, February 11, March 18, April 22, May 17, May 31, August 26, November 27, and December 9, based on business need.

Respectfully submitted by the Woodstock Ethics Board - 2020