

# Town of Red Hook

## Ethics Board Minutes

Friday, March 20, 2009

**Attendance:** Fred Cartier, Claire Horst, Susan Goldstein, Gail Nussbaum and Linda Keeling

**Absent:** None

**Guest:** Christine Chale, attorney to the town, and 8 visitors, filmed

**Location:** Town Hall, Conference Room

**Call to Order:** Chairman Fred Cartier called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. He explained that this is a public hearing and most likely an executive session will occur next week. Several complaints have been received but they are not FOILable. A private report is issued to the person complained about and the Town Board members.

**Purpose:**

1. To address a letter from Lisa Pullaro regarding a perceived conflict of interest of town personnel, Micki Strawinski as a Bard College employee as it relates to the vote for District 5 polling place resolution.
2. To allow Micki Strawinski to provide additional information
3. To allow the public to offer their comments

**Other:** Susan Goldstein motioned to accept the Rules and Procedure packet for the Ethics Board. Claire Horst seconded, all agreed.

**Correspondence:** 5 complaints and 7 informational letters

**Discussion:**

Susan Goldstein indicated that she will be out of the country and wanted to know if she could participate over the internet. Christine Chale indicated that under the Open Meetings Law that is not acceptable for voting purposes.

Micki Strawinski made the statement she believes there is no conflict of interest regarding the issue before the Ethics Board. She felt she did her due diligence and felt that District 5 needed a new polling location whose increased numbers could be handled at the Bard College facility.

Chairman Fred Cartier read a letter from Jim Brudvig of Bard College dated March 18<sup>th</sup>.

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Claire Horst referred to a letter received regarding the polling place location and she felt this is not the issue at hand but rather how the issue applies to Section 13-5-C-3 of the Ethics Code as it applies to the “appearance” of impropriety and Micki Strawinski’s employment at Bard College.

Christine Chale clarified that the only issue is that of the alleged conflict may be deliberated.

Gail read a prepared statement from herself as she felt there is a much deeper issue.

Christine Chale explained about notarization which eliminates anonymous letters.

Susan Goldstein addressed 13-5-B appearance of impropriety and possible fiduciary advantage for Micki Strawinski or her employer Bard College.

Chairman Fred Cartier received a letter from Lisa Pullaro giving permission for Dan Pullaro to speak on her behalf. Lisa Pullaro originally just wanted an advisory opinion regarding an appearance of conflict and not dealing with the polling location. Dan Pullaro said she was required to make a formal complaint.

Susan Goldstein explained that the Ethics Board is an advisory to the Town Board. No formal opinion can be made to townspeople as part of our governmental process.

Stephen Cole referred to his letter which addresses the ethical appropriateness of her being a liaison to Bard College.

Micki Strawinski said Supervisor Crane asked her to be the liaison.

Robert Latimer doesn’t care where the polling place is located. The Ethics Code does not solely rely on financial gain. He referred to his recusal when he was on the Town Board because he was also a police officer. He felt her voting on the issue was a facilitator of the relocation of the polling place.

Jonathan Becker, professor of politics at Bard, explained the Oct. 8, 2008 letter to the Board of Elections regarding the present polling site and the increase in the number of registered voters. He indicated that Bard College is not benefiting from this. He noted that by the 2012 census the Town Board will need to vote on where to move the voting location.

Stephen Cole would like the discussion to stay on the issue. It is the “perception” of impropriety. It has nothing to do with the election.

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Susan Goldstein reviewed what she thought were the three points to consider:

1. Appearance of impropriety;
2. Financial gains;
- and 3. Liaison

Fred Cartier noted that #2 was not in Lisa Pullaro's complaint.

Jim Brudvig of Bard College said that Micki Strawinski was elected by the townspeople and there is no advantage to Bard College.

Pat Kelly made 3 point: 1. concern for the powers that be – influencing; 2. appearance of conflict – look beyond letters received; and 3. complaints arguments – all 5 town board members receive a paycheck and should recuse

Susan Goldstein motioned to go into executive session, Claire Horst seconded and all agreed.

The executive session lasted from 8:45 until 9:15. Susan Goldstein motioned to go out of executive session, Fred Cartier seconded, all agreed.

Susan Goldstein motioned to move that there was no need for Micki Strawinski to recuse herself on the District 5 polling station resolution. The vote was 3 in favor and 2 opposed.

Susan Goldstein .....	Yes
Gail Nussbaum .....	Yes
Claire Horst .....	No
Linda Keeling .....	No
Fred Cartier .....	Yes

**Next Meeting:** The next meeting is Friday, April 3, 2009 8 a.m., town hall to discuss "Liaison" issue.

**Meeting Ended:** Claire Horst motioned to end the meeting and Susan Goldstein seconded. All agreed. The meeting ended at 9:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling,  
Ethics Board Secretary  
March 20, 2009  
Approved 4-3-09