

Town of Red Hook Ethics Board Minutes

Friday, April 3, 2009

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

Absent: Claire Horst (resigned 3/28/09)

Guest: Christine Chale, attorney to the town, Stephen Cole, Yvonne Cole, his wife, and Micki Strawinski

Location: Town Hall, Conference Room

Call to Order: Chairman Fred Cartier called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m.

Purpose:

1. Responding to a letter, March 12, 2009, from Steve Cole on the “liaison” position in general and specifically as it relates to Micki Strawinski’s employment at Bard College.

Correspondence: none

Discussion:

The Board members reviewed the minutes of 3-20-09.

Susan Goldstein questioned when it is appropriate to have attachments? Chairman Cartier indicated that they were just informational. Chris Chale explained that letters read during a meeting are part of the minutes and attachment documents are generally held by the town clerk to reduce the amount of paper attached with the minutes.

Susan Goldstein motioned that we amend the minutes to indicate that the attachments are available on file with the town clerk. Gail Nussbaum seconded. No further questions. All agreed.

Susan Goldstein motioned that we amend the minutes as noted. Linda Keeling seconded. All agreed.

Chairman Cartier opened the subject to the liaison issue and acknowledged Stephen Cole and his letter to the Ethics Board dated March 12th. Chairman Cartier felt we addressed the first part of his letter. The second part dealt with removing Micki

Strawinski as the liaison to Bard College. The Chairman indicated that we can not remove her from that position. Steve Cole interjected that we **could** make a recommendation. His letter also asks that the Ethic Board counsel her in all discussions and her recusal of herself from all discussions pertaining to Bard College.

Chairman Cartier had contacted Supervisor Sue Crane about the liaison role but he did not receive anything from her. He then, asked Micki Strawinski, to give her perceived view of the role of the liaison. She is the liaison to the CAC, Greenway Trail Committee and Bard College, which is not a committee of the town. She attends committee meetings and brings back questions to the Town Board for those committees. She only brings back community information events at Bard College. She indicated she has never attended a formal meeting as a representative of the town at Bard. The material she presents at the Board meetings comes from the Bard Public relations office of their handouts of future college and community events held at Bard . Susan Goldstein clarified that it was Sue Crane who thought it was a good idea for Micki Strawinski to be the liaison to Bard. She felt there was no conflict of interest with this appointment role.

Steve Cole , making comments concerning his letter to the Ethics Committee, stated that it is not an issue of Bard. He works at Marist College and is not anti-education, anti-student or anti-student's right to vote. He felt the whole issue about the polling place is obfuscating the issue that he perceives. The sole intent of his correspondence was to try to have a definitive statement that the town board could accept about how a particular town employee or board member or policy making position in this town affect their relationship between their employer and their community in the town. This is for the protection of the town's representatives, the employer and the community to prevent a potential embarrassing situation for anyone of them.

Chairman Cartier felt that what Steve Cole talked about is in 13-5 of the Ethics Code indicating that the Ethics Committee had previously talked about a biography of the person but felt that people were reluctant to give up their personnel information. Instead we developed a disclosure form.

Susan Goldstein moved to go into executive session for deliberation of the liaison practice. Linda seconded and all agreed. The session lasted from 8:55 am to 9:45am with the following determination and recommendation statement:

The Ethics Board determined it is not a conflict for Micki Strawinski to serve as Town Board liaison to Bard College as that role primarily involves communication of public events or information.

In such case where there is a matter involving contractual and financial matters, in each case, recusal should be considered.

Susan Goldstein moved to accept the statement, Gail Nussbaum seconded, all agreed.

Susan Goldstein inquired if we should draft a statement to the Town Board asking them to define the role of liaison for the public.

There was a lengthy discussion on how to ask the town board to issue a statement defining the role of liaison for the Town of Red Hook board members. The following resolution was made by Susan Goldstein, Gail Nussbaum seconded and all agreed.

To promote transparency within our town government, we recommend that the Town Board issue a statement defining the role of liaison.

Next Meeting: A regular meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 17th at 8 am.

Meeting Ended: Gail motioned to end the meeting and Linda seconded, all agreed. The meeting ended at 10:55 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Keeling,
Ethics Board Secretary
April 16, 2009

(Passed with corrections made by the Ethics Board)