

Roxanne Maher

From: Carlo M Porazzi <porazzicm@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 8, 2025 2:00 PM
To: Town Council Group; Fred Allyn, III; Roxanne Maher; April Brunelle; Jessica Buhle; Kevin J. Dombrowski
Subject: Town Ethics Commission

Ledyard Town Council Administrative Team and others,

I write once again to request that the administrative committee push forward with a clear and transparent set of ethics guidelines and subsequently, a commission to apply those overarching guidelines to the code of conduct by the town government representatives. I understand the town has a working draft. As mentioned many times previous, Ledyard is one of a few towns in the state that still does not have an ethics commission. There have been discussions at the town council meetings about more reach and transparency to the residents and taxpayers in regards to the actions of our local government, yet this major step in that direction still seems elusive. It would be unfortunate for a few at the local government level to hamper the wishes of the community when the benefit would speak volumes about our town government respecting the will of the people. And being respected in return. I understand that our current charter empowers the Town Council to handle complaints of this type currently, but I know that any complaint deemed "too sensitive or controversial" by some will be summarily dismissed. Conversely, an Ethics Commission will have more autonomy, or should have. In regards to finding suitable local volunteers to sit on this panel, I don't think that will be an issue at all. I submit the following for your review (thanks to AI):

In government, ethics refers to **the application of moral principles to the actions and decisions of public officials, ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability, and prioritizing the public interest over personal gain.** [1, 2, 3, 4]

Here's a more detailed breakdown: [1, 3]

- Public Interest vs. Personal Gain: Government ethics emphasizes serving the public good and avoiding actions that could be seen as benefiting personal interests or those of a select few. [1, 3]
- Integrity and Honesty: Ethical behavior in government requires honesty, integrity, and adherence to high standards of conduct. [3, 5]
- Accountability: Public officials are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions, and ethical conduct ensures that they are held responsible for their actions. [3, 5]
- Fairness and Impartiality: Ethical government ensures that decisions are made fairly and impartially, without bias or discrimination. [1, 3, 5]
- Transparency: Ethical government promotes transparency in decision-making and operations, allowing the public to understand how decisions are being made and held accountable. [1, 2, 3]
- Conflict of Interest: Government ethics addresses conflicts of interest, where a public official's personal interests could potentially influence their official duties. [1, 6]
- Ethical Codes and Standards: Many governments have established codes of conduct and ethical standards for public officials, outlining expected behavior and potential consequences for violations. [4, 5]
- Importance of Ethics: Ethical behavior in government is crucial for maintaining public trust, ensuring effective governance, and upholding the principles of democracy. [1, 3, 4]
- Ethical Governance: Ethical governance means governance based on a certain value premise, which is also "good". For example, probity, integrity, compassion, empathy, responsibility, social justice etc. without which ethical issues can't be upheld. [7]
- Political Ethics: Political ethics, also known as political morality or public ethics, refers to the practice of aligning political actions with moral and ethical principles to ensure fair governance. [8]

[1] <https://www.scu.edu/government-ethics/resources/what-is-government-ethics/>

- [2] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Public_sector_ethics
[3] <https://www.govpilot.com/blog/guide-to-local-government-ethics-what-makes-an-ethical-government>
[4] <https://www.aspanet.org/ASPA/ASPA/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics.aspx>
[5] <https://manifold.open.umn.edu/read/chapter-8-ethics-and-accountability-in-public-administration>
[6] <https://www.cityofdenton.com/DocumentCenter/View/884/Local-Government-Ethics-in-a-Nutshell-PDF>
[7] <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/ethical-mode-of-governance-for-india>
[8] <https://www.vaia.com/en-us/explanations/anthropology/political-anthropology/political-ethics/>
[-] <https://www.vaia.com/en-us/explanations/anthropology/political-anthropology/political-ethics/>
[-] <https://www.scribd.com/document/657640415/Ethics-Vision-VAM-Merged>
[-] <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/ethical-mode-of-governance-for-india>

Finally, below is a copy of my previous email to the town council on this matter and the ethics draft at hand.

12/11/2024

Ledyard Town Council,

As a current resident and taxpayer I am writing to voice my support for the formation of a Ledyard Ethics Commission. I find it very concerning that Ledyard is one of the few towns that does not have this oversight committee. The objection over forming this committee by at least one standing member of the town council is also concerning. Simply having a code of ethics established with no board to administer is much like the example given of having laws but no police force. In my opinion there have been and are instances of poor judgement by town leaders in local matters and I believe the establishment of this commission will allow for complaints to be lodged, with pertinent facts supporting. I also agree this will go far in increasing trust between residents and Ledyard local government, something I believe is waning currently. To that matter, while the draft I read is a very good start I would offer some changes if I may:

- Sec 2 - the following sentence leaves some ambiguity as to what this could allow: "Specific portions of this Ordinance shall not be applicable if they conflict in whole or in part with any labor agreement, employment contract or state statute." It would be beneficial if some high -level examples could be provided
- Sec 4, subsection J & M - I would suggest any former member of town government be prohibited from representing any party seeking business with or in the town, or seeking employment with that party for a term of three (3) years from their vacancy of their town position
- Any reference or suggestion, explicit or implied, to the mayor in office at the time having any control or oversight in the dealings of the Ethics Committee except for receiving reports of current status and/or findings

Thank you for your consideration,
Carlo Porazzi
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