

To:
Ledyard Town Council
Working Group on Creation of an Ethics Committee
Ledyard, CT

12/11/2024

Dear Members of the Town Council,

As a current resident of the town of Ledyard, I would like to voice my support for the creation of a Code of Ethics and a Ledyard Ethics Committee, as your own investigations have indicated we are one of the very few towns in Connecticut that do not currently have sufficient vehicles to apply such oversight.

I found the discussion so far in the town minutes very enlightening, though it disturbs me to learn that there would be *any* dissenting voice on our town council against establishing a vehicle for oversight, as ethical behavior in government is a cornerstone of maintaining the trust the electorate has in our town officials, both elected, hired and appointed.

I have read the Draft Ordinance for Establishing a Code of Ethics and an Ethics Commission. I must say I largely approve of the language, but call you attention to the following points that perhaps merit discussion:

1. **Section 5.5.a** stipulates "No complaint may be made under the code unless it is filed with the Commission within three (3) years after the violation alleged in the complaint has been committed."
 - o *I pose the question whether 3 years is too short a period, since that does not even equal the 4-year term of office for many positions outlined in the Chapter II of the Town Charter. Perhaps a 4 or even 5 years limitation for making a complaint would be better in a spirit of just accountability?*
2. **Section 5.3 Terms of Appointment** stipulates Members shall be appointed by the Town Council for a period of 3 years. **Section 5.5.c** requires 3-out-of-5 concurring votes to establish *probable cause* during an ethics investigation. Subsequently **Section 5.5.e** further requires a unanimous 5-out-of-5 concurring members to be able to take action upon any violations found.
 - o *Unlike a jury in a criminal trial who are chosen at random from the general public, the Ethics Committee is appointed by the Town Council, which potentially introduces (political or other) influence/bias into its composition. Thus is 5-out-of-5 concurring members too high a bar to expect any findings to ever result in disciplinary action? I am wondering what is the norm for taking disciplinary action in other such ethics bodies (either in government or in business), or if there is perhaps another model to use?*

Thank you for your Consideration,
Milton Schroeder Jr.
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