

Ethics Committee- Town of West Seneca
November 9th, 2015 @ 5:45 pm

Members present- George P. Clifford, Chairman
Amy L. Carpenter
Susan Kims
Edward F. Gehen Jr.
James E. Manley
Jacqueline A. Felser, Town Clerk
John J. Fenz, Town Attorney

Also present- Eugene P. Hart, Councilman
William P. Hanley Jr., Councilman

Members absent- Shawn P. Martin

The meeting was held at the West Seneca Town Hall, 1250 Union Road, West Seneca and called to order by Chairman George Clifford at 5:45 P.M.

Motion to approve the minutes for the September 28th, 2015 meeting by Mrs. Carpenter, seconded by Mr. Manley. All in favor,

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried.

Mrs. Kims provided the board with “Board of Ethics annual report to the Town Board for 2015, a Recusal Form, a Whistleblower Policy and Procedures packet, a Bylaws packet, an Annual Statement of Disclosure, and Directions for completing the Annual Statement of Disclosure protocol”.

Discussion of “Code of Ethics Promulgation and Training” for 2016. Online training versus possible training provided from the Town Board. Mr. Fenz to look into possible training protocols and inquire with the Town Board what, if anything, they would provide.

Chairman Clifford reviewed the meeting times per year that they would recommend. Meetings would be conducted quarterly unless there was a public matter brought to the boards’ attention. Then the Chairman would coordinate with the board members to hold a meeting.

Mrs. Carpenter commented on the private discussion to determine the accuracy of such claims to avoid dragging someone’s name through the mud. Mr. Fenz responded that according to the “Open Meetings Law” they wouldn’t require everyone to come together until there was an issue present so one could discuss the matter in a private setting amongst them.

Discussion of holding Ethics meetings prior to Town Board meetings. Mr. Fenz commented to try and avoid work session nights.

Chairman Clifford motioned to hold the quarterly meetings scheduled on Town Board meeting nights at 5:30 pm and to also allow for adjournments or possible additional meetings if a public matter is brought to the board, seconded by Mrs. Kims. All in favor,

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried.

Ethics Member Term Lengths

Chairman Clifford discussed term lengths of the board. The present board members term will expire December 31st, 2015. Each member can discuss possible future terms with their respective Board member that appointed them. They also have the opportunity to resign if they wish to do so.

Discussion occurred with the terms of each member. Mrs. Carpenter and Mr. Gehen questioned the continuity of the present board members as the terms set forth and giving the political power to the Town Board members.

Councilmen Eugene Hart and William Hanley discussed some of Town Board views on length terms.

Councilman Hart recognizes the Ethics Board and reported they have discussed term lengths within the board members. Councilman Hart and Mr. Fenz reported that the Town Code needs to be addressed to have more legislative direction and outline the Ethics Boards duties prior to joining. Mr. Gehen commented on a staggered terms without limits. Mrs. Carpenter agreed. Councilman Hart asked to see some recommendations from the Ethics board members for changes to the current ordinance.

Councilman Hart commented on the appointment of the Chairman of the Board. As per the Rules and Regulations of the Ethics Board, the ethics members have the right to appoint a Chairman if the Town Board does not appoint one previously.

Mr. Fenz reported that the Town Code needs to be revised based on the recommendations of this board. He will draft up some revisions to present to the Town Board.

Mrs. Carpenter commented that when a different Supervisor gets elected the Town Attorney could possibly change and that a staggered term for Board members could help in keeping some security within the board.

Chairman Clifford motioned to amend the previous length recommendation in the September meeting and for the Town Board to appoint one appointment for a two year position and one appointment for a three year position, seconded by Mrs. Kims. All in favor,

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried.

Bylaws

Chairman Clifford reviewed the topics outlined in the Bylaws packet. Topics outlined included “Board Organization, Meetings, Voting, and Adoption and Amendment of the Bylaws”. Resignation would be in written form to the Town Board. Meetings will be quarterly on the second meeting of that month prior to the Town Board Meetings.

Mrs. Kims motioned to ask the Town Attorney to forward the Annual Report to the Town Board, the Bylaws to the Town Board, the Recusal Form to the Town Board, and the Whistleblower Policy to Town Board, seconded by Chairman Clifford. All in favor,

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried.

Mr. Manley reported that he would not like to be considered for the following term year and would like to thank everyone for their time.

Motion to adjourn from Chairman Clifford, seconded by Mr. Gehen. All in favor,

Ayes: All

Noes: None

Motion Carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Hourihan
Ethics Secretary