

December 13, 2015

John Clarkson
Town Supervisor
Bethlehem Town Hall
445 Delaware Avenue
Delmar, New York 12054

Dear Mr. Clarkson,

The Town of Bethlehem Board of Ethics is happy to deliver to the Bethlehem Town Board its 2015 Annual Report. The Town of Bethlehem Code of Ethics was adopted on June 13, 2012 and amended during 2013 to its current status. Five residents appointed by the Town Board, all serving three year terms with three ending in 2016 and two ending in 2017, are authorized to render advisory opinions to officers and employees of the Town, receive complaints, conduct investigations and make recommendations to the Town Board regarding such complaints.

In 2015, the Board held three meetings, January, April and September. During these meetings the Board discussed ways to keep the Ethics Board in the open view of all employees and how to work with the Human Resources Department of the Town of Bethlehem, as a result, two of our board members prepared two separate articles on the Town's ethics law which appeared in the June and December editions of the electronic newsletter (articles attached). While there were no complaints filed with the board in 2015, nor were there any requests for advisory opinions, the Board continues to meet at least three times a year. In 2016 we expect to elect a new chair, and also discuss ways to maintain an awareness of the town's Code of Ethics and Ethics Board among town employees and the public.

Finally, we would like to thank the Town Board for revitalizing the Town Code of Ethics and for giving each member of the Ethics Board the opportunity to serve our Town. We look forward to the year ahead and building on what has been started.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lisa O. Allendorph, Chair
Loretta Simon, Secretary
Michael Fallon
George Lenhardt
Theresa A. Schillaci

Local government is most effective when the public is confident that its officials and employees are acting in the best interests of taxpayers, and are not in conflict with any personal interests.

An ethics code provides guidance and standards for the conduct of elected public officials and employees. State law requires every local government in the state to adopt an ethics code that sets forth the standard of conduct that is expected of its municipal officers and employees. To these ends, in 2012 the Bethlehem Town Board adopted an updated ethics code for the town, appointed a five-member Ethics Board, and put in place a process for the Ethics Board to review ethics complaints. If a complaint is found to have merit, the Board is authorized to investigate and make a recommendation to the Town Board as to how to address the complaint.

The [Bethlehem Ethics Code](#) sets forth specific standards of conduct, including: a prohibition on the use of a person's town position for personal or private gain; requires disclosure of interest in legislation before the Town Board; addresses the holding of investments and private employment in conflict with a person's official duties; prohibits nepotism in hiring; prohibits political activity on town time or property; and limits the giving of gifts to town employees. The town has a five-member [Ethics Board](#) that town employees or officials cannot serve on. And no more than two members can represent any political party, so as to ensure that the Board works in a non-partisan manner.

It is impossible for any Code of Ethics by its very nature to be all inclusive – no one could anticipate every possible situation that might arise at some point in the future. But the Bethlehem Code of Ethics sets the tone and the expectations for ethical behavior for the town's elected officials and employees.

For more information, you can read the [Bethlehem Ethics Code](#), or the [Guide to the Code of Ethics](#) that the Ethics Board prepared for town officers and employees.

Anyone who wants to contact the Ethics Board -- to seek guidance, or to file a complaint -- can contact us through [our page](#) on the Town's web site.

As we approach the gift giving season, you may have considered sending cookies, a gift card or some other token of appreciation to a Town employee or department for a job well done. Before you act, it is important to know that in 2012, the Town enacted a law which prohibits municipal officers and employees from soliciting, accepting or receiving gifts of any value. Similar to the State ban on gifts, the Town law provides several limited exceptions to this prohibition, including unsolicited advertising or promotional items of little intrinsic value; gifts which are given on special occasions including marriage, illness or retirement which are modest, reasonable and customary; or meals or refreshments provided to a speaker or participant as part of a professional or educational conference or meeting. For a complete list of exceptions or to read the Town gift law in its entirety, you can view the [Code of Ethics](#) here. If you are a municipal officer or employee and have received a gift and need guidance about this or any other matter within the jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics, you may request an advisory opinion by contacting the Board at its [email address](#).