

238-07

AN ORDINANCE CREATING AN ETHICS POLICY FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS,
BOARD AND COMMISSION MEMBERS

BE IT ORDAINED by the Town Council of the Town of Rocky Hill that:

I. Ethics Policy

It is the policy of the Town of Rocky Hill to uphold, promote, and demand the highest standards of ethics and ethical conduct from all of its officials, whether elected or appointed. Accordingly, all members of boards, commissions, committees and the Town Council shall maintain the utmost standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, and fairness in carrying out their public duties, avoid any improprieties in their roles as public servants, comply with all applicable laws, and never use their position or powers with the Town improperly or for personal gain.

This Code of Ethics has been created to ensure that all elected and appointed officials have clear guidance for carrying out their responsibilities.

II. Applicable Laws and Policies

A. General Character

Elected and appointed officials, board, commission, and committee members are often called upon to make decisions that affect various groups and individuals. Balancing diverse constituent interests is a difficult task. While someone may be disappointed in decisions, officials shall adhere to ethical standards that eliminate disappointment borne of dishonesty, conflicts of interest, unfairness, or illegality. Preservation of public trust is critical for the preservation of democracy.

A certain amount of detail is required in any code of ethics so that it serves as a clear guide. However, at the core of ethical behavior are basic standards that officials shall use to reach a level of conduct that strives to be beyond reproach. Treating others as you would have them treat you is always a good ethical test. Another standard is to reflect on how your actions or decisions might be viewed by persons you or the public hold in high regard because of their ethical integrity.

1. Honesty and Integrity.

Honesty and integrity shall be primary values in all issues. The public trust in the Town Council and elected and appointed boards and commissions can be a reality only when public officials are truthful.

2. Fairness and Respect

All issues and citizens shall be treated with fairness, impartiality and respect. Elected and appointed officials have an obligation to treat all citizens fairly, including dividing time reasonably among potential speakers on an issue at a public hearing or meeting. In reviewing, discussing and deciding issues, Town Council members, and elected and appointed board and commission members have an obligation to be accessible, open, and direct, not only with other members of the Council or board or commission but also to the constituents who appear before their respective body except where this ordinance conflicts with state statutes. The public is entitled to communicate with the Town Council, boards and commissions and understand the positions of the members of the Town Council, boards, and commissions on issues before them.

3. Effort

Elected and appointed Council, board, and commission members have an obligation to attend the meetings of their respective bodies and be prepared. It is expected that these officials will review the materials, participate in discussions and make an informed decision on the merits of the issue.

4. Decorum in Debate

At all times members of the Town Council and elected and appointed boards and commissions must separate the issues from the individuals discussing them. When a question or issue is being discussed, a member can comment on the nature of likely consequences of the item or issue pending in strong terms, but at all times must avoid personalities and under no circumstances attack or question the motives of another member. All members should pose questions to another member through the chair and the responding member should not respond until recognized by the chair. Once recognized members of the public should pose comments to the chair.

5. Executive Sessions

Information discussed in Executive Session is information that is to remain confidential until such time as action is taken publicly. If a member of the Town Council or an elected or appointed board or commission violates the confidentiality of an Executive Session, it will be considered grounds to issue a letter of warning, reprimand, or censure. This action shall be taken upon a vote of a two-thirds majority of the Council. Members of appointed boards or

commissions may be subject to removal or suspension in accordance with Section 412 of the Town Charter.

B. Conflict of Interest

Members of the Town Council, and all elected and appointed officials must be constantly on guard against conflicts of interest. Elected and appointed officials shall not be involved in any activity which conflicts with their responsibilities to the Town and its residents or vote on any matter that would result in any personal gain. The citizens of Rocky Hill have a right to expect independence, impartiality, and fairness to all without partiality to individuals or personal interests.

Elected and appointed officials have an obligation to put the interests of the Town of Rocky Hill over all personal considerations. Their goal should be “what is in the best interests of the Town and the good of the public,” consistent with constitutional and legal protection for all citizens.

As provided in Section 907 of the Town Charter, “any elected or appointed Town official, or any Town employee, who has a financial interest in any matter to be acted upon or coming before his board, commission or office, shall make full record disclosure in writing of that interest, which shall be incorporated in the minutes of the particular board, commission or office, and a full copy of such minutes shall be filed in the office of the Town Clerk, and he shall be disqualified to act in any way upon such matter. Violation of this section with knowledge, express or implied, of any person or corporation participating in such matter or decision shall be an additional ground of appeal, which will nullify the action of such board, commission or office upon appeal to the appropriate court under the Statutes applicable to appeals from such board, commissions or offices.”

Failure by any person appointed by the Council to any board or commission may result in removal or suspension in accordance with Section 412 inclusive of the Town Charter.

Members of the Town Council, and all elected and appointed officials shall comply with any current or adopted conflict of interest legislation of the State of Connecticut.

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