
TOWN OF MILFORD BOARD OF SELECTMEN POLICY NO. 2006-04.08

TO: ALL DEPARTMENT HEADS, BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

FROM: GUY SCAIFE, TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

SUBJ: POLICY AND PROCEDURE ON TOWN OFFICIALS AND TOWN EMPLOYEE ETHICS

DATE: ENACTED TUESDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2006 (AMENDED JUNE 25, 2012, MAY 23, 2011, NOVEMBER 2009, JULY 14, 2008, JUNE 23, 2008, MAY 27, 2008 & AUGUST 27, 2007)

At a meeting of the Milford Board of Selectmen held on Tuesday, December 26, 2006, the Board of Selectmen voted to adopt the following Policy regarding Town Officials and Town Employee Ethics (this Policy amended by the Board of Selectmen on June 25, 2012, May 23, 2011, November 2009, July 14, 2008, June 23, 2008, May 27, 2008 & August 27, 2007):

2006.04.010 Definitions

In this policy:

- A. "Town official" means any elected Town official or individual appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve on a Town board, committee, subcommittee or commission.
- B. "Town employee" means any individual employed by the Town of Milford.
- C. "Gift" or "Contribution" means any money, discount, or thing of value received in excess of \$50 from any single source during any calendar year. "Gift" shall not include contributions as defined in RSA 664; a commercially reasonable loan made in the ordinary course of business; meals and beverages consumed in the course of official business; ceremonial gifts or awards which have insignificant monetary value; unsolicited gifts of nominal value or trivial items of informational value; reasonable expenses for food, travel, and lodging for a meeting at which a Town official or Town employee participates in a panel or a speaking engagement; gifts of tickets or free admission extended to a Town official to attend charitable or political events, if the purpose of such gift or admission is a courtesy customarily extended to the office; gifts that are purely private and personal in nature; or gifts from relatives by blood or marriage, or a member of the same household.

2006.04.020 Principles of Public Service

The following section describes a set of values that should be aspired to by all Town officials and Town employees. These items in and of themselves *do not* form the basis for an ethics complaint.

A. Public Service as a Public Trust -

Town officials and Town employees should treat their positions as a public trust, only using the powers and resources of their positions to advance public interests, and not to attain personal benefits or pursue any other private interest incompatible with the public good.

B. Principle of Independent Objective Judgment -

Town officials and Town employees should employ independent objective judgment in performing their duties, deciding all matters on the merits free from conflicts of interest and both real and apparent improper influences.

C. Principle of Accountability -

Town officials and Town employees should assure that government is conducted openly, equitably and honorably in a manner that permits the citizenry to make informed judgments and hold Town officials and Town employees accountable.

2006.04.030 Grounds for an Ethics Complaint

The following sections describe the items upon which an ethics complaint may be based. Any ethics complaint must specify the section or sections of this paragraph upon which the complaint is based.

A. Impression of Influence

Town officials and Town employees shall conduct their official and personal affairs in such a manner that they cannot be improperly influenced, and so as to avoid any appearance of improper influence, in the performance of their official duties.

B. Conflict of Interest

Town officials and Town employees shall avoid conflicts of interest. "Conflict of interest" means a situation, circumstance, or financial interest, which has the potential to cause a private interest to interfere with the proper exercise of a public duty. Town officials and Town employees shall not participate in any matter in which they, or their spouse or children, have a private interest which may directly or indirectly affect or influence the performance of their duties. In any instance where there is a conflict of interest or there could be the appearance of a conflict of interest, the Town official or Town employee shall disclose the circumstances prior to the time the matter arises for official consideration or decision. Such disclosures by Town officials shall be made to the board, committee, subcommittee or commission on which the official serves, and disclosures by Town employees shall be made to the Town Administrator.

C. Misuse of Position

No Town official or Town employee shall disclose or use confidential or privileged information for personal benefit or for financial gain. Town officials and Town employees shall not use their governmental positions to secure privileges or advantages for themselves, which are not generally available to Town officials or Town employees, or to improperly secure governmental privileges or advantages for others.

D. Acceptance and Giving of Gifts

Any Town official and any Town official's spouse or dependent, and any Town employee and any Town employee's spouse or dependent, who gives, solicits, accepts, or agrees to accept a gift from a person or entity who is subject to any matter or action pending before or contemplated by the Town official, Town employee, or by the governmental body with which that individual is affiliated shall disclose the gift prior to the time the matter or action arises for official consideration or decision. Disclosure by Town officials shall be made to the board, committee, subcommittee or commission on which the official serves, and disclosure by Town employees shall be made to the Town Administrator. Disclosure made by Town officials or Town employees shall be recorded in the official minutes of all meetings at which the matter or action is discussed or considered. Nothing in this section shall be construed to prohibit gifts made to the Town of Milford and accepted in accordance with the law.

2006.04.040 Supplemental Policies

In addition to this Ethics Policy, each Town board, committee, subcommittee and commission, and each Town department, may promulgate a supplemental ethics policy to address issues specific to that organization. In the event of a conflict, the provisions of this Ethics Policy shall supersede any such supplemental policy; provided however, that for those Town of Milford departments or agencies who have established Codes of Conduct or Codes of Ethics with provisions that are more stringent than those contained herein, then those more stringent provisions shall apply.

2006.04.050 Milford Board of Selectmen Procedure for Implementing the Ethics Policy

A. Filing the Complaint

1. Any individual having information that any town official or town employee is or has been engaged in activities, or is or has been subject to a condition that constitutes a violation of the Ethics Policy, may present a complaint to the Ethics Committee. The conduct that is the basis for the complaint must have occurred within one year prior to the date the complaint is filed.
2. The complaint form can be obtained from the Town's Web site or in person from the Board of Selectman's office at Town Hall during normal business hours.

3. A complaint shall be presented in writing and shall be signed under oath before a notary public. The complaint shall allege the specific facts constituting the alleged violation of the Ethics Policy, shall name a specific person or persons who are alleged to have violated the Ethics Policy, and shall specifically state the particular provisions of section 2006.04.030 of this document that are alleged to have been violated.
 4. The complaint shall be submitted to the Board of Selectmen's office at Town Hall during regular business hours in a sealed envelope addressed to the Ethics Committee
- B. Requests for advice relating to compliance with the Ethics Policy can be submitted in writing or by email directed to the Ethics Committee. A request for advice must identify the person requesting the advice.
- C. The Ethics Committee

In the event of an alleged ethics violation, the complaint will be addressed according to one of the following three scenarios:

1. If the individual being accused is a town employee (excluding the Town Administrator), the complaint will be turned over to the Town Administrator to be addressed according to established town procedures.
2. If the individual being accused is a member of the Board of Selectmen, a town official who has been appointed by the Board of Selectmen, or if the person being accused is the Town Administrator, the complaint will be heard by the Ethics Committee.
3. If the individual being accused is a member of the Ethics Committee itself, the complaint shall be heard by the Board of Selectmen, according to the procedures described herein.

In any of the above scenarios, if a member of the Ethics Committee, Board of Selectmen, or the Town Administrator feels that he or she would not be able to impartially conduct the business of the Committee/Board, he or she shall bring it to the attention of the Committee/Board chair person for replacement or recusal.

- D. Formation of the Ethics Committee
1. The Ethics Committee shall consist of five (5) voting members and two (2) alternates. Members and Alternates shall be private citizens who are residents of the Town of Milford and who do not hold any town official position in the Town.
 2. The first Ethics Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen with preferential consideration being given to members of the ad hoc Ethics Committee that was appointed by the Board of Selectmen in March of 2008. At the Committee's first meeting the appointed members shall determine by lot:
 - a. which member will serve for a one-year term
 - b. which two members will serve for a two-year term

c. which two members will serve for a three-year term

3. The two Alternate members shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen to serve terms of three (3) years.
4. The Board of Selectmen will appoint members to the Ethics Committee after these initial terms are completed. All newly appointed and reappointed members shall serve terms of three (3) years.
5. Should a vacancy on the Committee arise, the remaining members of the Ethics Committee will nominate to the Board of Selectman a town resident to serve out the remainder of the term.

E. Purpose and Charge

The purpose of the Ethics Committee is to:

1. Educate Town Officials regarding the provisions of the Town of Milford Ethics Policy.
2. Provide advice and counsel to Town Officials regarding ethical issues with which they are confronted.
3. Hear and resolve ethics complaints which are filed against Town Officials.

F. Confidentiality

1. All regular business of the Ethics Committee, including training, working on policies, and deliberations on requests for advice shall be conducted in public sessions, in accordance with RSA 91-A.
2. All reviews of complaints, preliminary hearings, hearings, and deliberations on complaints or hearings shall be conducted in non-public session, in accordance with RSA 91-A:3(c).
3. Any complaint received by the Ethics Committee is a confidential document and is not disclosable under RSA 91-A.
4. If the person against whom the complaint is made requests that the proceedings be conducted in public session, that request will be honored only if permissible by law.

G. Preliminary Review

1. Within two weeks of receiving a complaint, the Ethics Committee shall consider the complaint at a meeting and determine if the complaint has sufficient merit to warrant a hearing or further investigation. The Ethics Committee shall dismiss the complaint if any of the following applies:
 - a. The complaint does not meet the requirements of section 2006.04.050 (A) of this document. If the complaint is dismissed on this basis, the committee shall invite the complainant to resubmit the complaint in proper form.

- b. The complaint alleges facts that, if true, would not constitute a violation of the Ethics Policy or alleges facts that constitute constitutionally protected or legally protected conduct.
 - c. The complaint is frivolous, scurrilous, or retaliatory in nature.
 - d. The complaint alleges facts that may constitute a violation of criminal law. In this case, the Ethics Committee may consult with the Town's Chief of Police, in accordance with all confidentiality provisions of RSA 91-A, and, if necessary, shall refer the complaint to the applicable law enforcement authorities and shall take no further action on the complaint until notified of the conclusion of any criminal investigation or criminal proceeding.
 - e. If the complaint is being investigated by law enforcement, the Ethics Committee shall notify the complainant that the matter has been transferred to law enforcement.
 - f. If the complaint is investigated by law enforcement and there is a determination that no criminal activity occurred, the complaint shall be returned to the Ethics Committee and it shall follow its standard process for reviewing a complaint.
2. Regardless of whether the Ethics Committee dismisses the complaint or finds the complaint to have sufficient merit to warrant a hearing or further investigation, the Committee shall promptly notify the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made. The notification shall be in writing and shall include a copy of the Committee's written finding.
 3. If the complainant fails to move forward to proceed with the complaint, the Ethics Committee may, at its discretion, continue to review the complaint and make a determination if a violation of the Ethics Policy has occurred.

H. The Hearing

1. The hearing shall be held within four weeks of the date the complaint is received by the Ethics Committee.
2. The Ethics Committee shall request that the complainant and the person against whom the complaint is made attend the hearing.
3. The hearing shall provide the opportunity for all parties to be heard and to present evidence. Witnesses shall testify under oath.
4. The Ethics Committee shall determine all cases by a preponderance of the evidence in deciding whether or not there has been a violation of the Ethics Policy.
5. The Ethics Committee shall have all powers at the hearing available under applicable law, including subpoena authority.

6. The Ethics Committee may dismiss the complaint at any stage of the proceedings if the Ethics Committee determines that one or more of the reasons for dismissal, as stated in section 2006.04.050 (F:1) of this document, are applicable.

I. The Findings

1. Within one week of the conclusion of the hearing, the Ethics Committee shall make a determination, in writing, of whether the person against whom the complaint is made has violated the Ethics Policy.
2. The Ethics Committee shall notify the complainant, the person against whom the complaint is made, and the Selectmen, in writing, of the determination of the complaint and the applicable recommendation.
3. Any determination by the Ethics Committee shall become public upon being forwarded to the Board of Selectmen. If it is determined by the Ethics Committee that a violation has occurred, the Ethics Committee shall recommend such sanctions, if any, that it deems appropriate. Such sanctions may include, but are not limited to, any one or more of the following:
 - a. In the case where the person who violated the Ethics Policy is a Selectman or the town administrator, the Ethics Committee may:
 - I. Vote to recommend the removal of the person from office (to the extent authorized by law);
 - II. Vote to recommend that the person resign from his or her office;
 - III. Vote to recommend a public censure of the person;
 - IV. Vote to recommend a private censure of the person;
 - V. Vote to recommend that a letter of counseling be issued to the person regarding the determination.
4. The factual findings and determination of the Ethics Committee shall be final and are not to be overruled or modified by the Board of Selectmen, it being further understood that the Board of Selectmen is not obligated to take action on any recommendations forwarded to it by the Ethics Committee.
5. The Board of Selectmen shall notify the complainant and the person against whom a complaint is made, in writing, of the disposition of the complaint.

J. Other Issues

1. To the extent that these procedures may conflict with the terms of any collective bargaining agreement that is binding on the Town of Milford, the terms of the collective bargaining shall apply.

Severability:

If any provision of this Policy or the application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the invalidity does not affect the other provisions or applications of this Policy which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions of this Policy are severable.

Effective Date:

This Policy shall become effective upon adoption by the Milford Board of Selectmen and upon its distribution to Town Departments and any other relevant governing bodies/organizations (if applicable).

Gary L. Daniels, Chairman

Tim Finan, Vice Chairman

Katherine Bauer, Member

Mike Putnam, Member

Mark Fougere, Member