GREENWICH BOARD OF ETHICS

Minutes of Regular Meeting on May 11th, 2021

Members Present: Paul de Bary, Chair, Rev. Stephanie Johnson, Robert Sisca and Robert Grele

Members Absent: John Margenot

Others Present: Jennifer Paul Cohen

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:26 P.M. via telephone via and Internet conference using the Town’s Zoom license. He noted that there had been difficulties with the video connection, but that a quorum was present and that the agenda for the meeting had been provided to all the members, posted online and posted in Town Hall in accordance with Freedom of Information Act requirements. The Chair reported that there had been no requests from members of the general republic to attend the meeting and noted that, with only members of the Board and a Board volunteer present, Robert’s Rules of Order would be suspended in the interest of efficiency, subject to being reinstituted in the interest of an orderly discussion.

The Chair had previously distributed drafts of the minutes of Board’s meetings on February 2nd and April 6th, 2021 to each of the members. After review, there were no revisions requested to the draft minutes. The chair then moved for adoption of the minutes and authorization for the Chair, acting as Secretary of the meeting to certify the minutes in final form, which was seconded by Mr. Sisca the minutes of the February 2nd and April 6th, 2021 meetings of the Board were approved in the form attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

The Chair then reported that the legislation to authorize an on-line filing system for ethics disclosure statements had received a first reading at the RTM and was undergoing further review. In order to prepare for the possible passage of the legislation, he had been working with the Town’s IT department and Ms. Paul Cohen to prepare an on-line form. A draft of a proposed form had been circulated to the members of the Board. The Board then discussed some of the limitations involved in using the Town’s current website tools to prepare a form and instructions that would be convenient for Town Officers to fill out the mechanisms for filing and keeping records of the filings. The members expressed general approval of the draft that had been presented and mentioned a number of areas to address, including changes in the Board’s FAQ’s that would assist persons needing to file reports.

The Chair then indicated that the next item on the agenda was consideration of several reports that the Board had received concerning possible violations of the Code. Ms. Paul Cohen then left the meeting and the Board continued in executive session. At the conclusion
of the executive session the meeting was reconvened and the Chair indicated that the Board had completed its review of one report and had determined that it did not meet the requirements for a complaint under the Code as more fully set forth in the Board’s Statement of Procedures. Accordingly, it was now appropriate for the Board to adopt a decision explaining the reasons for its determination.

A draft of a proposed decision had been circulated to the members prior to the meeting. The Chair asked if there was any further discussion on the motion. Hearing none, the following resolution was moved by Mr. Grele, seconded by Mr. Sisca and adopted unanimously:

RESOLVED, that Decision 21-02 is hereby approved by the Board in the form attached as Exhibit B and the Chair of the Board is authorized to communicate the results of the decision to the complainant and respondent.

Following this discussion, there was no further business before the Board and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:43 P.M.
Exhibit A

MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON

February 2nd, 2021

And

April 6th, 2021
GREENWICH BOARD OF ETHICS

Minutes of Regular Meeting on February 2nd, 2021

Members Present: Paul de Bary, Chair, Rev. Stephanie Johnson, John Margenot, Robert Sisca and Robert Grele (as indicated)

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Lauren Rabin, Jill Oberlander, Aamina Ahmad, Jennifer Cohen

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:36 P.M. via Internet and telephone conference using the Town’s Zoom license. He noted that a quorum was present and that the agenda for the meeting had been provided to all the members, posted online and posted in Town Hall in accordance with Freedom of Information Act requirements. The Chair reported that there had been no requests from members of the general republic to attend the meeting and noted that, with only members of the Board, Town officials and a Board volunteer present, Robert’s Rules of Order would be suspended in the interest of efficiency, subject to being reinstituted in the interest of an orderly discussion.

The Chair had previously distributed drafts of the minutes of Board’s meetings on September 15th and December 8th, 2020 to each of the members. After review, there were no revisions requested to the draft minutes. Upon motion made by Mr. Sisca and seconded by Mr. Margenot, the minutes of the September 15th and December 8th, 2020 meetings of the Board were approved in the form attached to these minutes as Exhibit A.

The Chair then reported that Rev. Johnson’s appointment to the Board had been approved by the RTM at its January 17th meeting and the members formally welcomed her to the Board. The Chair also reported that Rev. Johnson had recently been asked to lead a special project for her Bishop and had asked to defer serving as the Secretary for the Board. He asked the members of the Board to consider who might be best to serve in this role for an interim period.

The next item on the agenda was a project to update the Board’s pages on the Town website. He introduced Ms. Cohen, who had volunteered to assist in this project. Ms. Cohen has been a long term resident of the Town. She was a local attorney for many years and then changed careers. She received a degree from Yale Divinity School and has taught ethics at Norwalk Community College while also lecturing and obtaining a degree from Columbia University in bio-ethics. She has a long history of volunteer involvement with local charitable organizations and is currently a member of the Medical Ethics Committee for Greenwich Hospital.

Ms. Cohen described the current FAQ’s on the Board’s web pages and suggested several revisions based on her review and reading the Board’s more recent opinions and decisions. The members of the Board expressed deep appreciation for Ms. Cohen’s
expertise and opinions and the Chair indicated that he would work with Ms. Cohen and the IT Department to develop a revised set of FAQ’s for the Board to consider.

The Board then reviewed the status of proposed technical amendments to the Code of Ethics to authorize the initiation of an on-line filing system for Ethics Disclosure Reports. The Chair indicated that a revised draft had been circulated that contained revisions to the previous draft based on items raised by Selectman Oberlander. A copy is attached as Exhibit B. The revised draft increased the current threshold for reporting from $100 to $200 as well as authorizing the Board to make further adjustments to the threshold in the future. The revisions would provide a better idea to the RTM members of the size of the increases that might be contemplated. Ms. Ahmad indicated that the revised draft had been reviewed by the Law Department. The members of the Board present expressed approval that the revised technical amendments should be considered by the Selectmen at their next meeting.

The Board then discussed the draft template that had been prepared concerning a Conflict of Interest Policy that could be adopted by Town boards, committees commissions and agencies. This was prepared in conjunction with the Director of Administrative Services and the Law Department as a means to allow Town Officers to participate in bids on Town contracts without needing to obtain an opinion from the Board of Ethics in advance, as long as they certified that they were in compliance with the policy. The Board would continue to be available to provide opinions, but would give deference to the fact that a Town Officer was in compliance with the policy and with the recommendations with respect to conflicts of interest made by independent members of the respective board, committee, commission or agency involved.

The Chair reported that the draft template and related amendments to Town purchasing policies had been discussed with Director Michalski and Ms. Ahmad at the last meeting and they were in agreement with them, but that the template had not been able to be adopted at that time due to lack of a quorum. Following discussion, motion was made by Mr. Sisca and seconded by Mr. Margenot. The Chair asked if there was any further discussion. Hearing none, the following resolution was adopted unanimously:

RESOLVED, that the safe harbor template for a Conflicts of Interest Policy for the Town’s various boards, commissions, committees and agencies is hereby approved by the Board in the form attached as Exhibit B.

Following this discussion, there was no further business before the Board and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:43 P.M.
Exhibit A

[Minutes of September 15th and December 8th, 2020 meeting have been previously filed in final form and are not attached to avoid meta-duplication]
STATEMENT OF POLICY

All members and staff of the [Full Name of Entity] are expected to act in an honest and ethical manner, in good faith and in the best interests of the Town of Greenwich (the “Town”). They are expected to adhere to the standard of conduct provided for in this Policy and place the interests of the community at large ahead of their own interests or the interests of any other person or organization. Members are expected to comply with all federal state and local laws, including the Town’s Code of Ethics (the “Code”). The purpose of this Policy is to help identify conflicts of interest and related party transactions and provide procedures for reporting, reviewing and monitoring them. It applies to all members and staff of the [Entity] while they are in active service and for a period of one year thereafter. For purposes of this Policy, the term members and staff refers to all members and staff of the [Entity], including alternate members, consultants, independent contractors, volunteers and agents.

STANDARD OF CONDUCT

Members and staff of the [Entity] are required to comply with the Code and any other laws and regulations applicable to their work with the [Entity]. The Code identifies personal financial interests as those financial interests that are financial in nature, more than nominal and not common to the other citizens of the Town. They include direct and indirect interests, such as interests of relatives, employers, subcontractors and business associates.

To better identify, review and monitor personal interests, the [Entity] has adopted the following procedures:

1. Whenever a member or staff the [Entity], or a person who is a member of their family, has a potential or existing personal financial interest greater than $200 in any [Entity] action or in any transaction with the Town, it is to be reported to the [Entity]. On terms generally applicable to all residents of the Town, the following are not considered a “transaction” for this purpose: (i) payment of Town taxes and routine assessments, (ii) payment of fees for ordinary Town services, (iii)
payment of minor fines and penalties or (iv) obtaining routine, memberships, passes permits and licenses to participate in Town activities that are broadly available to the general public.

2. The report should be filed promptly whenever a member or staff person becomes aware that they, or any relative or business entity they are involved with, may be considered to have a current or future personal financial interest in:

   a. a contract or other formal transaction with the Town,
   b. any action to be considered or taken by the [Entity] or
   c. any action to be considered or taken by another Town entity that the [Entity] or any staff member of the [Entity] may have a role in considering, recommending, adopting or implementing.

3. Any member or staff of the [Entity] who is aware of a personal financial interest on the part of another member or staff of the [Entity] that has not been reported within a reasonable period of time by the party or parties concerned has an obligation to make reasonable efforts to ensure that such a report is filed and for that purpose may report the interest even though it is not personal to them.

4. Each such report is to be sent to the [Responsible Person] in writing and delivered by hand, or sent by regular mail, email or other reliable form of communication. Receipt must be acknowledged by the [Responsible Person] and a copy sent to each member of the [Entity]. The written report should make a good faith disclosure describing the financial interest of the member or staff in reasonable detail as it relates to Town transaction or action in question. It should also specify any measures that the reporting person has taken or intends to take to avoid a violation of the Code and, if the action or transaction has already occurred, such actions, if any, as may be appropriate to remediate the appearance of a conflict of interest.

5. Promptly after receipt of any such report, the [Responsible Person] will arrange for a review of the matter by a special committee consisting of members of the [Entity] who do not have a personal interest in the matter. If more than a quorum of the members of the [Entity] have such an interest, however, the [Responsible Person] will arrange for an independent review of the report by the Board of Ethics.

6. The review of any such report by a special committee shall consider the manner in which the reported interest might tend to influence or appear to influence the actions of the [Entity] or staff or the actions of, or supervision by, Town personnel or Town entities that have continuing contacts with the [Entity]. A record of the review is to be made and reflect the following:

   a. Where the interest described in a notice relates to a Town transaction or action that neither the [Entity] or any Town personnel or Town entities that have continuing contacts with the [Entity] will have any involvement in, the special committee reviewing the matter need take no further action than to obtain written confirmation that
all appropriate persons have assumed responsibility for the filing of any necessary disclosure forms required by the Code.

b. Where the interest described in the notice relates to a Town transaction that the [Entity] has or may have involvement with, or where the transaction is subject to review or supervision by Town personnel or Town entities that have continuing contacts with the [Entity], the record of review by the special committee is to describe the interest, how the interest might influence or affect the persons involved and what alternatives may be available to the interested parties to avoid the appearance of a conflict. The report shall recommend such actions, if any, as the special committee may deem appropriate to avoid the appearance of improper influence and to monitor the transaction to ensure compliance with the Code. This may include recommending that the individual(s) involved seek an advisory opinion from the Board of Ethics.

c. Where the interest described in the notice relates to an interest in one or more future actions to be taken by the [Entity], the record of review by the special committee shall confirm that appropriate steps have been taken to avoid discussions of the matter that might improperly influence the [Entity]'s action and the participation by any interested person in any vote on the matter.

d. Where the special committee reviewing the matter considers that the person having an interest in the matter also has special information or circumstances that are appropriate to be considered by the [Entity] in its deliberations on the matter, it may recommend means for such information to be provided in a manner that informs, but does not influence, the action to be taken.

Any member or staff that becomes aware of a financial interest (whether or not it is his or her own interest) must take steps to ensure that the matter is dealt with in a transparent and impartial manner. This includes making sure that all persons needing to be aware of the conflict are informed of it and instructed not to discuss the matter with the affected person or provide information about the matter to the affected person, except as expressly provided for by this policy. Any person having a financial interest in a matter must, unless otherwise expressly approved by action of a special committee, refrain from: (1) any discussion of the matter with other members and staff, (2) making any recommendation related to the matter, and (3) from voting on the matter. During the period where a reported interest is under review by a special committee, interested persons will only be informed of a final decision and not of the ongoing status of the review, particular member’s positions or how they vote. In addition, consideration should be given to disclosing relevant related party transactions the [Entity]'s annual report to the Town.

**FINANCIAL INTERESTS**

A financial conflict of interest can arise whenever a person or a member of their family has, or in the future may reasonably expect to have, directly or indirectly, a financial interest in (i) a transaction, agreement or any other arrangement in which the Town or any affiliate of the Town participates or (ii) a recommendation, approval or authorization to be voted or otherwise formally acted on by the [Entity] or with respect to which the [Entity]
provides advice, makes a recommendation or otherwise assists another Town entity in connection with a recommendation, approval or authorization to be voted or otherwise formally acted on by that entity. For purposes of this policy, a family member includes any person that, by birth, marriage, adoption or other arrangement, an individual now or in the future may, by legal obligation or reasonable expectation, receive from or provide material support, shelter or other financial assistance. Without suggesting that the following list is all inclusive, financial interests may include:

1. An ownership interest as a principal, general or limited partner or shareholder of an entity or business operation;

2. An interest in a business or other organization (including not-for-profit organizations), as a current, prior or expected future employee of the business or organization;

3. A interest in the success or survival of a business or other organization as a manager, officer or director, whether or not such position is compensated for;

4. A success-based compensation or bonus expectation;

5. A grant, scholarship or subsidy arrangement;

6. A profit sharing, royalty arrangement or other financial compensation arrangement;

7. A arrangement, ownership position or other similar interest in or affiliation with any entity or individual that: (i) sells goods or services to the Town or purchases goods, materials or services from the Town; (ii) competes with the Town for funding or recognition or advocates policies divergent from Town interests; (iii) is applying for an approval, waiver, clearance, authorization or recommendation from the [Entity], a staff member of the [Entity] or another Town entity that is assisted by the [Entity] with regard to the matter in question, or (iv) has, or is contemplating, a business transaction or other financial arrangement with the Town;

8. A financial interest in any property or other rights in which the Town has, or is likely to have, an interest;

9. A financial interest in an opportunity related to the activities of the Town that is available to the Town, unless the Town has made a formal decision that it will not pursue that opportunity; or

10. An indebtedness to a person or entity who has an involvement with the Town.

A financial interest can also arise, when an individual has the ability to use the authority, confidential information or assets under control of the [Entity], to personal financial advantage or for an improper or illegal purpose or has been offered or accepted any gift, entertainment, or other favor where such gift might create the appearance of influence.

Members and staff should periodically review their financial and employment matters to
ensure that any changes to them that creates a potential financial interest in a Town transaction or action is properly reported. In order to facilitate such review, the [Responsible Person] may circulate periodic reminders, including checklists, and may also provide such checklists to persons applying for [Entity] positions.

RECORDS

The reports made under this policy, the minutes of any meeting of any special committee reviewing such report and a record of the findings and recommendations of such special committee shall be documented contemporaneously and reflect the name of the interested person, the nature of the conflict, and relevant details of the deliberations (such as documents reviewed, alternatives considered, comparative costs or bids, market value information and other factors considered in deliberations) and any ongoing procedures to manage any potential or perceived conflict that are approved. Where appropriate, a special committee shall require periodic reports to be made to the [Entity] concerning the status of any ongoing transaction that has been reviewed and copies of such reports shall be maintained as part of the documentation provided for in this policy.

Interested persons may only be informed of the final findings and recommendations. They may not be advised of the ongoing status of the review, or of any particular member’s positions or how they vote. In addition, consideration should be given to disclosing relevant related party transactions in the [Entity]’s annual report to the Town.

COMPLIANCE

The [Responsible Person] will provide a copy of this policy to all members and staff of the [Entity] and will be responsible to provide all new members and staff of the [Entity] with a copy of this policy at the commencement of their service for the [Entity].

If the [Entity] has reasonable cause to believe that a member or staff has failed to comply with this Policy, it may make such further investigation as may be warranted in the circumstances and if it determines that there has been an intentional failure to comply with this Policy, it may submit a complaint to the Board of Ethics.

This Conflict of Interest Policy was adopted by the [Entity] on ______, 202_. At such time, a copy of this policy was provided to and acknowledged by all members and staff.
GREENWICH BOARD OF ETHICS

Minutes of Regular Meeting on April 6th, 2021

Members Present: Paul de Bary, Chair and Rev. Stephanie Johnson (Robert Grele observed as indicated)

Members Absent: John Margenot, Robert Sisca

Others Present: Jennifer Cohen, Jill Oberlander (as indicated)

The Chair called the meeting to order at 5:42 P.M. via Internet and telephone conference using the Town’s Zoom license. He noted that a quorum was not present due to the difficulties Mr. Grele was having with his computer, but used his mobile phone connection to provide Mr. Grele with the ability to observe the meeting. Without a quorum present, Robert’s Rules of Order would be suspended in the interest of efficiency and the meeting would consist only of informational items.

Approval of the minutes of the February meeting of the Board was deferred.

The Chair reported on the progress of legislation to authorize and on-line filing system for disclosure statements and on the status of appointments of members to the Board as a result of term expirations.

The next item on the agenda was a report from Ms. Cohen on the project to update the Board’s pages on the Town website. Ms. Cohen presented ideas on how the FAQ’s on the pages could be reorganized and expanded. The members of the Board expressed appreciation for Ms. Cohen’s efforts in this regard and encouraged her to proceed with preparing specific FAQ’s for consideration at a future meeting. Ms. Oberlander joined the meeting during this discussion. Mr. Grele also joined the meeting during this discussion and the Chair noted the presence of a quorum.

The Chair then indicated that there were pending items involving preliminary investigations that would need to be addressed in executive session. As a result, Ms. Cohen and Ms. Oberlander left the meeting.

Following the executive session, the Chair announced that the matters discussed in executive session had been carried over to the next meeting of the Board. As there was no further business before the Board and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:29 P.M.
Exhibit B

Decision No. 21-02

Date: 5/11/2021

Topics: Complaints-Sufficiency, Board of Assessment Appeals, Financial Interests

Code Sections: Section 4, Section 8

The Board of Ethics received a report concerning possible violation of the Code of Ethics in connection with a decision made by a member of the Board of Assessment Appeals. The report indicated that the Board member had accepted the task of reviewing an appeal involving the complainant and made a decision with respect to the appeal against the complainant even though the respondent had been recently involved in an arbitration matter with the complainant.

Under its Statement of Procedures, the Board proceeded with a confidential investigation to determine if there was probable cause that a violation of the Code had occurred. The first step in any such investigation is for the Board to evaluate whether the submission alleges a violation of the Code by a Town Officer and whether the Board has jurisdiction over the subject matter and the person alleged to have violated the Code. In performing this review, the Board considers only the allegations contained in the submission and assumes the truth and completeness of these allegations without further investigation. After this evaluation, the Board makes a finding as to whether the report states a complaint that should be further investigated or whether it should be dismissed because it fails to allege a specific violation of the Code over which the Board has appropriate jurisdiction.

The report was received on April 6th and a hearing in executive session was scheduled to review the report on May 11th. Prior to the hearing, a member of the Board requested additional information concerning the financial interest of the respondent in the decision regarding the appeal and the complainant requested to withdraw the report.

At the hearing, the Board determined that the respondent was a Town Officer within the meaning of the Code. It also determined that the allegations purported to involve a possible violation of Section 4 of the Code of Ethics. However, it determined that the submission did not allege facts supporting the conclusion that a violation of the Code existed. The Board made this determination because the report contained no allegation that the respondent had a personal financial interest in the decision to deny the appeal of the assessment.
Accordingly, the Board determined to dismiss the report since it did not allege facts sufficient to qualify as a complaint that should be investigated under the Code.
BOARD OF ETHICS OF THE TOWN OF GREENWICH
RECORD OF VOTES BY THE BOARD

DATE: MAY 11TH, 2021

MOTION/RESOLUTION: (1) TO APPROVE ADOPTION OF FINAL MINUTES FOR THE FEBRUARY 2ND AND APRIL 6TH, MEETINGS

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DATE: MAY 11TH, 2021

MOTION/RESOLUTION: (2) TO ENTER EXECUTIVE SESSION TO CONSIDER REPORTS OF A POSSIBLE VIOLATIONS OF THE CODE OF ETHICS.

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BOARD OF ETHICS OF THE TOWN OF GREENWICH
RECORD OF VOTES BY THE BOARD

DATE: FEBRUARY 2ND, 2021

MOTION/RESOLUTION: (2) TO APPROVE DECISION NUMBER 21-02 OF THE BOARD OF ETHICS

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