

Town of Thompson  
Ethics Advisory Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, February 4, 2015

<u>Attendees</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Guests</u>
Jimmy Andrews Kathleen Herbert Al Landry Ray Dewey Gary Hopkins		Jason Akana*  * - Waiting to be sworn in.

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:02PM.

**2. Approval of Minutes from January 21, 2015 meeting**

Kathleen entertained a motion to approve the minutes, Al motioned and Jimmy 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ray abstained the rest of the group voted Yea.

**3. Citizens' Comments**

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**4. Discussion of Draft Ethics Code to include**

**a. Review of Gift section of Code from January 21, 2015 meeting; and**

**b. Discussion of next section several sections of code**

The group reviewed the idea of business meals as a category of a gift and that no matter what the value of the meal, it should be paid for by the Town representative or employee when acting in an official capacity. We reviewed the keynote address scenario and agreed that would not be classified as a business meal. It was especially noted that this only applies when the Town representative or employee is acting in an official capacity.

The group discussed the section added to account for gifts accepted on the Town's behalf. The group has a consensus that this allows flexibility without any appearance of impropriety.

The group moved along to the use of influence section. Kathleen entertained the idea of adding 'or favor' to "...shall solicit any business {or favor}..." Jimmy brought up good favor versus bad favor and are there times where good favors are ethical and the answer was generally agreed upon as yes. Jimmy would like to see that power of distinction in the hands of the Ethics Commission. Gary brought up corruptibility of an Ethics Commission and a few side bar conversations began. When things came back to focus, Al brought up scenarios from planning and zoning for comparison and thought exercises. Kathleen and other group members feel that this section still needs some extra flushing out.

We proceeded to hiring practices and started off with current events. Jason spoke to the perceptions of the events and the group discussed. Ray reiterated that if there were a complaint, the commission would review and decide the course of action. Additionally, some members of the group feel that the

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term nepotism needs to be further explained with a footnote. Ray will also make a notation that includes “to town positions” with regard to hiring practices.

Moving on to multiple agency positions, Al and Kathleen are not big fans of what is written, it is too challenging for a small town where the volunteer pool is quite small. There was a general consensus that it should be adjusted. The group feels that the Board of Finance is a big group to account for, feeling that members of that Board should not be members of any other group that is directly or indirectly affected by the Board of Finance. If we spell out specific scenarios, and work to account for all those scenarios, we would have a better section H.

Section I was reviewed, no comments.

With regard to social media, the group felt that opinions of Town happenings do not belong in a mass-market public forum, but belong in established local town forums (eg. Selectmen’s meeting) or through established policies and procedures (eg. Speaking to your manager.) We are going to look to Corporate social media policies to see how they handle the subject and look to rewrite the section.

Sections K and L were reviewed without comment.

More side-bar conversations on various topics. Kathleen mentioned she will be absent on March 4<sup>th</sup> and reminded us that our next meeting is February 18, 2015. The topic of recusal came up again, Ray mentioned how Griswold handles it. Gary feels that if a member recuses themselves, they should leave the room and not be able to comment due to the possibility of influencing the other members. Al feels that it is his right to speak as a citizen in the public forum. Jimmy brought up that some rights can be/are sacrificed when entering politics. Jimmy also floated the idea of a special mediator be appointed in cases where a recusal has happened and the one recused wishes to speak as a citizen. Jimmy also mentioned the idea of a written statement by the recused versus verbal. The EAC is split on which direction to lean and nothing was decided upon.

**c. Discussion of presentation to Board of Selectmen February 3, 2015**

Nothing of note.

**5. Committee Comments**

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**6. Citizen Comments**

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**7. Adjourn**

Kathleen motioned to adjourn the meeting, Al 2<sup>nd</sup>. The EAC adjourned at 8:40PM

Next Meeting:

February 18<sup>th</sup> 2015.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jimmy Andrews

Secretary, Ethics Advisory Committee