

**NEW DURHAM ETHICS COMMITTEE  
DRAFT MINUTES  
MARCH 26, 2013**

**PRESENT:** Dorothy Veisel, Ellen Phillips, Mike Gelinias, Carol Allen.

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Monica Haley, David Bickford.

**CALL TO ORDER:** 7:05 PM

**MOTION:** To accept minutes of last meeting in December as read. Dot Veisel, seconded by Carol Allen. All in favor. Approved.

**MOTION:** To accept cancellation notice for January and February meetings. Dot Veisel, seconded by Carol Allen. All in favor. Approved.

**ISSUES DISCUSSED:**

Chair Veisel asked if there were any comments/input from the public. Mr. Bickford replied yes, he had a complaint to address concerning the Chair of this committee. He produced a letter that she had written to the local newspaper commenting on his behavior as Chair of the Board of Selectmen when he had printed in the same paper a letter stating, "...three residents from town contacted me about having money stolen by the New Durham Police from their homes and one from their vehicle." The letter had been signed David Bickford, Selectman. Veisel had attended the next Selectmen's meeting where the Police Chief asked Chair Bickford if he had reported these charges (cited in the newspaper) to the NDPD or had passed this information on to any other authority. Mr. Bickford did not answer this question and abruptly terminated the conversation. Mr. Bickford said Veisel's letter is evidence that she is biased in favor of the New Durham Police Department and she should not be Chair of the Ethics Committee. Chair Veisel responded that she had submitted her letter as a statement/comment made by a private citizen who was in attendance at the Selectmen's meeting and it was signed, "Dorothy Veisel" with no designation of status as board /committee member. Mr. Bickford then repeated his complaint that Dorothy Veisel, because of her statement in the newspaper, is unfit to act as Chair of the Ethics Committee. He repeated his charge that her letter is proof that she is prejudiced in favor of the New Durham Police Department.

Chair Veisel then reviewed for the committee the process for discussing complaints with a reminder that we are an advisory board only and formal complaints must be heard by the Board of Selectmen. Chair Veisel then asked Mr. Bickford if he would prefer that she step down during the discussion. He repeated that she has a prejudice and should not be on this committee. Chair Veisel reminded him the decision to step down is hers, but she wanted to know if he was requesting her to do so. He did not respond.

Mr. Bickford then distributed to everyone a letter from the Local Government Center signed by Christine Fillmore, Atty. He claimed that inaccurate/false information had also been printed in another letter in the same newspaper as well. Veisel explained that she had not written nor signed that letter.

Mr. Bickford then proceeded to quote from a statement that Veisel had made at a Board of Selectmen's meeting on November 19, 2012 citing that as proof that she believes that recommendations by the Police Chief should be "rubber stamped through" by the Board of Selectmen. Veisel explained her statement saying that she had made that request as a member of the Oral Board who had interviewed perspective candidates for a vacancy on the NDPD. Her stated purpose had been to ask the Board to reconsider the candidacy of one highly recommended applicant. Included in her statement to the BOS was a list of her credentials for working with troubled youth and families in the community and her reasons for requesting this reconsideration.

Various members of the Ethics Committee attempted to give feedback to Mr. Bickford and to refocus the discussion on the basic issue inherent in his complaint, the right of public servants to free speech. Chair Veisel polled the committee to see if there were any other insights or considerations found in the Ethics Policy which might need to be considered or addressed during this discussion. Committee members clearly stated that the relevant issue in this discussion is the right to free speech by public servants and that right is clearly protected in the New Durham Ethics Policy. Mr. Bickford continued several times in a restatement of his position. After approximately an hour, Chair Veisel moved the meeting into the business portion of the agenda.

Formal thank you and statement of appreciation to Michael

Welcome to Monica Haley who is submitting app to volunteer for this committee.

Discussion of possibilities for funding supplementary materials for board members

Schedule for work on educational program

Next meeting is set for April 9, 2012, at the Town Hall, at 7PM

**MOTION** : To adjourn the meeting. Carol Allen, seconded by Ellen Phillips. All in favor.

Meeting adjourned at 8:38

Respectfully submitted,

Ellen Phillips