

Colchester's Code of Ethics

Q: Why does Colchester need a Code of Ethics?

A: It is the Colchester town government's belief that the trust of the public is essential for government to function properly. The Code of Ethics seeks to put in place a system that increases confidence in Colchester's town government.

Q: When was the Code of Ethics adopted?

A: It was adopted at a town meeting on May 26 1998

Q: Where can I get a copy of the Code of Ethics?

A: A downloadable copy is posted at the town's website under the Ethics Commission page.

Q: What does the Code of Ethics do for me?

A: First, the Code of Ethics allows any person alleging a violation to file a complaint that will be investigated by a non-biased group of citizens following a given standard applied to all. Secondly the Code of Ethics ensures that all public employees and officials, paid or volunteer, do not engage in any activity that can impair his/her judgment or action in the performance of his/her official responsibilities.

Q: How can I Get a copy of the Code of Ethics?

A: Copies of the complete ordinance can be downloaded from this website or obtained from the Town Clerk's Office located at town hall.

Colchester's Ethics Commission

Q: Who can belong to the Ethics Commission?

A: Any elector of the town of Colchester provided that he/she has not held a public office, have been a candidate for public office in the past two years, not currently hold an office in any political party or committee or be a public official in any other capacity.

Q: What does the Ethics Commission do?

A: The Ethics Commission maintains the reports, opinions, statements and memoranda pertaining to findings of a violation to the code of ethics.

Q: Is the alleged violation and subsequent reports, statements and opinions public information?

A: Yes, but only under certain circumstances. First the Ethics Commission must complete its investigation and make a determination. If the commission determines that no probable cause was found the complaint and the record of its investigation is kept confidential. At any time the Commission makes a determination that there is probable cause the hearing to determine whether a violation has occurred is public. At any time the person who answers the allegation may waive the right to confidentiality. Shall the commission make a finding of a violation, all records of the investigation are available for public disclosure.

Q: Is there a statute of limitations for filing an alleged violation?

A: Yes, a complaint must be filed within three years from when the alleged violation of the code occurred.

Q: Are their penalties imposed to those persons answering the allegation if the commission made a finding of a violation?

A: Yes, the Commission can impose sanctions such as public censure, reprimand, civil penalties and/or request restitution.

Conflicts of Interest

Q: Does the Ethics Commission make findings on Conflicts of Interest?

A: Yes. No public employee or public official in the town of Colchester is allowed to engage or participate in any business or transaction incompatible with his/her public responsibilities. The Ethics Commission acts as the town body to evaluate if a conflict or potential conflict of interest exists.

Q: How does the Ethics Commission get involved with Conflicts of Interest?

A: When requested the Ethics Commission will review any situation that presents itself as a potential conflict of interest against the Colchester's Code of Ethics and make a determination.

Q: What does the Ethics Commission consist of?

A: The commission consists of five members, each appointed by the Board of Selectman with staggered three year terms. No individual can be appointed to more than two consecutive three year terms and no more than three individuals can belong to the same political party.

Q: When and Where does the Ethics Commission meet?

A: The Ethics Commission meets on the first Tuesday of every other month starting in February or on a as needed basis to address a properly filed complaint. The Ethics Commission normally meets at town hall. Specific meeting time and location are posted by the town clerk in advance similar to other town commissions and boards.

Filing a complaint

Q: Who can seek the help of the Ethics Commission?

A: Any person alleging a violation of Colchester's Code of Ethics can file a complaint with the Ethics Commission. The complaint must be put in writing and cannot be anonymous.

Q: Is there a form you fill out to file a complaint?

A: Yes, by filling out the town form and signing it before a person allowed to witness as defined in the code the complaint can be considered complete and ready to be submitted to the commission.

Q: What happens if it is found that the alleged violation is false?

A: If it is found that the complainant intentionally makes a false statement he/she can be subject to fines and penalties as defined by the Connecticut General Statutes.

Q: Does the commission have to investigate an alleged violation?

A: Yes, provided the alleged violation is filed in writing and signed by the complainant under penalty of false statement.