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Ethics policy being developed in Clinton Township

By: Nick Mordowanec | Fraser - Clinton Township Chronicle | Published August 28, 2018

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — It's no secret that former Clinton Township officials have recently been in the crosshairs of illegalities and ethical wrongdoing.

At its Aug. 20 meeting, the Clinton Township Board of Trustees voted 6-0 to implore Human Resources Director William Smith and Township Attorney Jack Dolan to combine two separate ethics policies for future approval and implementation. Supervisor Bob Cannon was absent, so Trustee Jennifer "Joie" West was the board's acting chairperson.

One policy, originally introduced by Cannon and Trustee Ken Pearl, was deemed a "boilerplate" policy, with language replicated from the ethics policy of the Michigan Townships Association. That policy discusses items like the reporting of improper actions, disclosures of conflict of interest, gifts and integrity in office.

The other policy, introduced by West, Treasurer Paul Gieleghem and Trustee Mike Keys, emphasizes the following aspects: the prohibition of officials and employees accepting any gifts from anyone contracting with the township; a financial disclosure form in which officials list all sources of income, property ownership interests and assets exceeding \$5,000; officials disclosing interest in a private business held by themselves or a member of their immediate family; the creation of a nepotism disclosure; developing an online ethics training program; a ban on the solicitation of political donations from township employees, entities or individuals employed by entities contracting with the township; and requiring all materials using township resources to use the disclaimer, "Provided at taxpayer expense."

The trio's policy also called for the creation of an ethics page on the township's website, including a copy of the policy, a copy of purchasing and bid policies and procedures, an updated list of township vendors,

The two policies differed in some ways. For example, the policy put forth by Cannon and Pearl mentioned not accepting gifts and special benefits exceeding \$50, whereas the other policy prohibits the acceptance of any gifts.

Keys, who made the motion to have Smith and Dolan evaluate both policies and reach a consensus for board members

"Politics 101."

being voted on by the board prior to the recent election. However, he said Clerk Kim Meltzer told him to hold off for the time being.

He admitted that his submitted policy is "vague and needs specifics."

"It wasn't a last minute thing. ... It's a starting point, and I have no problem with the board presenting other things that will

Keys said he, West and Gieleghem "felt it was time to set a new standard here in Clinton Township."

"The goals of the motion I made give us the tools to set clear standards in Clinton Township; it gives us an opportunity to clean up the problem areas that we found within our internal investigation; and it also gives the tools to our staff and to the public to educate themselves on this new standard, conduct trainings and perform them on a yearly basis, so that way these standards are never lost," Keys said. "And most importantly, it gives us as board members the assurance that

Trustee Joe Aragona said he appreciated the combination of both policies and dissecting the intricacies, adding, "Ethics are learned when you're a kid at home," to which Keys replied, "Obviously not in Clinton Township."

Post-meeting Gieleghem said the ethics policy he supported mirrors those like in the city of Birmingham, which he said

He called the Cannon-Pearl policy "the ethics light plan" — a "bare bones" plan pulled from another website that

"We came up with some very stringent positions that we think are appropriate to help restore the trust that people have in their township officials," he said. "We think we have to go above and beyond the normal standard."

the community," he said.

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an archive of documented financial disclosure forms, and a copy of blank financial disclosure forms.

to revisit no later than Sept. 24 for adoption by Oct. 1, said placing Cannon and Pearl's policy on the same agenda was

Pearl retorted that he and Cannon began discussing the formulation of a policy "a couple months ago," with the hope of it

be discussed," Pearl said.

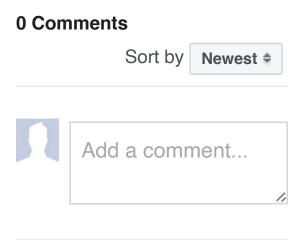
a proper standard has been set."

was a model to emulate due to its concerted effort to communicate standards in the community.

"mysteriously" appeared on the agenda the same evening as the other policy.

As for aspects like employee training, Gieleghem said he found "value" in such methodology.

"It was great to have that reminder and reinforcement that public service is an honor, and that we have to approach the job with that mindset. ... Fact is, it's great for us and the public to know who is trying to influence elected officials within



















The Clinton Township Board of Trustees is in the process of developing an ethics policy for township officials. File photo by Deb Jacques



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