



**Agenda**

**Ethics Commission Regular Meeting**

**January 6, 2026, 7PM**

**Louise Appleby Room**

ATTEST: *David H. Langston*  
TOWN CLERK

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
WATERFORD, CT  
2025 DEC 22 | P 1:50

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Attendance and Seating of Alternates
4. Approval of Minutes of Special Meeting of December 2, 2025.
5. Correspondence
6. Public Comment
7. Report from the Chair
8. Commission Determination of Future Actions Regarding the Advisory Opinion and the Town Ordinances
9. Discussion on Formalizing Rules of Procedure for the Commission
10. Old Business
11. New Business
12. Adjournment

The next regularly scheduled meeting is April 7, 2026, at 7PM.



RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
TOWN CLERK  
2025 DEC 12 AM 9:31

**ETHICS COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
DECEMBER 2, 2025**

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Chair Ritter called the Ethics Commission Special Meeting of December 2, 2025 to order at 5:30 p.m.
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.** The Pledge of Allegiance was observed.
3. **ATTENDANCE AND SEATING ALTERNATES.** Betsy Ritter, Adam Stone, Christopher Nailon, Alan Messier, Paul Helvig, Sara Mallari and Cathy Patterson.

**MOTION (1):** Mr. Messier moved to seat alternates Paul Helvig and Sara Mallari.  
Seconded by Mr. Nailon. (6-0) Unanimous.

Commission member Cathy Patterson joined the meeting.

4. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING OF OCTOBER 7, 2025, AS CONTINUED AND CONCLUDED OCTOBER 16, 2025.**

**MOTION (2):** Mr. Helvig moved to approve the Special Meeting and Public Hearing of October 7, 2025, as continued and concluded October 16, 2025, as presented. Ms. Mallari abstained from voting. (6-0-1) Motion carried.

**MOTION (3):** Ms. Patterson moved to approve the October 7, 2025 Public Hearing, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Messier. Ms. Mallari abstained from voting. (6-0-1) Motion carried.

**MOTION (4):** Mr. Helvig moved to approve the October 16, 2025 Public Hearing, as presented. Seconded by Mr. Messier. (7-0) Unanimous.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE.** Email Letter of 10/27/2025 from Danielle Steward-Gelinas sent via Town Clerk (distributed to members 10/29/2025).
6. **PUBLIC COMMENT.** Mr. Goldstein, previous RTM Moderator, asked that a letter dated May 2, 2025 from John Sheehan and Glenn Patterson together with Proposed Ordinance Change for

Capital Funds be attached to this meeting minutes. He stated that he is concerned about this commission. He added this commission has a duty to protect Waterford residents. He was concerned about the decision of this commission on May 11, 2020 to the RTM. He heard from a Board of Education employee that members were concerned about how votes were taken and that concerns him. The Town Attorney advised the RTM to abstain from voting on the Advisory Opinion. They may vote on the total budget. He stated if something is legal it may not be ethical. He added it's his job as Moderator not to abstain from voting. He stated you have asked Town Attorney in writing if he had given any member advice. He referred to the Ethics Commission's meeting minutes of November 22, 2021. He added state statutes are repeated in our code. He reported you have a vote from a former Superintendent of Schools that money can be moved around. The RTM vetoed the budget. He had a discussion with a member of the Board of Education if there was a reduction to staff and was informed there were none. Mr. Goldstein stated the budget was reduced and the Board of Education was asked to determine where the cuts would come from. He asked for clarification about the decision of this commission on May 11, 2020.

Mike Rocchetti stated he is a member of the Board of Finance and stated he was disappointed about how the meeting was held. He felt it was like a court case with no chance for a rebuttal. This was all on the Board of Education budget. He suggested looking at what had been done in the past.

Danielle Steward-Gelinas stated this Commission has copies of her email letter. She stated she was required to make eight separate complaints. It was found that there was probable cause and no action was taken. She stated she was disappointed.

**7. COMMISSION DELIBERATION ON THE STATUS OF THE ADVISORY OPINION OF 9/21/2021.**

Ms. Ritter stated the Commission needs to consider how we want to address the Advisory Opinion of September, 2021. Options are to change the Advisory Opinion, leave it as written, or abandon it. An additional consideration is that this Commission has four members whose terms expire at the end of January so we might want to accommodate those new members in this work.

**8. COMMISSION DETERMINATION OF FUTURE ACTIONS REGARDING THE ADVISORY OPINION AND THE TOWN ORDINANCES.** Ms. Patterson asked if we want to work to change it or scratch it.

Mr. Stone reported the Advisory Opinion should be a final decision of the Commission. We need to address why we are in violation.

Ms. Mallari stated there are laws guiding everything. Maybe they are imperfect but it's necessary to follow it until it has been changed. She did not feel the RTM looked at the information we asked them to address. She suggested giving it again to the L&A Subcommittee. Mr. Goldstein reported as of last night he was placed on the L&A. He will do his best to address it. He added numerous things have gone on in other towns.

Ms. Ritter asked the commission how they feel about going forward. Ms. Patterson stated she did not feel we violated anything. We need a process within boundaries in place. Ms. Ritter suggested it needs clarity. We were struggling to identify the potential of conflict.

Mr. Messier stated the two documents were in conflict with one another. He added in my profession you set specifications to issues of the Advisory Opinion. Would this be a violation? The Advisory Opinion does not give any. He suggested we can vacate it and begin addressing specific issues. In this case, we were called upon with an issue of the RTM on the budget.

Ms. Mallari stated the RTM members voted on the budget.

Ms. Ritter stated we don't have to make this decision tonight. We can seek additional advice. We could ask the RTM to make a decision to clarify that issue. We can inform the RTM what we want to do. We could add definitions to give clarity to the Advisory Opinion.

Mr. Helvig stated he agrees with Mr. Messier. He added we need to separate the particular complaints that we heard in terms of the decision that was made and now the question has to do with what the Advisory Opinion says and what our Code of Ethics says. It needs our attention on the part of the Advisory Opinion on the second page. A new idea was introduced hoping to clarify when a conflict of interest exists. It has to do with the perception of the conflict. This idea of perceived perception does not exist in the Code of Ethics. This becomes a problem for him because in our Code of Ethics the decision is not with public perception but with the subject of substantial conflict. The idea of the public perception is very broad. If the complaint was a person's perception, does it require a number of people or a survey of the public? It is very unclear and the idea of the decision being made from a substantial conflict where the respondent did gain or lose that requires that the complaint could have been a substantial conflict. The complaint needs to provide evidence. This commission could not determine there was a violation. Ms. Ritter again asked the commission how do we feel about moving forward with the Advisory Opinion?

Mr. Nailon stated the Advisory Opinion is too vague. We could possibly make an amendment and work with the RTM on Ordinance changes.

Ms. Mallari reported if we get rid of this document we need to work on a new one. The present one needs to be in place while reworking what we have. This commission might have new members. We need to set timelines and keep it moving.

Mr. Messier disagrees with eliminating the Advisory Opinion. We could ask the RTM to let us know how to improve it and we can let them know if we agree.

Ms. Ritter reported if we determine to scrap our guidelines, we are not violating state statutes. We are not without a Code of Ethics.

Mr. Helvig restated the difficulty with the language with public perception; it requires a judgment call. This Commission could function as it is presently written but it lacks clarity.

Ms. Patterson stated this Commission needs to make a decision and do whatever the RTM asks us to do. She is concerned about references in the Ordinance.

Ms. Ritter is interested in the RTM partnering with this Commission.

Mr. Stone added we don't have much choice. We are aware there is a problem with the documents and we were asked to make a decision. We cannot continue to work with this Advisory Opinion.

Ms. Ritter reported when this issue was originally discussed in 2020 and 2021, we had an opportunity to ask the Town Attorney for guidance from other towns regarding the "perception" of conflict of interest but he did not have any examples. Ms. Patterson suggested having a hearing.

Ms. Ritter spoke to Town Attorney Avena last week. In that discussion he did not indicate a problem would be created if the Commission chose to vacate the Advisory Opinion and let the Ordinances stand. He added it would be best to talk with Attorney Kepple about this issue.

Mr. Stone asked what changed from 2021? Ms. Ritter indicated this most recent issue was the first time the Advisory Opinion had been cited in a Complaint.

A resident asked what does this body feel our elected officials should vote on in their budget? The Ordinance if a complainant has to bring evidence there is no violation. He suggested advising people not to do it.

Ms. Gelinas suggested that the Advisory Opinion until it is revoked or amended shall be the determining opinion of this commission.

Mr. Stone added it is difficult to take that position. We could find a violation without punishment.

Mr. Goldstein suggested that they be told not to repeat the violation again. If you find a violation it would come back to the RTM.

Ms. Ritter added that if we choose to eliminate the Advisory Opinion we could then continue to look into the issue about a perception of conflict of interest. People would be able to continue to make complaints to this Commission, we may advise, and we may give our opinions.

Mr. Helvig proposed having concerns expressed that we set aside time to address the question of voting on particular budgets with the intent to offer direction when it is appropriate with the intent of providing clarity, and that should be the purpose of future discussions.

Ms. Mallari stated it is difficult for this commission to put down specifics that might cover any future violations. There are so many types of violations.

Ms. Ritter added we cannot cover everything. Mr. Stone suggested that we not say it needs to be substantial.

**MOTION (5): Ms. Patterson moved to vacate the Advisory Opinion and use the Ordinance. Seconded by Mr. Messier. No vote**

**MOTION (6): Mr. Helvig moved to table motion 5 until we hear back from Attorney Avena. Seconded by Mr. Stone. In Favor: Ritter, Mallari,**

**Stone, Nailon and Helvig. In Opposition: Ms. Patterson and Mr. Messier. (5-2) Motion carried.**

Ms. Ritter reminded the commission our next meeting will be held on January 6.

Ms. Ritter stated she has no problem vacating the Advisory Opinion but Town Attorney Kepple could have a different opinion; she will ask him for an opinion.

Mr. Stone reported the Ordinance says the Advisory Opinion is binding. He would like to hear from the Town Attorney on the potential of creating more problems if indeed the Opinion is vacated.

Ms. Ritter agreed to report her conversation on both questions back to the Commission.

- 9. DISCUSSION ON FORMALIZING RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE COMMISSION.** Ms. Ritter reported at our last meeting we discussed formalizing rules of procedure for this commission. The RTM may be asking all town boards and commissions to do so. Our procedures are determined in the Ordinances. We also have used specific language on our agendas when we meet in Executive Session, and we should be sure to document that language. She asked members to think about other items to include for discussion at our next meeting.

**10. ADJOURNMENT.**

**MOTION (7):** Ms. Patterson moved to adjourn the Ethics Commission Special Meeting of December 2, 2025 at 7:05 p.m. Seconded by Mr. Stone. (7-0) Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Ghera, Recording Secretary

December 9, 2025

To Betsy Ritter,

As requested, my notes from my comments at ethics meeting. Some comments were not discussed because they had been mentioned in prior comments from other residents.

What was accomplished with ethics public hearing and decision?

Why did you not refer to minutes of meetings from the last time an elected official was questioned on voting ethics?

Why did you spend so much time on process? ... and after spending time on process not include the difference that voting on final BOE Budget is same as "individual"? Why was that not noted in final decision?

Why was there no advice to not vote on boss/employer budget when 3 yrs ago an elected official who had a spouse/kid who worked for town, advice was given to abstain?

Especially when one respondent got a full-time job after voting in favor and one admitted voting to make his boss' job easier and stated they only voted if the vote was going to be "contentious" but abstained if it would pass easily?

Honestly this committee's actions seem unethical.....

It was stated that one of the jobs of this comm. is to make sure residents have confidence in the actions of the elected bodies.

Well now elected officials feel vindicated and that they are allowed to vote on employer budget.

People clapped and many have told me they are allowed to vote on their employer's budget as a result of this decision.

Not against law and not looking for punishment but voting on your employer's budget should be discouraged no encouraged.

Michael Rocchetti

860-460-7004

ETHICS COMMISSION  
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES  
NOVEMBER 22, 2021

Members Present: Marty Zeldis  
Mark Burnham  
Betsy Ritter  
Olga Bush

Absent: Laurie Wolfley  
Cindy Hersom, Alternate

Guest: Attorney Avena

2021 DEC -1 PM 2:22

RECEIVED TOWN CLERK  
NOV 24 2021

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** The November 22, 2021 Special Meeting of the Ethics Commission was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Zeldis. Mr. Zeldis stated during Executive Sessions he would like the Recording Secretary to be able to join the Executive Session. Attorney Avena felt as long as the Recording Secretary keeps discussions confidential, this Commission can invite the Recording Secretary to join an Executive Session.

**MOTION (1):** Mr. Zeldis moved that with general advice and counsel from Attorney Avena the Recording Secretary may be invited to an Executive Session and able to take notes to be reduced to a written form and at all times be bound to confidentially whenever she records minutes and that they be distributed to only Commission members after the meeting. Seconded by Ms. Ritter. (4-0) Unanimous.

2. **APPROVAL OF JUNE 29, 2021 MEETING MINUTES.**

**MOTION (2):** Betsy Ritter moved to approve the June 29, 2021 Special Business Meeting, as presented. Seconded by Mark Burnham. Ms. Bush abstained from voting. (3-0-1) Motion carried.

3. **REVIEW OF CORRESPONDENCE.** No correspondence was received.
4. **INTRODUCTION OF NEW RECORDING SECRETARY, FRANCES GHERSI.** The new Recording Secretary was introduced to the Commission.
5. **HOW IS THE NEW CODE WORKING?** Mr. Zeldis asked Attorney Avena for input on the new code. Attorney Avena stated the entire new code has been approved. Ms. Ritter asked when it will be distributed? Attorney Avena stated the Town Clerk will distribute it. Attorney Avena was asked if he has received any feedback? He did not. Attorney Avena would like the new code to be placed on this Commission's website. He felt it should be accessible and agreed to have discussion with the Town Clerk.

Attorney Avena felt the Board of Education should also be aware of what the standards and care are.

6. THE AFFECT OF THE ADVISORY OPINION. Attorney Avena referred to the October 13, 2021 meeting of the Board of Finance. There is one item on the Advisory Opinion which stated it is necessary to abstain from voting if there is a conflict.

Betsy Ritter reported the Chairman of the Zoning Commission felt the Advisory Opinion was well done. She referred him to Attorney Avena. Attorney Avena did speak to him. He felt discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission, Board of Finance and Board of Selectmen went well. They wish to be careful. He will have discussion with the Zoning Board of Appeals next week and the new RTM in December. Ms. Ritter stated she personally felt it was a good idea to also have discussion with the Superintendent of Schools. Attorney Avena stated he is available for discussion on the code. The Finance Director appreciates the efforts of this Commission. Ms. Ritter asked Attorney Avena if he had discussion with anyone who indicated that they felt the Advisory Opinion was an extension of the new ordinances? Attorney Avena stated some think it went too far. State Statutes are repeated in our code. He felt it was time to look at the State Statute. Ms. Ritter felt there was no reason a municipality's ordinances could not be stricter than the State Statutes. They cannot be more permissive than the State Statutes. Attorney Avena stated legally if you have empowering statutes within the bound part, it is good to update.

7. ANY FEEDBACK RE ETHICS COMMISSION DECISION IN R.V.F. Attorney Avena asked if this Commission has heard from Attorney Reardon? He heard from him before the meeting. Attorney Avena informed him that he felt this Commission was diligent.
8. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE RE THE RESIGNATION OF STEVE GARVIN? Mr. Zeldis reported Steve Garvin was elected to the RTM and has resigned from this Commission. The following members term of office will expire: Mark Burnham on February 7, 2022, Olga Bush on February 7, 2022 and Marty Zeldis on February 6, 2023. Attorney Avena will speak to the Town Clerk.
9. OLD BUSINESS. There was no discussion of Old Business.
10. NEW BUSINESS. A schedule of meeting dates for 2022 will be submitted on the first Tuesday in January, April, July and October.
11. DATE FOR NEXT MEETING. Chairman Zeldis informed the Commission we need to have a full Commission. He would like to schedule a meeting on January 4, 2022 at 7 p.m.
12. ADJOURNMENT.

MOTION (3): Mr. Burnham moved to adjourn the November 22, 2022 Ethics Commission Regular Meeting at 8:15 p.m. Seconded by Ms. Ritter: (4-0) unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Frances Gherl, Recording Secretary

11:07



Submit this complaint in a sealed envelope. Mail or hand deliver completed form to Ethics Commission c/o  
Town Clerk, 15 Rope Ferry Rd, Waterford CT 06395. Complaints must be kept strictly confidential to remain  
viable except upon the request of the respondent.

(Revised Jan. 2023)

P 11 / 20

2025-05-15-3

May 22, 2025

Waterford Ethics Commission  
16 Rope Ferry Rd.  
Waterford, CT 06385

Dear Member of the Ethics Commission,

In response to your letter dated May 15, 2025, naming me as a respondent to an ethics  
complaint, I would like to state that I will make myself available to answer any questions  
concerning my vote on the education budget. I was operating with the understanding  
that the Town Attorney has stated that an employee of the BOE may vote on the BOE  
budget. Please inform me of next steps as necessary.

Sincerely,

*Kristin Gonzalez*  
Kristin Gonzalez

RFM Member, District 2  
5 White Oak Lane  
Quaker Hill, CT 06375

P 12 / 20

2025-05-15-4



Complaint of Violation of Code of Ethics

 waterfordct.org



11:08



2025-05-07-1  
Through - 4  
2025-05-05-1  
Through 2  
JHJ:528.600-43883  
www.waterfordct.org

THE FIRST BRIDGE PARTY ISLAND  
WATERFORD, CT 06385-3004



July 3, 2025

Attorney Rob Arena  
Waterford Town Attorney  
15 Ridge Ferry Road  
Waterford, CT 06385

Confidential. Delivered by hand to Attorney Arena on July 3, 2025

Dear Attorney Arena,

Thank you for your letter on the telephone yesterday and for your help in answering a few questions for the Waterford Commission on Ethics.

The Commission, on July 1, 2025, in Executive Session, asked that I pose these questions to you as we examine 8 complaints currently before us: 2025-05-07-1 through 4 and 2025-05-15-1 through 4. I enclosed copies of the complaints. We plan to next meet on August 6 and would appreciate a response by that date. The questions:

- Did you advise either directly or indirectly any of the respondents prior to their votes referenced in the complaints regarding their employment and public perceptions of conflict of interest? Not that I can recall, especially not in the last two years.
- If so, when and how did that advice occur? N/A
- If so, what was the advice you offered? Last advice to Town Commissions was to follow Advisory Opinion of the Ethics Commission.
- Was the November, 2021, Advisory Opinion of the Commission on Ethics part of that advice? Yes
- Do you feel your advice complied with the Advisory Opinion? No
- If not, why not? Advised all town officials and elected members, as well as appointed members, to read the latest Advisory Opinion of the Commission.

P. 14 (2D)

- Do you have suggestions for the Ethics Commission going forward that might help clarify this issue? In this case, specifically, whether a reasonable question of conflict of interest exists if an employee of the Waterford Board of Education votes as an elected RTM member on the budget for the Board of Education? See below.

Thank you for your responses. Please contact me with questions or comments at (860) 614-2003. If I cannot personally receive your reply please deliver it to the Waterford Town Clerk appropriately sealed and marked for the Commission.

Sincerely,

*Elizabeth B. Ritter*

Elizabeth B. Ritter  
Chair, Waterford Commission on Ethics

waterfordct.org



**From:** Danielle Gelinis <steward-gelinis@sbcglobal.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, October 27, 2025 5:04 PM  
**To:** David Campo <DCampo@waterfordct.org>  
**Subject:** Ethics Correspondence

**CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization.  
Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender's email  
address and know the content is safe.**

Please forward this email to all members of the Ethics Commission and include it as correspondence for their next meeting.

Thank you!

October 27, 2025

Dear Members of the Ethics Commission,

Please accept this letter from a place of deep concern.

Because the Commission was unable to determine a decision as the Advisory Opinion, that was drafted by Betsy and approved by the Ethics Commission in 2021, was faulty, all Town Employees who serve on Boards and Commissions have been left exposed and vulnerable.

As I said at the first public hearing, my goal was to protect everyone. I walked away from this public hearing feeling like all protections were taken away.

This complaint is the first, that I am aware of, since the inception of the Ethics Commission to reach the level of "Probable Cause". I am aware that other complaints have been filed in the past, which prompted the creation of the Advisory Opinion, and even though probable cause was not determined, a letter was sent to an elected official strongly advising that person to abstain from budget votes. In the past, all town employees have abstained from the budget of their department head. You can see the trends in past meeting minutes. Most preface their abstention by acknowledging their conflict. The reason they are aware of the conflict is directly related to Attorney Avena's statement at the May 11, 2020 RTM meeting and the Advisory Opinion offered by the Ethics Commission in September of 2021.

First, please look at the accuracy and content of the Ethics Commission minutes:

The meeting minutes from September 8, 2025 do not reflect a vote to determine probable cause which should have been taken outside of Executive Session. In the minutes from June 3, 2021, there is a vote following Executive Session related to probable cause.

At no point in the minutes since the complaint was filed on May 7, 2025 is there an indication that this complaint was ever even addressed. While I appreciate the confidential and sensitive nature of these complaints, there should be some level of acknowledgement that the commission is dealing with business at hand.

In the September, 2025 meeting minutes, there is mention of Attorney Avena. Why was he not publicly contacted during the public hearing to discuss his input or advice to elected officials?

Second, there was discussion about the faults in the Advisory Opinion. Please refer back to the minutes of the November 22, 2021 meeting, Agenda items 5, 6 & 7 which I have provided here for ease of access:

"5. HOW IS THE NEW CODE WORKING? Mr. Zeldis asked Attorney Avena for input on the new code. Attorney Avena stated the entire new code has been approved. Ms. Ritter asked when it will be distributed? Attorney Avena stated the Town Clerk will distribute it. Attorney Avena was asked if he has received any feedback? He did not. Attorney Avena would like the new code to be placed on this Commission's website. He felt it should be accessible and agreed to have discussion with the Town Clerk.

Attorney Avena felt the Board of Education should be aware of what standards and care are.

6. THE AFFECT OF THE ADVISORY OPINION. Attorney Avena referred to the October 13, 2011 meeting of the Board of Finance. There is one item on the Advisory Opinion which stated it is necessary to abstain from voting if there is a conflict.

Betsy Ritter reported the Chairman of the Zoning Commission felt the Advisory Opinion was well done. She referred him to Attorney Avena. Attorney Avena did speak to him. He felt discussion with the Planning & Zoning Commission, Board of Finance and Board of Selectman went well. They wish to be careful. He will have discussion with the Zoning Board of Appeals next week and the new RTM in December. Ms. Ritter stated she personally felt it was a good idea to also have discussion with the Superintendent of Schools. Attorney Avena stated he is available for discussion on the code. The Finance Director appreciates the efforts of this Commission. Ms. Ritter asked Attorney Avena if he had discussion with anyone who indicated that they felt the Advisory Opinion was an extension of the new ordinances? Attorney Avena stated some think it went too far. State Statutes are repeated in our code. He felt it was time to look at the State Statute. Ms. Ritter felt there was no reason a municipality's ordinances could not be stricter than the State Statutes. They cannot be more permissive than the State Statutes. Attorney Avena stated legally if you have empowering statutes within the bound part, it is good to update.

7. ANY FEEDBACK RE ETHICS COMMISSION DECISION IN R.V.F. Attorney Avena asked if this Commission has heard from Attorney Reardon? He heard from him before the meeting. Attorney Avena informed him that he felt this Commission was diligent."

Also, please refer to the March 1, 2021 Board of Finance Budget Minutes.

"5. Police Department Budget:

Statement by Chairman Ron Fedor: I have always abided by a previous advisory opinion by the Ethics Board on how I vote on different budgets. At the meeting in January, John Sheehan brought up the fact that there was anew Code of Ethics passed by the RTM. I have sent a letter to the Chairman of the Ethics Commission asking for another advisory opinion based on the new code. In light of that, I will not vote on the Police Department of Board of Education budgets until I hear an advisory opinion from the board."

It should be noted that Mr. Fedor is NOT a town employee nor does he benefit from the paychecks received by his children or their spouses. He is also not a direct employee of either the Board of Education or the Police Department. His wife retired from the BOE in 2017.

All four of the Respondents, who are direct employees of the Board of Education, in this case acknowledged that they did vote on their department budget. Three of the four have abstained in the past and disclosed their conflict. Those three stated that they chose to vote because they did not like the process or to make their employer's job easier in the future (refer to recordings from public hearings on October 7 & 16, 2025). The fourth respondent

stated that they voted because they did not consider themselves an employee of the Board of Education, yet submitted a letter from HR confirming employment.

Third, the decision rendered was on all 8 complaints and indicated "total bottom line". These respondents voted 3 separate times, and two complaints per respondent were filed. In both complaints it was stated that an employee of the BOE voted on the BOE budget. At the May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting that vote included a reduction and subtotal. The complaints, although similar in nature, should have been addressed separately at the Final Hearing.

Finally, please refer to the Code of Ethics 2.50.060 Advisory Opinions, subsection A.

**"2.50.060 Advisory Opinion**

**A. The ethics commission shall issue advisory opinions with regard to the requirements of the code of ethic of the town upon the written request of any public official or town employee. Advisory opinions rendered by the commission, until amended or revoked, shall be binding on the commission and shall be deemed the final decisions of the commission."**

At no point during my contact with the Ethics Commission did I state that these people were unethical, and I found it disappointing to hear that this filing was interpreted as a personal attack. The respondents chose to actively vote on a budget that they were advised to abstain on by the Advisory Opinion issued in 2021 and by the Town Attorney which violates the Code of Ethics. All Respondents received this Advisory Opinion in their packet when they were sworn in to serve.

I was disappointed to see that a motion was pre-drafted and poorly debated at the final Public Hearing on October 16<sup>th</sup>. To decide that the Advisory Opinion created by the Ethics Commission was faulty, creates a sense of uncertainty and unease among all volunteer elected officials who are also town employees.

As this election approaches, we are about to seat new members to our elected Boards. What guidance would you recommend that they follow? The respondents have noted that the Ethics Commission found "NO Violation" more than once on social media leading to the perception that it is OK to vote on your department's budget.

I request that you take swift action to address these issues relating to substantial gain/loss, perceived conflict and immediate family as soon as possible to ensure that members who opt to abstain or vote on a department budget are protected from retaliation or reward.

Respectfully submitted,

Danielle Steward-Gelinas

May 2, 2025

John W. "Bill" Sheehan  
19 Laurel Crest Dr.  
Waterford, CT 06385

Glenn Patterson  
7 Leary Dr.  
Waterford, CT 06385

Mr. Paul Goldstein  
Moderator  
Waterford Representative Town Meeting  
15 Rope Ferry Road  
Waterford, CT 06385

Mr., Goldstein

According to the Agenda of the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) for the Annual Budget Hearing and Special Meeting, the RTM will be considering a resolution for a pilot program for approved Capital Projects within the FY26 budget.

Rather than approving that resolution, in our capacity as individual members of the Board of Finance (BOF), we propose that the RTM send to a Standing Committee (possibly the Legislative and Administration Committee) the attached proposed change to the Code of Ordinances.

There is sufficient time between now and the FY2027 budget to pass the proposed ordinance and be ready in the FY2027 budget to have the best of both the designation procedure and the direct appropriation procedure.

We are sending this letter and proposed ordinance as individual members of the Board of Finance and not as a request or recommendation of the BOF.

Sincerely,

J. W. Sheehan

Glenn Patterson.

Copy to (with encl): Town Clerk Campo  
First Selectman Brule

## **Proposed Ordinance Change for Capital Funds**

### **3.04.020 - Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures and Current Capital Fund established.**

1. There is created a reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures.

*a. The Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures will have two types of funding- Appropriated and Designated.*

*1) If the expenditure requires accumulating funding over multiple years, the annual funding will be designated for the project. After the total funds needed for the expenditure are accumulated, the funds will be appropriated by action of the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance, and the Representative Town Meeting.*

*2) If the expenditure is well-defined and funding is complete in the initial request, the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance and the Representative Town Meeting shall appropriate the funds at the initial presentation.*

*3) If the expenditure is not well defined in the initial presentation, it will be designated and the Department or Board will have to return to the BOS, BOF, and RTM to become appropriated. This is likely to occur for an expenditure proposed in the First Selectman's Capital Plan.*

*b. The Current Capital Fund is established for expenditures that are expected to be completed in the Fiscal Year Proposed and funding will be considered appropriated when approved by the Board of Selectmen, Board of Finance, and Representative Town Meeting.*

*1) If the expenditure is not complete in the fiscal year proposed, it should be transferred to the Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring Fund by action by the Board of Selectman, Board of Finance, and Representative Town Meeting before the end of the fiscal year.*

*2) If the expenditure is not complete in the fiscal year proposed and it is not transferred to the Reserve Fund, the remaining expenditure will be transferred to the Unassigned Fund Balance of the General Fund at the end of the fiscal year. If all that remains of the expenditure is final invoicing and payment then the funds may be encumbered to make those final payments in the next fiscal year.*

*b. The Board of Finance shall review the progress of projects in both funds quarterly.*

*c. Funds left after the completion of the expenditure shall be returned to the Unassigned Fund Balance of the General Fund if from the Current Capital Fund and to the Undesignated fund*

*Balance of the Capital and Nonrecurring Fund if from the Reserve fund for capital and nonrecurring expenditures.*

*2. Implementation*

- a. This ordinance change will be effective with the fiscal year 2027 budget.*
- b. In June 2026 the Board of Finance will transfer any outstanding projects from the Capital Improvement Fund to the Capital Nonrecurring Expenditure Fund.*
- c. The Capital Improvement Fund will be renamed the Current Year Capital Fund.*