

Council on Ethics  
Minutes of Meeting  
Town of Wilton, Connecticut  
Thursday, November 5, 2020

Chair Sayegh called the meeting to order through the Town of Wilton Zoom link at 7:00 p.m. in the presence of a quorum. Present were Council Members Edwards, Brown, Miller, Conway and Sayegh.

On motion by member Miller and second by member Edwards, the adoption of the Agenda as filed was accepted unanimously.

On motion by member Edwards and second by member Miller, the Council agreed unanimously to enter the email from Lynn Vanderslice, First Selectwoman, dated 10.28.2020 to the Council Chair, into the record.

A copy of the contents of that email is attached to these minutes.

Member Edwards moved to adjourn. Member Conway seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:15.

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Attachment to the Minutes of Meeting  
Town of Wilton, Connecticut  
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Email from Lynn Vanderslice, First Selectwoman to Miriam Sayegh, Chair Wilton Ethics Council, dated 10/28/20:

Miriam,

I watched your meeting tonight. If you are still taking comments, I wanted to provide the following clarifying information. If you are past that point, please disregard.

As Mike Conklin noted, the Tree Warden is defined by CT State statutes. This page from the state website may be helpful in understanding the position. <https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP/Forestry/Urban-Forestry/Connecticut-Tree-Wardens#statutes> It includes the enabling statutes. Section 26C-4 of the Town Charter

Per the Town's Charter the Board of Selectmen are required to appoint a tree warden: <https://www.ecode360.com/13348453?highlight=tree%20warden&searchId=28155297931702407#13348453>

Town ordinances, see section 26C, defines the Tree Warden, the Tree Committee and the relationship between the Tree Warden and the Tree Committee. <https://www.ecode360.com/14138667?highlight=tree,tree%20warden,tree%20warden%20tree,trees&searchId=28154289461472042#14138667>

Mike Conklin indicated that the tree wardens reported to DPW. The tree wardens actually reports to the First Selectwoman, though most of their interactions are with DPW. DPW notifies them of trees that need to be assessed. They report their findings back to DPW. DPW personnel arrange for any tree removal ordered by the tree warden.

At the February 6, 2017 Board of Selectmen appointed a resident who owned a Wilton-based landscaping business, to the Conservation Commission. During their interview, the resident volunteered that they had both donated services to the Town and had also been paid by the Town to perform services. It was the decision of the Board of Selectmen to appoint the individual subject to his company not to being able perform any paid landscaping services. There was a concern about the appearance of a conflict of interest. Per Town Counsel, the Board of Selectmen has 100% discretion when appointing board and commission, subject to any minority representation restrictions.

At some point after that February BOS meeting, I learned that Nick Lee, an uncompensated Deputy Tree Warden appointed by the first selectwoman and a Board of Selectmen appointed member of the Tree Committee, had been engaged by the Town to perform paid services. This lead to him being told that he could no longer perform paid services while serving in an appointed position.

When Nick asked for this decision to be reconsidered, Mike and I had a conversation with Town Counsel. Town Counsel recommended Nick request an opinion from the Ethics Commission before I brought Nick's request to the Board of Selectmen.

After Nick submitted his request to the Ethics Commission, Nick was appointed to the position of a second paid Tree Warden. Tree Wardens are paid \$1,500: \$1,000 stipend, plus reimbursement of

professional licenses and such up to \$500. The volume of work was such, that I recommended to the Board of Selectmen appoint a second paid Tree Warden.

I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if you have any questions.

Lynne