

## NEWS RELEASE

September 28, 2017

### **Residents Call Attention to Yorktown's Ethics Crisis**

In response to what it is calling a serious ethical crisis and lack of transparency in our town government, a group of residents are asking all six candidates for the Town Board to pledge that if elected they will honor **10 Principles for an Ethical and Transparent Town Government.**

The 10 Principles cover three broad areas:

- Ethics and Conflicts of Interest
- Transparency and Open Government
- Public Input

Copies of the 10 Principles are being sent to the candidates. The Principles are also available at <http://www.yorktownbettergovernment.org/town-issues.htm#ethics>.

The 10 Principles were prepared by Subcommittee on Ethics and Transparency of Yorktown Together, a grassroots organization committed to increasing citizen participation in our town government. The group came together in response to a growing uneasiness about what its members saw happening in Yorktown.

“The issues have been building up for years but the proverbial basket overflowed at the September 5<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting when the board voted to adopt a resolution supporting County Executive Astorino’s veto of the Immigrant Protection Act that was not listed on the published agenda for the meeting,” explained Melvyn Tanzman, a member of the Committee. “Whether one was for or against the resolution, there was absolutely no justification for the Town Board to take up this highly controversial issue without any advance notice to the public, especially as there was no need to pass the resolution that evening.”

Other disturbing actions that led to the drafting of the 10 Principles and the call for all six candidates to pledge that if elected they would honor them include:

- The continued failure to strengthen the Town’s Ethics Law by creating an independent Ethics Board.
- The possible conflict of interest when an elected official, acting as a private attorney, represented a local business that has a contract with the town. The Grievance Committee of the Ninth Judicial District is currently investigating the issue
- The failure of a Town Board member to recuse himself from the vote to adopt the 485b Tax Abatement local law when he knew he stood to indirectly benefit from a development project that would qualify for the tax incentive.
- The lack of transparency in not being honest with taxpayers about the true cost for the Granite Knolls Sports Complex and the highway garage project.
- The lack of transparency when the Town Board voted to stop collecting the \$30 open space fee AFTER the public hearing on the 2017 budget was closed so that the public had no opportunity to comment on what the board was planning to do.

- The Town Board's repeated refusal to use the public address system for work sessions and televise work sessions.
- The Town Board's failure to appoint willing volunteers for the Community Housing Board and Advisory Committee on Open Space.

Stressing the Committee's commitment to non-partisanship, Tanzman emphasized that, "Regardless of who wins in November, as individuals and as a group, we're committed to working for a more ethical and transparent town government. Good government isn't a partisan issue."

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