

The Town Of Putnam Valley



PLAIN LANGUAGE GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT ETHICS FOR OFFICERS, EMPLOYEES, AND RESIDENTS ^[1]

October 23, 2006

I – INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Code of Ethics is to foster integrity in government, promote public confidence, and help Town officers and employees to discharge their official duties without fear of unwarranted accusations of unethical conduct, and to ensure all officers and employees will be impartial and accountable to the people.

II. – WHAT APPEARS TO BE LEGAL IS NOT ALWAYS ETHICAL

Realizing what appears to be legal is not necessarily ethical, it is the policy of the Town of Putnam Valley and the purpose of this section of the Town Code is to establish standards and guidelines for ethical conduct of officers and employees.

The working definition of appearance of impropriety is “conduct that violates the spirit and intent of ethics regulations, even where no specific statute is violated”.

III – WHO MUST COMPLY?

All Town officials or employees whether paid or unpaid in your individual and official capacity and as a member of a Town Board or Commission must comply with the Code of Ethics.

IV – Guide to Government Ethics

1. **Using Your Public Office for Private Gain.** You may not take an action or fail to take an action as a public servant if doing so might financially benefit you, a member of your immediate family, or anyone with whom you have a personal business or financial relationship.
2. **Misuse of Town Resources.** You may not use Town letterhead, personnel, equipment, supplies, or resources for a non-Town purpose, nor may you pursue personal or private activities during times when you are required to work for the Town.
3. **Gifts.** You may not accept gifts or favors worth more than \$75.00 per year from anyone other than your parent, spouse or child, if you know the person is doing business with the Town.
4. **Moonlighting.** You may not have outside employment that conflicts with your duties as a Town officer or employee.

5. *Owning a Business.* You may not own any part of a business or firm that does business with the Town, unless your Town position is uncompensated and there is no conflict between your outside professional activities and your official duties.

6. *Confidential Information.* You may not disclose confidential information regarding the Town or its citizens or use it for any non-Town purpose.

7. *Appearing for Others.* You may not communicate with, or appear before any Town agency except on your own behalf or on behalf of the Town. You may not represent anyone other than yourself or the Town in business or professional dealings with any Town officer or Board.

8. *Post-Employment One-Year Ban.* For one year after you leave Town service, you may not communicate with any Officer or Board of the Town except on your own behalf or on behalf of the Town.

9. *Post-Employment Permanent Ban.* After you leave Town service, you may never work on a particular matter you personally and substantially worked on for the Town.

10. *Disclosure and Non-Participation.* As soon as you are aware of a real or potential conflict of interest, you must disclose the conflict in writing to the particular Officer or Board involved, and to the Board of Ethics. You must also refrain from any participation in the matter until an advisory opinion is given by the Board of Ethics that you may do so.

11. *Volunteer Activities.* You may be an officer or director of a not-for-profit organization that does business with the Town if you do this activity on your own time and the organization has no contractual relationship with the Town agency (*emergency services excluded*). You may receive reimbursement for expenses that you incur in working for the organization. Any other questions may be referred to the Board of Ethics.

12. *Multiple Boards.* Any officer or employee of the Town of Putnam Valley who also serves in any other town or county position shall disclose that information in writing to the respective Agency, Board, or Commission, the Town Board, and to the Board of Ethics.

V – Other Prohibited Interests

Town Contracts. You may not participate in making a Town contract if you have a financial interest in the contract. You may not be a member of the board whose approval is required to make a Town contract in which you have a financial interest.

VI – Annual Financial Disclosure

Depending on the Town position that you hold, you may be required to file an annual financial disclosure statement with the Board of Ethics.

VII – Ethics Training

Ethics training is available from the Board of Ethics at the request of the Town Board.

VIII – Pursuing an Advisory Opinion or Filing a Complaint with the Board of Ethics

1. You may request confidential advisory opinions or file a written complaint with the Board of Ethics by writing to the Post Office Box below.
2. You may request, in writing, to speak before the Ethics Board.
3. If you believe you are unfairly restricted by this law, you may request in writing a waiver from the Putnam Valley Board of Ethics.
4. For further information or to obtain answers to specific questions, you may write the Board of Ethics at:

**Putnam Valley Town Board of Ethics
Post Office Box 656
Putnam Valley, NY 10579**

To ensure your confidentiality, we request you mail your communication to the above address.

[1] This plain language Guide to Government Ethics has been prepared by the Board of Ethics to assist you in avoiding actual or potential conflicts of interest. It is not intended to replace the actual text of the Putnam Valley Town Code of Ethics. Article 17. For further guidance, you may also consult Article 18 of the New York General Municipal Law (conflicts of interest of municipal officers and employees).