

# Mamaroneck planning board member accused of ethics violations

By **Bill Heltzel** - May 26, 2020

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A member of the Mamaroneck village Planning Board has been accused of ethics violations for allegedly participating in actions that could benefit her personally.

Mayor Thomas Murphy will hold an online [public hearing](#) Wednesday to determine whether Cynthia G. Goldstein should be removed from the planning board, as recommended by the village ethics board.



*Goldstein*

The ethics board was reluctant to recommend removal of a volunteer planning board member, Chairman Mark Ettenger stated in the formal decision, particularly for someone who has devoted considerable time and energy serving the village.

"However, the evidence coupled with Ms. Goldstein's attitude and conduct, has overwhelmed that reluctance. Throughout the entire process, Ms. Goldstein consistently demonstrated a disregard for and refusal to conform her conduct to the letter or spirit of the code of ethics."

The ethics board decision was formalized last November but was not publicly disclosed until earlier this month.

By then, Goldstein had already sued the village and the board of ethics in Westchester Supreme Court, accusing them of abuse of discretion and capricious conduct. Her March 16 complaint asks the court to dismiss the ethics board decision and to declare the ethics code "void for vagueness."

Goldstein is a lawyer and accountant who specializes in taxes and financial planning. She has been active in numerous civic and nonprofit organizations, serving on the Mamaroneck Hunger Task Force, for instance, and volunteering as a firefighter.

She has served as a village trustee and member of the Harbor and Coastal Zone Management Commission. She was appointed to the planning board in December 2018.

The alleged ethics violations concern her conduct on proposals by Last Home LLC and Hampshire Recreation LLC.

Last Home was seeking permission to extend a public sewer one mile to 203 Hommocks Road.

Last Home offered to pay for the sewer, allowing properties along the way to tap in and get off their old septic systems. The extended sewer would skirt Oak Lane and enable six more homeowners, including Goldstein, to pay for a short extension to their properties.

Goldstein's husband, Steve, had touted the economic benefits of the sewer to village officials, according to the ethics board findings, and hired the same engineer that Last Home was using. He had estimated that fixing a failed septic system could cost \$30,000 to \$60,000, whereas homeowners on Oak Lane could each pay about \$20,000 to extend the line.

Cynthia Goldstein participated in deliberations about the project, but did not disclose her husband's role and denied that she could benefit from the project.

Nearly three months after the project was brought before the planning board, she recused herself from participating in further discussions, deliberations and votes.

Hampshire Recreation had been seeking several land use approvals for a proposed 105-unit housing development at Hampshire Country Club.

Two ethics board members met with Goldstein in March 2019 to discuss the possibility of recusal. She rejected their concerns, according to the board's findings, denied that her property abuts the country club and went on to participate in 13 planning board sessions on the project.

The planning board, including Goldstein, denied Hampshire Recreation's requests for five land use approvals on May 6.

A few days later, the ethics board decision and recommendation were publicly disclosed.

The ethics code requires village officials, board members and employees to disclose personal interests that could influence, or appear to influence, their actions.

Goldstein states in her lawsuit that she had no personal or private interest in the Hampshire matter.

She claims she was denied due process because the village manager had not acted on her request that an ethics board member be disqualified for bias.

The code of ethics fails to provide clear enforcement standards, she argues, and "fails to give a person of ordinary intelligence fair notice of the conduct that is forbidden."

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Bill Heltzel has covered criminal justice, courts, government and sports – as a beat reporter and investigative reporter – for daily newspapers in Florida, Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. He worked for Bloomberg LP in training and sales. He joined The Business Journal in 2016.

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