

MAMARONECK

Mamaroneck village planning board member won't be removed for ethics violations: mayor

David Propper Rockland/Westchester Journal News

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A Village of Mamaroneck Planning Board member who faced ethics charges won't be removed from her position, Mayor Thomas Murphy announced Friday afternoon.

Murphy, in a 12-page decision, came down against booting Cynthia Goldstein from the planning board. She's been a member since December 2018.

The village ethics board recommended on Nov. 29, 2019, that Goldstein be removed because of perceived conflicts of interest and violations of local disclosure laws. The ethics board was concerned about Goldstein's actions connected to two proposed projects.

But Murphy wrote removal is "a drastic measure that should not be imposed lightly."

"The removal of Ms. Goldstein from the Planning Board is not warranted for the violations at issue and would not be in the best interest of the Village," Murphy wrote in his decision. "The primary factors weighing against removal are Ms. Goldstein's long record of volunteerism and civic service and the nature of the Planning Board actions in which Ms. Goldstein participated."

Goldstein failed to recuse herself from a planning board review of a Hampshire Recreation housing proposal, even though her property abuts the site of the potential development, Hampshire Country Club, and she failed to publicly disclose her proximity to the club, the ethics board stated.

The Hampshire project, which would have built 105 single-family homes on part of Hampshire's golf course, was unanimously rejected by the planning board earlier this year. Hampshire has sued the village for \$58 million over the rejection, referencing Goldstein's conduct in legal papers.

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Goldstein was also criticized for her early involvement in reviewing a proposal by the owner of 203 Hommocks Road to extend a sewer line to his home. Goldstein's husband, Steve, had advocated to have that same sewer line connected to more households, including the Goldsteins, rather than rely on a septic system.

Cynthia Goldstein eventually recused herself from the project after participating in one meeting.

Murphy wrote while he agreed with the ethics board that Goldstein's actions were wrong, the outcomes of the proposals were not impacted by her conduct.

During a May 27 hearing, members of volunteer boards and even village trustees came to Goldstein's defense, describing her as a valuable asset to Mamaroneck. Murphy referenced the swell of support she received at the hearing in his decision.

Goldstein filed a lawsuit against the village March 18, criticizing the ethics board's decision as arbitrary and an abuse of discretion. The lawsuit is ongoing.

Goldstein and her attorney, Steven Leventhal, were not immediately available for comment.

"I wish to make it clear that my determination not to remove Ms. Goldstein was not taken lightly, and should not be interpreted to condone violations of disclosure and recusal provisions of the Code of Ethics," Murphy wrote.

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