



City of Stamford
Board of Ethics
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT 06901

January 13, 2016

The Honorable Matthew Quinones
Board of Representatives
Stamford Government Center
888 Washington Blvd.
Stamford, CT 06901

Dear Representative Quinones,

Thank you for your appearance before the Board of Ethics to address your request for an Advisory Opinion regarding any potential conflicts of interest when voting on matters concerning the Board of Education, as a result of your position as the executive director of the Stamford Public Education Foundation (SPEF).

The Board does not believe that Section 19-4 of the Stamford Municipal Code of Ethics (conflicts of interests; interference with duties), directly precludes you from discourse or voting on general matters pertaining to the Board of Education of Stamford Public Schools.

The Board strongly believes, however, that when considering any matters concerning the Board of Education or the Stamford Public Schools in your elected position as a member of the Board of Representatives, that you should disclose to that body your affiliation with SPEF.

Moreover, if in your personal judgment or upon receiving counsel from the City's Department of Legal Affairs, a discussion or vote on matters pertaining to specifically to SPEF may present a conflict of interest under Section 19-4 (specifically the "divided loyalty" clause), you should recuse yourself from any discussion or vote.

The Board also considered the language of Section 19-5(D)(7) of the Stamford Municipal Code of Ethics, which does not prohibit:

An officer voting on a proposed municipal or Board of Education budget or appropriation provided that the total financial interest to the officer's immediate family, including, but not limited to salary, health benefits, and pension, is insubstantial compared to the

budget or appropriation being considered, or the appropriation is substantially unrelated to such total financial interest, and it is reasonable to expect that any likely action on said budget or appropriation will not financially or otherwise impact such officer or his or her immediate family.

The Board by majority vote concluded that on face value, Section 19-5 does not preclude you from voting on matters concerning the Board of Education, its membership, nor the budget and appropriations for the Stamford Public Schools, as an elected Member of the Board of Representatives. The Board puts forward, however, the same caveat noted above: you should disclose your affiliation with SPEF before any discussion or vote that pertains to the Board of Education or education policy and recuse yourself from discussion or voting on any matters directly related to SPEF.

While a majority of Board members voted in favor of this opinion, there were varied degrees of reservation and there was one dissenting vote on the issue of your participation in appointing members of the Board of Education. The Board also wishes to emphasize that its finding pertains only to your specific (yet hypothetical) circumstances, and should not be construed as precedent for any future requests for an advisory opinion or complaint filed with the Board.

The Board of Ethics thanks you for your service to our City and appreciates the thought and time you have devoted to this matter.

Sincerely,

Cheryl G. Bader, Chair
Clarence R. Grebey III, Secretary

John Martelli, Member
Alan Lang, Member

Copy: Donna M. Loglisci, Town & City Clerk