

H.875

I am concerned that the Municipal Code of Ethics portion does not take into account the realities of small, rural towns such as Guildhall (pop. 261). 26 residents serve in 41 elected or appointed positions (10% of the Town!).

Our water and cemetery are in-house – residents with knowledge and equipment tend to serve on these commissions and are paid to perform maintenance and improvements. It's the legacy of the agricultural past when farmers with specific knowledge and skills took active positions and worked for the town. In the Past it was volunteer time, equipment and materials, but 15 years ago concerns were raised that the town budget did not reflect what it would really cost should volunteers not come forward, so we began paying for services.

In addition, We have no fire, ambulance, police, or highway departments – we contract with sole providers – the area typically supports one vendor of each type willing to contract with the town, and folks all know each other.

It is not possible to avoid Strict Conflict of Interest in a small town.

I suggest that as long as these contracts are subject to public scrutiny and debate, let the existing town meeting budget approval process and the ballot box serve as the check and balance.

I urge the Committee to incorporate language that recognizes the legitimacy of Sole Providers, and Municipal Officers and Appointees, who perform work for the town.

I have 3 other concerns regarding the existing municipal officials portion:

1. The training section adds additional content in Public Records and Open Meeting which are not explained or detailed in the preceding sections and are not really a Conflict of Interest matter;
2. There is no clarification of what “competency” means relative to requiring it rather than hours or course(s) of participation;
3. What happens to an elected official if they do not obtain competency?