

Amy Harvey

From: Jeanette Coffin
Sent: Wednesday, January 18, 2023 3:31 PM
To: campaign@willraymond.org
Cc: Lance Norris; Adam Searing; Amy Ryan; Camille Berry; Jeanne Brown; Jess Anderson; Karen Stegman; Michael Parker; Pam Hemminger; Paris Miller-Foushee; Tai Huynh; Amy Harvey; Ann Anderson; Atuya Cornwell; Carolyn Worsley; CHRIS BLUE; James Baker; Loryn Clark; Mary Jane Nirdlinger; Ran Northam; Ross Tompkins; Sabrina Oliver
Subject: RE: FORMAL PETITION: Ethics guidelines, Mayor Hemminger's promise of a review and Kumar Neppakli

Thank you for your correspondence with the Town of Chapel Hill. The Mayor and Town Council are interested in what you have to say. By way of this email, I am forwarding your message to the Mayor and each of the Council Members, as well as to the appropriate staff person who may be able to assist in providing additional information or otherwise addressing your concerns.

Again, thank you for your message.

Sincerely,

Jeanette Coffin

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-----Original Message-----

From: campaign@willraymond.org <campaign@willraymond.org>
Sent: Tuesday, January 17, 2023 8:54 PM
To: Town Council <mayorandcouncil@townofchapelhill.org>; All Agenda Materials <allclerk@townofchapelhill.org>; Pam Hemminger <phemminger@townofchapelhill.org>
Subject: Re: FORMAL PETITION: Ethics guidelines, Mayor Hemminger's promise of a review and Kumar Neppakli

External email: Don't click links or attachments from unknown senders. To check or report forward to reportspam@townofchapelhill.org

Dear Mayor and Council,

It has been one year since we requested the following reviews, information and Council action on improving ethics with zero movement.

In light of the FBI's and, apparently, Town investigation into former developer/traffic engineer Mr. Neppalli, please consider this a renewed request of the original petition.

Further, under relevant NC Open Records statutes, we demand the full release of the Town's report, any additional investigatory notes, staff communications, emails and other materials explaining what exactly clears Mr. Neppalli OR ANY OTHER STAFF MEMBER of using their "position to unduly influence development projects".

Thank you,

Will Raymond

On 2021-11-10 17:59, WillR wrote:

> Mayor and Council,

>

> I sent the following several day's ago. In case it wasn't obvious, I

> want Council to consider this as a formal petition for action.

>

> It is clear that appointing developers and developers' agents to key

> land-use advisory positions has set a bad example. By many local

> residents standards, including mine, it not only creates an

> appearance of a conflict of interest but is a conflict of interest.

>

> With Mr. Neppalli's example before you it should be clear those days

> should be over.

>

> We are calling on an open and public review of Mr. Neppalli's conduct

> to make sure that his assessments didn't conflict with the public

> interest and principles of good government.

>

> We are seeking full and detailed answers to the following questions:

> Which local developers did he partner with? Did he make any

> assessments related to past, current or future projects involving

> those developers? How significant were those assessments in making the

> final determinations about those projects? Were any of those

> determinations or assessments used to justify exceptions for other

> similar projects not related to these developers?

>

> In terms of staff and advisory boards: How is Council going to

> determine if other members of staff or members of advisory boards are

> trading on their connections with Town Hall? What steps will Council

> take to remediate any lapses?

>

> We are calling upon Council to tighten up ethical rules guiding

> Council, staff and advisory board conduct. The new rules should have

> clear examples of inappropriate conduct and specific remedies that do

> not rely exclusively on the Council to implement or enforce.

>
> We ask that these rules bar the appearance of conflict of interest and
> prohibit even the smallest chance of self-serving decision-making.
>
> We are calling on Council to remove all current advisory board members
> with these type of inherent conflicts of interest and to modify the
> rules so that future advisory board members have a clear choice -
> either fully relinquish their conflicting interests or serve the
> community.
>
> One path or the other. No confusion as to where their allegiances
> lie. Period. Stop.
>
> We are calling on a review of all other key staff to make sure that
> other folks have not been tempted by the poor examples set over the
> last decade to trade on their connections to Town Hall.
>
> We are demanding these reforms to the rules of ethical conduct to draw
> the brightest of lines between serving the wider community and serving
> oneself.
>
> We ask that there be a mechanism for the public to initiate
> independent reviews of apparent conflicts that cannot be barred by
> staff or Council.
>
> We ask that these new rules will be evaluated by an independent
> organization that is universally recognized as a standard bearer for
> ethics in government.
>
> And, as much as we like and respect UNC's School of Government, we ask
> that the body so charged with the review have no local entanglements.
>
> Finally, we ask that the Council provide two or more opportunities for
> direct public feedback on the new proposed rules.
>
>
> Thank you for taking this on in an expedited manner,
>
> Will Raymond on behalf of himself and other concerned residents.
>
>
>
> On 11/9/21 1:02 PM, WillR wrote:
>> Dear Mayor and Council,
>>
>> It is unfortunate that one of the Town's longest serving staff
>> members appears to have traded on his inside connections to raise
>> investment money.
>>
>> As quoted from the N&O, "The investors said Neppalli touted his
>> connections to developers through his work with the town when he
>> talked with them about investing in his pending real estate deal with

>> a local builder on an apartment or townhouse project."
>>
>> We expect more of our staff, the Council AND those who serve on
>> various advisory boards.
>>
>> But should we be surprised that a staff member who sees the Chair or
>> important members of key advisory boards working on their own behalf
>> or as agents of developers might not think "what's good for the
>> goose, is good for the gander"?
>>
>> There is no disputing now that letting residents serve on boards who
>> have direct connections to the outcomes of their decisions not only
>> is unethical but sets an example that will tempt others, possibly Mr.
>> Neppalli, to profit from their own sphere of influence.
>>
>> In the 15 years I physically attended many many Council meetings, it
>> was a rare night that Mr. Neppalli was called upon or referenced.
>>
>> Mr. Neppalli played a key role in determining whether development
>> projects could move forward. The Mayor and Council often would lean
>> very heavily on his analysis in selling projects to the wider
>> community especially those the community had pushed back strenuously
>> because of pedestrian, cyclist and traffic issues.
>>
>> In other words, a lot of what has happened in our Town were decided
>> based on Kumar's assessments.
>>
>> Mayor Hemminger, on behalf of myself and other concerned residents, I
>> am not asking but demanding a full review of Mr. Neppalli's decisions
>> made over the last 3 or 4 years he was self-reportedly involved in
>> raising money for development he says he was doing in conjunction
>> with at least one local developer.
>>
>> You need to let residents know, objectively, did Mr. Neppalli put his
>> thumb on the scale to benefit himself or his partners? Who were his
>> partners and did they have projects that were approved in the last 3
>> to 4 years that Mr. Neppalli participated on?
>>
>> Finally, it's way past time to draw the brightest of lines between
>> serving the wider community and serving oneself.
>>
>> Reform your weak ethics guidelines. Remove all members of advisory
>> boards who have an interest in the outcome of their decisions. Set
>> an example that everyone, including the staff, will understand and abide.
>>
>> Thank you,
>>
>> Will Raymond
>>
>>