

Ethics Commission

Advisory Opinion 2019-3

The Advice Requested: Gregory Schlough, alternate member on the Zoning Board of Appeals, requested an opinion relating to his fundraising activities as chairman for the local 2020 American Cancer Society Relay for Life. These funds will be for the event and for the American Cancer Society. This Request for Advisory Opinion was received in the office of the City Clerk on July 30, 2019 and was taken up at the regular meeting of the Ethics Commission on August 12, 2019.

The City of Norwich Code of Ethics that pertains to this request is Section 2-54 Conflict of Interest, sub section c, Gifts and Favors:

“Gifts and favors. No officer, official or employee shall accept or solicit any gift from any person who, to his or her knowledge, is interested, directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever, in business dealings with the city, or which gift may tend to influence him or her in the discharge of official duties or in granting any improper favor, service or thing of value.”

In considering Mr. Schlough’s request for advice, the Ethics Commission discussion focused on the process of solicitation of businesses and city agencies that might support the event with donated services, raffle events, or monetary donations. Mr. Schlough was present at the meeting and discussed the general process used to raise funds and solicit contributions for this annual event. These contributions would not benefit Mr. Schlough and would be going to the charity to support the fundraising of the 2020 American Cancer Society Relay for Life. Proper receipting for any cash donations and appropriate record keeping of all donations is recommended, in accordance with the organization’s policies. Additionally, if any of these businesses that contribute in response to direct solicitation by Mr. Schlough appear before the Zoning Board of Appeals, Mr. Schlough will follow appropriate guidelines for recusal in these cases.

The vote was unanimous; the members of the Ethics Commission do not consider soliciting city agencies and businesses to support the 2020 American Cancer Society Relay for Life to be a conflict of interest or considered a gift or favor since all proceeds will benefit the charity.

On behalf of the Norwich Ethics Commission

Carol Menard, Chairperson