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**MEMORANDUM  
FINAL**

TO: Ancram Town Board

FROM: Elena DeFio Kean, Esq. 

Re: Results of Comprehensive Investigation of Trends and/or Complaints of Gender Based Discrimination within the Town of Ancram

Date: April 21, 2022

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**Background**

On February 12, 2022, the Town of Ancram Town Board hired Hinman Straub, P.C. to investigate allegations of Disrespectful Behavior towards women that relate to statements made by Mr. Jack Lindsey during a public session of the Town Board meeting held on January 20, 2022, and two additional related complaints that were made after the January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting. Specifically, Hinman Straub was retained to investigate the allegations, determine facts regarding disrespectful behavior, and to put forward recommendations, if necessary, for improvement.

**Investigation**

Accordingly, an investigation was initiated by Hinman Straub to address the allegations outlined by Mr. Lindsey during the public session of the January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting and the subsequent two additional related complaints received by the Town. Between February – April 2022, twenty (20) individuals were interviewed. Several of the parties were interviewed on more than one occasion.

All individuals interviewed fell into one of three categories: (1) a Town employee; (2) an elected Town official; or (3) a volunteer on one or more Town committees either currently or in the recent distant past. Members of the general public were not interviewed.

All individuals interviewed were encouraged to be open and provide any information they felt was appropriate to support, address or counter the allegations raised by Mr. Lindsey and by the two additional complaints received, or to share any additional information that might be relevant regarding disrespectful behavior by the Town, employees, or volunteers whether towards

women or other groups. Each individual interviewed was promised there would not be a direct recitation of every statement made by each individual and what statement was attributed to whom. Rather, the purpose of this investigation was to develop and identify themes and conduct of behavior, areas for potential improvement, and to help identify potential areas of past breakdowns in communication. Specifics would only be used when absolutely necessary to address a direct incident or issue raised by Mr. Lindsey in his statements made during the public session of the January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

At the start of each interview, an introduction occurred, and the following questions were generally asked of each person interviewed. However, depending on the person's position, involvement in a particular event, or answers received, more detailed questions would occur and/or the questions would be altered.

- Were they present for Mr. Lindsey's statements and, if not, if they were aware of it?
- How long have they been in the Town?
- How are they serving the Town and for how long?
- Inquired about their personal experiences in each of these roles.
- Inquired as to their presence/participation in Board/committee meetings.
- Provide an overview as to what their sense of the issues as identified by Mr. Lindsey and whether they agreed or disagreed.
- Specific questions would ensue depending on the person's positions within the Town and/or responses to the above questions.
- All individuals were asked whether they felt like they had been subjected to/or had observed discriminatory harassment or disrespectful or dismissive behavior.
- Finally, witnesses were asked if they had any suggestions on how to move things forward.

The following policies were reviewed prior to the investigation commencing:

- Town Board Memos
- Draft Board resolutions
- Town Board meeting minutes
- Potential Proposed Draft Code of Conduct
- Town Employee Handbook
- Town Policy and Complaint Procedure regarding Discrimination and Harassment
- Town Code of Ethics and Ethics Law

In addition, to the policies, the following were reviewed:

- Letter read into the record by Mr. Lindsey at the January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting.
- Two related complaints that were made to the Town subsequent to the January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting.
- Email communications as provided by the various individuals interviewed.
- Planning Board audio recordings from May and June 2021.
- Findings and Conclusions relative to operation of the Planning Board from 2020.
- Video of January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board Meeting.

### **Allegations**

On January 20, 2022, Jack Lindsey, who is also head of the Town of Ancram's Ethics Board, made a statement during a public session of the Town Board meeting alleging disrespectful behavior toward women by the Town, employees, and volunteers.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Mr. Lindsey read a letter into the meeting record. The letter referenced various events and individuals with the Town Board and the Town of Ancram. The letter, while speaking for itself, did identify several issues of concerns as presented by Mr. Lindsey.

At the conclusion of Mr. Lindsey's remarks, several female members of the community spoke out in support of his statements. These women gave examples of their experiences. Some experiences were unrelated to the Town government and/or had occurred over 15 years earlier. Other experiences had occurred recently.

In response to Jack Lindsey's statements, the Town received two separate and distinct complaints from individuals that felt that they had been unduly targeted by the letter read into the public record by Mr. Lindsey, and that there had been misinformation. As for the individual complaints, the ultimate results of same will be resolved in separate memos directed to the individuals. However, the allegations that served as the basis for same are specifically addressed herein.

### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS OF INVESTIGATION**

The findings and conclusions track the items identified by Mr. Lindsey's letter read into the public record, and reviewed as part of this investigation, but also addresses the various issues and complaints raised during the interviews process.

#### **A. Claims of Dismissive, Hostile and/or Inappropriate Treatment of Women who serve the Town-Causing People to Be Fearful to Complain**

The investigation revealed that many of the items raised by Mr. Lindsey's letter were events that occurred, in some instances, more than 10 years earlier. However, it did expose a perceived theme of dismissal and disrespect towards women by many women interviewed, but not all women interviewed. Male individuals questioned did not acknowledge that any such events could be occurring.

The investigation revealed within the last few years some female volunteers felt dismissed and not respected when differences of opinion arose. Multiple sources have observed and/or been subject to potentially bullying and/or dismissive behavior by a fellow board/committee member during a public meeting. There is no definitive suggestion that it is gender based, but rather a result of differences of opinion on a multitude of issues. These range from personalities, education, political affiliations, long standing v. new residency, environmentally focused v. building oriented.

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<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lindsey stated he was addressing the Town Board in his personal capacity and not as Chair of the Town Ethics Board.

Other female interviewees indicated not being subject to different treatment based upon gender. However, some female interviewees asserted that other women subjected them to hostile/dismissive treatment, if they did not agree on a topic. Male witnesses did not believe they were being dismissive or rude but rather expressing their opinions as was their right and obligation upon their role on a particular Board or Committee.

The interviews revealed various areas of concern and/or claims of conduct that resulted in individuals feeling alienated, dismissive, or devalued:

- Perceived dismissive behavior during Town and Committee meetings by way of individual tone or voice, chuckling or not being taken seriously.
- Talking over people when speaking during Committee and Board meetings.
- Planning Board member subjected to an inappropriate comment in February 2020 during a public meeting by an applicant, who also served on another Town committee.
- Pattern of behavior by a former Planning Board member that would talk over and/or dismiss opinions of individuals that were more environmentally conscious.
- Concerns that Board members would communicate directly with committee members if resident complaints are received instead of bringing concerns to the committee chairs.
- Being criticized for their conduct on volunteer boards/committees by other board/committee members attempting to influence their conduct.
- Improper action during recent trainings by Town employees.
- Brandishing a ceremonial gun during a training.
- Dismissing and opposing the work of a volunteer committee after substantial work was performed.

Examples of each of these were confirmed through interviews. However, many interviewees disagreed with certain characterizations, particularly claims of disrespectful conduct based on gender.

One issue that seemed to surface was the issue of citizen complaints were immediately addressed with committee members versus through a Committee Chair. Several felt targeted or pressured to change their approach. Interference and/or presuming things were not done properly if someone complained created unnecessary problems.

Issues of that kind should be referred to the Committee Chair. Town Board members should allow the Committee/Board to handle and report back.

Another issue was the feeling of being unappreciated by the Town Board for volunteer work performed. The Committee, after substantial work, prepared and submitted a plan to the Town Board for consideration. The response was strong and divided. In light of the substantial work, the Committee did not feel supported. More clarity as to the roles of the Committee and reminding the public of the Board's freedom to vote as the deem appropriate would hopefully alleviate some of these feelings.

Multiple individuals reasonably perceive that gender is driving these events at least in part and therefore should not be dismissed. Others strongly do not believe it is based upon gender and

even question that there is any problem with respectful behavior. Statements by several individuals that dismissed harsh or abrasive behavior as “that is how that person is” and/or “they don’t mean anything by it” only furthers the divide. Nonetheless, the majority of those interviewed acknowledged that dismissive and disrespectful behavior occurs at times. Many believed it was not gender based but rather, an objection to views or unrealistic positions taken by various individuals. However, this behavior demonstrates a lack of respect for other positions.

While the perception can be highlighted that this may be a male/female issue, overall, on a larger scale, it would appear to be a failure to respect and value the opinions of various individuals. Therefore, regardless of gender, there needs to be certain guidelines put in place to ensure the respectful treatment of all individuals, particularly in light of the fact that the majority of these individuals are serving the Town in one or more capacity on a volunteer basis.

The investigation did reveal a few individuals that clearly expressed concerns about retaliation. While there were a few examples, there did not appear to be a pattern of behavior that would suggest an environment of retaliation.

Concern One: The brandishing of a ceremonial rifle during a video town training on the prevention of sexual harassment after a female participant inquired about examples of harassment. The participant and others participating felt threatened by the gun and took it as a sign not to raise issues. The response to this concern was to indicate that the gun for ceremonial purposes for an upcoming parade and that it would no longer be stored at the highway garage. The response failed to address the fact that there was a mandatory training occurring. There was no reason to “be moving the ceremonial gun” if the employees were paying attention and participating. The event should not have occurred. Additionally, the Town has a no firearms policy.

Concern Two: Occurred in 2011-2012. A planning board member questioned the recusal procedures for matters by raising same with the Ethics Board in December 2011. Thereafter, the individual was not reappointed to the planning board in 2012. As this incident occurred over ten (10) years ago, it is difficult, if not impossible, to address. Further, actions of ten (10) years ago would not serve as a basis for a retaliation claim today.<sup>2</sup> However, at this point it should be important to note that this individual was appointed to another important committee, which she chaired.

Concern Three: During Mr. Lindsey’s comments, he indicated that he had attempted to raise these issues in the Fall 2021 to the Town Board. The investigation confirmed that two separate email chains occurred between Mr. Lindsey and the Town Board (October 29, 2021, and November 28-29, 2021). The October email addressed training concerns. In response to the training issues raised in October 2021, the Town sent out an email to all Board and Committee Chairs addressing these concerns. It reminded all to be aware of the perception of harassment and bullying. As for the November email chain, Supervisor Bassin and Board Member Hundt on notice to all Board Members, responded to Mr. Lindsey’s email. These emails addressed specifically the concerns about the ceremonial gun, conduct during training as well as training suggestions provided by Mr. Lindsey. During this interaction, Mr. Lindsey raised issues of conduct and he was

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<sup>2</sup> In order to assert a claim for retaliation, a person must have an engaged in a protected activity, they suffer an adverse action by someone that was aware of that protected activity and such conduct occurs reasonably close in time. There were no concrete patterns of retaliation.

clearly attempting to identify a larger problem. The Town requested more information and detail so that it could be addressed. In response, Mr. Lindsey suggested discussing in the New Year, it then was particularized by Mr. Lindsey in his January 2022 presentation.

### **B. The Allegations of Mistreatment of Planning Board Applicant by Town Employee**

In support of claims of mistreatment of female members of the public, Mr. Lindsey read a portion of a letter from a Town Planning Board applicant that provided as follows:

*HERE IS AN EXCERPT FROM A RECENT LETTER I RECEIVED FROM AN APPLICANT TO THE PLANNING BOARD: I HAVE DELETED THE NAMES, BUT I HAVE SUPPLIED A COPY TO EACH BOARD MEMBER WITH THE PERMISSION OF THE AUTHOR. WHILE THIS APPLICANT DID GET HER APPROVAL, IT IS THE EXPERIENCE OF HOW SHE WAS TREATED THAT SHOULD CONCERN US ALL.*

*"LAST SPRING I WAS AT THE MERCY OF----- WHO DERAILED MY APPLICATION TO THE PLANNING BOARD FOR RENOVATION OF AN HISTORIC BARN ON MY PROPERTY. ----- GAVE ME BAD INFORMATION AND THEN PUBLICLY DENIED IT. OVERALL -----TREATED ME WITH DISRESPECT AND WASTED MY TIME...*

*"ALL OF THIS HAS BEEN DULY NOTED AND THE COMPLAINTS I SENT TO THE TOWN BOARD AND (CHAIR OF PLANNING BOARD) WERE NOT ACKNOWLEDGED BY ANYONE ON THE BOARD. THE CHAIR DID OFFER AN APOLOGY IN PERSON SOON THEREAFTER BUT REFUSED TO INCLUDE ME IN ANY KIND OF REPRIMAND OF \_\_\_\_\_, SO I NEVER LEARNED OF WHAT DID OR DID NOT HAPPEN AS A RESULT. I SUSPECT NOTHING DID."*

This portion of his comments resulted in the subject employee filing a complaint claiming the statement is inaccurate, but was also gender based.

In response to same, interviews of witnesses occurred, and audio recordings of the applicable Planning Board meetings were reviewed. The application that was referenced was submitted as new business on May 6, 2021. The applicant made her presentation to the planning board and questions were asked relative to the site plan. The board members did not have a copy of the site plan to review as the plans could not be scanned.

The audio reveals that the employee in question responded that they were unable to scan the large plan and needed a pdf copy. In response, the Chair advised that Town Hall is closed "due to COVID" and so the normal process of reviewing in Town Hall was not occurring. In response, the applicant indicated that "I must have misunderstood" and she apologized. However, the Board indicated it was not an issue, they would make arrangements to review the plans and would conduct a site visit. Based upon this course of action, the matter was held over to the next meeting. The next meeting of early June was adjourned due to technical difficulties with the internet, but the

matter was addressed at the adjourned date of June 14, 2021 and was passed. There was no indicated delay.

Contrary to the allegations contained in the complaint, there is no evidence of the application being derailed. Nor were there any raised voices during the meeting. It should be noted that the applicant sent an email the next day and again apologized for not following the proper procedure but does express being very upset over the delay. Although, the meeting on May 7<sup>th</sup> clearly identified it was not “derailed”. While it is acknowledged that the resident subsequently made a complaint to Town Hall, there is no indication that anyone conducted a review of the audio that unequivocally contradicts the allegations that the application was “derailed”.

While the applicant may have perceived “misinformation”, in light of the technical difficulties faced by many public boards during COVID, there is no suggestion of ill-intent or misconduct.

Accordingly, there is no finding of improper action on the part of the Town employee. Further, the inclusion of it in the Lindsey presentation is not supportive of allegations of gender-based actions.

### **C. Referencing “a court case” Costing the Town Significant Legal Fees**

During the January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting Mr. Lindsey referred to a current volunteer serving the Town has **“through past inappropriate misogynist comments which led to a court case costing the Town significant legal fees is still allowed to serve the Town in any capacity?”**

With regard to this allegation, there were two misstatements. There was no court case and there was only “one comment”. As such, there were two incorrect statements made by Mr. Lindsey. This resulted in the person referenced therein filing their own objections and complaint with the Town. The individual felt targeted.

The general underlying facts surrounding the allegations are as follows. In or about February 2020, the Town received an internal complaint from a female Town committee person objecting to the comment made by a male Town committee person. The male committee person was appearing before a board as a Town applicant; he was not a member of the committee. The comment was “wow, I wouldn’t want to be your husband” and was made in response to questioning of his application by the female committee member.

In light of the comment, the matter was processed in accordance with the Town’s anti-harassment policy. The Town’s outside labor counsel investigated the complaint. There was no court case.

The investigation was completed in late February 2020. The investigation determined that the singular comment did not rise to the level of creating a hostile work environment based upon gender under the law. However, it was clearly identified as inappropriate and could not be allowed to continue. The investigation revealed that there were concerns over communication among various committee members. Thus, the investigation recommended that the male member provide an apology and that all involved attend group training on sensitivity and communication. Although

recommended, the apology was apparently insufficient and the complainant failed to attend the post training. The result caused the matter to fester among all parties.

The current investigation revealed several important facts.

The parties involved both have acknowledged a better working relationship since that period. This appears to be a result of strong leadership on another committee allowing for the growth of respectful behavior. That being said, both were less than satisfied with the ultimate result of the investigation.

Since that time, those events have apparently served as the basis for much discussion by members of the public and the volunteers. Several individuals interviewed believed that the comment created a hostile work environment based on gender and were not pleased with the legal response. Others asserted it was used as political fodder during recent elections. Public perception of events is commonly a topic of discussion during elections. The Town cannot control this behavior. Rather, the Town obligation must be to investigate and address complaints in accordance with its policies.

#### **D. Proposed Suggestions for Change Moving Forward**

In light of Mr. Lindsey's suggestions, each person interviewed was allowed to weigh in, some of the following ideas and concepts are raised. Note that the below items, were comments raised and do not represent this report's recommendations. Rather, it outlines the various areas of concern and suggestion. Nonetheless, some of following comments and ideas, as well as information gathered during the investigation, helped shape the final Considerations and Recommendations identified below. Interviews suggested:

- Committees should have more meetings for better communication.
- Getting to know your committee members will be help understand their point of view.
- Committees should be more diverse.
- If you fail to attend meetings, you should be removed from the committee.
- Trainings should be in person.
- Anti-harassment training needs to be updated.
- Sensitivity training should be for all volunteers, not just Planning Board.
- More respect for different opinions.
- If the Town conducts an investigation and makes recommendations, the individuals involved should be required to follow the recommendations (i.e., training or apology).
- Volunteer appreciation day, hosted by the Town, which might actually serve as a good interactive event.
- Revise the Ethics Laws.
- Better communication between the Board and public.
- Town Board/Committee communications and dissemination of information should be sent to everyone on the Board/Committee, not just a few.
- All committee and board meetings should be video/audio taped.
- Stop responding and/or proceeding forward on complaints received from a Town resident and treating it as "gospel"; rather, look into things before responding.



- Public education on governmental processes so that everyone understands their respective legal obligations.
- Stop referencing things from years ago that many thought were resolved and look to moving forward.
- People should remember and follow the “Golden Rule”.
- Develop ground rules for committees.

### **Considerations and Recommendations for Change**

Based on the overall investigation and information received, it is clear there are validated concerns regarding the way in which women, volunteers, and others are treated by the Town, employees of the Town and other volunteers and that the need for some changes to be made/or considered. The following outlines considerations and recommendations for change as the Town moves forward to ensure an inclusive and positive environment for all that work and volunteer for the betterment of the Town of Ancram. It is recognized that these are mere considerations and require the Town Board to act.

1. Code of Conduct – It is recommended that a Code of Conduct be created to be utilized by all individuals of the public when attending a Town committee and/or Town Board meeting. This Code of Conduct should be developed by the Town in a way to address the following issues:
  - To eliminate profanity, harassing, derogatory or bullying comments by spectators.
  - Elimination of the potential for dismissive or disrespectful conduct while people are speaking to a board/committee.
  - Eliminate inappropriate comments and behavior from spectators while people are addressing the board and/or committee.
  - Establish clear guidelines regarding the duty of Board/Committee members to maintain confidentiality as part of their official duties.
  - Establish consistent and clear parameters and guidelines for consequences if the Code of Conduct is violated.
2. Public Comment – Individuals presenting to the Town Board and/or Town Committee should not be interrupted by any Town Board/Committee member or member of the public; however, to ensure that one individual does not unduly monopolize a given meeting, consideration should be given to limit the length of an individual comment period (i.e., 3, 5, or 10 minutes).
3. Public Comment – Consideration should be given to eliminate a “back and forth” dialog during Town Board meetings in response to Town comments. This seems to breed the potential for opportunities for “dismissive behavior”, or at a minimum the perception of dismissal. As such, the Town Board should consider rules and guidelines when addressing the Town Board. Potential areas for consideration might include:
  - Advising residents that they will be allowed to speak uninterrupted.
  - Limit a resident’s ability to comment only once per item to eliminate back and forth.
  - Remind all speaking that the Town has a Code of Conduct (that is if the Town were to establish same).

- Contemplate limiting public comment to only the items on the agenda, then have a period for new business.
  - Board members shall agree to thank the speaker and not engage in a back and forth or challenge of statement.
4. Public Comment – It is recognized that “back and forth” may be appropriate in other settings such as Planning Board and ZBA meetings; however, each such committee should contemplate establishing rules and guidelines of interaction to ensure:
    - That all members of such committee have an opportunity to question applicants and express their respective opinions in a respectful manner; and
    - That all applicants are treated fairly and equitably.
  5. Mission Statements for Committees – All Town Committees that are created that are not established as a result of law should have a specific mission and directive from the Town Board. To the extent that there are any existing Committees presently established without a specific mission, the Town Board should consider reviewing same and establishing the mission by resolution.
  6. Committee Compilation – The Town has been contemplating the creation of a Committee for Civil Behavior and Respect. If such committee is created it should contain a broad cross-section of Town residents, from different areas, backgrounds, and experiences, and consideration should be given to appoint individuals that do not already serve on one or more committees. Selecting the same individuals to one board after another limits the opportunity for new ideas and growth.
  7. Committee Compilation – Diversification of the people that are involved in the various committees in the Town should be attempted to provide for diversity in age, background and perspective.
  8. Committee Term Limits – Consideration and examination should be given to the potential for the establishment of term limits for the various Town committees, with a minimum of one-year hiatus after serving before being eligible to reapply or be reappointed to a particular committee. There is much disagreement on all sides if this will be beneficial. However, having someone serve on the same committee/board for four (4) decades does not breed the opportunity for change in most circumstances.
  9. Committee Service Limitations – Consideration and examination should be given to limiting the number of committees to which an individual can serve on at one time. Questions relative to potential conflicts of interest have been raised, as well as the potential for creating a sense of entitlement for non-elected individuals.
  10. Committee Independence – Town Board members should be mindful not to attempt to interfere or intercede in the actions with regard to legally established Boards under New York law, such as Planning, ZBA, Ethics Boards, and Board of Assessment Review.
  11. Committee Independence – Consideration should be given to establish a chain of command for addressing concerns with conduct of committee members. If there is a citizen complaint

received by the Town, or a concern is raised, it should be addressed with the Committee Chair not the individual members. This direct contact has the potential for disruption to the committee as well as the independence of committee members.

12. Training Attendance – Mandatory Town trainings should be required for all volunteer committee members. It is recommended that the Town Board, by resolution, establish guidelines and consequences for committee members that fail or refuse to attend a required training. Consideration should be given as to have removal from a committee as a penalty for repeated violations.
13. Training – It is recommended that training be conducted in person to the extent that COVID conditions permit.
14. Training – It is recommended that all employees sign in for the training.
15. Training – It is recommended that all employees sign an acknowledgement form. The Town should develop a form that provides, generally, that they attended, participated, understood it, and had all questions answered. This can be modified to the extent necessary for the trainings.
16. Training – In the event that trainings must be conducted remotely due consideration should be given to require employees to individually sign in for the training and groups should not be allowed to sign on as a group. This will eliminate the potential for disruption and distraction by the participants.
17. Training – Supervisors/Department Heads should be required to ensure that all employees/volunteers participate in training and disruptive and inattentive participants should face consequences for such behavior. Consideration should be given to the development of such guidelines. It is noted however, that Town employees have certain legal rights that will impact decisions on discipline and the Town must ensure compliance with same.
18. Training – Serious consideration should be given by the Town Board to require Town trainings beyond sexual harassment. There are various areas of further training that could be instrumental for positive growth in the Town. The following are potential topics for consideration of further training:
  - ethics;
  - sensitivity;
  - diversity and inclusion;
  - teamwork and collaboration;
  - effective communication.
19. Training – New committee members should be required to undergo Town sponsored training. The Town Board should consider establishing a required orientation that has training that addresses some of the following items:
  - Anti-harassment training

- Policy training on Ethics, or any other Town conduct policy that may be adopted
  - Training on meeting procedures for the particular committee/board
  - Legal training, to the extent applicable, regarding the laws concerning their particular committee/board (i.e., planning, zoning, etc.)
  - Orientation as to committee procedures and mission
20. Communication – Committees should be encouraged to have more meetings in which they can talk about and interact on ways for better communication. Limiting meetings, in part as a result of COVID, has unfortunately allowed the bigger issues in this Town to fester to a boiling point. Consideration should be given to adding workshops to meetings, so that this can occur, so long as it is done in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.
21. Policy Changes – The Town’s Employee Handbook should be updated with changes and suggestions in certain areas, bulleted as follows:
- Code of Conduct to be added (if adopted)
  - Consider revisions to include volunteers and committee members to the purpose and scope of handbook
22. Policy Changes – It is recommended that the Town Board review and consider if the Ethics Law should be expanded in its scope. The current Ethics Law presently limits the investigatory ability of the Board and its obligations. Consideration should be given as to the ability to investigate anonymous complaints.
23. Policy Changes – Anti-Harassment policy should be revised:
- To expand the mandatory reporting obligations to “elected and appointed Town Officials”.
  - Town Official should be defined to include Committee Chairpersons, so that even if their committee does not have the mechanism for reporting, they have an obligation under the Town’s policy.
  - The Town should consider whether there is a need to alter the “reporting chain” of command to determine if there are sufficient avenues for reporting.
  - Consideration should be given on how the Town would address the receipt of anonymous complaints.
  - The Town should consider whether there is a need to revise reporting standards on anonymous complaints to the Town Board.
24. Some of the issues that have been highlighted and raised during this investigation can be eliminated by consistent actions on the part of Committee Chairs as well as Town Board members.
25. Policy Enforcement – The Town must ensure that there is follow through on existing policies and consequences for violation of same. The ceremonial gun is a good example, considering the Town has a policy prohibiting firearms on premises. New policies must be enforced otherwise they have no impact.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, Mr. Lindsey's comments and letter read into the record at the January 20<sup>th</sup> Town Board meeting did accurately convey the feelings and sentiments of multiple females that provide services to the Town of Ancram. The feelings of these individuals are genuine and sincere. While the comments and letter contained information that was less than accurate, they have resulted in an exposure of concerns felt by a significant number of individuals that have dedicated true time and energy in Town government for its betterment.

Although it is clear that some individuals reasonably felt dismissed or treated disrespectfully, it also clear that the actions of many were not intending to be rude or disrespectful and are clearly a result of a lack of communication. Further, several of the issues at hand do not appear to be gender based but may be driven, intentionally or unintentionally, by political ideology.

Further, the investigation revealed an overwhelming theme that if a member of the community complains, regardless of what their complaint is about, that it is already given immediate credence regardless of either side. As a result, parties quickly are attempting to move to address same without having full knowledge of the facts before them when making decisions. Apologies for Town conduct without all the facts have occurred. This creates a situation of angst and anxiety among employees, committee/board members as well as members of the public. A more thoughtful and consistent approach should be utilized moving forward.

In conclusion, the Town Board of Ancram should be applauded for examining this issue and affording this exploration with no impingement on the investigation. While there was no finding of a violation of law or ethics, the investigation did reveal areas for potential improvement and consideration. These are set forth above.

EDK/mck