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Nearly four years ago I filed a complaint with the Ethics Board in what I believed was a clear-cut case of an advisory board member using his position for financial gain. I was naive at that time, thinking that our town's ethics law would assure a thorough, timely, and transparent investigation. Although the final report of the investigation found clear violations, it was the rules written into the ethics code itself which proved to be the major obstacle in this matter's resolution. And although I am pleased to see the Town Board finally taking action to revise this Law, I am disappointed that some of its flaws have not been addressed.

I had assumed early on that the filing of my complaint would trigger a series of events. My assumptions were wrong at nearly every critical turn. To start with, I was never informed of the Ethics Board's decision whether to open an investigation or not. I received no notice that the investigation had begun, nor when it had concluded. The Board never interviewed me for their investigation. When the subject of my complaint suddenly resigned, the Town Board heaped praise upon this person and not once mentioned that he had been the subject of a months-long conflict of interest investigation. And when a local newspaper reported a leak of the investigation from within the Ethics Board the Town Board was up in arms – not about the report's findings but, rather, about the release of its contents.

To this day, the Town Board has yet to acknowledge that this Ethics investigation occurred. An individual that files a complaint with our Ethics Board should have the right, at the very least, to have their complaint recognized, to be informed of the decision, and to see the process come to a resolution. The complainant might not agree with the Board's conclusions, but they deserve a response. None of this happened in this instance, and nothing in the Town Board's suggested amendments to our Ethics Code would prevent this from happening again.

I urge the Town Board to seriously consider the suggestions that I and others are making this evening. And though I appreciate the Board's attempt to improve our Ethics Law, the amendments that you have proposed do little to fix the weaknesses in our current law, namely the need for greater transparency, communication, and independence.