

# **Litchfield Historical Society**

## **Ethics Statement**

### **Mission**

**The Litchfield Historical Society illuminates the rich and nationally-significant history of Litchfield, enabling each of us to construct meaning from the past for the present and future.**

### **Vision**

**The Litchfield Historical Society brings people together to discover experience and share the many diverse stories that have made our community a distinctive place, now and over time. We value the fact that every individual adds something to the story of Litchfield and recognize that each of those stories is important to our collective understanding of our community.**

### **INTRODUCTION**

All persons associated with the Society including staff, board of trustees and volunteers are entitled to engage in the full range of personal and professional activities of their choice, limited by the restraints imposed in this ethics statement and the following principles:

- They shall fully and conscientiously fulfill the duties of their position in the organization.
- They shall avoid conflicts of interest.
- They shall not misuse the Society's name, reputation, property, or services, nor shall they compromise its goodwill in the community.

### **GOVERNANCE**

The Board of Trustees of the Litchfield Historical Society serves the public interest as it relates to the Society and considers itself accountable to the public as well as to the institution. The board acts as the ultimate legal entity for the Society, and stands responsible for the formulation and maintenance of its general policies, standards, condition, and operational continuity.

The Board of Trustees protects and enhances the Society's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources. It ensures that all these resources support the museum's mission, respond to the pluralism of society, and respect the diversity of the natural and cultural world.

Each trustee must devote time and attention to the affairs of the institution and ensure that the Society and the Board of Trustees act in accordance with the basic documents and with applicable state and federal laws. In establishing policies or authorizing or permitting activities, trustees must ensure that no policies or activities jeopardize the basic nonprofit status of the Society or reflect unfavorably upon it as an institution devoted to public service.

Trustees shall not attempt to act in their individual capacities. All actions should be taken as a board, committee or task force, or otherwise conform to the bylaws or applicable resolutions. A trustee must work for the institution as a whole, and not act solely as an advocate for particular activities of theirs.

Trustees shall maintain in confidence information learned during the course of their museum activities when the information concerns the administration or activities of the Society and is not generally available to the public. This principle does not preclude the public disclosure of information that is properly in the public domain, or information that should be released in fulfilling the institution's accountability to the public.

The Board of Trustees holds the ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the Litchfield Historical Society and for the protection and nurturing of its various assets: the collection and related documentation, the plant, financial assets and the staff. It is obliged to develop and define the purposes and related policies of the institution, and to ensure that all of the organization's assets are properly and effectively used for public purposes. The board shall provide adequate financial protection for all museum officials including themselves, staff and volunteers so that no one will incur inequitable financial sacrifice or legal liabilities arising from the performance of duties for the Society.

The board has an obligation to provide the proper environment for the physical security and preservation of the collections, and to monitor and develop the financial structure of the museum so that it continues to exist as an institution of vitality and quality.

In carrying out its duty to the collections, the board shall continue to examine and update the Society's policies regarding collections, accessioning and deaccessioning of objects and loans. The board shall oversee and monitor compliance with these policies by the executive director and the staff. The board shall ensure that the trustees, the executive director and the staff understand and respect the restrictions, conditions, and all other circumstances associated with accessions or deaccessions, loans or gifts.

#### *The Trustee-Executive Director Relationship*

A critical responsibility of the Board of Trustees derives from its relationship to the executive director, the institution's chief executive. The selection of that executive and the continuing surveillance of his or her activities are primarily board responsibilities and must be thoroughly and thoughtfully fulfilled.

Trustees have an obligation to define the rights, powers and duties of the executive director. They should work with the executive director, who is their chief executive officer, in all administrative matters, and deal with him or her openly and with candor.

The trustees must act as a full board in appointing or dismissing an executive director and the board must reflect the primacy of the institutions goals over all personal or interpersonal considerations. The executive director should attend all board meetings and important committee meetings, except executive sessions concerning him or her.

The executive director has an obligation to bring before the board any matters involving policy questions not already determined and to keep them informed on a timely basis about all other significant or substantial matters, or intended actions affecting the institution.

The executive director must carry out the policies established by the trustees, and adhere to the budget approved by the board. Whenever it is necessary to deviate from established policies or to

alter or exceed budget guidelines, the executive director should notify the board in advance and request appropriate approval.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

### *Board of Trustees*

Individual trustees who are experience and knowledgeable in various fields of endeavor related to the Litchfield Historical Society activities can be of great assistance to the organization, but conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts may arise because of these interests or activities. Each trustee must endeavor to conduct all of his activities, including those relating to persons closely associated with him or her and to business or other organizations, in a way that no conflict will arise between the other interests and the policies, operations, or interests of the Society. The appearance of such conflicts also should be avoided. The reputation of the Society can be damaged should a trustee continue an inappropriate activity concurrent with his or her service in a position of institutional and public trust.

Every Society trustee shall file with the board a statement disclosing his or her personal, business or organizational interests and affiliations and those of persons close to him or her which could be construed as being museum related. Such a statement should include positions as an officer or director as well as relationships to other organizations, if the purposes or programs are in any manner related to or impinge upon the purposes, programs or activities of the Society. Such statements should be made available to the board prior to the trustee's election to that body. As an aid to preparing such statements, trustees will be provided relevant data on the Society's operations. Disclosure statements should be updated periodically or whenever significant changes occur

If there is possible conflict or the appearance of conflict between the interests of the museum and an outside or personal interest of a trustee or that of a person close to him or her, the outside interests of the trustee should be made a matter of record. In those cases where a trustee is present when a vote is taken in connection with such a question, he or she should abstain. In some circumstances the interested trustee should avoid discussing any planned actions, formally or informally, from which he or she might appear to benefit. Sometimes neither disclosure nor abstention is sufficient, and the only appropriate solution is resignation.

A trustee should not take advantage of information he or she receives during his or her service to the institution if a trustee's personal use of such information could be financially detrimental to the Society. Any such action that might impair the reputation of the Society also must be avoided. When a trustee obtains information that could benefit him or her personally he or she should refrain from acting upon it until all issues have been reviewed by an appropriate representative of the Board of Trustees.

Trustees serve the Society and its public. They shall not attempt to derive any personal material advantages from their connection to the institution. Trustees shall use museum property only for official purposes, and make no personal use of the museum's collection, property or services in a manner not available in a comparable manner to member of the general public. While loans of objects by trustees can be of great benefit to the museum, it should be recognized that exhibition can enhance the value of the exhibited object. The display of objects owned or created by the

trustees or staff in which the trustees or any person close to them have any interests must receive prior approval of the board.

A visible area of self-interest at the expense of the institution, and of personal use of privileged information, arises when a trustee, a member of his or her family or a close associate personally collects objects of a type collected by the Society. The Board of Trustees will make every effort to be sure that no trustee competes with the museum for objects or takes personal advantage of information available to him because of his board membership. Furthermore, should any conflict develop between the needs of the individual and the Society, those of the Societies will prevail.

No trustee, person close to him, or individual who might act for him or her may acquire objects from the collections of the museum

### *Volunteers*

Individual volunteers who are experience and knowledgeable in various fields of endeavor related to the Litchfield Historical Society activities can be of great assistance to the organization, but conflicts of interest or the appearance of such conflicts may arise because of these interests or activities.

Each volunteer must endeavor to conduct all of his activities, including those relating to persons closely associated with him or her and to business or other organizations, in a way that no conflict will arise between the other interests and the policies, operations, or interests of the Society.

Volunteer service should be undertaken for the benefit of the Litchfield Historical Society and not for personal gain, other than the intrinsic reward that comes from such participation.

Volunteers who have access to collections, research, staff activities, and sensitive or propriety information (such as donor and member information) must respect the confidentiality of their positions, as well as the significance and integrity of the collections.

Volunteers must be loyal to the mission of the LHS and to the public which they serve.

Volunteers:

- Understand and support the purpose, structure and policies of the Museum
- Offers the use of his or her special skills and experience
- Conducts himself or herself in accordance with the standards of conduct and ethics of the organization
- Performs assigned responsibilities willingly and courteously to the best of his or her ability
- Accepts the guidance of his or her supervisor
- Complies with the time and dress requirements of the Museum
- Respects the confidentiality of sensitive or proprietary information
- Provides timely notification to the supervisor of absence or termination
- Serves as a goodwill ambassador for the Museum in the community

### *Employee*

Loyalty to the Litchfield Historical Society must be in accordance with fundamental ethical principles and the employee's professional obligations as a whole. While every staff member is entitled to personal and professional independence consistent with professional and staff responsibilities, employees must be aware that in the eyes of the public, no private business or professional interest of an employee can be entirely divorced from the interests of the Society as a whole.

At no time should any staff member knowingly misrepresent the mission, objectives, policies, programs, proceedings or motives of the Litchfield Historical Society

## COLLECTIONS

### Acquisition and Disposal of Collections

In the delicate area of acquisition and disposal of historical Society materials, the institution must weigh carefully the interests of the public for which it holds the collection in trust, the donor's intent in the broadest sense, the interests of the scholarly and the cultural community, and the institutions financial well-being.

Stewardship of collections entails the highest public trust and carries with it the presumption of rightful ownership, permanence, care, documentation and accessibility.

The Litchfield Historical Society must ensure that collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities and are protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for and preserved. Collections in the Society's custody must be accounted for and documented with access to them and related information permitted and regulated. The Litchfield Historical Society must ensure that acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and which conforms to its mission and public trust responsibilities. The disposal of collections material must be solely for the advancement of the Society's mission through the enhancement of collections. The Litchfield Historical Society must also ensure that collections related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.

Acquisition and disposal of any artifact shall be handled according to the procedures outlined in the Collections Policy. These procedures include placing deaccessioned items by gift, sale or exchange with another institution whenever possible. Funds realized through deaccessioning activities shall be reserved for adding materials to the collection or for direct care of the collections.

### Personal Collecting

At the time of employment, employees must provide the Litchfield Historical Society with a list of items in their personal collection which fall within the collecting standards of the institution. The list shall be kept in the employee's personnel file.

Employees must not compete with the Litchfield Historical Society in collecting; nor may employees take advantage of privileged information obtained as a result of his/her position or permit others to make use of information otherwise unavailable to the public for furthering personal interest or gain.

If an employee acquires an object which falls within the collecting areas of the institution, the employee must disclose the purchase to the Executive Director. If interest is expressed on behalf of the institution, the employee must disclose the purchase price within 30 days and provide a description of the object to the chair of the collections committee. The Litchfield Historical Society has the right to acquire the object (at the price paid by the employee) for a six month period. The employee must be notified within 60 days if the institution intends to acquire the object. This policy excludes the purchase of books and materials relating to local history which are readily available on the open market.

A visible area of self-interest at the expense of the institution, and of personal use of privileged information, arises when a trustee, a member of his or her family or a close associate personally collects objects of a type collected by the Society. The Board of Trustees will make every effort to be sure that no trustee competes with the museum for objects or takes personal advantage of information available to him because of his board membership. Furthermore, should any conflict develop between the needs of the individual and the Society, those of the Society will prevail.

Employees, board members, and their immediate family may not purchase objects deaccessioned from the institution's collections or trade objects from their personal collection for objects from the museum collection.

Employees and board members may not store personal collections on museum property or cause research on personal collections to be done on museum time.

In order to avoid the appearance or potential of conflict of interest, employees of the Litchfield Historical Society may not purchase or acquire excess equipment inventory from the institution

#### Dealing

Employees may not deal (buy and sell objects for profit on a regular basis) in historical artifacts, books or papers, act on behalf of a dealer, accept outside employment from a dealer or retain interest in a dealership.

#### Appraisals

No museum employee shall perform appraisals. The museum shall maintain a list of appraisers, but shall not provide an endorsement

#### Ownership of Scholarly Material.

Staff members are encourage to write and publish both for the Society and on their own.

Publications, lectures, manuscripts etc., and all other materials prepared by an employee within the scope of his/her employment at the Litchfield Historical Society and/or any scholarly works produced by an employee as a result of financial support from the Litchfield Historical Society are the sole property of the Society except as authorized in writing by the executive director.

Employees must also first confer with the executive director before agreeing to author, as a private individual, any publications that substantially draw upon materials prepared in the scope of employment with the Litchfield Historical Society.

## Gifts

Employees of the Litchfield Historical Society must avoid the appearance of unethical or compromising practice in relationship with suppliers, contractors and other businesses.

The employees of the Litchfield Historical Society are prohibited from soliciting or accepting money, loans, credits, discounts, favors, entertainment, meals, lodging and trips from present or potential suppliers and businesses, which might influence negotiations and purchasing decisions.

These rules also apply for family or household of employees of the Litchfield Historical Society, unless the recipients of the gifts have a relationship with the donor outside of the Litchfield Historical Society, and that the acceptance of the gifts will not in any way create a conflict between the employee's personal interests and the interests of the Society.

## Outside Employment

Due to the potential for conflicts of interest, or the appearance of conflicts of interest, any employee engaged in or considering seeking outside employment for pay, must disclose such employment in writing to the executive director, who will determine if the outside employment or proposed activity constitutes a conflict of interest.

All employment outside the Litchfield Historical Society that is deemed not to be in conflict with the interests of the Litchfield Historical Society shall be carried out on the employee's personal, non-duty time, and the employee shall not make use of the facilities, equipment, or services of the Litchfield Historical Society. Outside employment, whatever its nature, must not impair the ability of the employee to execute his/her duties and responsibilities at the Litchfield Historical Society in an appropriate and professional manner.

## PROGRAMS OF THE LITCHFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

### Programs

The Litchfield Historical Society serves the public by advancing an understanding and appreciation of our shared cultural heritage. Exhibitions, scholarship, publications, and educational programs, public events and other activities must further advance the institutions mission and be responsive to the concerns, interests and needs of Litchfield area residents.

The Litchfield Historical Society is committed to insuring that:

- Programs support its mission and remain responsive to the interests of and concerns of its members and area residents
- Programs are intellectually responsible, founded on scholarship, and consistent with current knowledge.
- Programs are accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with our mission and resources.
- Programs respect cultural diversity of the region, pluralistic values, traditions and concerns.

- Revenue-producing activities and those that involve relationships with outside organizations are compatible with the mission of the Litchfield Historical Society and support its public trust activities.
- Programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gains.

### Political Activities

The Litchfield Historical Society Code of Ethics recognizes that employees have the same personal interests in the decisions and policies of government as do other citizens and employees retain these rights as individuals to interests of a personal, political or economic nature. However, because the institution receives state and federal funding, employees must be careful to keep any such activities separate from work and kept on a strictly individual basis.

Listed below are some of the ground rules for permissible political activities provided they are done as an individual and not on behalf of the Litchfield Historical Society.

- Making voluntary contributions for political reasons.
- Expressing opinions as an individual privately and publicly on political subjects and candidates.
- Joining a political party and participating in party affairs.
- Soliciting votes in support of, or in opposition to, a candidate provided it is not during working hours and that it is not done on Litchfield Historical Society property.

Listed below are examples of activities which are not permissible:

- Using Litchfield Historical Society property, materials, supplies or equipment in connection with partisan political activity
- While on official duty engaging in any form of political activity as an individual and not on behalf of the Litchfield Historical Society

The above lists of permissible and non-permissible activities are only intended to show examples and serve as a guideline for employees who wish to be active in political causes. It is by no means inclusive, nor is it intended to be. Employees are encouraged to talk with their supervisors about any activities which may be in question.

### Public Expression of Personal Opinions

Litchfield Historical Society employees may, at times, feel inclined to express opinions to people outside the Litchfield Historical Society about proposals, legislation, or other issues. Occasionally these opinions may be expressed on behalf of other organizations to which the employee belongs. The following guidelines should be followed:

- It should be clearly expressed that the opinions stated are independent or personal in nature and do not necessarily represent the position or policy of the Litchfield Historical Society.
- If the opinions are in writing, they should not be on Litchfield Historical Society letterhead.
- Preparation of the statement must be on the employees own time, equipment and materials.
- The operations of the Litchfield Historical Society should not be negatively affected.

Discretion and the utmost attention to professional ethics should govern these activities.

Signature

---

I have read the Ethics Statement of the Litchfield Historical Society in its entirety and hereby affirm that I understand its contents

Print name

---

## TRUSTEES DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Litchfield Historical Society

In accordance with the Litchfield Historical Society ethics statement adopted July 2017 I hereby file a statement disclosing my personal, business and organizational interests and affiliations which could be construed as being museum related. I have listed my positions as an officer or director and my relationships to other organizations where the purposes or programs relate to or impinge upon the purposes, programs, or activities of the Society as set out in the Litchfield Historical Society trustee ethics statement. I understand that I am responsible for updating this statement whenever significant changes occur.