

# **Norvell Township Ethics Policy Violation Complaint**

Submitted by

**Matt Dame**

01/10/2024

# Norvell Township Ethics Policy Violation Complaint

Since there is no official form available to the public online for filing a Norvell Township Ethics Policy Violation Complaint (EPVC) of an elected official or employee of Norvell Township, I declare this document as my 'Norvell Township Ethics Policy Violation Complaint' (EPVC) against Deputy Clerk Garnet Francis. The following documentation will describe the Norvell Township Ethics Policy violations committed by Deputy Clerk Francis.

Norvell Township Ethics Policy Violation Complaint filed by Matt Dame.

Norvell Township Ethics Policy Violation Complaint filed against: Deputy Clerk Garnet Francis for Unethical Conduct.

Complaint Submitted On this Date: January 10, 2024

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Matt Dame

In a Letter to the Editor (LTE) written by Deputy Clerk Garnet Francis, and published in The Exponent Newspaper on August 22, 2023, a number of unfounded assertions and falsehoods were claimed against former Norvell Township Trustee, Matt Dame. Matt Dame resigned as Trustee on 8/9/23.

The INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE of the NTEP states:

Township of Norvell  
County of Jackson, State of Michigan  
Norvell Township Ethics Policy

INTRODUCTION: Public Office is a public trust. Any democracy requires public confidence in the integrity of the government. Persons in public service must recognize that a moral commitment to do the right thing is necessary. Characteristics like honesty, loyalty, fairness, promise keeping, accountability, respect for others and integrity do not depend on one's situation. Such characteristics are expected by and of the Township Board of Trustees, employees and appointees at all times.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to provide practical guidelines for ethical decision-making and to encourage ethical behavior from township representatives responsible to the citizens of Norvell Township. The Norvell Township Code of Ethics serves to emphasize the public has recourse through local ordinances, municipal, State and Federal laws for unethical actions of all township representatives whether they are appointed, elected, employed full or part-time. The decisions and actions of all township representatives (appointed, elected, full, or part-time) should be in the best interest of the township and be free from the influence of outside or conflicting interests. This policy is to encourage representatives to act in the best interest of Norvell Township and the citizens of Norvell Township and to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

## **Deputy Clerk Francis Violation #1**

Deputy Clerk Francis LTE Quote: As a resident of and currently the Deputy Clerk in Norvell Township, I am appalled by the article regarding Mr. Matt Dame's resignation in The Exponent's August 15, 2023, edition. (See Exhibit A, G. Francis LTE 8/22/23)

### **VIOLATION: Section II – Standards of Ethical Conduct**

Deputy Clerk Francis used her township title in the LTE. Deputy Clerk Francis did not provide a disclaimer that the opinions she expressed were solely her own, and not that of the Clerk's Office, and/or the Norvell Township Board. She used her official capacity in this LTE without a disclaimer and thus creates an impression that the Board and Clerk's Office supported the LTE and the falsehoods within.

#### **Section II – Standards of Ethical Conduct (NTEP Excerpt)**

B. A public officer, contractor, employee or volunteer shall not represent his or her personal opinion as that of the township.

## **Deputy Clerk Francis Violation #2**

Deputy Clerk Francis LTE Quote: "There were many times he voted against anything that would have helped the board on the proposal to improve several township roads and held a private meeting to encourage residents to come to board meetings to oppose the road repairs." (See Exhibit B, G. Francis LTE 8/22/23)

There was no private meeting regarding road repair. The completely legal 'Informational Forum' Trustee Dame conducted was promoted publicly in The Exponent. (See Exhibit B, Dame LTE 2/21/23)

At this completely legal 'Information Forum', there was encouragement to the participants to voice their opinion, whether they were FOR board actions or AGAINST board actions. Deputy Clerk Francis would have known this had she attended the public meeting, instead of making unfounded accusations. Administrative Assistant Corwin was in attendance, and she recorded the Forum with former Trustee Dame's blessing. (See Exhibit B, Dame LTE 2/21/23)

### **VIOLATION: NTEP INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE**

Stating falsehoods in a local newspaper, as Deputy Clerk Francis did in her capacity as Deputy Clerk, violated the NTEP by making false statement, thus desecrating the public trust, public confidence and integrity of Norvell Township government. Plainly stated, lying is dishonest and unethical conduct.

### **Deputy Clerk Francis Violation #3**

Deputy Clerk Francis Quote: This (informational forum) was a violation of the township board's ethics policy (a policy he voted against). (See Exhibit A, G. Francis LTE 8/22/23)

#### **VIOLATION: NTEP INTRODUCTION and PURPOSE**

The assertion that an Informational Forum held by an elected official violates the Ethics Policy is blatantly untrue. The fact that Deputy Clerk Garnet Francis would even make this statement is alarming. This uninformed statement was a direct attack on my integrity.

Stating falsehoods in a local newspaper, as Deputy Clerk Francis did in her capacity of Deputy Clerk, violated the NTEP by making false statement, thus desecrating the public trust, public confidence and integrity of Norvell Township government. Plainly stated, lying is dishonest and unethical conduct.

### **Deputy Clerk Francis Violation #4**

VIOLATION: Section V, Item (3) Impeding Township efficiency;

Wasting taxpayer resourced by writing a Letter to the Editor on company time is not efficient and violates the NTEP, Section V, item (3). As shown in the documentation in Exhibit C, Deputy Clerk Francis wrote the LTE on Norvell Township time, when she should be serving the good people of Norvell Township in her capacity of Deputy Clerk.

#### **Section V – Intention of the Ethics Policy**

(3) Impeding Township efficiency;

#### **CONCLUSION AND REQUEST**

Deputy Clerk Garnet Francis needs to be investigated for clear ethics policy violations perpetrated AND should make a public apology to Matt Dame in the same periodical where she committed the outlined violations, The Exponent. As the victim of the NTEP violations, and considering there isn't a 'due process (clause) afforded the public officer through the Township code' outlined in the NTEP as stated in Section IV, I would like to be informed of what the process for 'Due Process' is AND the disciplinary outcome for the violations perpetrated by Deputy Clerk Francis as outlined in this complaint.

**PAGE 4 • THE EXPONENT • TUESDAY, AUGUST 22, 2023**

## **Letters to the editor**

### **Coverage unfair**

**Dear editor,**

As a resident of and currently Deputy Clerk in Norvell Township, I am appalled by the article regarding Mr. Matt Dame's resignation in The Exponent's August 15, 2023, edition. On the front page of the newspaper, in large bold headlines, it states, "Embattled Trustee Resigns" and then a quote by Mr. Dame, stating he had been slandered and libeled. Did the author of the article bother to fact-check that accusation?

The entire article is slanted towards Mr. Dames' accusations regarding his "struggles" and poor treatment by the current board. If I had the time or space in this letter, I would love to tell the other side of the story. There were many times he voted against anything that would have helped this board bring Norvell Township into the 21st century. One example I recall, was when he voted against and tried to obstruct the board on the proposal to improve several township roads, and he held a private meeting to encourage residents to come to board meetings to oppose the road repairs. This was in violation of the township board's ethics policy (a policy he voted against). This is just one of the many township improvements he voted against and fought against.

Obviously, the editor and writer of the article (Mr. John Hummer) did not feel the need to fact-check any of the comments or statements Mr. Dame made. So much for truth and honesty in reporting. I feel our small local newspaper has gone in the same direction as the national media - no news, just sensationalism.

This paper claims to be "Open to All, Controlled by None", but does not bother to find out "the rest of the story."

**Garnet Francis  
Norvell Township**

## Letters

### What is irresponsible? Dame replies to critics

Dear editor,

There's a saying that came out of the Air Force during World War 2, "The flak gets heavy when you're over the target."

I must respond to the baseless attacks I received in the letter to the editor section of the February 7, 2023, Exponent, but before I do, it's important that you know the Norvell Township Board might be addressing the 300 Mill building project at the March 8, 2023, board meeting. If you have an opinion on this project, it's important that you attend this meeting.

I am holding an 'informational forum' on Monday, February 27, 2023, at 6 p.m. at the Brooklyn Sportsman's Club. This is not a board event. Please visit [www.VoteMattDame.com](http://www.VoteMattDame.com) to register and to take surveys regarding road improvements and the proposed building project.

Clerk Oswald said in his letter to the editor, "To state a cost for the project before bids are received is irresponsible." Yet in his own handout at the Mill Road Open House, it stated that renovation costs to the current township hall would cost \$1.3 million, and there are no plans, bids, or data to support that claim. By his own standards, he is being irresponsible. And the handout is posted online.

Trustee Haystead stated, "In my opinion, throwing fictitious

numbers out in the media is an irresponsible act as an elected public official." Fictitious numbers?

The number I quoted came directly from architect Jeannette Woodard at the November 16, 2022, board meeting. She estimates the cost of the new 2,000 sq. ft. addition at \$300 per sq. ft. to be \$600,000. She estimates the renovation of the existing 2,000 sq. ft. building at an ADDITIONAL \$200,000 to \$300,000. Go to [VoteMattDame.com](http://VoteMattDame.com) and hear for yourself and to take my survey. Neither Clerk Oswald nor Trustee Haystead called Ms. Woodard irresponsible for stating those figures publicly.

Trustee Haystead continued, "The board has NOT had any secret meetings..." yet the first question on the questionnaire provided at the 300 Mill Road open house is, "What do you think the township should do with the current township hall (106 E. Commercial St.) WHEN WE MOVE to 300 Mill Road?" WHEN WE MOVE? It appears as though someone already made a decision, and it wasn't at a board meeting.

Regarding the repair of primary roads, why have Supervisor Sutherland, Clerk Oswald, and Trustee Haystead NEVER mentioned in their submissions to the Exponent that by state law, townships do not have to pay for this repair? Isn't that too impor-

tant to be overlooked?

Trustee Haystead stated, "Did you know that roads are the #1 item cited in the recently conducted master plan survey that Norvell residents want something done about?" What he failed to mention is that survey respondents were never told that townships do not have to pay for primary roads. Additionally, the survey results mentioned fixing some 49 roads in total, not just Horning, Fay Lake, Norvell, and Antcliff. When will those other 45 roads get fixed? Ask the other board members and see how they respond.

Regarding road repair, Master Plan survey respondents ranked Sharon Valley Road #1 and it has already been scheduled to be repaired in 2023 without Norvell Township taxpayers paying a dime for it. The Master Plan survey also showed that more people wanted Hardcastle Road fixed than Fay Lake and Horning. So, when is Hardcastle, and our 'roads in general' going to get fixed, and who is going to pay for it? Master Plan road survey results can be found at [VoteMattDame.com](http://VoteMattDame.com).

The opinions expressed in this letter to the editor and at the forum are mine and not that of the Norvell Township Board.

**Matt Dame  
Norvell**

**Exhibit C**

'letter to the editor.docx' document properties as sent to The Exponent on 8/23/2023 from a non-governmental email address [garnet.francis@yahoo.com](mailto:garnet.francis@yahoo.com) during Norvell Township work hours.


Properties ▾

|                    |              |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Size               | 13.3KB       |
| Pages              | 1            |
| Words              | 290          |
| Total Editing Time | 43 Minutes   |
| Title              | Add a title  |
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| Comments           | Add comments |

Related Dates

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| Last Modified | 8/18/2023 9:16 AM |
| Created       | 8/18/2023 8:31 AM |
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