

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**FINDINGS IN THE COMPLAINTS OF
HARRISON UNITED AGAINST MOVING HARRISON FORWARD**

Tarrytown, NY (October 23, 2021) - The Westchester County Fair Campaign Practices Committee met via Zoom on October 21, 2021 to hear the complaints of Harrison United and its respective candidates Richard Dionisio, candidate for Town/Village of Harrison Supervisor/Mayor; Elizabeth Brown, candidate for Town/Village of Harrison Councilwoman/Trustee; and Gina Evangelista, candidate for Town/Village of Harrison Councilwoman/Trustee against Frank Gordon, candidate for Town/Village of Harrison Supervisor/Mayor; Rachel Berkey, candidate for Town/Village of Harrison Councilwoman/Trustee; and Adam Weiner, candidate for Town/Village of Harrison Councilman/Trustee; and Moving Harrison Forward, a multicandidate committee. The Harrison United slate was represented by Jim Castro-Blanco. Mr. Gordon attended on his own behalf.

COMPLAINT 1: Harrison United complains that Moving Harrison Forward has misled voters by stating in its website that “No one will receive special preferences or privileges, least of all elected officials. We will reverse the Mayor’s self-awarded \$30,000 pay raise.” Harrison United claims that this is an “unsubstantiated and baseless, and legally impossible assertion” since no elected official in Harrison can self-award a pay raise to him/herself.

FINDING: UNFAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICE

The statement on Moving Harrison Forward’s website that the mayor’s pay raise was “self-awarded” is misleading since the pay raise was included in Harrison’s budget and the town budget was approved by the Town Board.

The statement on the website violates the following FCPC Principle: “The candidate will not use or condone any campaign material or advertisement that misstates, misrepresents or distorts material fact or any communication that misleads the public.”

COMPLAINT 2: Harrison United complains that Moving Harrison Forward misled voters and is responsible for misinformation and defamatory statements made in an email sent by Lauren Leader using the “movingharrisonforward” domain name. The email alleges that “Harrison has been run for too long by cronies – people who put self interest and self dealing ahead of the common good.” Harrison United claims this allegation is false and not specific or supported.

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FINDING: NO FINDING

The email was sent in January, 2021 in preparation for the election season. It was not sent on behalf of any particular candidate because the slate of candidates had not yet been determined. In addition, the Committee was not informed to whom the email was sent.

COMPLAINT 3: Harrison United complains that Moving Harrison Forward has misled voters by stating on its website that, “We plan to go from last to first in pursuing sustainability goals such as the State’s Clean Energy Community and Climate Smart Community initiatives.” Harrison United states that the assertion that Harrison is “last” in pursuing sustainability goals is factually incorrect and unprovable.

FINDING: FAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICE

The Committee finds the statements on the Moving Harrison Forward website to be normal political discourse. The website states: “Our community is lagging in efforts to combat climate change. We plan to go from last to first in pursuing sustainability goals, such as the State’s Clean Energy Community and Climate Smart Community initiatives.” The metrics on the NYS Clean Energy Community (CEC) and Climate Smart Community (CSC) websites show that Harrison has zero CEC points and does not have a CSC certification. Based on these metrics, Harrison could be considered tied for last with other towns and the Committee finds that the statement on the website falls within the bounds of normal political discourse.

COMPLAINT 4: Harrison United complains that Moving Harrison Forward has misled voters by stating the following in its press release regarding the Findings of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee: “Nonpartisan Committee Rules Baseless Attacks by Harrison United Against Moving Harrison Forward Unfair.” Harrison United states that the use of the word “baseless” is a misrepresentation of the Committee’s Findings, since the Committee did not use the word “baseless.” Harrison United states that the Committee “correctly cited to the lack of examples in the statements and made no finding as to the truthfulness of the statements nor was a finding made regarding whether the statements had any basis in fact.”

FINDING: UNFAIR CAMPAIGN PRACTICE

The use of the word “baseless” in the press release for a previous Filing is misleading and misrepresents the Fair Campaign Practices Committee Findings. The Committee’s previous Findings had addressed the lack of supporting material for assertions made; the Findings did not address whether the statements were accurate.

Committee Members: Susan P. Guma, [Chair], Jennifer Mebes Flagg [Coordinator], Elizabeth Bermel, Gisele Castro, Victor J. Goldberg, LaRuth Gray, Kyle-Beth Hilfer, Lee Kinnally, Robert C. Kirkwood, Carole Princer Levy, Don Marra, Paul Bennett Marrow, Joy Rosenzweig, Susan Schwarz, John Stern, Evelyn M. Stock Party representatives (ex officio): Republican Party, Democratic Party, Working Families Party, Independence Party, Green Party

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The purpose of the Westchester County Fair Campaign Practices Committee is to help set an acceptable standard for political discussion by offering a forum for identifying unfair campaign practices and promoting a climate in which candidates conduct honest and fair campaigns. The Committee encourages candidates to conduct campaigns openly and fairly, to focus on issues and qualifications, to refrain from dishonest and defamatory attacks, and to avoid the use of campaign materials that distort the facts.

The Committee accepts written complaints from candidates about alleged unfair campaign practices. The Committee may then hold hearings to determine whether the action complained about is indeed unfair or whether it falls within acceptable political discourse. Among other things that the Committee will consider to be an unfair campaign practice is a misstatement of a material fact or any communication that misleads the public.

The Committee has no power to compel anyone or any group to stop doing what it has found to be unfair, nor does it have the authority or power to enforce election or other laws.

If the Committee acts on a complaint, it will release its findings to inform the public. The Committee may choose not to consider a complaint; in that case, a hearing is not held and the parties to the complaint are notified.

Statement of Principles of the Committee, as stated in its Manual, is available at www.faircampaignpractices.org. The Westchester County Fair Campaign Practices Committee believes that candidates should conduct their campaigns in accordance with the following principles:

- The candidate will conduct a campaign for public office openly and fairly, focusing on issues and qualifications.
- The candidate will not use or condone any campaign material or advertisement that misstates, misrepresents or distorts material fact or any communication that misleads the public.
- The candidate will neither engage in nor be involved with false or misleading attacks upon the character of an opponent, nor in invasions of privacy unrelated to fitness for office.
- The candidate will not participate in or condone any appeal to prejudice.
- The candidate will clearly identify by name the funding source of all advertisements and campaign literature published and distributed.
- The candidate will not abuse the Westchester County Fair Campaign Practices Committee process in order to obtain political advantage. This includes, but is not limited to announcing that he/she has filed a complaint, or quoting from the Committee's Findings

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unless the individual Finding cited is quoted in its entirety. The Committee considers selective quotation or misrepresentation of its Findings to be an unfair campaign practice.

- The candidate will publicly repudiate materials or actions made on behalf of their candidacy that violate this Statement of Principles.