Mandated ethics training continues for sixth straight year in Suffolk County

Suffolk County’s Board of Ethics recently held a meeting on October 3 to discuss its most recent mandated training session for elected officials and those appointed to their positions by elected officials.

The Board of Ethics has been holding its training sessions for six straight years now, following its implementation in 2013.

“This law came into play in 2012 so this board started administering training in 2013, so all of the County elected officials since 2013 have gone through their ethics training,” said Samantha Segal, Executive Director of the Suffolk County Board of Ethics.

“I did it when I was first elected about six and a half years ago,” said Legislator Robert Calarco (D-Patchogue). “The county revamped its ethics law and ethics commission in 2011 and did a couple more minor revisions in 2012 so I did it when I was elected in 2012 and was certainly one of the first classes and all of my colleagues including those elected prior were going through the training at that time.”

A requirement of those elected into office in Suffolk County, the purpose of the mandated training is to help those who work for the county avoid any ethical violations.

“The individuals who go through the training are part of a high-risk group because of potential conflicts of interest,” added Segal, who has served as the board’s Executive Director since 2013.

Bill Lindsay has been a legislator in Suffolk County’s 8th legislative district since he was elected in 2013 and says the training has only helped him while in office.

“It’s not a punitive thing, it’s a helpful tool for legislators when they come in to make sure what restrictions they’re placed under and help steer them from getting into any conflicts or troubles,” said Legislator Lindsay (D-Holbrook). “I was only conflicted once, we were considering legislation that would restrict Uber drivers and my insurance business does work with Uber so I recused myself from the vote… I didn’t participate in the debate or the vote and I wouldn’t have known that if I didn’t go to the training.”

While there isn’t a requirement from the Board of Ethics for officials to retake the mandated training course, the board does recommend those in office to attend another session.

“The board’s recommendation of recycling the program for a refresher is every four years, but our law doesn’t speak to a cycle,” said Segal.