

BROOKHAVEN TOWN

Disclosure law to include candidates

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Brookhaven officials have changed the town ethics code to require political candidates to submit detailed reports about their personal finances.

The change in the law, which affects both incumbents and non-incumbents, is intended to help identify potential conflicts of interest among people running for town offices such as supervisor, clerk and superintendent of highways, officials said.

Previously, town employees and elected officials were required to file the forms, and

non-incumbent political candidates were exempt. With the change, Brookhaven becomes one of the few Long Island towns to require all candidates to submit financial information for review.

The 10-page forms ask Brookhaven employees and candidates whether they or their relatives have outside business relationships with the town or town contractors. The forms also ask whether any family members are current or former town employees.

"It's not a burden," Supervisor Edward P. Romaine, a Republican, said. "You can do it in

five minutes. It's not onerous."

The Brookhaven Town Board, which includes five Republicans, one Democrat and one registered Conservative, unanimously approved the code change last month.

The code amendment received bipartisan support from Brookhaven party leaders. Democratic town committee chairwoman Lillian Clayman said the law was "probably long overdue."

"I think the more disclosure the better," Clayman, a former mayor of Hamden, Connecticut, said. "You have to make sure that people are not benefit-

ing and collecting ill-gotten gains, that people are working for the public good rather than their own wallet."

Republican town chairman Jesse Garcia said the code change is part of an open government effort that includes improved access to town records.

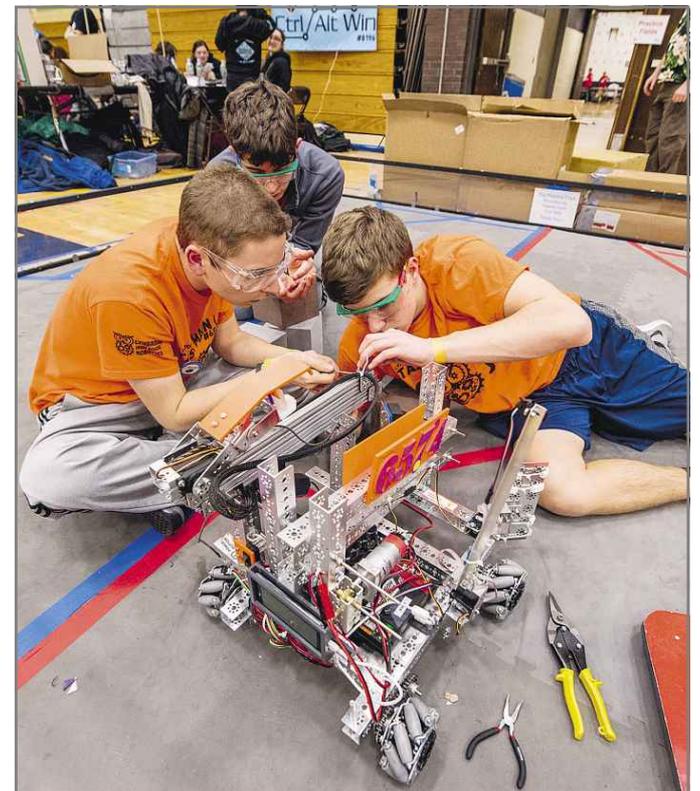
"I just know that our team . . . has always strived to make Brookhaven more open and have more transparency," he said. "An informed electorate makes for a very good electorate for me when I go to the ballot box."

Mandatory financial disclosures for non-incumbents are

common among large municipalities such as New York City, but less common for small towns and villages, said James Gardner, a University at Buffalo School of Law professor who specializes in election law.

Hempstead and Oyster Bay towns have similar requirements, though their laws differ from Brookhaven's.

Clayman said while Democrats who ran against Brookhaven incumbents last year were not required by law to submit disclosure forms, they provided financial information to party leaders as part of the candidate screening process.



Learning machines

Bharvi Chavre, far left, Jada Letts and Aditi Dam, all 16, of Hewlett High School's robotics team, Bionica, compete in a For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology (FIRST) competition at Smithtown West High on Sunday. At the event, students designed, built, programmed and operated robots to complete a set of goals. Above, Matt Bernstein, 17, left, Andrew Moscheni, 14, and Joseph Callahan, 17, of Lynbrook High School's robotics team, Taskmain, work on their robot.