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## Islip Dem: Plan to hire GOPer 'unethical' <sup>[1]</sup>

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**Publication:** NEWSDAY

May

21

2012

The Republican-controlled Islip Town board will vote Tuesday night on a measure to hire Islip's Republican Party chairman as counsel to the town planning board.

Frank Tantone would be paid \$55,000 a year for the position of outside counsel, town attorney Robert Cicale said. Tantone would not receive health benefits or pension credits, he said.

Some towns such as Brookhaven and Huntington prohibit town board appointments from being political party heads but Islip has no such rule. Further, Cicale said the move, criticized by Democrats, is not an appointment but a professional services agreement and is legal because nothing in town code prohibits political party executives from contracting with the town.

Monday, the board resolution was amended to include a provision that the town's ethics board -- the current six members were all appointed by the previous Democratic administration -- must first approve the decision.

The town has not had outside counsel for the planning board in recent years, said spokeswoman Inez Birbiglia, and uses town attorneys for the zoning board. The move is a result of the new administration's "philosophical change" to focus on land use, she said, and draw on Tantone's experience as a former planning board member and an attorney specializing in land use issues. Tantone, who has been the Islip Republican Party chairman since 2009, was on the town planning board from 1996 to 2010, serving as chairman of the board for eight of those years.

Tantone said he sees no conflict in taking the job, as he will be advising the board and not voting on applications. "Daily, as an attorney, I'm in a position where I have to render objective advice and I wouldn't act any differently in this case," he said. "I'm not interested in being disbarred -- no amount of money is worth that."

But the proposed hiring irks Islip Democratic Party chairman Joe Hagelmann, who called the

move "unethical."

"If you get a sizable donation, is that going to affect what you're going to tell the board members?" he said. "If you're a political leader, you should be independent of town hall and their decision making . . . Your job is to find candidates, not run town government."

Republican Supervisor Tom Croci could not be reached for comment. The board meeting will take place at Town Hall at 7 p.m.

[Original article](#) <sup>[2]</sup>

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