

## **ARTICLE 171 CODE OF ETHICS**

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### **171.01 DECLARATION OF POLICY**

Public office demands the highest respect of the public and consequently there is an incumbent duty upon all public officials and employees to fulfill that trust.

The operation of democratic government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial and responsible to the people; that government decisions and policy be made in the proper channels of governmental structure; that public office not be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government. In recognition of these goals, there is hereby established a Code of Ethics for all officials and employees whether elected or appointed, paid or unpaid, and a Board of Ethics to administer the Code and further its objectives. The purpose of this Code is to establish ethical standards of conduct for all such officials and employees of the City, its agencies and authorities, whether elected or appointed, by setting forth those acts or actions which are incompatible with the best interests of the City and by directing disclosure by officials and employees of private, financial or other interests in matters affecting the City. The provisions and purpose of this Code and such rules, regulations and opinions as may be promulgated by the Board pursuant hereto are hereby declared to be in the best interest of the City. (11821 9/1/70)

For purposes of this Code of Ethics, the following definitions shall apply:

1. **Official** means any elected or appointed member of the City government, its authorities, boards or commissions.

2. **Employee** means any other personnel in the City government.
3. **Associate**, where used to indicate a relationship with any person, means any relative or spouse of such person, or any relative of such spouse, who has the same home as such person.
4. **Agency** means any department, bureau, authority, commission, board or other governmental unit of or established by the City. (11821 §1 9/1/70)

Words in the singular number shall include the plural number, and words in the plural number shall include the singular number. The masculine gender shall include the feminine, and the feminine gender shall include the masculine. Wherever the word "he" appears read "he or she". (13137 7/1/92)

### **171.02 CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

No official or employee, whether paid or unpaid, shall engage in any business or transaction or shall have any financial or other private interest, direct or indirect, which is incompatible with the proper discharge of his official duties in the public interest or which would impair his independence of judgment or action in the performance of his official duties unless full disclosure is made in writing to the Board of Ethics. Such disclosure shall be a public record. (11821 9/1/70)

The following conflicts of interest are expressly prohibited whether or not disclosed:

#### **A. Business or Professional Conflict**

No official or employee shall participate in any decision-making process affecting himself or any entity in which such official or employee or associate of either of them is a director, official, or partner or in which such official or employee has a financial interest in excess of five (5%) percent, but such official or employee shall not be precluded from participating in any decision-making process where the matter involved affects the general populace or a large segment of the community. (11821 9/1/70)

No City official or employee shall discuss, vote on, decide or take part in, formally or informally, any matter proposed or pending before any agency or other City official or employee in which he has a pecuniary interest. This provision shall not apply to any City official or employee whose interest in the proposed or pending matter is minimal, provided that these procedures are followed strictly: (13137 7/1/92)

1. The City official or employee shall identify his interest, that is, the benefit or advantage that would be gained or lost if the City acts on the matter in various ways, and the underlying basis of it, such as ownership, an

investment, a contract or claim, employment, or a relationship, if any. (13137 7/1/92)

2. The City official or employee shall completely and specifically describe and disclose his interest and its underlying basis, if any, in writing to his immediate superior and the chairperson of the Board of Ethics, in advance of his participation in the matter. (13137 7/1/92)

3. If either the City official or employee, or his immediate superior, or the chairperson of the Board of Ethics thinks that the disclosure reasonably raises a question whether the interest is minimal, the question shall be submitted to the Board of Ethics for an opinion, prior to which the official or employee shall not participate in the matter. (13137 7/1/92)

Failure to disclose properly, or abide by the opinion of the Board of Ethics, shall make any participation of the official or employee in the matter null and void and may also subject the official or employee to appropriate disciplinary action. (13137 7/1/92)

No City official or employee shall own in person or through an agent or broker, or be a principal in any corporation, partnership or other business entity which owns, any real property within the City of Allentown that is in violation of City or state laws or regulations. Property shall be deemed to be in violation when a reasonable and proper notice and order to correct violations duly issued has not been obeyed in a timely manner. (13137 7/1/92)

No City official or employee privy to non-public information regarding the allocation of City funds, or having direct influence or control over the allocation of City funds, shall be a director, official or trustee of any organization which receives from or through the City funds that constitute ten (10%) percent or more of the organization's annual operating and capital budget, except where appointment to such position is required by law and except where that interest is construed as being in the best interest of the City. (13137 7/1/92)

No City official or employee shall have or enter into any contract with the City which would result in personal gain unless:

1. The contract between the person and the City is awarded pursuant to the competitive bidding procedures of the General Municipal Law; or (13137 7/1/92)

2. The contract between the person and the City is one with respect to which the City official or employee (a) has no interest, (b) has no duties or responsibilities, or, if the contract with the person is one which the City official or employee entered into prior to becoming a City official or employee, he

abstains from any performance of duties or responsibilities, and (c) exercises or attempts to exercise no influence. (13137 7/1/92)

#### B. Confidential Information

No official or employee shall without proper authorization disclose confidential information concerning the property, government or affairs of the City, including confidential information gained in the discharge of his official duties relating to any private person, firm, corporation or association. Nor shall he use such information to advance the financial or other private interest of himself or others. (11821 9/1/70)

#### C. Gifts and Favors

No official or employee or associate of either of them shall accept any valuable gift, whether in the form of service, loan, thing, or promise, from any person, firm, corporation or association which to his knowledge is interested, directly or indirectly, in any manner whatsoever, in business dealings with the City; nor shall such official or employee or associate of either of them accept any gift, regardless of value, favor or thing of value that may tend to influence him in the discharge of his duties or grant in the discharge of his duties any improper favor, service or things. (11821 9/1/70)

#### D. Use of Public Property

No official or employee shall request or permit the use of City-owned vehicles, equipment, materials, services or property for the convenience or profit of himself or any associate except when such are available to the public generally or are provided as municipal policy for the use of such official or employee in the conduct of official business. (11821 9/1/70)

#### E. Representing Private Interests

No official or employee whose salary is paid in full or in part by the City shall appear on behalf of private interests before any agency of the City. He shall not represent private interests in any action or proceeding against the interests of the City in any litigation to which the City is a party. An elected official or employee may appear before agencies on behalf of constituents in the course of his duties as a representative of the electorate or in performance of public or civic obligations. However, no compensation, remuneration or gift of any kind whatsoever shall be accepted for such activity. (11821 9/1/70)

No City official or employee who serves the City without compensation shall represent any person before the agency he serves, or before any other City official or employee who regularly serves the agency he serves, or before any other agency on matters directly involving the agency he serves. (13137 7/1/92)

No former City official or employee shall at any time after he leaves the agency he served represent a person before any agency on a specific matter with which he was directly involved or of which he has special knowledge, if the representation would be adverse to the position of the City on the matter. (13137 7/1/92)

F. Favoritism

No City official or employee, acting in the performance of his official duties, shall treat, whether by action or omission to act, any person more favorably than it is the custom and practice to treat any member of the general public. (13137 7/1/92)

**171.03 USE OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES FOR PERSONAL BENEFIT**

No official or employer shall use public employees on government time for private benefit. Public employees should refuse to perform improper personal tasks on government time. (13137 7/1/92)

**171.04 USE OF POSITION OR PRESTIGE FOR PERSONAL BENEFIT**

No official or employee shall use, nor allow others to use, the authority, title or prestige of public office for the attainment of private financial, social or political benefits in any manner that is inconsistent with public interests. (13137 7/1/92)

A. Use for Commercial Purposes

No official or employee shall permit their names or official titles to be used by a non-public enterprise in any manner which would lead reasonable observers to believe that those who deal with the enterprise may receive special treatment or advantages as a result of a formal association with the official or employee. (13137 7/1/92)

B. Use for Public Advantage

No official or employee shall use official letterhead or refer to their public position as a means of inducing or intimidating persons to resolve disputes more favorably, provide preferential treatment, or give free tickets, discounts, favors or other advantages. (13137 7/1/92)

**171.05 INTERVENING ON BEHALF OF CONSTITUENTS AND FRIENDS**

Public officials shall be cautious about directly or indirectly intervening with normal decision making, investigatory or adjudicative processes of governmental bodies on behalf of constituents or friends because such intervention can threaten the ability of government administrators to exercise independent objective judgment on the merits. (13137 7/1/92)

#### A. General Rule

Intervention on behalf of constituents or friends is proper only if it is strictly limited to assuring fairness and equity of treatment of the procedures and the intervener consciously avoids seeking to unduly influence the decision-making process. Those who intervene should firmly, explicitly and unambiguously convey their limited purposes to reduce the possibility of direct or indirect pressure on administrators which could reasonably appear to influence the substantive decision. (13137 7/1/92)

#### B. Sharing of Compensation

No person rendering professional services to the City shall, in any form or guise, share or agree to share the compensation received by him for such services with any City employee. Nor shall any City employee share or agree to share in the compensation received from the City by any other person for rendering professional services to the City. (12180 4/7/76)

A "person" for purposes of this section shall be a natural person, partnership, or a corporation. (12180 4/7/76)

Notwithstanding anything contained herein to the contrary, this section shall not prohibit a general partner in a professional partnership from sharing or agreeing to share his compensation with other general partners in the partnership; nor shall the other general partners in the partnership be prohibited from sharing in any such compensation. (12180 4/7/76; (12180 4/7/76; 13137 7/1/92; 13742 §1 3/18/99)

### **171.06 DISCLOSURE OF CITY INTERESTS**

The Department of Administration and Finance shall annually publish a list of all persons, firms, corporations, associations or other business entities doing in excess of Five Hundred (\$500.00) Dollars in business with the City during the past year. All officials, department directors, bureau heads and such other employees of the City as the Board of Ethics, Mayor or City Clerk may enumerate shall indicate any offices or employment in such businesses or any financial interest in such businesses which he or any associate of his may have and the amount of such interest. (11821 9/1/70; 13137 7/1/92)

Such enumerations shall be returned to the Board of Ethics and become public record. (11821 9/1/70)

### **171.07 POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

No appointed official or employee of the City shall use the prestige, power or influence of his position on behalf of any political party. (11821 9/1/70)

No appointed official or employee, other than temporary summer employees, shall orally, by letter or otherwise solicit or be in any manner

concerned in soliciting any assessment, subscription or contribution to any political party. Such appointed officials and employees, or those seeking office on their own behalf, excluding temporary summer employees and elected officials, shall not take an active part in political campaigns for candidates for City office. No official or employee, whether elected or appointed, shall promise an appointment to any municipal position as a reward for any political activity nor remove or threaten the removal of another official or employee for failure to participate in political activity. (11821 9/1/70; 12192 7/7/76; 13137 7/1/92)

### **171.08 CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS**

A conviction for a felony which constitutes a knowing and deliberate breach of the law shall be considered a breach of the public trust and a knowing and deliberate violation of this Code of Ethics. (13137 7/1/92)

### **171.09 ACTIVITIES PROHIBITED UNDER THE CHARTER**

#### *A. Activities Prohibited*

1. *No person shall wilfully make any false statement, certificate, mark, rating or report in regard to any test, certification or appointment under the provisions of this Charter or the rules and regulations made thereunder, or in any manner commit or attempt to commit any fraud preventing the impartial executive of such provisions, rules and regulations. (Art. XI, 1102)*

2. *No person who seeks appointment or promotion to any City position or appointive City administrative office shall directly or indirectly give, render or pay any money, service or other valuable thing to any person for or in connection with his or her test, appointment, proposed appointment, promotion or proposed promotion. (Art. XI, 1102)*

3. *No elected City official shall knowingly or wilfully solicit or assist in soliciting any assessment, subscription or contribution for any political party or political purpose to be used in conjunction with any City election from any City employee. (Art. XI, 1102)*

*B. Penalties. Any person found in violation of this section, by the Board of Ethics, and confirmed by Council, shall immediately forfeit his or her office or position. City Council shall establish, by ordinances, such further penalties as it may deem appropriate. (Art. XI, §1102)*

### **171.10 BOARD OF ETHICS**

A. Board of Ethics. The Mayor, with the approval of City Council, shall establish an independent Board of Ethics consisting of five (5) City residents holding terms of three (3) years, to administer and enforce the conflict of interest provisions of this Charter (Section 1101) and the prohibition sections of this Charter. No member of the Board may hold elective or City office in the City or any other government or hold any political party office. Insofar as possible under

state law, the Mayor shall authorize the Board to issue binding opinions, conduct investigations on its own initiative and on referral or complaint, refer cases for prosecution, impose administrative fines, and to consult with independent counsel. City Council shall appropriate reasonably sufficient funds to the Board of Ethics to enable it to perform the duties assigned to it. Members of the Board of Ethics may be removed by the Mayor with the consent of City Council. (Art. XI, §1101) At least one of the members shall be an attorney. No more than three of the members shall be members of the same political party. The initial members of the Board shall have staggered terms and any member of the Board shall be eligible to succeed himself. The members of the Board shall serve without compensation, but shall be entitled to reimbursement of expenses incurred by them in the performance of their duties. The Office of the City Clerk shall provide administrative support services to the Board. (11821 9/1/70; Art. XI, 1102)

B. Each member shall serve until his successor has been appointed and qualified. The Board shall annually select a chairperson. (11821 9/1/70)

C. The Board shall adopt the necessary rules which will enable it to carry out its powers, duties and functions. Meetings of the Board shall be held at the call of the chairman, and the affirmative vote of a majority of the entire membership shall be necessary to take any action. The Board shall have the power to administer oaths. (11821 9/1/70)

D. The Board shall render written advisory opinions at any time at the request of any official or an employee of the City involving possible conflicts of interest on the part of such official or employee. (11821 9/1/70; 13137 7/1/92)

E. The Board shall also render written advisory opinions in circumstances where there is alleged to be a conflict of interest or unethical conduct on the part of any official or employee of the City within the scope of the Code of Ethics. (11821 9/1/70; 13137 7/1/92)

F. The Board may for good cause refuse to entertain a request for an advisory opinion. Without limiting the generality of the foregoing, the Board may refuse to entertain a request where the request is speculative or purely hypothetical and does not involve an actual situation or where the request is frivolous. In no case shall the Board entertain a request that is not in writing and not signed by the person making the request. (11821 9/1/70)

G. The Board shall acknowledge the receipt of a request in writing to the person submitting the request. If the request involves an employee or official and the request is made by a person other than such employee or official, a copy of the request shall be sent to the employee or official so involved, with the name of the person making the request deleted so that his name will not be disclosed. (11821 9/1/70)

H. The employee or official involved in the request shall have the opportunity within fifteen (15) days after receipt of the request to respond in writing, to make a written request for a hearing or to do both. (11821 9/1/70)

I. The Board shall upon receipt of a request for a hearing within the period above referred to by the official or employee involved set a time and place for the hearing for the purpose of determining the facts. The person making the allegations and the employee or official involved shall have the opportunity to appear at the hearing by himself or by counsel and to present any and all evidence including testimony and exhibits which are relevant to the issue involved. No testimony shall be excluded except for irrelevancy. (11821 9/1/70)

J. All hearings before the Board involving an alleged conflict of interest of an employee or official shall be held in executive session; provided, however, that a public hearing may be held where such official or employee alleged to have conflict of interest consents thereto. (11821 9/1/70)

K. Within thirty (30) days after a request for an opinion or within thirty (30) days after a hearing on any request shall have been concluded, whichever is later, the Board shall render its opinion in writing. All opinions rendered by the Board shall be in such form and with such deletions as would prevent the disclosure of the identity of the official or employee involved. (11821 9/1/70)

L. If the request for an opinion involves an employee or official and the request is made by a person other than such employee or official, then after an opinion has been reached, the Board shall in the case of an appointed official or employee notify the Mayor and the appointing authority of the official or employee involved of its decision. The appointing authority shall take whatever action is deemed necessary and shall report the action to the Board within fifteen (15) days after receiving the decision of the Board. If it is the majority decision of the Board that the action taken is not satisfactory then the Board shall so notify the Mayor and all members of Council. In the case of an elected official, the Board shall notify the Mayor and all members of Council. (11821 9/1/70; 13137 7/1/92)

#### **171.11 INITIATIVE OF VIOLATOR FOR REMEDIAL ACTION**

Violation of any provision of this Code of Ethics should raise conscientious questions for a councilperson or other official or employee concerned as to whether voluntary resignation or other action is indicated to promote the best interests of the City. (13137 7/1/92)

#### **171.12 RULES AND REGULATIONS**

The Mayor may issue rules and regulations governing officials and employees subject to his jurisdiction consistent with and in furtherance of the requirements set forth in this Code, and may require such disclosure, financial

and otherwise, as he deems appropriate or necessary. Any rules and regulations or amendments thereto shall be filed with the City Clerk and formally communicated to the City Council, appropriate officials and City employees and the Board of Ethics. (13137 7/1/92)

#### **171.98 SEVERABILITY**

Any ordinance or part of any ordinance which conflicts with the provisions of this ordinance is hereby repealed insofar as the same affects this ordinance or is inconsistent with this ordinance. (13137 7/1/92)

#### **171.99 PENALTIES**

The doing of any act prohibited, or the failure to do any act required, by the Code of Ethics or rules and regulations issued pursuant thereto shall constitute grounds for disciplinary action, and any City official or employee subject to the Mayor's jurisdiction who violates the Code of Ethics shall be disciplined in the manner provided by law and administrative policy. Any elected City official or employee or one subject to the City Council's jurisdiction who violates a material provision of the Code of Ethics shall be subject to disciplinary action up to and including removal from office in the manner provided by law. (13137 §1 7/1/92)