

## Chapter 36

### ETHICS, CODE OF

**[HISTORY: Adopted by the City Council of the City of Allentown 9-1-1970 by Ord. No. 11821 (Article 171 of the 1962 Codified Ordinances); amended in its entirety 5-19-2021 by Ord. No. 15712. Subsequent amendments noted where applicable.]**

**§ 36-1. Declaration of policy.<sup>1</sup>**

- A. 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.
- B. 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.
- C. For purposes of this Code of Ethics, the following definitions shall apply:
  - AGENCY — Any department, bureau, authority, commission, board or other governmental unit of or established by the City.
  - 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.
  - CITY — For purposes of provisions relating to the entering of contracts and agreement, the City of Allentown as a corporate entity, as well as any agency, as defined above.
  - EMPLOYEE — Any other personnel in the City government.
  - OFFICIAL — Any elected or appointed member of the City government, its authorities, boards or commissions.
- D. 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."

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1. Editor's Note: For related Charter provisions pertaining to Code of Ethics, see Charter §§ 1101 and 1102.

**§ 36-2. Conflict of interest.**

- A. 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.
- B. The following conflicts of interest are expressly prohibited, whether or not disclosed:
- (1) Prohibited use of official position:
- (a) An official or employee may not use his or her official position or office, or take or fail to take any action, or influence others to take or fail to take any action, in a manner which he or she knows, or has reason to believe, may result in a personal or financial benefit, not shared with a substantial segment of the City's population, for any of the following persons or entities (no group of government employees may be considered "a substantial segment" for the purposes of this subsection):
- [1] Himself or herself;
  - [2] A member of his or her household, including a domestic partner and his or her dependents, or the employer or business of any of these people;
  - [3] A sibling or stepsibling, stepchild or foster child, parent or stepparent, niece or nephew, uncle or aunt, or grandparent or grandchild of either himself or herself, or of his or her spouse or domestic partner, or the employer or business of any of these people;
  - [4] A person with which he or she has a financial or business relationship, including but not limited to:
    - [a] An outside employer or business of his or hers, or of his or her spouse or domestic partner, or someone who works for such outside employer or business;
    - [b] A client or substantial customer;
    - [c] A substantial debtor or creditor of his or hers, or of his or her spouse or domestic partner.
  - [5] A person or entity from whom the official or employee has received an election campaign contribution of more than \$200 in the aggregate during the past election cycle (this amount includes contributions from a person's immediate family or business as well as contributions from an entity's owners, directors, or officers, as well as contributions to the official or employee's party town committee or non-candidate political committee); or

- [6] A nongovernmental civic group, union, social, charitable, or religious organization of which he or she (or his or her spouse or domestic partner) is an officer or director.
- (b) The prohibition above applies equally to attempts to use, act, or influence.
  - (c) It is a violation of this code for an official or employee to, within two years of entering City employment or service, award a contract or participate in a matter benefiting a person or entity that formerly employed him or her.
- (2) Business or professional conflict.
- (a) No official or employee shall participate in any decisionmaking 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 5%, but such official or employee shall not be precluded from participating in any decisionmaking process where the matter involved affects the general populace or a large segment of the community.
  - (b) 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 subsection 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:
    - [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.
    - [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.
    - [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.
  - (c) 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.
  - (d) 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.

- (e) No City official or employee privy to nonpublic 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 10% 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.
- (f) 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
  - [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.
- (3) 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.
- (4) 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.
- (5) 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.
- (6) Representing private interests.

- (a) 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.
  - (b) 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.
  - (c) 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.
- (7) 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.
- C. Inappropriate direction of City funds. **[Added 2-2-2022 by Ord. No. 15781]**
- (1) Charter. Consistent with Section 1101 of the Home Rule Charter, City employees, City officials and City agencies shall not: 1) act in a private capacity, or on behalf of a private party, on matters dealt with the City of Allentown; 2) disclose or use any confidential, privileged or proprietary information, gained by reason of the person's or agency's official position, for personal gain or for the gain of particular individuals, entities or groups. However, information may be disclosed if: 1) it is a matter of public knowledge; 2) is available to the public upon request.
  - (2) No unfair advantages. No City employee or elected official shall engage in conduct that gives a potential provider of services to the City an advantage in the procurement or selection process. No City employee or elected official shall engage in conduct that gives the potential recipient of government funds an advantage over another recipient.
  - (3) Mandatory disclosure. Officials and employees who have had communications of any kind with individuals or entities seeking to do work for the City, or seeking to receive government funds, must disclose those communications to the City Clerk prior to the government taking action in designating who will conduct the service, receive the contract or receive the funds. Such disclosure will take place on an electronic or paper form or process to be prepared jointly by the Administration and Council.

- (4) Conformance with existing laws. City policies relating to procurement, service selection, and fund awarding must be followed in all cases as required by law.
- (5) Duty to not assist in inappropriate conduct. City employees and elected officials shall also be prohibited from acting as a conduit that facilitates unfair advantages or avoids mandatory disclosures. Each City official or employee shall immediately disclose violations of the above requirements to the City Clerk who shall forward the disclosure to the City's Ethics Board for appropriate consideration.

### **§ 36-3. 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.

### **§ 36-4. 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.

- A. Use for commercial purposes. No official or employee shall permit their names or official titles to be used by a nonpublic 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.
- 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.

### **§ 36-5. Post-position.**

- A. Representation. For a period of two years after the termination of his or her City service or employment, an official or employee may not, on behalf of any other person, for compensation, directly or indirectly, formally or informally, act as agent, attorney, lobbyist, or other sort of representative, to or before his or her former agency, department, authority, board, or commission. For the purposes of this subsection, a Mayor, managing director, Council member or Council aide is deemed to have worked for every City department, agency, authority, board, and commission. Acting indirectly includes action by a partner, associate, and other professional employee of an entity in which the former official or employee is a partner, associate, or professional employee, as well as acting by a member of the former official or employee's immediate family.
- B. Particular matters. With respect to particular matters on which the official or employee personally and substantially worked while in City service or employment, the foregoing prohibition is permanent.
- C. Area of responsibility. With respect to matters for which the official or employee

had official responsibility, but were not personally and substantially involved, the foregoing prohibition is for a period of two years after termination of City service or employment.

- D. Employment. An official or employee, or a member of his or her immediate family, may not accept employment with, or with the help of: a) a party to a contract with the City, within two years after the contract was signed, when he or she participated personally and substantially in the preparation, negotiation, or award of the contract, and the contract obliged the City to pay an aggregate of at least \$25,000; or b) an individual or entity who has, within the previous two years, benefited directly from any decision made by, or based on advice or information supplied by, the official or employee or by a subordinate. An elected or appointed official, or a member of his or her immediate family, may not accept employment if the body of which he or she is a member or was a member within the previous two years had any role in filling the job, including an advisory role. A Mayor, chief of staff or Vice Mayor, or Council member, or a member of his or her immediate family, may not, for two years after termination of City service or employment, accept any full-time compensated position with the City. For the purposes of this section, "employment" includes full-time and part-time jobs, and professional and other work for hire, given directly or indirectly.
- E. Exceptions. Former officials and employees are not prohibited from acting if:
- (1) They are working for the City on a volunteer basis.
  - (2) They are acting on behalf of another federal, state, or local government.
  - (3) They are giving testimony under oath and is not being compensated for it.
  - (4) They are providing scientific or technological information at the government's request.
  - (5) They performed only ministerial acts.
- F. Waivers. The Ethics Commission may waive the prohibitions of this provision if it determines that the situation does not create a potential for undue influence, unfair advantage, or a serious appearance of impropriety.

### **§ 36-6. Intervening on behalf of constituents and friends.**

Public officials shall be cautious about directly or indirectly intervening with normal decisionmaking, 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.

- 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 decisionmaking 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.
- B. Sharing of compensation.

- (1) 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.
- (2) A "person" for purposes of this section shall be a natural person, partnership, or a corporation.
- (3) 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.

**§ 36-7. Disclosure of City interests.**

- A. The Department of Finance shall annually publish a list of all persons, firms, corporations, associations or other business entities doing in excess of \$500 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.
- B. Such enumerations shall be returned to the Board of Ethics and become public record.

**§ 36-8. Political activity.**

- A. No appointed official or employee of the City shall use the prestige, power or influence of his position on behalf of any political party.
- B. 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.
- C. No elected official, appointed official, or employee shall use City resources in any manner for purposes of any political activity. This prohibition includes, but is not limited to, use of interior locations in City buildings; use of any City equipment; use of time; and use of any City resources; and conducting public or private meetings inside City buildings. Political activity includes, but is not limited to: 1) any campaigns for elected political office, whether contested or not; 2) any support or opposition for or against any political party; and 3) any support or opposition for or against any political based action group.



**§ 36-9. 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.

**§ 36-10. Initiative of violator for remedial action.**

Violation of any provision of this Code of Ethics should raise conscientious questions for a Council person or other official or employee concerned as to whether voluntary resignation or other action is indicated to promote the best interests of the City.

**§ 36-11. 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.

**§ 36-12. Reports.**

When appropriate, the Ethics Board shall annually prepare a written report for Council and the Mayor, and shall present in a meeting with City Council recommendations concerning policies and procedures that ensure that City officials and employees maintain the highest degree of trust with the public using a template provided by City Council.

**§ 36-13. Filing and posting of campaign finance reports.**

On or before the due dates for the campaign finance reporting schedule as mandated by Pennsylvania law requires such reports to be filed with the County of Lehigh, candidates for the offices of Mayor, Controller and Council shall file a copy of their campaign finance report with the City Clerk's office and receive a receipt for such deposit. The Clerk's office shall have the campaign reports forwarded to the Information and Technology Bureau which shall post such reports on the City website. The campaign finance reports shall be posted no later than five days after the reporting deadlines mandated by state law and as required by this chapter.

**§ 36-14. Personal use of City funds prohibited. [Added 2-2-2022 by Ord. No. 15779<sup>2</sup>]**

Leaders, members, or officials belonging to nonprofit or other organizations that lobby for or are actively engaged in seeking City funds or funds distributed through the City and receive funding or receive funds through the City are prohibited from receiving remuneration from these funds. This prohibition shall also apply to the immediate and extended family members of such leaders, members and officials. City officials shall also be prohibited from acting as a conduit for such activity and shall immediately

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2. Editor's Note: This ordinance also redesignated former §§ 36-14 and 36-15 as §§ 36-15 and 36-16, respectively.

disclose such request to the City Clerk who shall forward the disclosure to the City's Ethics Board.

**§ 36-15. Repealer.**

Any ordinance or part of any ordinance which conflicts with the provisions of this chapter is hereby repealed insofar as the same affects this chapter or is inconsistent with this chapter.

**§ 36-16. Violations and 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.