

TOWN OF COTTAGE CITY
RESOLUTION 2026-10

**A RESOLUTION REQUIRING SUPPLEMENTAL PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BY TOWN COMMISSIONERS DURING DISCUSSION
AND VOTING ON MATTERS BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

Introduced by: Town of Cottage City Commission

WHEREAS, The Cottage City Commission of the Town of Cottage City is entrusted to serve the public with integrity, transparency, and accountability; and

WHEREAS, maintaining public trust requires that all elected officials act in the best interests of the Town and avoid situations in which personal interests could influence official decision-making; and

WHEREAS, conflicts of interest—whether real, perceived, or potential—may arise when a Town Commissioner stands to personally benefit from any matter under consideration; and

WHEREAS, disclosure of such conflicts promotes transparency and ensures that decisions are made in an open and ethical manner; and

WHEREAS, concerns at various levels of government have highlighted the importance of clear ethical standards to prevent the use of official positions for personal gain; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 15 of the Town Code of Cottage City (Public Ethics), adopted November 14, 2018, by Ordinance No. 2018-01, establishes minimum ethical standards for Town officials, including prohibitions on participation in matters involving conflicts of interest (§ 15-3), requirements for notification of conflicts (§ 15-3A), and rules for remote interests (§ 15-3D); and

WHEREAS, this Resolution is intended to supplement Chapter 15 by adding a clear requirement for public disclosure in open session, without superseding or limiting any provision of Chapter 15.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by The Cottage City Commission of the Town of Cottage City that:

1. **Disclosure Requirement:** Any Town Commissioner who has a conflict of interest, as addressed in Chapter 15, § 15-3 of the Town Code, or who may personally benefit—financially or otherwise—from any matter before the Commission, shall publicly disclose the nature and extent of that interest in open session during any discussion, deliberation, or vote on the matter. This public disclosure shall be made in addition to any notification required under Chapter 15, § 15-3.A. Section 15-3.A states as follows:
 - a. Elected officials, appointees and Town employees shall not knowingly engage in activities that are in conflict, or that have the potential to create conflict, with performance of official duties.

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- b. No person subject to this chapter (Chapter 15) shall have any direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, or incur any obligation of any nature, or engage in any business, employment, transaction or professional activity that is in substantial conflict with the proper discharge of his or her public duties or employment.
 - c. Any elected official, appointee or Town employee who is or becomes aware of any conflict of interest on his or her own part or that of another shall notify the Commission or supervisor of any such conflict, and the Commission shall, in a closed session, determine the appropriate course to follow with respect to the matter, in accordance with the provisions of this chapter.
2. **Timing of Disclosure:** Such public disclosure shall be made prior to or at the beginning of any discussion, deliberation, or vote on the matter in which the conflict exists and shall be entered into the official meeting minutes.
3. **Definition of Conflict of Interest:** Consistent with Chapter 15, § 15-3 of the Town Code, a conflict of interest includes, but is not limited to:
- a. Any direct or indirect interest, financial or otherwise, that creates a substantial conflict with the proper discharge of the Commissioner’s public duties (§ 15-3A);
 - b. Any situation in which the Commissioner or a family member stands to gain or lose financially, or otherwise benefit personally, from the matter under consideration;
 - c. Personal or business relationships that may reasonably be expected to influence the Commissioner’s decision-making;
 - d. Direct participation or benefit (financial or otherwise) in a Town-sponsored program or initiative under consideration (for example, participation in a community garden or similar program).
 - e. “Family member” is defined in Chapter 15, § 15-3H of the Town Code as anyone related to the Commissioner by blood, marriage or adoption, or who is part of the Commissioner’s household, including but not limited to a spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child, cousin, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandparent, grandchild, or anyone who is part of the Commissioner’s household.
4. **Record of Disclosure:** All disclosures required by this Resolution shall be entered into the official meeting minutes to ensure transparency and a complete public record, consistent with the requirements of Chapter 15.
5. **Recusal:** Following disclosure, and as required by Chapter 15, § 15-3 of the Town Code:
- a. The Commissioner shall recuse himself or herself from further discussion and voting on the matter if the Commissioner or a family member has a financial interest or other

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conflict of interest that creates a substantial conflict with the proper discharge of public duties (§ 15-3C). In such cases, recusal is mandatory, and in certain situations (such as contracts), the Commissioner may also be required to leave the meeting room during discussion (§ 15-3F).

b. If the interest is only a remote interest as described in Chapter 15, § 15-3D, the Commissioner shall disclose the fact and extent of the remote interest (which shall be recorded in the minutes), and the Commissioner’s vote shall not be counted.

6. **Purpose and Intent:** This Resolution is intended to strengthen ethical governance, reinforce public confidence, and ensure that all actions of the Town Commissioners are conducted with the highest standards of integrity, in full harmony with Chapter 15 of the Town Code. Nothing in this Resolution shall be construed to limit, override, or conflict with any requirement of Chapter 15.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

ADOPTED by the Town Commission of the Town of Cottage City this 8th day of April, 2026.

ATTEST:

TOWN OF COTTAGE CITY, MARYLAND

John Hoatson, Town Manager

By: _____
Wanda Wheatley, Ward 3, Commissioner Chair

Julia Salsich, Ward 1, Commissioner

Reney Henderson Sr, Ward 2, Commissioner

Demetrius Givens, Ward 4, Commissioner

John Brooks, At-Large, Commissioner Vice Chair

CERTIFICATION

I, HEREBY CERTIFY, as the duly appointed Town Manager of the Town of Cottage City, Maryland, that on the ____ day of ____ 2026 with Aye votes and Nay votes, the aforesaid Resolution 2026-10 passed.

John Hoatson, Town Manager