

ORDINANCE NO. 93-06

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TOMBALL, TEXAS, AMENDING THE CODE OF ORDINANCES BY ADDING A NEW ARTICLE III, DIVISION 4, TO CHAPTER 2 OF THE CODE TO ESTABLISH A CODE OF ETHICS FOR CITY OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES; CONTAINING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING A PENALTY IN AN AMOUNT OF \$500 PER OFFENSE, OR AS PROVIDED BY STATE LAW; DIRECTING PUBLICATION OF THE CAPTION OF THIS ORDINANCE; FINDING THAT THE MEETINGS AT WHICH THIS ORDINANCE IS CONSIDERED ARE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND THE REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; AND PROVIDING OTHER DETAILS RELATING TO THE PASSAGE OF THIS ORDINANCE.

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BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TOMBALL, TEXAS:

Section 1.0. That Chapter 2 of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tomball, Texas, is hereby amended by adding a new Article III, Division 4, which provides as follows, an which shall be renumbered to conform to the numbering system of such Code:

**“CODE OF ETHICS OF
THE CITY OF TOMBALL, TEXAS”**

1.0. Declaration of Policy.

It is hereby determined by the City Council of the City of Tomball, Texas, that the proper operation of government requires that public officers and employees be independent and impartial; that the government’s decisions and policies be made within the proper channels of the governmental structure; that a public office not be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government and its governmental officials.

The purpose of this Code is to enumerate existing state laws which regulate the conduct and activities of City officers and employees, and to promulgate such additional minimum standards as are deemed necessary and appropriate to assure the faithful and impartial administration of the City’s government.

2.0. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Code of Ethics the following words, terms, and phrases shall have the meanings ascribed thereto:

- 2.01. **City Employee.** Any person employed by the City, including those individuals employed on a part-time basis.
- 2.02. **City Officer.** The Mayor, members of the City Council, the City Manager, City Secretary, Municipal Court Judge and Clerk, Alternate Judges, and Substitute Judges, and each member and alternate member of all of the City Boards, Commissions, and Committees.
- 2.03. **City Official.** A City officer or City employee.

3.0. Ethical Principals.

The following Code of Ethics for all City officers and employees is adopted. To further the objectives of this Code of Ethics, certain ethical principles shall govern the conduct of every officer or employee, who shall:

- 1. Be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships in order to merit the respect and confidence of the citizens of Tomball;
- 2. Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people;
- 3. Be dedicated to public service by being cooperative and constructive, and by making the best and most efficient use of available resources;
- 4. Refrain from any activity or action that may hinder one's ability to be objective and impartial on any matter coming before the Council or the City. Do not seek or accept gifts or special favors; believe that personal gain by use of confidential information or by misuse of public funds or time is dishonest;
- 5. Recognize that public and political policy decisions, based on established values, are ultimately the responsibility of the City and City Council; and
- 6. Conduct business in open, duly noticed meetings in order to be directly accountable to the citizens of Tomball. It is recognized that certain exceptions are made by the State for executive sessions; however, any

action as a result of that type of meeting will be handled later in open session.

4.0. Standards of Conduct.

In order to more fully effectuate the policy declared in this Code of Ethics, to assure that all City officials act and conduct themselves both inside and outside the City's service so as to give no occasion for distrust of their integrity, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety by any City official, the following standards of conduct are adopted.

4.01. Grant of Special Consideration.

No City official shall grant any special consideration, treatment, or advantage to any citizen, individual, business organization, or group beyond that which is normally available to every other citizen, individual, business organization, or group. This shall not prevent special considerations authorized and granted by the City Council for the purpose of creating incentives necessary to secure or retain employees.

4.02. Appearances on Behalf of Private Interests.

No City official shall represent or appear on behalf of private interests of others before any agency of the City, or any City board, commission, committee, or City Council concerning any case, project, or matter over which the official exercises discretionary authority, nor shall a City official represent any private interest of others in any action or proceeding involving the City, nor voluntarily participate on behalf of others in any litigation to which the City is a party.

4.03. Appearances by Past Officials.

No City official, holding a position which involves decision-making, advisory, or supervisory responsibility, shall, within twelve (12) months following the end of service with the City, represent or appear on behalf of private interests of others before the City or any agency thereof concerning any case, project, or matter over which the official has exercised discretionary authority.

4.04. Securing Special Privileges.

No City official shall use his official position to secure special privilege or exemption for himself or others.

4.05. Gifts.

No City official shall accept or solicit any gift or favor that could reasonably tend to influence that individual in the discharge of official duties or that the official knows or should know has been offered with the intent to influence or reward official conduct.

4.06. Disclosure or Use of Confidential Information.

No City official shall disclose any confidential information gained by reason of his office or employment with the City, concerning any property, operation, policy, or affair of the City, or use such confidential information to advance any personal interest, financial or otherwise, of such official or others.

4.07. Incompatible Outside Activities.

No City official shall engage in any outside activity which will conflict with, or be incompatible with, the City office or employment.

4.08. Incompatible Employment.

No City official shall accept outside employment which is incompatible with the full and proper discharge of his or her duties and responsibilities with the City, or which might impair his or her independent judgment in the performance of his or her public duty.

4.09. Use of City Property for Personal Use.

No City official shall use City supplies, equipment, vehicles, or facilities for any purpose other than the conduct of official City business, unless otherwise specifically provided for by law, ordinance, or City policy.

5.0. State Laws Governing Conduct.

5.01. Conflicts of Interest.

5.01.01. Pursuant to §171.001 et seq., Texas Local Government Code, a local public official having a substantial interest in a business entity or piece of real property must file, before any vote or decision is made on any matter affecting the business entity or real property, an affidavit stating the nature and extent of the interest. The official must file the affidavit with the City Secretary, and is required to abstain from any further participation in the matter if (1) the

proposed action would have a special economic effect on the business entity that is distinguishable from the effect on the public, or (2) it is reasonably foreseeable that the action would have a special economic effect on the value of the real property which is distinguishable from its effect on the public. An exception to the abstention rule is provided in cases where a majority of members of the entity are likewise required to and do file affidavits.

5.01.02. A substantial interest in a business entity exists when the official (1) owns ten percent (10%) or more of the voting stock or shares of the business entity, or (2) owns ten percent (10%) or more or \$5,000 or more of the fair market value of the business entity, or (3) has received from the business entity funds which exceed ten percent (10%) of the official's gross income for the prior year.

5.01.03. A substantial interest in real property exists when the official has an equitable or legal interest in such property which has a fair market value of \$2,500 or more.

5.01.04. A local public official means a member of the City Council or other official of the City, paid or unpaid, who exercises responsibilities which are more than advisory only. A business entity means any entity recognized by law.

5.01.05. It is an offense for a local public official to act as a surety for a business entity that is contracting with the City, or to act as a surety on any official bond required of an officer of the City. §171.003.

5.01.06. A local public official is considered to have a substantial interest if a person related to the official in the first degree by consanguinity or affinity has a substantial interest. §171.002(c).

5.01.07. The provisions of §171.001 et seq., are IN ADDITION to any other municipal charter provisions or municipal ordinances defining and prohibiting conflicts of interest.

5.02. Bribery.

It is unlawful for a City official to accept or agree to accept (1) any benefit as consideration for a decision, opinion, recommendation, vote, or other exercise of discretion as a public servant or (2) any benefit as consideration for a decision, vote, recommendation, or other exercise of official discretion in a judicial or

administrative proceeding, or (3) any benefit as consideration for a violation of a duty imposed by law on a public servant. §36.02, Penal Code.

5.03. Gifts to Public Servants.

5.03.01. It is unlawful for a City official to solicit, accept, or agree to accept any benefit from a person the official knows is subject to regulation, inspection, or investigation by the official or the City. §36.08(a), Penal Code.

5.03.02. In the event of litigation involving the City, it is unlawful for any City official to solicit, accept, or agree to accept any benefit from a person against whom the official knows litigation is pending or contemplated by the official or the City. §36.08(c), Penal Code.

5.03.03. It is unlawful for a City official who exercises discretion in connection with contracts, purchases, payments, claims, or other pecuniary transactions of government to solicit, accept, or agree to accept any benefit from a person the official knows is interested in or likely to become interested in any contract, purchase, payment, claim, or transaction involving the exercise of his discretion. §36.08(d), Penal Code.

5.03.04. It is unlawful for a City official who has judicial or administrative authority, is employed by or in a tribunal having judicial or administrative authority, or who participates in the enforcement of the tribunal's decision, to solicit, accept, or agree to accept any benefit from a person the official knows is interested in or likely to become interested in any matter before the official or tribunal. §36.08(e), Penal Code.

5.03.05. Exceptions to Gifts to Public Servants.

The provisions of §36.08, Penal Code, described above, do not apply to (1) fees prescribed by law to be received by the public official or any other benefit to which the official is lawfully entitled and for which the official has given legitimate consideration; (2) gifts or other benefits conferred on account of kinship or personal, professional, or business relationships independent of the official's status with the City; (3) certain honorariums in consideration of legitimate services; (4) benefits consisting of food, lodging, transportation, or entertainment accepted as a guest and reported as required by law; or (5) benefits for which statements must be filed

pursuant to §251.001 and §251.012, Texas Election Code, if the benefit and source of any benefit exceeding fifty dollars (\$50.00) is reported and the benefit is used solely to defray expenses which accrue in the performance of duties or activities in connection with office which are nonreimbursable by the City. §36.10, Penal Code.

5.04. Tampering with Governmental Records.

It is unlawful for any person to knowingly make a false entry in, or false alteration of, a governmental record, or to make, present, or use any record, document, or thing with knowledge of its falsity with the intent that it be taken as a genuine governmental record, or to intentionally destroy, conceal, remove, or otherwise impair the verity, legibility, or availability of a governmental record. §36.10, Penal Code.

5.05. Impersonating Public Servant.

It is unlawful for any person to impersonate a City official with intent to induce another to submit to his pretended official authority or to rely on his pretended official acts. §37.11, Penal Code.

5.06. Misuse of Official Information.

It is unlawful for a City official, in reliance on information to which he has access as a result of his office and which has not been made public, to acquire or aid another in acquiring a pecuniary interest in any property, transaction, or enterprise that may be affected by the information or to speculate or aid another in speculating on the basis of the information. §39.03, Penal Code.

5.07. Disrupting Meeting or Procession.

It is unlawful for any person, with intent to prevent or disrupt a lawful meeting, to obstruct or interfere with the meeting by physical action or verbal utterance. §42.05, Penal Code.

5.08. Official Oppression.

It is unlawful for a City official to intentionally subject another to mistreatment or to arrest, detention, search, seizure, dispossession, assessment, or lien that he knows is unlawful, to intentionally deny or impede another in the exercise or enjoyment of any right, privilege, power, or immunity, knowing his conduct is unlawful, or to intentionally subject another to sexual harassment. §39.02, Penal Code.

5.09. Official Misconduct.

It is unlawful for a City official, with intent to obtain a benefit or with intent to harm another, to intentionally or knowingly violate a law relating to his office or employment or to misapply any thing of value belonging to the government that has come into his custody or possession by virtue of his office of employment. §39.01, Penal Code.

5.10. Nepotism.

It is unlawful for any City official to appoint, or vote for the appointment, to any office, employment or duty, of any person related within the second degree by affinity or within the third degree by consanguinity to the person so appointing or so voting, or to any other member of a board or governing body to which the person so voting or appointing may be a member, when the salary, fees, or compensation of such appointee is to be paid out of public funds. An exception is provided for persons who have been continuously employed in such office, employment or duty for the following periods prior to the election or appointment, as applicable, of the officer or member related to such employee in the prohibited degree: (1) at least thirty (30) days, if the officer or member is appointed, or (2) at least six (6) months, if the officer or member is elected.

When a person is allowed to continue in an office, position, or duty because of an exception above, the officer who is related to such person in the prohibited degree shall not participate in the deliberation or voting upon the appointment, reappointment, employment, confirmation, reemployment, change in status, compensation, or dismissal of such person, if such action applies only to such person and is not taken with respect to a bona fide class or category of employees. Art. 5996a, Tex. Rev. Civ. Stat. Ann.

5.11. Disclosure of Interest in Property.

It is unlawful for a City official, or a person elected, appointed, or employed as a City official but for which office such person has not yet qualified, to fail to make public disclosure of any legal or equitable interest he may have in property which is acquired with public funds, provided such official has actual notice of the acquisition or intended acquisition. The public disclosure required is the filing of an affidavit with the county clerks of all counties in which the property is located and wherein the official resides at least ten (10) days prior to the acquisition. Article 6252-9e, Tex. Rev. Cit. Stat. Ann.

6.0. Violations.

6.01. Any person violating any standard contained in Article 4.0 above shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof shall be fined in an amount not to exceed \$500. Each day of violation shall constitute a separate offense.

6.02. Penalties for violations of conduct described in Article 5.0 above are as set forth in the applicable statutory provision.”

Section 7.0. Publication; Effective Date; Open Meetings.

The City Secretary of the City of Tomball, Texas, is hereby directed to publish this Ordinance in the official newspaper of the City of Tomball, Texas, in compliance with the provisions of Section 6.14(A) of the City Charter, which publication shall be sufficient if it contains the caption of this Ordinance. This Ordinance shall be effective after the publication requirement of the City Charter is satisfied.

It is found and determined that the meetings at which this Ordinance was considered were open to the public, as required by Article 6252-17, V.A.T.C.S., and that advance public notice of the time, place, and purpose of the meetings was given.

Section 8.0. Severability. In the event any section, paragraph, subdivision, clause, phrase, provision, sentence, or part of this Ordinance or the application of the same to any person or circumstance shall for any reason be adjudged invalid and held unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, it shall not affect, impair, or invalidate this Ordinance as a whole or any part or provision hereof other than the part declared to be invalid or unconstitutional, and the City Council of the City of Tomball, Texas, declares that it would have passed each and every part of the same notwithstanding the omission of any such part thus declared to be invalid or unconstitutional, or whether there be one or more parts.

Section 9.0. Rights and Remedies; Repeal; Code of Ordinances.

All rights and remedies which have accrued in favor of the City under this chapter and its amendments shall be and are preserved for the benefit of the City.

All ordinances in force when this Ordinance becomes effective and which ordinances are inconsistent herewith or in conflict with this Ordinance are hereby repealed, insofar as said ordinances are inconsistent or in conflict with this Ordinance.

The provisions of this Ordinance shall be included and incorporated as an amendment to the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tomball, Texas, and shall be appropriately renumbered to conform to the uniform numbering system of the Code.

FIRST READING:

READ, PASSED, AND APPROVED AS SET OUT BELOW AT THE MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TOMBALL, HELD ON THE 3rd DAY OF May, 1993.

COUNCILMAN FORD	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN WILEY	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN MATHESON	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN OLDHAM	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN WOOD	<u>AYE</u>

SECOND READING:

READ, PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED AS SET OUT BELOW AT THE MEETING
OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TOMBALL, HELD ON THE 17th DAY OF May, 1993.

COUNCILMAN FORD	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN WILEY	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN MATHESON	<u>ABSENT</u>
COUNCILMAN OLDHAM	<u>AYE</u>
COUNCILMAN WOOD	<u>AYE</u>

/signed/ H. G. Harrington
H. G. (Hap) Harrington

ATTEST:

/signed/ Mary Reagan
Mary Reagan, City Secretary

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

/signed/ Mario L. Dell'Osso
Mario L. Dell'Osso
Olson & Olson
Attorneys for the City of Tomball