

## **City of Tomball Ethics Policy for City Council Members**

### **1. Purpose**

The purpose of this Ethics Policy for City Council members is to ensure that all public decisions made by elected officials are carried out with integrity, impartiality, and transparency, in compliance with local, state, and federal laws. This policy promotes trust in local government by preventing conflicts of interest, unethical behavior, and misuse of public resources while maintaining the City Council's duty to serve the best interests of all citizens as stated in Ordinance No. 1993-06; adopted and approved by Council May 17, 1993.

### **2. Ethical Principles**

City Council members shall uphold the highest ethical standards by:

- **Dedication to Honesty and Integrity:** Always acting with honor and integrity to earn the respect and trust of the citizens of Tomball.
- **Commitment to Public Service:** Always acting in the best interests of the people, ensuring fair, just, and efficient decision-making in all matters.
- **Avoiding Bias or Favoritism:** Ensuring decisions are made impartially, avoiding any action that could be perceived as favoritism or personal gain.
- **Accountability to the Public:** Ensuring decisions are made in open meetings, and any actions arising from executive sessions are disclosed and handled publicly when appropriate.

### **3. Standards of Conduct**

City Council members must adhere to the following guidelines to maintain public confidence in the integrity of their office:

#### **1. Grant of Special Consideration**

Council members shall not grant special treatment, consideration, or advantage to any individual, business, or group beyond what is available to all. Exceptions for specific programs or incentives must be explicitly authorized by the City Council.

#### **2. Appearances on Behalf of Private Interests**

Council members shall not represent or advocate for private interests before any City body (Council, boards, commissions) regarding matters over which they have discretionary authority. They shall also refrain from representing or participating in any litigation involving the City.

#### **3. Post-Office Representation**

Council members shall not represent private interests in any matter before the City within twelve (12) months of leaving their office if they have had direct involvement in the matter during their tenure.

#### **4. Misconduct**

Council members shall not accept any gift, favor, or benefit that could reasonably influence their official duties or that is offered with the intent to influence or reward their official conduct.

#### **5. Use of Confidential Information**

Council members must not disclose or use any confidential information gained through their position to further their personal interests or the interests of others.

#### **6. Outside Activities**

Council members shall avoid engaging in outside employment or activities that conflict with or are incompatible with their official duties. They must ensure that no outside business or employment influences their judgment in official matters.

#### **7. Use of City Property**

City property, including vehicles, equipment, and supplies, shall only be used for official City business and not for personal use unless expressly authorized by law, ordinance, or City policy.

#### **4. Conflicts of Interest**

Council members must comply with all state laws regarding conflicts of interest, particularly the following:

- **Disclosure:** Council members shall file an affidavit disclosing any substantial interest in a business entity or real property before voting on any matter related to that interest.
- **Recusal:** If a Council member has a substantial interest in a matter, they must abstain from participating in the decision-making process. As part of the recusal, the member will voluntarily leave the room during the discussion of the item to avoid influencing other voting members.

Substantial interests are defined by the Texas Local Government Code, including financial interests in business entities or real property that could be impacted by Council decisions.

#### **5. Acknowledgment**

All City Council members are required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of this Ethics Policy by signing the acknowledgment form. By doing so, they commit to upholding its standards of conduct throughout their term in office. Signed forms are available for viewing on the city's website.