

CITY OF GREEN BAY, WISCONSIN

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR

ELECTED OFFICIALS

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SECTION 1: The City of Green Bay Code of Conduct

It is the policy of the City of Green Bay to uphold, promote, and demand the highest standards of ethics from its elected officials. Accordingly, members of the Common Council and Mayor shall maintain the utmost standards of personal integrity, trustfulness, honesty, and fairness in carrying out their public duties, avoid any improprieties in their roles as public servants, comply with all applicable laws, and never use their City position or authority improperly or for personal gain.

The City of Green Bay and its elected officials share a commitment to ethical conduct and service to the City of Green Bay. This Code has been created to ensure that all officials have clear guidelines for carrying out their responsibilities in their relationships with each other, with the City staff, with the citizens of Green Bay, and with all other private and governmental entities.

SECTION 2: Elected Official Conduct with One Another

The Common Council and Mayor (hereinafter the "Council") have a responsibility to set the policies for the City. In doing so, certain types of conduct are beneficial while others are destructive. The Council has the responsibility to take the high road on Intra-Council conduct and to treat other Council members as they would like to be treated.

The Council is composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all choose to serve in public office and, therefore, have the obligation to preserve and protect the well-being of the community and its citizens. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged, and the Council must recognize that certain behavior is counterproductive, while other behavior will lead to success.

A. Use Formal Titles

The Council shall try to refer to one another formally during public meetings as Mayor, Council President, or Alderperson followed by the individual's last name.

B. Use Civility and Decorum in Discussions and Debate

Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of free democracy in action. Every Council member has the right to an individual opinion, which should be respected by the other Council members. Council members shall not be hostile, degrading, or defamatory when debating a contentious issue. Council members should assume the other members of the Council have the appropriate motives and interest of the public in mind and should not criticize differing opinions because they believe them to be lacking in judgment or improperly motivated.

However, this does not allow Council members to make belligerent, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or personally disparaging comments in public meetings or during individual

encounters. Shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening or demeaning will not be accepted. If a Council member is personally offended by the remarks of another Council member, the offended member should make a note of the actual words used and call for a "point of personal privilege" that challenges the other Council member to justify or apologize for the language used.

C. Honor the Role of the Chair in Maintaining Order

It is the responsibility of the Mayor, as Chair of the Council, to keep the comments of Council members on track during Council meetings. Council members should honor efforts by the Mayor to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the Mayor's actions, those objections should be voiced politely and with reason, following commonly recognized parliamentary procedure. Likewise, the same responsibilities vested in the Mayor for Council meetings, are vested in the Committee Chair for Committee meetings.

SECTION 3: Elected Official Conduct with City Staff

Governance of the City relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials who set policy and the City staff who implement and administer the Council's policies. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each other for the good of the community.

A. Treat all Staff as Professionals

Council members should treat all staff as professionals. Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Poor behavior toward staff is not acceptable. Council members should refer to staff by their title followed by the individual's last name in public meetings when first introduced.

B. Never Publicly Demean or Personally Attack an Individual Employee

Council members shall never demean or personally attack an employee regarding the employee's job performance in public. All employee performance issues shall be forwarded to the employee's supervisor or the City Attorney through private correspondence or conversation.

C. Do not Supersede Administrative Authority

Unless otherwise provided in this Code, neither the Council, nor any of its members, shall attempt to supersede the administration's powers and duties. Neither the Council nor any member thereof shall give orders to any subordinate of the Department Heads, either publicly or privately. Council members shall not attempt to unethically influence or coerce City staff concerning either their actions or recommendations to Council about personnel, purchasing, awarding contracts, selection of consultants, processing of development applications, or the granting of City licenses and permits.

Nothing in this section shall be construed, however, as prohibiting the Council while in open session from fully and freely discussing with or suggesting to the Department Heads anything pertaining to City affairs or the interests of the City.

D. Do not Solicit Political Support from Staff

Council members should not solicit any type of political support (financial contributions, display of posters or lawn signs, name on support list, collection of petition signatures, etc.) from City staff. City staff may, as private citizens within their constitutional rights, support political candidates, but all such activities must be done away from the workplace. Photographs of uniformed City employees shall not be used in political ads.

SECTION 4: Elected Official Conduct Towards the Public

In Public Meetings

Making the public feel welcome is an important part of the democratic process. No signs of partiality, prejudice, or disrespect should be evident on the part of individual Council members toward an individual participating in a public forum. Every effort should be made to be fair and impartial in listening to public testimony. The Council members are expected to demonstrate, both publicly and privately, their honesty and integrity, and to be an example of appropriate and ethical conduct. All Council members should convey to the public their respect and appreciation for the public's participation, input, and opinions.

A. Be welcoming to Speakers and Treat them with Care and Respect

For many citizens, speaking in front of Council is a new and difficult experience. Under such circumstances, many are nervous. Council members are expected to treat citizens with care and respect during public hearings. Council members should commit full attention to the speakers or any materials relevant to the topic at hand. Comments and non-verbal expressions should be appropriate, respectful, and professional.

B. Be Fair and Equitable in Allocating Public Hearing Time to Individual Speakers

The Mayor will determine and announce time limits on speakers at the start of the public hearing process. Generally, each speaker will be allocated five minutes, with applicants and appellants or their designated representative allowed more time. If many speakers are anticipated, the Mayor may shorten the time limit and/or ask speakers to limit themselves to new information and points of view not already covered by previous speakers.

Each speaker may only speak once during the public hearing unless the Council requests additional clarification later in the process. After the close of the public hearing, no additional public testimony will be accepted unless the Council reopens the public hearing for a limited and specific purpose.

C. Ask for Clarification, but Avoid Debate and Argument with the Public

Only the Mayor, not other Council members, should interrupt a speaker during a presentation. However, other Council members may ask the Mayor for a point of order if the speaker is off the

topic or exhibiting behavior or language the Council member finds disturbing. Questions directed by Council members to members of the public testifying should seek to clarify or expand information, not to criticize or debate.

D. Follow Parliamentary Procedure in Conducting Public Meetings

The City Attorney serves as advisory parliamentarian for the City and is available to answer questions or interpret situations according to parliamentary procedures. Final rulings on parliamentary procedure are made by the Mayor or Committee Chair, subject to the appeal of the full Council or Committee per Roberts Rules of Order. [GBMC 2.06(1)]

Outside Public Meetings

E. Make no Promise on Behalf of the City or Council in Unofficial Settings.

Council members will frequently be asked to explain a Council action or to give their opinion about an issue as they meet and talk with constituents in the community. It is appropriate to give a brief overview of City policy and to refer to City staff for further information. Overt or implicit promises of specific Council action or promises that City staff will take some specific actions shall be avoided.

Council members must ensure that in expressing their own opinions they do not mislead any listener into believing that their individual opinion is that of the entire Council, unless the Council has taken a vote on that issue and the Council member's opinion is the same as the decision made by the Council. Likewise, no Council member should state in writing that Council member's position in a way that implies it is the position of the entire City Council. A Council member has the right to state a personal opinion, and has the right to indicate that he/she is stating such as a member of the Council, but must always clarify that he/she is not speaking on behalf of the City or the Council unless authorized by the Council to do so.

SECTION 5: Elected Official Conduct with Public Agencies

A. Be Clear about Representing the City or Personal Interests
If a Council member appears before another governmental agency or organization to give a statement on an issue, the Council member must clearly state whether his or her statement reflects personal opinion or is the official stance of the City.

Council members must inform the Council of their involvement in an outside organization if that organization is or may become involved in any issue within the City's jurisdiction. If an individual Council member publicly represents or speaks on behalf of another organization whose position differs from the City's official position on any issue, the Council member must clearly communicate the organization upon whose behalf they are speaking and must withdraw from voting as a Council member upon any action that has bearing upon the conflicting issue.

B. Representation of the City on Intergovernmental Commissions and Other Outside Entities
Council members serving on committees or boards as a City representative for outside entities or agencies shall properly communicate with other Council members on issues pertinent to the City.

SECTION 6: Elected Official Conduct with Boards and Commissions

A. Limit Contact with Board and Commission Members to Questions of Clarification
Council members shall not contact a Board or Commission member to lobby on behalf of an individual, business, or developer for personal gain. Council members may contact Board or Commission members in order to clarify a position taken by the Board or Commission or a member thereof. Council members may respond to inquiries from Board and Commission members. Communications should be for information only.

B. Attendance at Board or Commission Meetings
Council members may attend any Board or Commission meeting, which are always open to any member of the public. However, they should be sensitive to the way their participation is viewed, especially if it is on behalf of an individual, business, or developer, which could be perceived as unfairly affecting the process.

C. Be respectful of Diverse Opinions
A primary role of Boards and Commissions is to represent many points of view in the community and to provide the Council with advice based on a full spectrum of concerns and perspectives. Council members must be fair and respectful to all citizens serving on Boards and Commissions.

SECTION 7: Elected Official Conduct with the Media

A. Expression of Positions on Issue

When communicating with the media, Council members should clearly differentiate between personal opinions and the official position of the City. Each Council member represents one vote of twelve and until a vote on any issue is taken, Council members' positions are merely their own.

B. Discussions Regarding City Staff

Council members should not discuss personnel issues or other matters regarding individual City staff in the media. Any issues pertaining to City staff should only be addressed directly to the Department Head or City Attorney.

SECTION 8: Enforcement of this Code of Conduct

A. Filing of Complaints

Any person who believes a Elected official, in his/her official capacity, has violated a requirement, prohibition, or guideline set out herein may file a sworn complaint with the City Clerk identifying (1) the complainant's name, address and contact information; (2) the name and position of the City official who is the subject of the complaint; (3) the nature of the alleged violation, including the specific provision of the Code allegedly violated, and (4) a statement of facts constituting the alleged violation and the dates on which, or period of time during which, the alleged violation occurred.

Attached to the complaint the person making the complaint shall provide all documents or other materials in the complainant's possession that are relevant to the allegation, a list of all documents or other materials relevant to the allegation that are available to the complainant but not in the complainant's possession, and a list of all other documents or other materials relevant to the allegation but unavailable to the complainant, including the location of the documents if known, and a list of witnesses, what they may know, and information to contact those witnesses.

The complaint shall include an affidavit at the end of the complaint stating that the "information contained in the complaint is true and correct, or that the complainant has good reason to believe and does believe that the facts alleged are true and correct and that they constitute a violation of the Code." If the complaint is based on information and belief, the complaint shall identify the basis of the information and belief, including all sources, contact information for those sources, and how and when the information and/or belief was conveyed to the complainant by those sources. The complainant shall swear to the facts by oath before a notary public, or before the City Clerk. The notary public or City Clerk shall verify the signature.

If a complaint filing is determined to be complete by the City Clerk, the City Clerk shall forward the matter to the Ethics Board. If the complaint filing is determined incomplete, the City Clerk shall notify the complainant of the deficiency.

B. Time for Filing

A complaint under the Code must be filed no later than one year from the date of discovery of the alleged violation. However, anyone having information on which a complaint is based is encouraged to file the complaint as soon as the information is obtained so that immediate action may be taken by the Council or the appropriate staff member or agency. The delay in filing a complaint may be considered in determining the sanction to be imposed.

C. False or Frivolous Complaints

A person who knowingly makes a false, misleading, or unsubstantiated statement in a complaint is subject to criminal prosecution for perjury and possible civil liability. If, after reviewing a complaint, it is determined that a sworn complaint is groundless and appears to have been filed in bad faith or for the purpose of harassment, or that intentionally false or malicious information has been provided under penalty of perjury. A City official who seeks to take civil action regarding any such complaint shall do so at his or her expense.

D. Complaint Procedure

(1) Hearing on Complaint- If the City Clerk determines that the complaint is complete he/she shall forward it to the Ethics Board to set a hearing to investigate the allegations within 45 days after filing of the complaint. The Ethics Board shall issue a summons signed by the City Clerk, commanding the individual so complained of to appear before the Ethics Board on a day and at a place named in such summons and show cause as to why the individual should not be subject to penalties and sanctions. Such summons shall be served at least seven days before the time in

which such person is commanded to appear, and shall include the complaint and any supporting documentation.

(2) Failure to Respond to Summons- If the individual charged does not appear as required by the summons, the Ethics Board may consider such failure to appear in its recommendation to Council. The Council may subsequently consider such failure to appear in its decision to issue penalties or sanctions.

(3) Parties Counsel- If the person charged appears as required by the summons and denies the complaint; both the complainant and the person charged may produce witnesses, cross-examine witnesses, and be represented by counsel. The person charged shall be provided a written transcript of the hearing at his or her expense.

(4) Recommendations- At the conclusion of the evidentiary hearing, the Ethics Board, following deliberation in open or executive session, shall submit a report to the Council, including findings of fact, conclusions of law, and a recommendation as to what action, if any, the Council should take into account with respect to the individual charged. The Ethics Board shall provide the complainant and the individual charged with a copy of the report. Either the complainant or the person charged may file an objection to the report and shall have the opportunity to present arguments supporting the objection to the Council.

(5) Council Action- The Council shall determine whether the arguments shall be presented orally, in writing, or both. The Council shall consider and take action on the recommendation of the Ethics Board within 60 days after the Ethics Board adjourns the hearing. Upon review of the report and following a discussion, if the Council, by motion, concludes that there is a violation of the Code, the Council may impose a sanction or penalty. The Council may adopt, reject, or modify the recommendation made by the Ethics Board. In resolving the complaint, the totality of the circumstances shall be taken into consideration, including the intent of the person accused of the wrongdoing.

(6) Penalties and Sanctions Policy - It is the intent of the Council to educate and, when necessary, discipline Council members who violate this Code. Discipline shall be progressive, from the least punitive to the most punitive measures, unless the Council believes that the progressive discipline does not provide the appropriate sanction because of the gravity of the offense, or because the Council does not believe the sanction would deter future misconduct. In all instances, the totality of the circumstances shall be taken into consideration in resolving the matter, including the intent of the one accused of wrongdoing.

(7) Possible Penalties and Sanctions- Possible sanctions may include:

a. An informal censure by the Council, which would only be made as part of a motion in a public meeting. [GBMC 2.06(1)]
b. A formal censure by the Council, which would be made by motion in a public meeting and then published in the City newspaper. [GBMC 2.06(1)]
c. Mandatory community service. [Wis. Stat. 62.11(3)(e)]
d. Attendance at counseling or mediation sessions. [Wis. Stat. 62.11(3)(e)]
e. Imposition of a dollar fine of up to $500.00. [Wis. Stat. 62.11(3)(a) & (c)]

f. Any other sanction available by law.

The imposition of any of these penalties or sanctions will require an affirmative vote of 3/4 of the Council, other than an informal or formal censure which shall only require a majority vote of the Council. A violation of the penalties imposed by Council may constitute grounds for removal from office under Wisconsin Statute §17.12(1)(a).

(8) Notice- The municipal clerk shall give notice of the Council's decision to the person charged.