

7.04.090 - Duties of the ethics board.

- (a) Upon receipt at the city clerk's office of a notarized complaint in writing, which shall state the name of the elected or appointed official or employee alleged to have committed a violation of this chapter and which shall set forth the particulars thereof, the city clerk or designee shall distribute a copy of the complaint along with a copy of the code of ethics ordinance to the respondent within ten working days (i.e., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays). The city clerk or designee also shall send a copy of the complaint to each member of the ethics board. The information contained in the verified complaint shall be kept confidential until a proper disposition of the case occurs.
- (b) The board shall meet in closed session and determine whether the complaint, if true, may constitute a violation of the chapter. If four or more of the members of the board vote to dismiss the verified complaint, a formal dismissal action adopted in open session shall be filed with the city clerk and a copy sent to the complainant and the respondent. If four or more members do not vote to dismiss, the action shall proceed as provided in subsection (c) of this section.
- (c) If the action is not dismissed under subsection (b) of this section, the board shall make preliminary investigations with respect to the alleged violation of the ethics chapter. No preliminary investigation of the activities of any elected or appointed official or employee may be initiated unless such official or employee is notified in writing. The notice shall state the nature and purpose of this preliminary investigation. Information gathered during the preliminary investigation shall be kept confidential until a finding is made by the board.
- (d) If, after the preliminary investigation, three or more of the members of the board vote in open session that no probable cause exists, the board shall issue a formal finding to that effect and dismiss the case. A copy of the formal finding shall be filed with the city clerk and a copy distributed to the complainant and the respondent.
- (e) If the board is unable to come to a conclusion on the subject of probable cause, due to abstentions or the voting of "present," the board shall have further discussion and vote again. If the stalemate continues, the board shall treat it as a dismissal and proceed as in subsection (d) of this section.
- (f) If, after the preliminary investigation, three or more of the members of the board vote that there is probable cause that a violation took place, the board shall file formal findings to that effect with the city clerk and proceed toward the conduct of a hearing. The vote shall be taken in open session.
- (g) In the case of a probable cause finding, the board shall send a notice of due process rights and a notice of hearing on the matter to the respondent. The complainant shall also be notified of the hearing.
- (h)

The board shall then conduct a hearing on the verified complaint, which hearing shall be held not more than thirty days after such finding of probable cause. The board shall give the respondent at least twenty days notice of the hearing date. Such hearings shall be at open session unless the respondent petitions for a hearing closed to the public. The rules of criminal evidence shall apply to such hearings. All evidence considered by the board, including certified copies of records and documents, shall be fully offered and made part of the record. Every party shall be afforded adequate opportunity to rebut or offer countervailing evidence.

- (i) During all stages of the proceeding conducted under this section, the elected or appointed official or employee whose activities are under investigation shall be entitled to be represented by counsel of his or her own choosing.
- (j) The respondent or his/her attorney shall have an opportunity to examine all documents and records to be used at the hearing under subsection (g) of this section at a reasonable time before the date of the hearing; as well as during the hearing, to bring witnesses, to establish all pertinent facts and circumstances, and to question or refute any testimony or evidence, including opportunity to confront and cross-examine adverse witnesses.
- (k) The board shall have the power to compel the attendance of witnesses and to issue subpoenas granted other boards and commissioners under Section 885.01(3) of the Wisconsin Statutes.
- (l) Determination. Upon conclusion of the hearing the board shall make a decision agreed to by at least four members. It shall file the decision in writing within ten working days after the vote, signed by at least four participating board members stating findings of fact, conclusions of law concerning the propriety of the conduct of the elected or appointed official or employee, and if appropriate, referring the matter to the city council or other proper authority with a recommendation for censure or other disciplinary action. A member of council censured may be subject to recall pursuant to Section 9.10, Wisconsin Statutes, or any other legal process authorized by law. If four or more members are not able to reach an agreement, the complaint shall be dismissed.

(Ord. 1203(2/5/91) § 2(part), 1991).