

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WYLIE, TEXAS, REPEALING ORDINANCE NO. 2014-19, CREATING A CODE OF CONDUCT; PROVIDING FOR A PENALTY FOR THE VIOLATION OF THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING FOR REPEALING, SAVINGS, AND SEVERABILITY CLAUSES; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE OF THIS ORDINANCE; AND PROVIDING FOR THE PUBLICATION OF THE CAPTION HEREOF.

WHEREAS, the City of Wylie ("City" or "Wylie") desires for all of its citizens to have confidence in integrity, independence, and impartiality of those who act on their behalf in government;

WHEREAS, the City of Wylie previously adopted Ordinance No. 2014-19, establishing a Code of Ethics; and

WHEREAS, the City of Wylie desires to create a Code of Conduct and repeal Ordinance No. 2014-19, as of the Effective Date of this Ordinance.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WYLIE, TEXAS that:

Section 1. Creation of Code of Conduct

The City of Wylie creates this Code of Conduct (the "Code") and repeals Ordinance No. 2014-19, as of the Effective Date of this Ordinance.

Section 2. Policy

The proper operation of democratic local government requires that City Officials be independent, impartial and responsible to the people; that local government decisions and policy be made in the proper channels of the government structure; that public office not be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its City Officials. It is the policy of the City of Wylie that its City Officials meet the standards of conduct established in this Ordinance.

Section 3. Definitions

Administrative Board means any board, commission, or other organized body: (1) that has, by law, final decision-making authority on matters within its jurisdiction and that is either: (a) established under the City Charter, by City ordinance, or by appointment by the City Council or the Mayor; or (b) whose members are all council members or are appointed or confirmed by the City Council; or, (2) created as a non-profit economic development corporation by the City Council under the authority of the Development Corporation Act of 1979, as amended.

Advisory Board means a board, commission, or other organized body other than an Administrative Board, that was created by an act of the City Council whose members are appointed or confirmed by the City Council or by an act of the Mayor and are charged with making recommendations to the City Council on matters within its jurisdiction.

City Official or Official means the Mayor; a member of the City Council, members of Administrative Boards, and Advisory Boards, appointed by the Mayor or City Council.

Economic Interest means a legal or equitable property interest in land, chattels, and intangibles, and contractual rights having a value of more than fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000.00). Service by a City Official as an Officer, director, advisor, or otherwise active participant in an educational, religious, charitable, fraternal, or civic organization does not create for that City Official an "Economic Interest" in the property of the organization.

Official Action means:

- (1) Any affirmative act (including the making of a recommendation) within the scope of, or in violation of, an Official's duties; or
- (2) Any failure to act, if the Official is under a duty to act.

Section 4. Covered officials

The rules of conduct contained below apply generally to City Officials unless otherwise specified.

Section 5. City Officials required to comply with both state and local law

When a City Official's conduct is regulated by a provision of this Ordinance and a similar provision of state law, and it is possible to comply with the requirements of both, a City Official shall comply with both.

Section 6. Education

The City shall provide training and educational materials to City Officials on their obligations under state law and this Ordinance. Such training shall include at least one formal classroom session in each calendar year. All City Officials shall annually attend the formal training session offered by the City or equivalent training sessions conducted by the City Attorney, the Texas Municipal League, or similar organizations. The City also shall prepare and distribute written materials on the subject to each City Official at the time of his or her election or appointment to office.

Section 7. Standards of Conduct for City Officials

(A) Appearance on behalf of private interests of others

- (1) A member of the City Council shall not appear before the City Council, an Administrative Board or an Advisory Board for the purpose of representing the interests of another person or entity. However, a member of the City Council may, to the extent as otherwise permitted by law, appear before any such body to represent the member's own interests or the interests of the member's spouse or minor children.
- (2) A City Official who is not a member of the City Council shall not appear before the body on which he or she serves for the purpose of representing the interests of another person or entity, and shall not appear before any other body for the purpose of representing the interests of another person or entity in connection with an appeal from a decision of the body on which the City Official serves. However, the City Official may, to the extent as otherwise permitted by law, appear before any such body to represent the City Official's own interests or the interests of the City Official's spouse or minor children.

(B) Misuse and disclosure of confidential information

- (1) It is a violation of this Code for a City Official to violate Texas Penal Code § 39.06 (Misuse of Official Information).
- (2) A City Official shall not disclose to the public any information that is deemed confidential and/or privileged under any federal, state, local law, or Council rules, unless authorized by law.

(C) Restrictions on political activity and political contributions

- (1) No City Official shall use state or local funds or other resources of the City to electioneer for or against any candidate, measure, or political party.
- (2) A City Official shall not directly or indirectly induce, or attempt to induce, any City employee:
 - a. To participate in an election campaign (beyond merely encouraging another to vote), to participate in a political fundraising activity, or to contribute to a political candidate or political committee;
 - b. To engage in any other activity relating to a particular candidate, party or issue that is not directly related to a legitimate function of City government; or
 - c. To refrain from engaging in any lawful political activity after working hours.

(D) Use of cell phones or electronic devices by appointed or elected officials during meetings of Administrative Boards and Advisory Boards, of which they are a member

City Officials shall refrain from communicating on cell phones or electronic devices during a City meeting at which the City Official is attending as a member of that Administrative Board or Advisory Board, except as provided below. However, City Officials may access agendas and information relevant to a past, current, and/or future agenda. Cell phones shall be turned off or put on vibrate during meetings. Should it be necessary to use a cell phone, City Officials shall step down from the dais. Text messaging, emails, and other electronic or written communications shall not be sent during a meeting unless it is an emergency.

(E) Conflicts of Interest

A City Official must not use, or attempt to use, his or her official position or office, or take or fail to take any action, or influence, or attempt to influence, others to take or fail to take any action, in a manner which he or she knows, or has reason to believe, may result in a personal, financial benefit, or Economic Interest not shared with a substantial segment of the City's population, for any of the following persons or entities:

- (1) The Official;
- (2) The Official's relative, or the employer or business of the relative;
- (3) A person with which the Official has a financial or business relationship, including but not limited to:
 - a. A business of the Official, or the Official's spouse or domestic partner, or someone who works for such outside employer or business; or
 - b. A client or substantial customer.
- (4) A nongovernmental civic group, social, charitable, or religious organization of which the Official, or the Official's spouse or domestic partner, is an officer or director; or
- (5) A public or private business entity for which the Official, or his or her relative

serves as a director, general partner, or officer, or in any other policy-making position except when so appointed to the position by the City.

(F) Compliance with Texas Local Government Code Chapters 171 and 176

It is a violation of this Code for a City Official to violate Texas Local Government Code, §§ 171 and 176.

(G) Prohibitions - Granting Special Privileges and Use of City Supplies and Equipment

It is a violation of this Code for a City Official:

- (1) To use his official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or others;
- (2) To 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 the granting of fringe benefits to City employees as a part of their contract of employment or as an added incentive to the securing or retaining of employees; or
- (3) To use City supplies, equipment or facilities for any purpose other than the conduct of official City business, unless otherwise provided for by law, ordinance or City policy.

Section 8. City Council Review of Complaints

(A) Purpose

The City Council shall review Complaints regarding alleged violation(s) of the Code ("Complaints"), review applicable waivers regarding the alleged violation(s), and determine if a Complaint should be dismissed under the criteria, as outlined herein.

(B) Qualifications

City Council members may not participate in the Complaint review process and/or hearing if the member is the subject of the Complaint, or the individual filing the Complaint ("Complainant") or the individual who is the subject of the Complaint ("Respondent") is related to the City Council member within a prohibited level of affinity or consanguinity.

(C) Consultation with City Attorney

The City Attorney is authorized to issue to any City Official, upon reasonable request, formal written opinions regarding the applicability of the provisions of the conduct laws to an action the City Official is considering taking in the future. The City Council may consult with the City Attorney or a designee of the City Attorney regarding legal issues which may arise in connection with this section and may request advisory assistance from the City Attorney in conducting hearings during any stage of the process.

(D) Reviewing Attorney

- (1) The City Council shall approve a list of three (3) independent private attorneys recommended by the City Attorney who may individually serve as a "Reviewing

Attorney” for Complaints filed under this section. The Reviewing Attorney shall be chosen by the City Manager by lot.

- (2) To be qualified, the Reviewing Attorney must be an attorney in good standing with the State Bar of Texas, have been licensed to practice in the State of Texas for at least ten (10) consecutive years, and have at least five (5) years of experience working with municipalities in Texas. The Reviewing Attorney may not be:
 - a. A City Council member or City of Wylie employee, or the spouse or domestic partner of a City Council member or City of Wylie employee;
 - b. An elected public official; or
 - c. A candidate for elected public office at the time of their service.

(G) Complaint Process

- (1) Filing Complaints. Any citizen of Wylie who believes that there has been a violation of the Code may file a sworn Complaint with the City Secretary. The Complaint shall:
 - a. Identify the person or persons who allegedly committed the violation;
 - b. Provide a statement of the facts on which the Complaint is based;
 - c. To the extent possible, identify the rule or rules allegedly violated; and
 - d. Be sworn to in the form of an affidavit and be based on personal knowledge of the affiant and be subject to the laws of perjury.
 - e. The Complainant may also recommend other sources of evidence that the Reviewing Attorney should consider and may request a hearing.
- (2) Notice / Timelines / Representation
 - a. Days, as used herein, is defined as City business days.
 - b. All timelines provided herein must be followed, subject only to extensions approved in writing by the City Manager based on the individual circumstances surrounding the review of the Complaint.
 - c. A Complaint must be filed with the City Secretary within one (1) year of the date the violation is alleged to have occurred. The City Secretary shall not accept or process any Complaint that is filed more than one (1) year after the date of the violation alleged in the Complaint. Complaints not filed within this timeframe are barred and will be dismissed as untimely.
 - d. Within three (3) business days of receiving a Complaint, the City Secretary shall provide a copy of the full Complaint to the City Official who is the subject of the Complaint (“Respondent”), the City Attorney, the City Manager, and the Reviewing Attorney.
 - e. If the City Manager is not available or is implicated, the City Secretary will provide copies, as outlined herein.
 - f. The Reviewing Attorney and/or City Council shall allow any person who is the subject of a Complaint to designate a representative if he or she wishes to be represented by someone *else* and to present evidence, according to rules adopted by the City Council.
- (3) Frivolous Complaint
 - a. For purposes of this section, a “frivolous complaint” is a sworn Complaint that is groundless and brought in bad faith or groundless and brought for the purpose of harassment.
 - b. By a vote of at least two-thirds of those present, the City Council may order a Complainant to show cause why the Complaint filed by the Complainant is not frivolous.
 - c. In deciding if a Complaint is frivolous, the City Council will be guided by Rule 13 of the Texas Rules Civil Procedure, and may also consider:
 - i. The timing of the sworn Complaint with respect to when the facts supporting the alleged violation became known or should have

- become known to the Complainant, and with respect to the date of any pending election in which the Respondent is a candidate or is involved with a candidacy, if any;
- ii. The nature and type of any publicity surrounding the filing of the sworn Complaint, and the degree of participation by the Complainant in publicizing the fact that a sworn Complaint was filed;
- iii. The existence and nature of any relationship between the Respondent and the Complainant before the Complaint was filed;
- iv. If Respondent is a candidate for election to office, the existence and nature of any relationship between the Complainant and any candidate or group opposing the Respondent;
- v. Any evidence that the Complainant knew or reasonably should have known that the allegations in the Complaint were groundless; and
- vi. Any evidence of the Complainant's motives in filing the Complaint.
- d. Notice of an order to show cause shall be given to the Complainant, with a copy to the Respondent, and shall include:
 - i. An explanation of why the Complaint against a Respondent appears to be frivolous; and
 - ii. The date, time, and place of the hearing to be held under this section.
- e. Before making a determination that a sworn Complaint against a Respondent is frivolous, the City Council shall hold a hearing at which the Complainant may be heard and accompanied by his or her representative.
- f. By a record vote of at least a simple majority of those present after the hearing under this section, the City Council may determine that a Complainant filed a frivolous Complaint and may recommend sanctions against that Complainant.
- g. Before imposing a sanction for filing a frivolous Complaint, the City Council shall consider the following factors:
 - i. The seriousness of the violation, including the nature, circumstances, consequences, extent, and gravity of the violation;
 - ii. The sanction necessary to deter future violations; and
 - iii. Any other matters that justice may require.
- h. The City Council may impose the following sanctions:
 - i. A civil penalty of not more than \$500;
 - ii. Imposition of attorneys' fees incurred by Respondent;
 - iii. Any other sanction permitted by law; and/or
 - iv. The City Council may notify the appropriate regulatory or supervisory agency for their appropriate action. This may include a referral for criminal prosecution if the facts so warrant.
- (4) Review of Complaint
 - a. Within seven (7) business days of receiving the Complaint from the City Secretary, the Reviewing Attorney shall issue a written advisory opinion, taking one of the following actions:
 - i. Dismiss the Complaint if:
 - 1. The deadline for filing a Complaint has passed;
 - 2. The accused is not subject to the Code;
 - 3. The conduct alleged is not regulated under the Code;
 - 4. The Complaint is not completed as defined herein or signed and sworn to by the person filing the Complaint in the form

of an affidavit;

5. The person who is the subject of the Complaint had obtained a waiver permitting the conduct; or
6. Determines the facts, if taken as true, do not constitute a violation of the Code.

ii. Dismissal of a Complaint under this provision is final and non-appealable.

- b. If the Reviewing Attorney does not dismiss the Complaint, as provided herein, the Reviewing Attorney shall refer the Complaint and the advisory opinion to the City Council for review under this provision. The Reviewing Attorney's referral of the Complaint and advisory opinion to the City Council does not mean that any of the allegations of the Complaint are true or false or that any current City Official has or has not violated the Code.
- c. If the Complaint is referred to the City Council for review, the Reviewing Attorney shall also copy his or her advisory opinion to the Complainant, the City Manager, and the City Attorney within seven (7) business days of receipt of the Complaint. For Complaints not dismissed by the Reviewing Attorney, and subsequently referred to the City Council, the notice to the Respondent will include notice of the Respondent's option to file a written response to the advisory opinion with the City Secretary within seven (7) business days of receipt of the opinion from the Reviewing Attorney. The City Secretary will forward the Respondent's written response to the City Council with the Complaint and the Reviewing Attorney's advisory opinion.

(5) City Council Review / Hearing

- a. The City Council may dismiss a Complaint if:
 - i. The alleged violation is a minor or de minimis violation;
 - ii. The Complaint *is*, on its *face*, frivolous, groundless, or brought for purposes of harassment;
 - iii. The matter has become moot because the Respondent is no longer an elected official or Administrative Board or Advisory Board member; or
 - iv. The Respondent came into voluntary compliance.
- b. The City Council will conduct its review of a Complaint not dismissed pursuant to paragraph 3.a.i. of this section at meetings which are open to the public.
- c. The rules shall require the dismissal and the reason for dismissal to be submitted by the City Council in writing and available to the public within [NUMBER] ([NUMBER]) days of considering the Complaint under paragraph 4.b. above. A dismissal under this provision by the City Council is final and non-appealable.
- d. If the City Council does not dismiss the Complaint, the City Council will consider the Complaint within [NUMBER] ([NUMBER]) business days of receiving the Complaint.
- e. The City Secretary shall notify in writing the City Council, the Complainant and the Respondent of the date, time and location of a hearing on the Complaint. Such written notice shall be sent to the Complainant and the Respondent by email, mail, and/or certified mail, return receipt requested. If the hearing is not held within 45 business days after receipt of the Complaint, the City Secretary shall notify both the Complainant and the Respondent of the reasons for the delay.
- f. All hearings shall be conducted in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, Tex. Government Code Chapter 551. The City Council shall have the right to hold the hearing in open or closed session as permitted by applicable

laws and regulations. Additionally, the City Council shall establish time limits and other rules of procedure for a hearing and relating to the participation of any person in the hearing. Subject to the rules of procedure established by the City Council for the hearing:

- i. Both the Complainant and the Respondent shall have the right to a full and complete hearing with the opportunity to call witnesses and present evidence on his/her behalf.
- ii. All proceedings of the hearing shall be recorded by audio recording if a court reporter is not used, or reduced to writing by a court reporter if present for the hearing. If a court reporter is not used, the audio recording shall be filed with the City Secretary within such time as specified by the City Council. If a court reporter is used, the court reporter's transcript of the hearing shall be filed with the City Secretary within such time as is specified by the City Council.
- iii. The procedures established by the City Council shall allow the Complainant and the Respondent sufficient time to examine and respond to any evidence not presented to them in advance of the hearing.
- iv. The rules shall require the City Council to schedule the hearing at a time that is reasonably convenient to both the person who submitted the Complaint and the subject of the Complaint.
- g. The City Council shall consider the Complaint, the Respondent's response (if any), and the advisory opinion of the Reviewing Attorney, and evidence submitted in the course of the hearing. The final action, decision, or vote of the council with regard to the Complaint shall be taken or made only in a meeting that is open to the public. The City Council shall use a preponderance of the evidence standard to determine whether a violation occurred. Only members of the City Council present for the hearing may participate in its decision.
- h. The City Council shall consider, when it makes findings and recommendations, the severity of offense; the presence or absence of any intention to conceal, deceive, or mislead; whether the violation was deliberate, negligent, or inadvertent; and whether the incident was isolated or part of a pattern.
- i. The City Council shall dismiss a Complaint if the Complainant does not appear at the hearing and if, in the opinion of the City Council, it would be unfair to the Respondent to proceed without the Respondent having the opportunity to question and address the issues raised in the Complaint.
- j. The decision of the City Council is final and non-appealable.

(H) Findings / Consequences

- (1) City Officials deemed to be in violation of the Code are subject to consequences, including but not limited to the following:
 - a. Censure - If the violation did not involve a matter of public concern and the City Council finds that a violation of this Code occurred, the City Council may issue a censure of the City Official, to the extent permitted by law.
 - b. Letter of Notification – The City Council may issue a letter of notification if the City Council finds that a violation of this Code was unintentional. A letter of notification must advise the City Official of any steps to be taken to avoid future violations.
 - c. Letter of Admonition – The City Council may issue a letter of admonition if the City Council finds that a violation of this Code was minor, but where the circumstances call for a more substantial response than a letter of

notification.

- d. Reprimand – To the extent permitted by law, City Council may issue a reprimand if the City Council finds that a violation of this Code was not minor and was committed intentionally or through reckless disregard.
- e. Removal from Leadership Position – In addition to, or in place of, the consequences outlined above, the City Council may remove a City Official from any leadership position held by that City Official as a member of the body in which the City Official serves.
- f. Removal from Administrative Boards and Advisory Boards – In addition to, or in place of, the consequences outlined above, the City Council may remove an appointed City Official from Administrative Boards and Advisory Boards.

Section 9. Other Obligations

This Code is cumulative of, and supplemental to, applicable state and federal laws and regulations. Compliance with the provisions of this Code shall not excuse or relieve any person from any obligation imposed by state or federal law regarding conduct, financial reporting, lobbying activities, or any other issue addressed herein.

Even if a City Official is not prohibited from taking official action by this Code, action may be prohibited by duly promulgated personnel rules, which may be more stringent.

Section 10. Effective Date

This Code shall take effect on [DATE], following its adoption and publication as required by law (the “Effective Date”).

Section 11. Distribution and Training

- (A) Every person shall be provided reasonable opportunity to review this Code as a condition of their candidacy and/or application to be a City Official. At the time of application for a position of City Official, every applicant shall be furnished with a copy of this Code.
- (B) Individuals seated as City Officials on the Effective Date of this Ordinance shall be bound by it and shall sign a written acknowledgement of receipt and understanding of this Code within 30 days of the Effective Date. All City Officials elected, appointed or retained following the Effective Date of this Code shall sign a written acknowledgement of receipt and understanding of this Code before performing any of the duties or functions of the City Official's position.
- (C) The City Attorney or City Manager as designated by the City Council shall develop educational materials and conduct educational programs for the City Officials on the provisions of this Code, the City Charter, and Chapters 171 and 176 of the Texas Local Government Code. Such materials and programs shall be designed to maximize understanding of the obligations imposed by these conduct laws.

Section 12. Severability

If any provision of this Code is found by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, or if the application of this Code to any person or circumstances is found to be invalid or unconstitutional, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the other provisions or applications of this Code which can be given effect without the invalid or unconstitutional provision or application.

**DULY PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY
OF WYLIE, TEXAS, on this ___ day of _____, 2021.**

Matthew Porter, Mayor

**ATTESTED AND
CORRECTLY RECORDED:**

Stephanie Storm