

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

AGENDA ITEM XI



**CITY OF FRANKLIN
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

City Council meeting September 2015

From: Elizabeth Dragon – City Manager

Subject: Recommendations from Legislative Committee regarding updates to Code of Conduct

Recommended Motion: “I move to approve the legislative committee proposed changes to the Code of Conduct.”

Discussion: The code of conduct was originally approved in April 2002 and updated in April 2008. It is provided to newly elected and appointed board members. The Legislative committee met on August 18, 2015, and reviewed the document. The committee recommended some additional wording to the preamble and to allow the City manager to wordsmith the additional phrase. Tonight’s copy includes this new phrase:

“We remember that we are, first and foremost, servants of the people and treat them with the highest respect and dignity in our public meetings and outside of those meetings. Further, Franklin’s public officials should educate themselves on the requirements of the law and ordinances to ensure that they are never using their position to avoid either.”

In addition, the committee recommended the document be reviewed annually (next review to be February 2016).

Attachments/Exhibits: 1. Code of Conduct with proposed changes

CITY OF FRANKLIN

CODE OF CONDUCT

FOR

ELECTED OFFICIALS

AND

APPOINTED BOARD

MEMBERS

Date Approved: April 1, 2002

Revised: September 8, 2015

Review Date: February 2016

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PREFACE

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to assist Elected officials and appointed board members in performing their duties for the public. The Code of Conduct is a guide for the members to follow during their term in office. This Code does not reduce the authority granted to Elected officials and appointed board members by the laws of the United States and the State of New Hampshire, as well as the Charter for the City of Franklin.

We remember that we are, first and foremost, servants of the people and treat them with the highest respect and dignity in our public meetings and outside of those meetings. Further, Franklin's public officials should educate themselves on the requirements of the law and ordinances to ensure that they are never using their position to avoid either.

The Code of Conduct will be distributed to all City Council and board members annually in January, and new board members as they are appointed during the year.

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ATTENDANCE

Elected officials and appointed board members should make every effort to notify the Mayor, or City Manager (in the case of the City Council), or the Chairman of their respective board, if they will be unable to attend or will be late to a meeting. In the event a member needs to leave a meeting, while the meeting is in session, the member should receive acknowledgement of their departure from the presiding officer.

CONDUCT AS A PUBLIC OFFICIAL

Public service is a public trust, requiring elected officials and appointed board members to place loyalty to the constitution of the United States and the New Hampshire Constitution, federal and state laws, city ordinances and Charter provisions and ethical principles above private gain for themselves or others.

Elected officials and appointed board members shall not, except as otherwise permitted by ordinance, solicit or accept any gift, service or favor from any person or entity seeking official action from, doing business with, or conducting activities regulated by the City of Franklin, whose interests may be affected by the

performance or non-performance of the elected official's or appointed board member's duties.

Elected officials and appointed board members shall never discriminate unfairly by the dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether for remuneration or not; and never accept favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed as influencing the performance of their public duties.

Elected officials and appointed board members shall put forth honest effort in the performance of the public duties, remaining impartial and responsible to the public.

Elected officials and appointed board members shall make no promises of any kind binding upon the duties of their office, since an elected official or appointed board member only have authority to make binding decisions, when voting at a legally posted meeting of their board or committee, when a quorum is in attendance.

Elected officials and appointed board members shall not interfere with the powers and duties of the City Manager, as set forth in the Franklin City Charter, or interfere with the powers and duties of the Superintendent of Schools, as set forth by the laws in

the State of New Hampshire. Interference by elected officials or appointed board members with the City Manager or Superintendent's powers and duties could constitute immediate forfeiture of their office and criminal charges.

CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

At City meetings a councilor or board member shall be recognized to speak by the Mayor or chair or in his/her absence the person appointed by the Mayor/Chair. The behavior of an elected official/board member both in public and in private should reflect the trust placed in them as leaders of the community.

The goal of a Franklin elected official or board member is to provide the highest quality leadership for all its citizens, to be fiscally responsible and to be dedicated while listening to the needs of others.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Elected officials and appointed board members of the City of Franklin shall avoid conflicts of interest when conducting City business – even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

State law demands that City officials, and board members, not participate in any matter in which they

(or a member of their family) have a personal interest, which may directly or indirectly influence the impartial performance of their duties. In such instances, officials shall recuse themselves from discussion and decision-making.

If an elected or appointed office holder insists upon participation when there is a clear and serious conflict of interest, the Franklin City Council will consider this misconduct and may take corrective action allowable under State law and the City Charter.

Recusal means to remove oneself completely from all further participation in the matter. In the setting of a meeting, an official or board member who has been recused shall immediately leave the meeting room or seat themselves with other members of the public who are present. The person recused shall not participate in further discussions, unless it is clearly stated for the record that such comments are made only as a member of the public. A recused person may not deliberate or vote on the matter in question.

Immediate uncertainty about conflicts and recusal can be resolved by majority vote of the board or committee. Any such vote would be non-binding, but can assist the official's decision regarding participation.

LEGAL COMMUNICATIONS

Designate legal counsel shall attend any meetings of the Council when requested by the Mayor or City Manager. Any member of the Council (through the City Manager when possible) may call upon Counsel for an oral or written opinion to decide any question of law or parliamentary procedure.

All boards in the City of Franklin shall direct all communications to Counsel through the Chairperson of their respective boards, and the Chairperson shall go through the City Manager when possible.

Legal communications received from the City Attorney are not public information and will not be shared with the public unless authorized by the City Manager.

NON-PUBLIC SESSION

The meetings of all governmental bodies are open to the public, in accordance with the State of New Hampshire "Right-To-Know Law", RSA 91-A. There are occasions when governmental bodies need to conduct business in non-public sessions, as allowed under the provisions of RSA 91-A. The intent of non-public sessions, or "non-meetings" to meet with legal council are to allow for the governing bodies to

discuss confidential information, that could affect someone's reputation, or releasing the information would make the action taken ineffectual.

The confidential information discussed, or actions taken in non-public sessions are to remain confidential. No elected official or appointed board member in the City of Franklin shall violate the confidentiality of non-public sessions by publicizing, gossiping or discussing the information acquired in the course of official duties without a legitimate reason to do so. No elected official or appointed board member in the City of Franklin shall use any confidential information acquired by virtue of the individual's official position for personal benefit, or for the benefit of any other person or business. This does not apply to information, which is readily available to the general public.

The misuse of confidential information by any elected official or appointed board member in the city of Franklin could lead to the forfeiture of their office, or even criminal charges.

SALE AND USE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY

Elected officials shall protect and conserve City property and services and shall not use them for other than authorized purposes or for personal benefit and or gain. No elected or appointed official shall devote any City property or labor to private use, except as may be provided by Law or Ordinance.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

All officials and board members of the City of Franklin are entitled to operate in an environment free of sexual harassment. History has shown that public entities are far from immune to this illegal behavior. This City is committed to preventing such misconduct. To accomplish these goals, the City's policy against sexual harassment shall be clearly communicated to all officials and board members. In addition, this policy will be reinforced through a complaint investigation procedure.

All complaints of sexual harassment or retaliation shall be promptly and thoroughly investigated by the City Manager or by the Mayor or his/her appointed designee when necessary. While it can never be completely guaranteed, particular care shall be taken in the course of investigations to protect confidentiality.

Should it be determined through investigation that an elected or appointed City official has committed sexual harassment; their immediate removal from office may be considered by the City Council. The reason for removal shall be brought to the attention of the Superior Court, who holds jurisdiction over removal proceedings.

CODE REVIEW

The Code of Conduct can be amended any time by the City Council. The Code should be reviewed and approved by the City Council ~~every three years~~ **annually**. ~~The next review and approval year will be 2005.~~