

Chapter 9 CODE OF ETHICS

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9.01. Declaration of Policy and Ethics Principles.

(1) Policy. It is declared that high moral and ethical standards among county public officials and county employees are essential to the conduct of free government; that the county believes that a code of ethics for the guidance of county public officials and county employees will help them avoid conflicts between their personal interests and their public responsibilities, will improve standards of public service and will promote and strengthen the faith and confidence of the people of this county in their county public officials and county employees. It is the intent of the county that in its operations the board shall protect to the fullest extent possible the rights of individuals affected.

(2) Ethics Principles. The proper operation of democratic government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial, and responsible to the people; that decisions and policy be made in the best interests of the people, the community, and the government; that public office not be used for personal gain; and that the public has confidence in the integrity of its government. In recognition of these goals, this code of ethics shall apply to all candidates for county office, elected and appointed officers and employees of the county, and members of county boards and commissions. Nothing contained herein is intended to deny to any individual those rights granted by the United States Constitution, the constitution and laws of the State of Wisconsin, or labor agreements negotiated with certified employee bargaining representatives. The purpose of this code is to establish standards of conduct to assist public officials and employees in avoiding those acts or actions that are incompatible with the best interests of county government and the people of Milwaukee County. Further this code provides the process by which determinations are made that public officials or employees have acted in ways which are incompatible with the best interests of county government and of the people of Milwaukee County.

- (a) Ethical Principles. The ethical county public official or employee should:
- Properly administer the affairs of the county.
 - Promote decisions that only benefit the public interest.
 - Actively promote public confidence in county government.
 - Preserve and protect all funds and other properties of the county.
 - Conduct and perform the duties of the office diligently and promptly dispose of the business of the county.
 - Maintain a positive image to pass constant public scrutiny.
 - Evaluate all decisions so that the best service or product is obtained at a minimal cost without sacrificing quality and fiscal responsibility.
 - Inject the prestige of the office into everyday dealings with the public, employees and associates.
 - Maintain a respectful attitude toward employees, other public officials, colleagues and associates.
 - Effectively and efficiently work with governmental agencies, political subdivisions and other organizations in order to further the interest of the county.
 - Faithfully comply with all laws and regulations applicable to the county and impartially apply them to everyone.
- (b) The ethical county public official or employee should not:
- Engage in outside interests that are not compatible with the impartial and objective performance of his or her duties.
 - Improperly influence or attempt to influence other officials to act in his or her own benefit.
 - Accept anything of value from any source that is offered to influence his or her action as a public official.
- (c) The ethical county public official or employee accepts the responsibility that his or her mission is that of servant and steward to the public.

9.02. Definitions.

(1) "Anything of value" means any money or property, favor, service, payment, advance, forbearance, loan, or promise of future employment, business, or other consideration having a value greater than twenty five dollars (\$25.00), but does not include compensation and expenses paid by the county, fees and expenses which are permitted and reported under sec. 9.14 of the Code, political contributions which are reported under ch. 11, Wis. Stats., or hospitality extended for a purpose unrelated to county business by a person other than an organization.

(1m) "Appointed official" means any member appointed to a county commission or board.

(2) "Associated," when used with reference to an organization, includes any organization in which an individual or a member of his/her immediate family is a

director, officer, or trustee, or who has a significant fiduciary relationship or an individual who owns or controls, directly or indirectly, and severally or in the aggregate, at least ten (10) percent of the outstanding equity.

(3) "Board" means the Ethics Board.

(4) "Business" means any corporation, partnership, proprietorship, firm, enterprise, franchise, association, organization, self-employed individual, or any other legal entity that engages in profit-making activities.

(5) "Conflict of Interest" means a public official's or employee's action or failure to act in the discharge of his or her official duties which could reasonably be expected to produce or assist in producing a substantial economic or personal benefit for such official, his or her immediate family or an organization with which he or she is associated.

(6) "Elected official" means any person holding an elected county office.

(7) "Employee" means any person holding an office or position in the classified service of the county or any person holding a non-classified office or position, except elected officials and appointed officials.

(8) "Gift" means the payment or receipt of anything of value without valuable and sufficient consideration.

(9) "Immediate family" means an individual's:

(a) spouse; and

(b) child, parent or sibling or in-law or step-relative of the same degree who receives, directly or indirectly, more than one-half of his/her support from the individual or from whom the individual receives, directly or indirectly, more than one-half of his /her support.

(10) "Investigation Request" means a written and signed statement from a person stating that there are specific acts or omissions by an identified person subject to the Code from unverified sources which appear prima facie to constitute a violation of the Code and for which the requestor is seeking that an investigation be undertaken to determine whether a matter should be pursued under the Verified Complaint proceedings. The investigation request must remain confidential until disclosure is permitted or required by the Code unless the subject of the complaint requests in writing that it be made part of the public record.

(11) "Lobbying" means the practice of attempting to influence legislative or administrative action by oral or written communication with any public official.

(12) "Ministerial action" means an action that an individual performs in a given state of facts in a prescribed manner in obedience to the mandate of legal authority, without

regard to the exercise of the individual's own judgment as to the propriety of the action being taken.

- (13) "Organization" means any stock or non-stock corporation, partnership, proprietorship, firm, enterprise, franchise, incorporated or unincorporated association, trust or other legal entity other than an individual or body politic.
- (14) "Privileged information" means information obtained under government authority which has not become a part of the body of public information.
- (15) "Probable cause" means information sufficient to support a reasonable belief that an identified person has or may have violated one or more provisions of this Code.
- (16) "Public official" means any elected official or appointed official.
- (17) "Reporting period" means any 6-month period beginning with Jan. 1 and ending with June 30 or beginning with July 1 and ending with Dec. 31 or annual period beginning January 1 through December 31.
- (18) "Significant fiduciary relationship" means owning or controlling, directly or indirectly:
 - (a) At least ten (10) percent of the outstanding stock or stock of any business corporation having a cost or market values of at least five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00), or
 - (b) An interest of at least ten (10) percent or five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) of any organization.
- (19) "Resources" means county supplies, services, property, or facilities not available to all citizens.
- (20) "Verified Complaint" means a written statement from a person, given under oath and subscribed before a notary public or other official authorized to administer oaths, alleging specific acts or omissions constituting a violation of the Code by an identified person subject to the Code. The Verified Complaint must remain confidential until disclosure is permitted or required by the Code unless the subject of the complaint requests in writing that it be made part of the public record.

9.03. Financial disclosure.

- (1) COUNTY OFFICIALS, CANDIDATES OR EMPLOYEES REQUIRED TO FILE STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTEREST: All county elected and appointed officials, candidates for elected county offices, and county employees, whose duties and responsibilities, performed for or on behalf of the county or any board or commission thereof, include the awarding or execution of contracts for the purchase of supplies, services, materials, and/or equipment; the construction of public works; and/or the sale or leasing of real estate or who may be designated by the Ethics Board, shall file statements

of economic interests as set forth in this section. In the case of members of boards and commissions, the Ethics Board may, in its discretion, require the filing of economic interest statements by members of boards and commissions. Upon failure of any such person to file the requested statement within a period of thirty (30) days from the date requested in writing by the Ethics Board, such person shall be subject to those penalties applicable to others who fail to file such statements as required by this chapter.

(2) **FILED WITH COUNTY ELECTION COMMISSION:** Statements of economic interests shall be filed with the county election commission on the date of the filing of nomination papers:

- (a) By all county elected officials when initially a candidate for office; and
- (b) By all candidates for county elected offices.

(3) **FILE WITHIN 30 DAYS OF EMPLOYMENT OR TAKING OFFICE:** Upon entering county employment, elected office, or appointment as a public official, persons required to file statements of economic interests shall do so within thirty (30) days after commencement of employment or of taking oath of office.

(4) **ANNUAL STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTEREST FILING REQUIREMENT:**

(a) Each person required to file a statement of economic interests shall file updated statements with the Ethics Board within thirty (30) days after the closing of each calendar year.

(b) **QUARTERLY FINANCIAL DISCLOSURE REQUIRED FOR PENSION BOARD:** Each member of the county pension board and each employee of the pension board who is a county official or employee, shall complete and file with the Ethics Board a quarterly financial disclosure statement no later than the last day of the month following the end of each calendar quarter or any portion thereof in which he or she was a member or employee of the county pension board. Such financial disclosure statements shall be in the form prescribed by the Ethics Board and shall identify the date and nature of any purchase, sale, put, call, option, lease, or creation, dissolution or modification of any economic interest made during the quarter for which the report is filed and disclosure of which would be required by this code.

(c) **NO COMPENSATION UNTIL FILING:** A person required to file a statement of economic interests under this section shall not receive his/her salary or other compensation until he/she files such statement of economic interests.

(d) **DISCLOSURE BY SPOUSE:** County elected officials, appointed officials, candidates, and employees required to file statements of economic interests, as required by section 9.03, shall include and file statements of a spouse's employment and financial assets and liabilities.

(5) **AFFIDAVIT OF COMPLIANCE:** Within thirty (30) days after the close of each calendar year, all county employees and public officials referred to in section 9.03(1) shall file with the Ethics Board a sworn affidavit regarding compliance with statements of economic interests provisions found in this chapter. The sworn affidavit shall be a form

provided by the Ethics Board as approved by the county board and shown as Appendix A to this chapter.

(6) **UPDATING RECOMMEND LIST OF INDIVIDUALS COVERED:** Each department head in the service of the county shall submit to the executive director of the Ethics Board an updated list of the job titles and position numbers of those incumbents within his/her jurisdiction. He/she shall indicate on the list whom, in his/her opinion, should be required to file statements of economic interests and sworn affidavits.

9.04. Form of Statement.

(1) The person filing a statement of economic interests, as required under this chapter, shall file the statement on a form prescribed by the Ethics Board, with the concurrence of Corporation Counsel and the Department of Audit, and shall include the following information applicable as of the 15th day of the month preceding the month in which the statement is required to be filed:

(a) The identity of every significant fiduciary relationship, organization associated with and the offices and directorships held by him/her or his/her spouse;

(b) The identity and amount of bonds, debentures, or debt obligations of a municipal corporation or other corporation, in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00), held by him/her or his/her spouse;

(c) The name of any creditor to whom he/she or his/her spouse owes five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) or more and the amount owed;

The identity of each significant fiduciary relationship and the identity and amount of property, bonds, debentures, or debt obligations of a municipal corporation or other corporation in excess of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00) transferred by him/her or his/her spouse to a member of his/her immediate family during the two (2) calendar years preceding the filing of the statement;

(e) The identity of real property in the county or contiguous county in which the person or his/her spouse holds an interest and the nature of the interest held.

Real property exempted from reporting includes:

1. The principal residence of such person or his/her spouse; and
2. Real property for which the pro rata share of such person or his/her spouse is less than ten (10) percent of the outstanding shares or is less than an equity value of five thousand dollars (\$5,000.00).

(f) The identity of each non-stock corporation:

1. Which such person or his/her spouse holds an office or position and the title of the office or position; and
2. Which is doing business with the county or operating in the county.

9.05. Standards of Conduct.

(1) **NO PERSONAL OR ECONOMIC INTEREST IN DECISIONS AND POLICIES:** The county board hereby reaffirms that a county elected official, appointed

official or employee holds his/her position as a public trust, and any effort to realize personal gain through official conduct is a violation of that trust. This chapter shall not prevent any county elected official, appointed official or employee from accepting other employment or from following any pursuit which does not interfere with the full and faithful discharge of his/her duties to the county. The county board further recognizes that in a representative democracy, the representatives are drawn from society and, therefore, cannot and should not be without all personal and economic interest in the decisions and policies of government; that citizens who serve as public officials or public employees retain their rights as citizens to interests of a personal or economic nature; that standards of ethical conduct for public employees and public elected and appointed officials need to distinguish between those minor and inconsequential conflicts which are unavoidable in a free society and those conflicts which are substantial and material; and that county elected officials, appointed officials or employees may need to engage in employment and/or professional or business activities, other than official duties, in order to support their families and to maintain a continuity of professional or business activity or may need to maintain investments. However, the code maintains that such activities or investments must not conflict with the specific provisions of this chapter.

- (2) (a) **NO FINANCIAL GAIN OR ANYTHING OF SUBSTANTIAL VALUE:** Except as otherwise provided or approved by the county board, no county public official or employee shall use his/her public position or office to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for the private benefit of himself/herself or his/her immediate family, or for an organization with which he/she is associated. This paragraph does not prohibit a county elected official from using the title or prestige of his/her office to obtain campaign contributions that are permitted by and reported as required by ch. 11, Wis. Stats.
- (b) **NO PERSON MAY OFFER ANYTHING OF VALUE:** No person shall offer or give to any public official or employee, directly or indirectly, and no public official or employee shall solicit or accept from any person, directly or indirectly, anything of value if it could reasonably be expected to influence the public official's or employee's vote, official actions or judgment, or could reasonably be considered as a reward for any official action or inaction or omission by of the public official or employee. This section does not prohibit a public official or an employee from engaging in outside employment.
- (c) **NO SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST OR BENEFIT:** Except as otherwise provided in paragraph (1.), no public official or employee shall:
1. Take any official action substantially affecting a matter in which the public official, employee, a member of his/her immediate family, or an organization with which the public official or employee is associated has a substantial financial interest.
 2. Use his/her office or position in a way that produces or assists in the production of a substantial benefit, direct or indirect, for the public official, employee, members of the public official's or employee's immediate family either separately or together, or an organization with which the public official or employee is associated.

- (d) **NO DISCLOSURE OF PRIVILEGED INFORMATION:** No county public official or employee shall use or disclose privileged information gained in the course of, or by reason of, his/her position or activities which in any way could result in financial gain for himself/herself or for any other person.
- (e) **NO USE OF PUBLIC POSITION TO INFLUENCE OR GAIN UNLAWFUL BENEFITS, ADVANTAGES OR PRIVILEGES:** No county public official or employee shall use or attempt to use his/her public position to influence or gain unlawful benefits, advantages, or privileges for himself/herself or others.
- (f) **NO OFFER OF GIFTS OR ANYTHING OF VALUE:** No county public official shall offer or give anything of value to a member or employee of a county department or entity, while that member or employee is associated with the county department or entity, and no member or employee of a department shall solicit or accept from any such person anything of value from a county official or employee.
- (g) **LIMITS ON CONTRACTS WITH COUNTY:** No county public official or employee and no business with which he/she or his/her spouse has a significant fiduciary relationship or any organization with which he/she or his/her spouse is associated shall enter into any contract with the county unless that contract has been awarded through a process of public notice and competitive bidding in conformity with applicable federal and state statutes and county ordinances.
- (h) **LIMITS ON LEASE OF REAL ESTATE WITH COUNTY:** No county public official or employee and no business in which that county public official or employee has a ten (10) percent or greater interest shall enter into a lease of real property with the county, except that the county board, upon a publicly filed and considered request, shall waive this subsection when it is in the best interests of the county.
- (i) **NO LIMITS ON LAWFUL PAYMENTS:** Paragraph (c) does not prohibit an elected official from taking any action concerning lawful payment of salaries or employee benefits or reimbursement of actual and necessary expenses, or prohibit an elected official from taking official action with respect to any proposal to modify a county ordinance.
- (j) **NO SOLICITATION OF AT-WILL EMPLOYEES:** No elected county official shall knowingly solicit a campaign contribution from any "at-will employee" defined as an employee who is not under union or labor contract with the county, who is hired for an indefinite term or who is under an independent contract with the county or its subparts or who can be discharged or terminated at any time for any nondiscriminatory reason.
- (k) **NO CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS TO COUNTY OFFICIALS WITH APPROVAL AUTHORITY:** No person(s) with a personal financial interest in the approval or denial of a contract or proposal being considered by a county department or with an agency funded and regulated by a county department, shall make a campaign contribution to any county elected official who has approval authority over that contract or proposal during its consideration. Contract or proposal consideration shall begin when a contract or proposal is submitted directly to a county department or to an agency funded or regulated by a county department until the contract or proposal has reached final disposition, including

adoption, county executive action, proceedings on veto (if necessary) or departmental approval. This provision does not apply to those items covered by sec. 9.14 unless an acceptance by an elected official would conflict with this section. The language in sec. 9.05(2)(k) shall be included in all Requests for Proposals and bid documents.

(1) LIMITS ON HONORARIUM FEES OR EXPENSE

REIMBURSEMENTS: No county public official or employee shall accept or solicit any honorariums, fees or expense reimbursements except in accordance with sec. 9.14.

(3) LIMITS ON CONTACT:

(a) LIMITS ON CONTACT WITH FORMER COUNTY ASSOCIATES: No former county public official or employee, for twelve (12) months following the date on which he/she ceases to be a county public official or employee, shall, for compensation, on behalf of any person other than a governmental entity, make any formal or informal appearance before or try to settle or arrange a matter by calling, writing, or conferring with, any county public official, officer or employee of the department with which he/she was associated as a county public official or employee.

(b) LIMITS ON CONTACT WITH JUDICIAL OR QUASI-JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS: No former county public official or employee for twelve (12) months following the date on which he/she ceases to be a county public official or employee, shall for compensation on behalf of himself/herself or any person other than a governmental entity, make any formal or informal appearance before, or try to settle or arrange a matter by calling, writing, or conferring with, any county public official, officer or employee of a department in connection with any judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding, application, contract, claim, or charge which was under the former public official's or employee's responsibility as a county public official or employee.

(c) LIMITS ON CONTACTS WITH JUDICIAL OR QUASI-JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS WHERE PERSONALLY PARTICIPATED: No former county public official or employee shall, whether for compensation or not, act on behalf of any party other than the county in connection with any judicial or quasi-judicial proceeding, application, contract, claim, or charge in which the former public official or employee participated substantially as a public official or employee.

(d) CONSIDERATION OF EXEMPTIONS: The Ethics Board shall accept and review written requests by former appointed officials for an exemption from the prohibitions of (3). Such exemption requests must be heard and deliberated during a properly convened open session of an Ethics Board meeting and must be included in a written Ethics Board opinion stating the reason(s) that the former appointed official should be exempt from the otherwise prohibited conduct.

9.06 Political Activity

- (1) **CAMPAIGN PROHIBITIONS:** No county public official or employee at his or her place of employment while engaged in his or her official duties shall, for the apparent purpose of seeking to elect or defeat a person seeking elective office:
 - (a) Wear or display any campaign material.
 - (b) Distribute any campaign literature.
 - (c) Solicit contributions for any candidate.
 - (d) Engage in political campaign activities for any candidate.
 - (e) Circulate nomination papers for elected office.

- (2) **COERCION PROHIBITED:** No county employee shall in any way coerce or attempt to coerce contributions or services from subordinate employees in support of a political party or a candidate for elective office or for or against a referendum position, or retaliate against or reward an employee for refraining from participating in any political activity.

- (3) **PROHIBITION ON REWARDS:** No county elected official or candidate for a county elected office shall promise an appointment to any county position as an apparent reward for any political activity.

9.07. Ethics Board: Composition, Appointment, Staffing and Meetings.

- (1) The Ethics Board shall be composed of:
 - (a) **SIX MEMBERS:** six (6) adult residents of the county;
 - (b) **NOMINATING AUTHORITIES:** the nominating authorities shall be the following entities:
 1. President of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)
 2. Board Chair of Public Policy Forum
 3. Board Chair of Greater Milwaukee Committee
 4. President of the Milwaukee Bar Association
 5. Board Chair of Inter-Faith Conference of Greater Milwaukee
 6. President of the Board of the League of Women Voters of Greater Milwaukee

The nominating authorities are leaders of longstanding, broad-based Milwaukee County entities interested in good government and institutional integrity. Ethics Board members shall reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of Milwaukee County, serve the residents of Milwaukee County according to their oaths of office and act independently from the nominating and appointing authorities.
 - (c) **COMPLETION OF TERMS:** Upon the effective date of this Code, current Ethics Board sitting members shall complete their respective current terms, to preserve continuity and experience on the Ethics Board.
 1. Any sitting member at the time of the effective date of this Code is eligible for reappointment to the Ethics Board by the nominating entities.

2. Any sitting member at the time of the effective date of this Code, if nominated by an appointing entity for a six-year term, would not be subject to the limitations of (g) for that initial nomination.
- (d) **SOLICITATION OF NOMINATIONS:** The county executive shall solicit nominations from the nominating authorities for term appointments according to the order in which they are listed above.
- (e) **NOMINATION PROCEDURE:** Each nominating authority, upon request of the county executive, shall submit the names of two (2) nominees to the county executive who shall then select and submit the name of one of the nominees as an appointee to the county board for confirmation.
1. The county executive shall notify a nominating entity 180 days before a term is expiring which the nominating entity is to fill.
 2. The nominating entity shall submit a nomination(s) to the county executive 120 days before the expiration of the term of the impending vacancy.
 3. In the event of a vacancy during a member's term, the county executive will provide immediate notification of the vacancy.
 - i. The notification shall be provided to the nominating entity which nominated the member who is leaving the Ethics Board.
 - ii. The nominating entity must submit nominations of two (2) names to the county executive within 30 days.
 - iii. If the mid-term vacancy is of a Ethics Board member appointed prior to the effective date of this Code, then the county executive will notify the nominating entity which is charged with the next nomination, as provided in sec. 9.07(1)(d).
 - iv. A resume of each nominee for appointment to the Ethics Board shall be submitted to the county executive. The county executive shall submit the name of his/her appointee to every member of the county board at least thirty (30) days prior to county board action on confirmation of the nominee for appointment.
 - v. Upon receiving the nomination from the nominating entity, the Ethics Board's Executive Director shall provide to the appointee all pertinent information concerning Ethics Board member's authority and duties and Ethics Board operations.
- (f) **SIX-YEAR TERM:** Except as provided in sec. 9.07(1)(c), a member shall be nominated and appointed for a term of six (6) years.
- (g) **LIMIT OF TWO CONSECUTIVE TERMS:** A member shall be limited to two (2) consecutive terms but in no event shall a member be appointed for more than twelve (12) consecutive years.
- (h) **ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR:** The Chair and vice chair shall be elected annually at the Annual Meeting, pursuant to sec. 9.07(3)(b). In the event of a vacancy in the office of chair, the Ethics Board shall elect the Chair in a properly convened meeting and in open session pursuant to sec. 9.07(3)(c)(2).
- (i) **MEMBER CANNOT BE COUNTY PUBLIC OFFICIAL OR EMPLOYEE:** A member shall not hold any other public office or employment in the government of the county while serving on the Ethics Board.

(j) **CANDIDATES FOR PUBLIC OFFICE MUST RESIGN:** A member of the Ethics Board who officially files as a candidate for public office while serving on the Ethics Board must resign his/her position on the Ethics Board or be subject to removal by the Ethics Board.

(k) **REMOVAL OF BOARD MEMBERS ONLY FOR CAUSE:** Removal from the Ethics Board shall be for cause, according to the rules and procedures of the Ethics Board

(2) **APPOINTMENT OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL:** The county executive shall appoint, subject to confirmation by the county board, an Executive Director who shall perform such duties as the Ethics Board assigns to him/her. The county board shall provide such additional personnel as may be required in the administration of this chapter and execution of the duties of the Ethics Board.

(3) (a) **FOUR (4) MEETINGS PER YEAR:** The Ethics Board shall meet at least four times per year.

(b) **FEBRUARY ANNUAL MEETING:** A February meeting will be designated as the Annual Meeting of the Ethics Board.

(c) **METHOD OF CALLING MEETINGS:** All mandatory or additional meetings of the Ethics Board:

1. shall be called by the Chair; or

2. by a minimum of three (3) members of the Ethics Board upon written request to the Executive Director.

(4) **AFFIRMATIVE VOTE FOR ACTION** Any action by the Ethics Board shall require an affirmative vote of four (4) members.

9.08. Duties of the Ethics Board.

(1) **AUTHORITY:** The Ethics Board shall serve as the primary authority for interpreting the Code, for applying the Code to written requests for Advisory Opinions and Formal Opinions, for deciding the outcome of Verified Complaints, for conducting meetings and for establishing policies and procedures for internal operations except for the provisions of sec. 9.09(3) relating to the Corporation Counsel.

(2) **WRITTEN RULES OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES:** The Ethics Board shall adopt such written rules of policy and procedure to execute its duties and obligations under this chapter. The Ethics Board rules shall be made available for public inspection and reference.

(3) **FORMS:** The Ethics Board shall prescribe and make available forms for use under this chapter.

(4) **RECORDS FOR PUBLIC INSPECTIONS:** The Ethics Board shall accept and file and have available for public inspection any information related to the purposes of this chapter which is supplied by any person, in addition to the information required by this

chapter excepting that which this chapter provides is not to be made available for public inspection or scrutiny.

(5) **PRESERVE STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS FOR SIX YEARS:** The Ethics Board shall preserve the statements of economic interests filed with the Ethics Board for a period of six (6) years from the date of receipt in such form as will facilitate document retention.

(6) **REPORT OF INQUIRY TO INDIVIDUAL WHO FILED STATEMENT OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS:** The Ethics Board shall report in writing to the individual who filed a statement of economic interests, as soon as possible, the identity of any individual seeking to copy or obtain information from a statement of economic interests. This subsection does not apply to the Ethics Board or to any individual acting on behalf of the Ethics Board.

(7) **FILE AND COMMUNICATE DETERMINATIONS:** The Ethics Board shall file and publicly communicate the determinations of Verified Complaints and formal opinions, according to the provisions of sec. 9.09.

(8) **RETAIN ADVISORY OPINIONS:** The Ethics Board shall retain Advisory Opinion requests and opinions, according to the provisions of sec.9.09.

(9) **PREPARE AND FILE ANNUAL REPORT:**

(a) The annual report shall be prepared and approved by the Ethics Board no later than April 1 of each succeeding year.

(b) The Annual Report shall be submitted to the county executive and the county board.

(c) The Annual Report will report on the Ethics Board's actions, compliance with prescribed duties, operations and activities during the preceding calendar year, including a summary of its determinations, a synopsis of each Advisory Opinion issued under sec. 9.09 of the code, a synopsis of each finding by the Ethics Board that a violation of the Code was committed, and the current and complete text of all opinions issued by the Ethics Board.

(d) Such synopses shall be redacted to remove names and any other information that would disclose identifying information of any individual county public official or employee seeking the Advisory Opinion or any person or entity discussed in the Advisory Opinion.

(10) **PUBLIC EDUCATION:** Assist and cooperate with other county entities in the public education regarding the Code, amendments to the code, and advisory and formal opinions issued by the Ethics Board.

(11) **RETAIN EXPERTS:** Retain outside counsel, hearing examiners, and other experts as needed after solicitation of recommendations from corporation counsel and upon such contract for services approved for form and content by corporation counsel.

(12) CONDUCT INVESTIGATIONS: Conduct investigations, order hearings of Verified Complaints and hear cases of Verified Complaints.

9.09. Advisory Opinion, Formal Opinions, Corporation Counsel Opinions, Investigation Requests and Verified Complaints.

(1) ADVISORY OPINION.

(a) REQUEST FOR ADVISORY OPINION: A request may be made of the Ethics Board for an Advisory Opinion:

1. By any individual, either personally or on behalf of an organization or governmental body, regarding the propriety of any matter to which the person is or may be engaged in as provided by sec. 9.09.
2. By any appointing authority, with the consent of a prospective appointee to a county office or position of employment in county service, regarding the propriety of any matter in which the prospective appointee is or may be engaged, as provided under sec. 9.09.
3. Or an advisory opinion may be requested from the Governmental Accountability Board by the Corporation Counsel as provided in sec. 9.09(3).

(b) ADVISORY OPINION REQUESTS CLOSED FROM PUBLIC INSPECTION: Requests for Advisory Opinions, records obtained or filed in connection with requests for such Advisory Opinions and Advisory Opinions rendered by the Ethics Board shall be closed to public inspection.

(c) The Ethics Board shall review a request for an Advisory Opinion and may advise a person or organization making the request.

1. Advisory Opinion requests shall be in writing.
2. Advisory Opinion requests are not “public records” pursuant to Ch. 19, Wis. Stats., unless the person or organization requesting the Advisory Opinion or the person who is the subject of the Advisory Opinion requests, in writing, that the matter be made part of the public record.
3. It is prima facie evidence of intent to comply with this chapter when a person refers a matter to the Ethics Board and abides by the Ethics Board’s Advisory Opinion, if the material facts are as stated in the written opinion request.
4. The Ethics Board’s deliberations and actions upon such requests shall be in properly noticed meetings and held in closed session, pursuant to state statute, unless the person or organization requesting the Advisory Opinion or the person who is the subject of the Advisory Opinion requests, in writing, that the matter be heard and deliberated in open session.
5. No member or employee of the Ethics Board may make public the identity of the individual requesting an Advisory Opinion or of individuals or organizations mentioned in the opinion.
6. Advisory Opinion shall be written and provided to the requesting party. The written Advisory Opinion and the records obtained or filed in

connection with requests for such Advisory Opinion shall be filed with the Ethics Board and closed to public inspection.

7. This provision shall not be interpreted to preclude the Ethics Board from compiling or publishing summaries of Advisory Opinions that are redacted to remove any information that would disclose the identity of any individual or organization.

(2) **FORMAL OPINIONS:** The Ethics Board may issue a Formal Opinion interpreting the Ethics Code or applying the Ethics Code to postulated facts without a request from a county public official or employee. This process allows the Board to interpret the application of the Code to a universal concern and to address an issue that might not otherwise be raised in an Advisory Opinion request, Investigation Request or a Verified Complaint. Formal Opinions serve as an educational tool for Code compliance and a means for persons to avoid engaging in an activity that might otherwise become a matter for the Investigation Request or the Verified Complaint processes.

(a) If the Ethics Board determines that a Formal Opinion would provide useful guidance on an issue of broad concern or assist individuals who are subject to the Code to comply with its terms, the Ethics Board shall adopt a resolution to that effect which identifies the issue the Ethics Board intends to address.

(b) Upon adoption of such a resolution, the Ethics Board shall discuss that issue in a properly noticed meeting pursuant to the Open Meetings law.

(c) Formal Opinions shall be written, filed with the Ethics Board, included in the Annual Report and public record and provided for public inspection.

(d) The records obtained or filed in connection with Formal Opinion resolutions shall be filed with the Ethics Board and available for inspection.

(3) **CORPORATION COUNSEL OPINIONS:**

(a) A county public official or employee or other person may request in writing that the Ethics Board obtain an Advisory Opinion from the Corporation Counsel regarding the application of this chapter to a given set of circumstances.

(b) The Ethics Board may request in writing an Advisory Opinion from Corporation Counsel.

(c) Any written Advisory Opinion requested of Corporation Counsel under this section is subject to the provisions and process of sec. 9.09 (1).

(d) The Ethics Board may authorize the Corporation Counsel to act in its stead in instances where delay is of substantial inconvenience or detriment to the requesting party. In such instances it is prima facie evidence of intent to comply with this chapter when the requesting party abides by the Corporation Counsel's written Advisory Opinion, if the material facts are as stated in the written opinion request.

(e) The Corporation Counsel may request an advisory opinion under sec. 5.05(6a) of Wis. Statutes from the Governmental Accountability Board when requested by the Ethics Board or County Board.

(4) **INVESTIGATION REQUESTS AND VERIFIED COMPLAINTS:**

- (a) **INVESTIGATION REQUESTS AND VERIFIED COMPLAINTS IN WRITING:** Investigation Requests shall be in writing and signed. The Ethics Board shall review them. Verified Complaints shall be in writing and sworn to as provided in sec. 9.02(20). The Ethics Board shall review them.
- (b) **TIMELY FILING REQUIRED:** Pursuant to Ch.19, Wis. Stats., when an Investigation Request or Verified Complaint is filed it does not become part of the public record. No action may be taken on any Verified Complaint that is filed later than 3 years after a violation of the Code is alleged to have occurred. On-going alleged violations that began earlier than three years after being alleged in an Investigation Request or Verified Complaint may be reviewed to the point of origination, included in the hearing on the Verified Complaint, and be found to be violations of the Code.
- (c) **REFERRAL TO THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY:** After filing with the Ethics Board, a copy of the Verified Complaint shall be provided to the District Attorney. The Ethics board will not act on the Verified Complaint if a delay is requested by the District Attorney. A copy of any Investigation Request shall be provided to the District Attorney after the Investigation Request is approved by the Ethics Board. The Ethics Board shall delay further action on the Investigation Request if requested by the District Attorney.
- (d) **RELEASE BY DISTRICT ATTORNEY:** The Ethics Board may review the Verified Complaint when released by the District Attorney.
- (e) **NOT PUBLIC RECORDS:** Investigation Requests and Verified Complaints are not “public records” unless the person who is the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint requests, in writing, that the matter be made part of the public record.
- (f) **NOTIFICATION TO ACCUSED:** within 10 days of receiving a Verified complaint or approving an Investigation Request, the board shall forward to the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint a copy of it and a general statement of the applicable code provisions with respect to such Investigation Request or Verified Complaint unless a delay is requested by the District Attorney.
- (g) **COMPLIANCE WITH OPEN MEETING LAW:** The Ethics Board’s deliberations and actions upon such Investigation Request or Verified Complaint shall be in properly noticed meetings and held in closed session, pursuant to state statute, unless the person who is the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint requests, in writing, that the matter be heard and deliberated in open session.
- (h) **NO DISCLOSURE OF IDENTITY:** No member or employee of the Ethics Board may make public the identity of the individual submitting the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint or of individuals or organizations mentioned in the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint.
- (i) **REVIEW IN CLOSED SESSION:** The review of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint shall proceed in closed session.
- (j) **WRITTEN DECISIONS:** Decisions on Investigation Requests or Verified Complaints shall be written and provided to the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint and filed with the Ethics Board.

1. If the Ethics Board determines that the review of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint does not produce facts sufficient to merit a conclusion that a violation of the Code has occurred, it shall take no further action on the Request or shall dismiss the Complaint and notify the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint.

2. If the Board determines that the Investigation Request provides a basis for finding probable cause exists sufficient to constitute a violation of the Code, the Ethics Board may make, upon its own motion in closed session, a Verified Complaint. It shall be in writing, and shall state the alleged specific acts or omissions constituting a violation of the Code by an identified person subject to the Code. Such Verified Complaint would follow the provisions of sec. 9.10 et. seq.

(k) **HARASSMENT DISCLOSURE:** If the Board determines that the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint was brought for harassment purposes, the Board shall so state.

(l) **NOT PUBLIC RECORDS:** Investigation Requests or Verified Complaints that do not result in decisions that an alleged code violation exists would not be “public records.” This provision shall not be interpreted to preclude the Ethics Board from compiling or publishing a summary of the unsubstantiated Investigation Requests that are redacted to remove any information that would disclose the identity of any individual or organization.

(m) **PUBLIC RECORDS:** Verified Complaints that result in findings of Code violations would become “public records” upon completion of all Ethics Board proceedings.

9.10. Preliminary Conference.

(1) **PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE:**

(a) **VOLUNTARY RESOLUTION:** Every effort should be made to voluntarily resolve an allegation that the Ethics Code has been violated.

(b) **BOARD PROCEDURE:** Following the release by the District Attorney, an Investigation Request or a Verified Complaint that provides a reasonable basis for the belief that a violation of the Code has or might have occurred or is ongoing, the Ethics Board shall schedule a preliminary conference during the closed session of a properly noticed Ethics Board meeting.

(c) The Ethics Board shall notify both the person who filed the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint and the person who is the subject of the Request or the Complaint that a Preliminary Conference has been scheduled for closed session.

(d) The Ethics Board shall state in the notice the nature and purpose of the Preliminary Conference and the actions or activities to be discussed, and that those notified of the Conference may bring evidence or witnesses with them for review.

(e) The Ethics Board shall confer with each party separately.

1. The Ethics Board shall administer an oath to each person appearing in the matter.

2. The person who submitted the Investigation Request or the Verified Complaint shall meet with the Ethics Board first.
3. The person(s) who is subject to the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint shall meet subsequently with the Ethics Board.
4. If the Ethics Board needs additional information it may pursue it on its own. The Ethics Board also shall provide both persons-- the person who submitted the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint and the subject(s) of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint, additional time for submission of any further evidence or witness appearance. If necessary, the Ethics Board shall extend the Preliminary Conference and establish an additional meeting time to complete the Preliminary Conference.
5. After obtaining all the information it needs, the Ethics Board will deliberate in closed session without either or any of the parties present.

(2) PRELIMINARY CONFERENCE OUTCOMES:

- (a) **DISMISSAL:** If the Ethics Board determines that probable cause does not exist to find that a violation of the Code has occurred or that the matter does not warrant further action, it shall dispose of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint through written dismissal.
- (b) **DISMISSAL WITH CONDITIONS:** If the Ethics Board determines during the course of the Preliminary Conference that the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint recognizes that a minor violation of the Code has occurred, which has been rectified or will be rectified, the Ethics Board may enter into a stipulation with the subject of the Investigation Request or the Verified Complaint, and shall issue a written dismissal of the Request or Complaint on condition that the matter can be reopened if similar or other minor violations occur within three years. The stipulation will remain part of the closed record.
- (c) **SETTLEMENT:** If the Ethics Board determines during the course of the Preliminary Conference that actions or omissions of the subject of the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint constitute significant violations of the Code, it may enter into a settlement pursuant to sec. 9.13.
- (d) **INVESTIGATION REQUEST: ORDER TO HEARING:** If the Ethics Board determines during the course of the Preliminary Conference that actions or omissions of the subject of the Investigation Request constitute significant violations of the Code, it may, on its own motion, file a Verified Complaint and shall issue an order to proceed to the hearing process and set a date for a hearing to determine whether a violation of the Code has occurred.
- (e) **VERIFIED COMPLAINT: ORDER TO HEARING:** If the Ethics Board determines during the course of the Preliminary Conference that the actions or omissions of the subject of the Verified Complaint constitute violations of the Code, it shall issue an order to proceed to a hearing to determine whether a violation of the Code has occurred.
- (f) **AMENDMENT:** If the Ethics Board determines during the course of the Preliminary Conference that violation(s) of the Code allegedly exist, other than

the violations alleged in the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint, it may draft or amend the Investigation Request or Verified Complaint, upon its own motion, to include such violation(s).

(3) **PREHEARING PROCESS:**

(a) **NOTICE AND COPY OF ORDER:** The Ethics Board shall mail a copy of the order to proceed to a hearing to each subject of the Verified Complaint who is identified in the motion together with a notice informing the subject of the Verified Complaint that the matter will proceed to the hearing process. The notice shall include the written motion, a general statement of the applicable provisions of the Code that will be considered at the hearing and the date set for the hearing. Service of the notice is complete upon mailing.

(b) **HEARING WITHIN 30 DAYS:** A hearing ordered under this subsection shall be commenced within 30 days after the date it is ordered unless the subject(s) of the Verified Complaint and hearing order petition(s) in writing for a later date and the Board consents in writing.

(c) **DISCOVERY RIGHTS:** Prior to convening any hearing ordered under this subsection the subject(s) of the Verified Complaint and hearing order is entitled to reasonable discovery rights including adverse examination of witnesses who will testify at the hearing at a reasonable time before the date of the hearing.

(d) **EXCULPATORY EVIDENCE:** The Ethics Board shall inform the subject(s) of the Verified Complaint and the hearing order of his/her/their counsel of exculpatory evidence in its possession.

9.11 Hearing Procedure.

(1) During any hearing the members of the Ethics Board will be the finders of fact, decide the conclusions of law and issue orders. They will determine whether a violation of the Code has occurred. All evidence that the Ethics Board considers shall be fully offered and made a part of the record in the proceedings. The subject(s) of the hearing or any other person under investigation shall be afforded an adequate opportunity to rebut or offer countervailing evidence.

(2) The Ethics Board shall appoint a hearing examiner to conduct the hearing. The Ethics Board may also retain outside counsel and other experts as needed with respect to the hearing, in accordance with its policies. The selection of a hearing examiner and outside counsel or other experts and any contract for such persons shall be made after solicitation of recommendations from corporation counsel and the contract shall be approved for form and content by corporation counsel.

(3) Any person, other than the subject(s) of the hearing, whose name is mentioned or who is otherwise identified during a hearing being conducted by the Ethics Board, and who, in the opinion of the Ethics Board, may be adversely affected thereby, may, upon written request of the person or counsel of the person, or upon the request of any member of the Ethics Board, appear at the hearing to testify on his or her own behalf or have

counsel appear to represent his/her interests, and the Ethics Board may permit any other person to appear and testify at a hearing.

(4) Chapters 901 to 911, Wis. Stats., apply to the admission of evidence at the hearing.

(5) The Ethics Board shall not find a violation of the Code except upon clear and convincing evidence admitted at the hearing, according to an affirmative vote of four members of the Ethics Board.

(6) The hearing examiner during the hearing on behalf of and/or at the behest of the Ethics Board shall have the power to require any person to submit, in writing, such reports and answers to questions relevant to the proceedings conducted under the Code as the Ethics Board may prescribe, such submission to be made within such reasonable time period and under oath or otherwise as the Ethics Board may determine. The hearing examiner shall have the power:

(a) To administer oaths and to require by subpoena the attendance and testimony of witnesses and the production of any documentary evidence relating to the hearings being conducted.

(b) To order testimony to be taken by deposition before any individual who has the power to administer oaths and, in such instances, to compel testimony and the production of evidence.

(c) To order the payment of witnesses the same fees and mileage as are paid in like circumstances by the courts of this state.

(d) To request and obtain from the department of revenue copies of state income tax returns and access to other appropriate information regarding all persons who are the subject of the hearing pursuant to Chapter 19, Wis. Stats.

(7) During the hearing the subject(s) of the hearing proceedings or the subject(s) of the Verified Complaint may be represented by counsel of his or her own choosing.

(8) During the hearing, the subject(s) of the hearing or his or her or their counsel, if any, shall have an opportunity to examine all documents admitted at the hearing, to bring witnesses, to establish all pertinent facts and circumstances, to question or refute testimony or evidence, including the opportunity to confront and cross examine adverse witnesses, and shall otherwise be able to exercise reasonable discovery.

(9) After the conclusion of the hearing the Ethics Board shall as soon as practicable begin deliberations on the evidence presented at such hearing and shall then proceed to determine whether the subject(s) of the hearing violated the Code.

9.12 Findings of Fact and Conclusions; Orders and Recommendations.

(1) If the Ethics Board determines that no violation of the Code has occurred, it shall immediately send written notices of such determination to the subject(s) of the hearing. Such a determination will not become part of the public record.

- (2) If the Ethics Board determines that a violation of the Code has occurred it must prepare its findings of fact and conclusions of law that a violation(s) of the Code occurred, and it must make one or more of the following orders and recommendations:
- (a) An order requiring the subject of the hearing to conform his/her conduct to the Code.
 - (b) An order requiring an individual who has been determined to have violated the Code to forfeit an amount not less than one hundred dollars (\$100) nor more than one thousand dollars (\$1,000) for each violation of the Code, along with a payment deadline.
 - (c) An order for the specified return of county property or funds or gifts and/or restitution for the value of gifts, property and funds procured, obtained or retained as a result of the Code or in violation of the Code.
 - (d) Such other recommendation(s) or order(s) as may be necessary, appropriate and consistent with the intent and purposes of the Code.
 - (e) An order in any case when the Ethics Board determines that a violation has occurred that includes, when the determination warrants, a recommendation that the subject of the order be censured, suspended or removed from office or employment.
 - 1. In the case of a county public official, a recommendation shall be made to the appropriate appointing authority or county body that may censure, suspend or take action to remove the official from office or employment.
 - 2. In the case of a county employee, a recommendation shall be made to the appropriate appointing authority or county body that the county employee be disciplined or discharged.
 - (f) An order that the findings of fact, conclusions of law and orders be made part of the public record, including instructions that certain information should be sealed or redacted based on the need to protect persons and documents that in the judgment of the Ethics Board should not be part of the public record.
- (3) The corporation counsel, when so requested by the Ethics Board, shall institute a civil proceeding under Chap. 778, Wis. Stats., to recover any forfeiture, restitution or declaratory order incurred under this section which has not been timely complied with by the subject of the order. Any forfeiture or other funds recovered under this section shall be remitted to the county treasurer. Any property ordered returned shall be returned to the county department or entity from which the property was taken, or to any other person or entity providing a gift.
- (4) No county entity, public official or employee shall authorize the subrogation of forfeitures, funds, restitution, attorney fees and costs, or anything of value to assist a person subject to a finding in an Ethics Board hearing order.

9.13 Settlements.

- (1) **AUTHORITY:** The Ethics Board may compromise and settle any action or potential action or a violation of the Ethics Code on such terms as may be agreed upon between the Ethics Board and the subject of the investigation or hearing. A compromise and settlement under this section may include any of the orders or recommendations which the Ethics Board is authorized to make under sec. 9.13 of the Ethics Code.
- (2) **WRITTEN AGREEMENT:** Whenever the Ethics Board enters into a compromise and settlement agreement under this section with an individual who has been alleged to have violated the Ethics Code in an Investigation Request or Verified Complaint or who is subject to the hearing process for a possible violation of the Ethics Code, the Ethics Board shall reduce the agreement to writing for signature by the Ethics Board chair and by the subject of the investigation or Verified Complaint process. The Ethics Board shall also prepare a written statement of the findings of the Ethics Board concerning the alleged violation and the Ethics Board's reasons for entering into the agreement, which statement shall be retained as part of the public record.
- (3) **FOUR VOTES REQUIRED:** A written settlement agreement can be entered into by the Ethics Board only upon the affirmative vote of four members of the Ethics Board.

9.14. Honorariums, Fees, and Expenses.

- (1) Every county elected official, appointed official or employee is encouraged to meet with clubs, conventions, special interest groups, political groups, school groups, and other gatherings to discuss the affairs of the county relative to the duties of that official or employee. Such public officials and employees present at such meeting relative to their duties as a public official or employee shall avoid accepting anything of value, not including the value of food and beverage offered coincidentally with a talk or meeting, if it could reasonably be expected to influence the public official's or employee's vote, official actions or judgment, or could reasonably be considered as a reward for any official action or inaction or omission by the public official or employee.
- (2)
 - (a) Except as provided for in paragraph (b), every county public official or employee who is required to file a statement of economic interests, pursuant to sec. 9.03 and who receives any lodging, transportation, money, or other thing with a combined pecuniary value exceeding fifty dollars (\$50.00), not including the value of food or beverage offered coincidentally with a talk or meeting, shall report on his/her statement of economic interests the identity of every person from whom the county public official received such lodging, transportation, money, or other things during the preceding taxable year, the circumstances under which it was received, and the approximate value thereof.
 - (b) A county public official or employee need not report on his/her statement of economic interests under paragraph (a) any compensation, reimbursement, or payment which:

1. The county public official or employee returns to the payer within thirty (30) days of receipt;
2. The county public official or employee can show by clear and convincing evidence was made for a purpose unrelated to the purposes specified in subsection (1) and unrelated to the duties or responsibilities of the position of the public official or employee;
3. The county public official or employee has previously reported to the Ethics Board as a matter of public record; or
4. The county public official or employee is paid by that branch of county government or county department or agency in which the public official or employee is empowered or to which he/she has been elected.

(3) Notwithstanding sec. 9.05, a county public official or employee may receive and retain reimbursement or payment of actual and reasonable expenses for a published work or for participation in a meeting and may receive and retain reasonable compensation if the work is published or the activity is accomplished by the county public official or employee without the use of the county's time or resources or property and outside the course of his/her official duties.

(4) If any county public official or employee, whether or not required to file a statement of economic interests, receives a payment not authorized by the Code, in cash or otherwise, for a published work or talk or meeting, the county public official or employee may not retain that payment. The county public official or employee shall deposit that payment in the general revenue account of the county, or the county public official or employee shall return that payment or its equivalent to the payer pursuant to sec. 9.14(2)(b)1. If the county public official or employee is required to file a statement of economic interests, he/she shall report the payment prohibited by the provision when filing his/her next required statement of economic interests.

County Ordinance No. 08-8
File No. 06-283(a)(a)
Adopted by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
June 26, 2008