Conflicts of Interest and Other Legal Issues

MMCI

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St. Cloud, MN

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Ethics

What do we mean by ethics?

What are types of ethical dilemmas we can face?

What kinds of thinking processes can help when facing ethical dilemmas?
MCFOA Code of Ethics

Recognizing their responsibilities to the people, desiring to inspire public confidence and respect for government and believing that honesty, integrity, loyalty and courtesy are the basis of ethical conduct, members of the Municipal Clerks and Finance Officers Association of Minnesota do hereby subscribe to the following principles and ethics which will govern the personal and professional conduct as municipal employee:

- Shall uphold constitutional government and the laws of the community;
- Shall be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships to merit the respect, trust and confidence of governing officials, employees and the public;
- Shall respect and protect privileged information;
- Shall be sensitive and responsive to the rights of the public and its changing needs;
- Shall not knowingly be a part of or condone any illegal or improper activity;
- Shall exhibit loyalty and trust in the affairs and interest of the city served;
- Shall discharge duties without favor and shall refrain from engaging in any outside matters of personal interest incompatible with the impartial and objective performance of duties;
- Shall not seek or accept personal gain which would influence, or appear to influence, the conduct of official duties;
- Shall continue education through independent study, seminars, conferences, and sound management practices to produce continued progress so as to fulfill responsibilities to the community.

From the website: https://www.mcfoa.org/
Ethical Situations

Please review the following ethics situations. Talk in groups about how you might approach and/or resolve these situations.

Improved Plowing

Jane is employed in the city clerk’s office of a mid-sized community. On the first Tuesday of each month, she brings treats to the office. Once of the employees of the street department, William hears about the treats and stops by periodically to eat some. When he finds out the Jane makes them, he stops by her desk, introduces himself, and thanks her for the treats. When the first snow comes, Jane notices that her street is being plowed much earlier than it has been in the past. She also notices that her portion of the block gets cleaned much more thoroughly than the rest of the block.

The next time she brings treats to the office, William stops by her desk and asks her how she likes how the snow plowing has improved. He says, the earlier and more thorough cleaning is a “thank you” for the treats she has provided him in the past.

Discounted Lot

As a Part of his job in the clerks’ office in Baytown, Josh hears about all of the potential new businesses that are considering locating in the area. A representative of the $.99 store stops in the office to ask about the region. It is apparent from the visit that the store is looking at relocating to Baytown. A neighbor of Josh’s, Angie Smith approaches Josh and shares that she is interested in selling a vacant lot to him. Since she knows him, she is interested in offering the lot at a discount. Josh thinks he could sell the lot to the $.99 store and make a profit. Should he tell Angie about the new store or buy the lot and try to sell it to the new store?

Just Dropping By…

Dave, a retired gentleman in the community, is getting ready to sell his house. He needs to clean out his garage and has checked into the cost of hiring a company to haul away all of his extra things. Dave’s neighbor, Tom works for the city. He offers to bring over a city truck and haul away the extra junk. Dave says that the truck is just sitting there and it would not cause a problem. Amy, from the clerk’s office sees the truck and asks Tom about it. He tells her that he was just helping out a neighbor.
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Your own Potential Conflict of Interest/Ethics Situations

In this part of the session, you will have a chance to talk through a situation you have either heard about or experienced that has ethical implications. Use the following template to identify the major aspects of this situation.

1. Describe the details of the situation or issue you faced.

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2. Identify the potential ethical or conflicts of interest that could arise in this situation.

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3. Outline what you could do to address/avoid the ethics problem in this situation.

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4. Talk about what you learned and how you could avoid a potential problem in the future.

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