



Code of Ethics Policy

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1.0 POLICY

The proper operation of democratic government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial and responsible to the people; that governmental decisions and policy be made in proper channels of the governmental structure; that public office not be used for personal gain; and that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government. In recognition of these goals, a code of ethics for all County employees and Elected Officials is adopted. The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all such officials by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the best interests of the County.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 Business:** shall mean a corporation, partnership, sole proprietorship, firm, organization, or other legal entity carrying on business.
- 2.2 Confidential information:** shall mean information which is not available to the general public and which is obtained only by reason of an employee's position.
- 2.3 Employee:** shall mean all officials, officers, members and employees, whether elected or appointed and whether paid or unpaid, of the government of Lee County and of all its agencies. Employees shall include former employees if the violation occurred during County employment.
- 2.4 Financial interest:** shall mean any interest that shall yield, directly or indirectly, any monetary or other material benefit to a County employee. The term "financial interest" shall not include the employee's salary or other compensation received pursuant to County employment. The fact that an employee owned ten (10) per cent or less of the stock of a corporation or has a ten (10) per cent or less ownership in any business entity or is an employee of said business entity does not create a financial interest.
- 2.5 Official act:** shall mean an official decision, vote, approval, disapproval or other action, which involves the use of decision-making authority.

2.6 Personal Interest: shall mean any interest arising from blood or marriage relationships or from employment or business whether or not any financial interest is involved. A blood or marriage relationship for the purpose of this section shall mean spouse, mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, son, grandmother and grandfather, grandson, and granddaughter, aunts and uncles. Included are the step, half, in-law, loco parentis relationships and persons living within the same household.

2.7 Political Activity: shall mean any act aimed at supporting or opposing the election of any candidate for public office or supporting or opposing a particular political party.

3.0 PROCEDURE / RULE

3.1 Standards of Conduct: Employees must in all instances maintain their conduct at the highest standards. Official conduct guided by high ethical standards gives the public confidence in the integrity of its government and assures the public that government is responsible to the people. The following standards of conduct are goals which public employees should strive to attain so as to avoid even the appearance of impropriety in the conduct of the public's business.

- A. Employees have an obligation to act morally and honestly in discharging their responsibilities.
- B. Employees shall conduct themselves with propriety, discharge their duties impartially and fairly and make continuing efforts toward attaining and maintaining high standards of conduct.
- C. Employees shall not improperly use, directly or indirectly, their county positions to secure any financial interest or personal benefit for themselves or others.
- D. Employees shall not use nor attempt to use their positions to improperly influence other employees in the performance of their official duties.
- E. No employee or elected official shall give a verbal or written recommendation for employment with Lee County unless interviewer specifically requests the recommendation.

3.2 Use of County Resources:

- A. No employee shall use or permit the use of County employees or County-owned material, property, funds, or other resources of any kind for the private gain, personal benefit, or political advantage of any person, except where such use is made available to the public at large. Nothing herein shall be interpreted or construed to limit the use of County-owned facilities for public gatherings.

- B. County-owned vehicles shall not be used for the personal business of any employee. No County owned automobile shall be used by a County employee going to or from home, except when such use is for the benefit of the County and such use has been authorized by the County.

3.3 Conflict of Interest:

- A. No employee shall engage in any employment or business which conflicts with the proper discharge of his official duties.
- B. No employee shall have a financial interest, directly or indirectly, in any transaction with any County agency as to which he/she has the power to take or influence official action. No employee shall take or influence official action in any transaction with any County agency that would confer a benefit based on a personal interest where such benefit is not made available to the public at large.
- C. If an employee has any direct or indirect financial interest in the outcome of any matter coming before the agency of which he is a member of or by which he is employed, such employee shall disclose on the record of the agency or to his/her superior or other appropriate authority the existence of such financial interest. An employee having such an interest shall not engage in deliberations concerning the matter, shall disqualify himself/herself from acting on the matter and shall not communicate about such matter with any person who will participate in the action to be taken on such matter. However, the excusal from voting by members of the board of County Commissioners shall be governed exclusively by General Statutes Section 153A-44.
- D. No employee shall represent or appear on behalf of any individual or entity, either personally or through an associate or partner, against the interests of the County or any of its agencies in any action or proceeding in which the County or any of its agencies is a party, unless the action or proceeding is sufficiently remote from his official duties, so that no actual conflict of interest exists.
- E. Nothing herein shall be interpreted or construed to prohibit any employee from exercising his legal rights as to his own personal interests in processing a claim against or request to the County or any of its agencies or in defending a claim made against him/her by the County or any of its agencies, or to prohibit an employee from testifying as a witness in any administrative or judicial proceeding.

- 3.4 Incompatible Service:** No public official or employee shall engage in, or accept private employment or render service for private interest, when such employment or service for the County is incompatible with the proper discharge of his official duties.
- 3.5 Special Treatment:** No public official or employee shall grant any special consideration, treatment or advantage to any citizen beyond that which is available to every other citizen.
- 3.6 Disclosure of Confidential Information:** No public official or employee shall disclose confidential information concerning the property, government, or affairs of the County in such a manner as to advance the financial or other private interest of himself or others.
- 3.7 Penalty for Violation:** If any appointed public official or employee is found to have violated any provision of this policy, he may be subject to forfeiture of his appointed office or dismissal from his position. If any elected public official is found to have violated any provision of this policy, he may be subject to public censure.

All elected and appointed County officials, members of County boards and commissions appointed by the County Commissioners, and other County employees who are serving in these roles at the date this policy becomes effective and those hereafter elected or appointed shall be issued a copy of this policy.

4.0 APPENDIX / APPENDICES

None.