

City of Southlake

Personnel Policies

Section: **Ethics and Conduct** **Topic:** Employee Business Code of Conduct

Effective Date: July 1, 2006

Approved By: Resolution No. 06-029 **Revision Date:**

I. PURPOSE

A Code of Ethics and Conduct, codified as Chapter 2, Article VI of the Southlake City Code, was passed by City Council on March 21, 1995 and further amended on June 6, 2006. The Code of Ethics and Conduct applies to all officers, employees and board members acting in an official capacity on behalf of the City. Chapter 2, Article VI, Section 2-268 requires the City Manager to present an Employee Business Code of Conduct for adoption by City Council.

To ensure public confidence in the integrity of its City government, we as employees, must be mindful of the Code of Ethics and Conduct and adhere to its provisions. We must also recognize that how we conduct our business also affects the public's perception of the City and its leaders.

The purpose of this Employee Business Code of Conduct is to further expand on the Code of Ethics and Conduct, and to convey our adopted values in how we conduct our business as employees -- with the public, with each other, and with other organizations and businesses.

Southlake Values:

(Adopted by City Council Strategic Planning Workshop June 2005)

Integrity – Being worthy of the public's trust in all things. We deal honestly and respectfully with each other and the public at all times.

Innovation – Valuing progressive thinking, creativity, flexibility and adaptability in service delivery.

Accountability – Taking personal responsibility for our actions or inaction while putting the interests of the taxpayer first.

Commitment to Excellence – Behaving responsively in our delivery of service to the public. Our work is characterized by its quality and by the diligence with which it is carried out. We proactively seek to solve problems in advance.

Teamwork – Recognizing the importance of working together to meet our citizen's needs, communicating clearly, sharing resources and information freely.

It does not address every situation, nor does it take the place of the City Personnel Policies and Procedures. Where appropriate, those policies are referred to for further guidance and instruction. By following these guidelines, we ensure the public has confidence in the integrity of their City government.

II. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER

A. **Recognizing and Respecting Diversity**

The City is committed to an all-inclusive work culture. We believe and recognize that all people should be respected for their individual abilities and contributions. The City strives to provide challenging, meaningful and rewarding opportunities for personal and professional growth to all employees without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other legally protected status. We believe that such an attitude contributes greatly to the innovative environment that the City values so greatly.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Workplace Conduct."]

B. **Maintaining Workplace Safety**

We are responsible for maintaining a safe workplace for ourselves and for others, by following safety and health rules and practices. We are responsible for immediately reporting accidents, injuries and unsafe equipment, practices or conditions to a supervisor or other designated person. The City is committed to keeping its workplaces free of hazards.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, Chapter 7, "Safety."]

C. **Respecting Each Other's Privacy**

The City respects the privacy of its employees and therefore maintains only those employee personnel and medical records necessary for business, legal or contractual purposes. The Texas Public Information Act requires public access to all City records. However, as provided by law, employees may restrict public access to certain personal information:

1. Every employee has the right to see his or her own personnel record.
2. The City will comply with all applicable laws regulating the disclosure of personal information about employees.

The City and its employees recognize and respect the privacy of each other's personal lives. However, as public servants, we are also held to a higher standard and we must not let our personal conduct impair our work performance or adversely affect the work environment or reputation of the City.

D. **Employee Assistance Program**

The City has an Employee Assistance Program to help provide guidance and confidential counseling for its employees. Helping its employees handle

situations before they become unmanageable is important to the City, and is a significant tool in promoting excellence.

E. Harassment

The City prohibits all forms of harassment and violence towards employees, volunteers, and officers in the Workplace Conduct Policy. This includes demeaning, insulting, embarrassing or intimidating behavior directed at any employee related to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability or any other legally protected status. We believe harassment of any kind contradicts Southlake Values.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Workplace Conduct."]

F. Team Environment

The City places great importance upon teamwork, one of the five adopted Values. While individual effort is important and necessary, it is also desirable that we recognize and make use of the strength gained through teamwork. Cooperation and consolidation of effort is not only important within each department, but across the entire City as well.

G. Recognition of Southlake Values

The City encourages promotion of outstanding examples of Southlake Values through employee awards, incentive programs, and recognition in employee newsletters and other communication tools. The City also promotes an environment of open communication that values discussion of ideas and issues.

III. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

A. Professionalism

In our relationship with both elected and appointed officials, we must always act with the professionalism that is the hallmark of excellent public service. Throughout the life of the City, there will be continual transitions in leadership through elections and council appointments. The greatest asset we have in ensuring a smooth transition is by our professional demeanor.

B. Political Involvement

As employees of a municipal government, there are limitations on our political activities while at work. These limitations serve to protect our integrity and accountability for our role in the public sector. We can execute our constitutional rights within the political process, but there are certain limitations as they relate to our service in Southlake.

1. Impartiality and Neutrality

It is essential that we perform our duties without regard to any political party, agenda or point of view while acting in an official capacity. Our

responsibility is to the citizens of Southlake and to their elected representatives, the City Council.

2. Political Advocacy

We shall not engage in any political activity while working. Although we are not prohibited from expressing our political opinion on an issue, we must clarify that the opinion does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the City or its officers.

3. Influencing Subordinates

We shall not, directly or indirectly, induce or attempt to induce any City subordinate to participate in an election campaign, contribute to a candidate or political committee, or engage in any other political activity relating to a particular party, candidate, or issue, or to refrain from engaging in any lawful political activity.

A general statement merely encouraging another person to vote does not violate this rule.

4. Paid Campaigning

We shall not accept anything of value, directly or indirectly, that might reasonably tend to influence us in favor or opposition regarding any political item pending on the ballot.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Code of Ethics and Conduct."]

5. Display Of Campaign Materials

We shall not display political campaign materials on any City vehicle or property.

C. Information Distribution

We have a responsibility to distribute information in a fair and consistent manner to elected and appointed officials. It should be inclusive of all available facts, not just what is needed to make a favorable decision for us. Additionally, we should provide such information in a responsive and timely manner.

While we should always respond in a timely manner to citizen and City Council requests for information, we should also keep our supervisors and the City Manager informed of such requests as applicable.

IV. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CITY

A. Respecting the City's Greater Good

Our purpose is to serve the citizens of Southlake. To that end, we also must respect the City's greater good. We should never pursue our own goals or personal gain to the detriment of the City.

B. Outside Employment

As employees of the City, we accept certain restrictions so that we may better serve the citizens. Specifically, we shall not accept other employment or engage in outside activities that compromise our ability to fulfill our duties and responsibilities with the City, or which might impair our independent judgment in the performance of our official duties.

C. Conflicts of Interest

Maintaining impartiality and neutrality in decisions before the City is essential in preserving not only our individual integrity, but that of the City as well. Conflicts of interest arise when personal involvement and/or gain in a decision could lead to prejudice, or the appearance of prejudice in that decision.

All City employees shall disclose a relationship that exists between the city employee or family member of the city employee, with a person or business contracting or seeking to contract with the City for any goods or services.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Code of Ethics and Conduct."]

D. Representation of the City

We have a responsibility to represent the City in a manner that does not bring discredit upon it or its employees, nor to represent the City in any manner other than in an official capacity. This responsibility should guide our actions while wearing City clothing or uniforms. We shall not wear uniforms or logos identifying the City while engaging in conduct or activity that by virtue of this association would reflect poorly upon the City.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Uniform / Dress Code / Grooming Policy."]

The Code of Ethics and Conduct also delineates specific guidelines that prohibit an employee of the City from representing any person or group before the City. Further, we may not represent any person or group in any action or proceeding against the interests of the City or in any litigation in which the City is a party.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Code of Ethics and Conduct."]

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V. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOUTHLAKE CITIZENS AND THE PUBLIC

A. Responsiveness and Equitable Treatment

We should respond in a timely manner to the needs of the public with respect, courtesy, and professionalism. At no time shall we grant any special consideration, treatment, or advantage to any citizen beyond that which is available to any other citizen.

B. Respect For Private Property

We shall respect the private property of our citizens. In circumstances where official City business requires us to work on private property, we shall make every reasonable effort to notify the property owners of such work activity. Whenever possible, the private property shall be returned to its pre-work condition.

VI. OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH VENDORS AND CONSULTANTS

A. Gifts

It cannot be overstated that the Southlake Values can be greatly compromised by the improper acceptance of gifts. Even the appearance of accepting gifts can be damaging.

No City officer or employee shall accept any gift that might reasonably tend to influence them in the discharge of their official duties, or grant any improper favor, service or thing of value. Neither shall they use their official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for themselves or others.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Code of Ethics and Conduct."]

B. Bidding and Contracting

Bidding and contracting can bring great discredit upon the City if it is not conducted in a legal and appropriate manner. Any private gain by employees of the City or any gain beyond reasonable compensation for the contractor is prohibited.

[Refer to City Purchasing Policy.]

VII. OUR STEWARDSHIP OF INFORMATION

A. Information Access and Management

In the course of our official duties, we may have knowledge of, or work with, various types of public and confidential information. We should strive to provide prompt and accurate access of public information in a timely manner. The Texas Public Information Act and the Texas Open Meetings Act provide specific guidance and legal requirements.

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In providing information to the media, the City seeks to provide consistent, accurate and timely information. To accomplish this goal, it is desirable that only designated employees provide official responses to the media. This does not prevent any employee from providing a response, but we must always remember that in doing so, whether we intend to or not, we represent the City of Southlake. [Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Media Relations and Communications."]

B. Confidential Information

We shall not use our position as employees of the City to secure official information about any person or entity for any purpose other than the performance of our official responsibilities. We will protect from disclosure or misuse all non-public information pertaining to the City or its actions. Further, we shall not disclose confidential information or use such information to further or impede anyone's personal interests. This does not prohibit any disclosure or use that is authorized by law, or the confidential reporting of illegal or unethical conduct to authorities designated by law.

VIII. OUR STEWARDSHIP OF THE ENVIRONMENT

To provide residents with an outstanding quality of life, the City is committed to health, safety and the environment through actions such as recycling and energy conservation. We will abide by all applicable health, safety and environmental laws and regulations as we conduct our business, and will seek to maintain standards of excellence in the Southlake environment. Whenever possible and appropriate, we will notify citizens about environmental issues related to our activities. If we are required to use hazardous materials in the conduct of our operations, we will take all precautions necessary to prevent misuse.

IX. OUR STEWARDSHIP OF PUBLIC RESOURCES

A. Equipment, Facilities and Technology Systems

Our ability to serve the citizens of Southlake requires the efficient and proper use of the City's assets and resources. This includes not only physical property, equipment and inventory, but other tangible assets such as office equipment and supplies, and information systems. Safeguarding these assets is the responsibility of all employees. We must use and maintain City equipment and facilities with care and respect while guarding against fraud, waste and abuse.

[Refer to Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, "Technology Policy."]

We will use public resources according to City policies and procedures, comply with security programs and procedures that help prevent their unauthorized use or theft, and abide by all regulations or contractual agreements governing their use.

B. Use Of Public Resources

We recognize that the resources of the City have been provided through the taxes of the citizens of Southlake, and are for the purpose of providing service to our citizens. We shall not use, request, or permit the use of City facilities, personnel, equipment, or supplies for private purposes (including political purposes), unless allowed by City policy or approved by City Council.

X. OUR FINANCIAL INTEGRITY

Financial integrity is one of the most essential concerns a government has to deal with, and it is no less important in the operations of the City. As stewards of public monies, we must always recognize that the funds we utilize are not our own. We act on behalf of the citizens of Southlake. In all things from budget prioritization, administration, records maintenance and reporting, we should strive to make our actions transparent, easily understood, and beneficial to the citizens. To do anything less would be to forsake the public trust that we have been given.

XI. OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT VIOLATIONS

The cornerstone in any team environment is a shared concept of ethics. Therefore it is imperative that all employees report any ethics violations and ensure that the highest standards are upheld in our daily conduct. Depending upon the situation and personnel involved, violations can be reported to various parties, including the department director, City Manager's Office, Human Resources Department, or to an ethics violation hotline. The Human Resources Department is responsible for publishing an ethics violation hotline number to all employees.