

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF FREEPORT, TEXAS, CONTAINING A PREAMBLE; BY ADDING TO TITLE IX OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY A NEW CHAPTER 100 ESTABLISHING AN ETHICS POLICY FOR ALL APPOINTED OR ELECTED OFFICIALS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS, AS WELL AS EMPLOYEES WHEN REPRESENTING THE CITY OR DOING BUSINESS FOR THE CITY IN ANY CAPACITY; REQUIRING THAT SUCH ORDINANCE BE REVIEWED ANNUALLY; AND PROVIDING THAT THIS ORDINANCE SHALL TAKE EFFECT AND BE IN FORCE FROM AND AFTER ITS ADOPTION BY CITY COUNCIL.

Whereas, it is important that the public have confidence in the integrity of its government; and

Whereas, the City of Freeport, Texas, is a "Home Rule City" and a "Home Rule Municipality" lying and situated in Brazoria County, Texas, as described in and defined by Section 5, Article XI of the Constitution of Texas and Section 1.005 of the Local Government Code of Texas, respectively; and,

Whereas, Sections 51.072 and 342.011 of the Local Government Code of Texas and Sections 2.01, 2.02 and 3.07, Item (u), of the Home Rule Charter of the City of Freeport authorize the City Council thereof to adopt the provisions of this Ordinance: and,

Whereas, the proper operation of government requires that the all City Officials, including elected officers, appointed officers, boards and commission members, as well as employees be independent and impartial, and that governmental decisions and policy be made within the proper channels of the government structure; and

Whereas, the intent of this ordinance is to establish a set of general principles and guidelines pertaining to ethical conduct, responsibility, and duty; and

Whereas, the City of Freeport desires to adopt said policy to govern the actions of public officials and employees and to memorialize Freeport officials' dedication and service to the citizens of the City; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF FREEPORT, TEXAS:

First, a new Chapter, to be known as Chapter 100, is hereby adopted and added to the Code of Ordinances of the City of Freeport, Texas, and shall read as follows:

"Chapter 100. CODE OF ETHICS

Part One - General Provisions

Section 100.01. Definitions

The following words, terms and phrases, when used in this article, shall have the meanings ascribed to them in this section, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

Benefit means anything reasonably regarded as economic gain or economic advantage, including benefit to any other person in whose welfare the beneficiary is interested, but does not include a contribution to expenditure made and reported in accordance with law.

Board means a board, commission, or committee:

- (1) Which is established by city ordinance, charter, interlocal contract, or state law, or
- (2) Which serves as the board of a nonprofit development corporation that acts as an instrumentality of the city, and
- (3) Any part of whose membership is appointed by the city council, but does not include a board, commission, or committee which is the governing body of a separate political subdivision of the state.

City ("the City") means City of Freeport

Employee means a person employed and paid a salary by the city whether under civil service or not, including those individuals on a part-time basis, but does not include an independent contractor or the Mayor or city council members.

Fair and Equitable Standards means the intent of the City of Freeport to safeguard the rights of all citizens, to ensure that all citizen's actions are judged by fair and equitable standards, and to require that all rules are applied on an equitable basis.

Negotiating concerning prospective employment means a discussion between a city officer or employee and another employer concerning the possibility of the city officer or employee considering or accepting employment with the employer, in which discussion the city officer or employee responds in a positive way.

Officer or official means Mayor or any member of the City Council and any appointed member of a board, committee, or commission set up by ordinance, charter, state law or otherwise, on a regular basis, excluding those boards and commissions not operating under the direct authority of or subject to the direct control of the City Council.

Section 100.03. Purpose of the Ethics Policy.

(a) The code of ethics has five purposes:

1. To encourage ethical conduct on the part of city officials and employees;
2. To encourage public service with the city;
3. To establish standards for ethical conduct for city officials and employees by defining and prohibiting conduct that is incompatible with the interests of the city;
4. To require disclosure by city officials and employees of their economic interests that may conflict with the interests of the city; and
5. To serve as a basis for disciplining those who fail to abide by its terms.

(b) The code of ethics is not intended to be used as a political weapon or to intimidate or embarrass affected persons. The officials charged with administration of this code of ethics shall administer it in a manner that avoids any such use of this code of ethics.

(c) Ethics Policy Statement.

It is the policy of the city that all city officials and employees shall conduct themselves both inside and outside the city's service so as to give no occasion for distrust of their integrity, impartiality or devotion to the best interest of the city and the public trust which the city holds.

(d) It is further declared to be the policy of the city that the proper operation of democratic government requires that:

- (1) Officials and employees be independent, impartial and responsible;
- (2) Governmental decisions and policy be made using the proper procedures of the governmental structure;
- (3) No officer or employee have any financial interest, direct or indirect, or engage in any business, transaction or professional activity or incur any obligation of any nature which is in conflict with the proper discharge of his duties in the public interest;
- (4) Public office is not be used for personal gain; and
- (5) All boards of the City are at all times to be maintained as a nonpartisan body.

(e) It is the policy of the City to uphold, promote, and demand the highest standards of ethical behavior from its Mayor, members of the City Council, employees, and individuals appointed to serve on the city's boards, commissions, committees, task forces, and other appointed advisory groups ("City Officials"). Honesty, integrity, fairness, and transparency of action are the hallmarks of public service in Freeport.

(f) Appearance of impropriety. Public service is a public trust. All city officials and employees are stewards of the public trust. They have a responsibility to the citizens of the city to administer and enforce the City Charter and city ordinances. To ensure and enhance public confidence in city government, each city official and employee must strive not only to maintain technical compliance with the principles of ethical conduct set forth in this article and in state law, but also to avoid the appearance of impropriety at all times.

(g) To implement this article, the city council has determined that it is advisable to enact this code of ethics for all officials and employees, whether elected or appointed, paid or unpaid, advisory or administrative, to serve not only as a guide for official conduct of the city's public servants, but also as a basis for discipline for those who refuse to abide by its terms.

(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of this article, a member of the board of directors of a reinvestment zone established under the tax increment financing act, as amended, may:

- (1) Own property within that reinvestment zone; and
- (2) Participate in discussions and voting on matters before the board of directors that may directly or indirectly affect the member's property within the reinvestment zone.

Part 2 Administration

Section 100.10 Standards of conduct.

(a) An officer or employee of the city shall not:

- (1) Accept or solicit a benefit that might reasonably tend to influence the officer or employee in the discharge of his official duties.
- (2) Use his official position to secure special privilege or exemptions for himself or others.
- (3) Grant any special consideration, treatment or advantage to a person or organization beyond that which is available to every other person or organization. This shall not prohibit the granting of fringe benefits to city employees as a part of their contract of employment or as an added incentive to the securing or retaining of employees.
- (4) Disclose information that could adversely affect the property of affairs of the city, or directly or indirectly, use any information understood to be confidential which was gained by reason of his official position or employment for his own personal gain or benefit or for the private interest of others.
- (5) Transact any business on behalf of the city in his official capacity with any business entity with which he is an officer, agent or member or in which he has a financial interest. In the event that such a circumstance should arise, then he shall make known his interest, and:
 - (i) In the case of an officer, leave the room during debate or hearing, refrain from discussing the matter at any time with the members of the body of which he is a member or any other body which will consider the matter and abstain from voting on the matter; or
 - (ii) In the case of an employee, turn the matter over to his superior for reassignment, state the reasons for doing so and have nothing further to do with the matter involved.

- (6) Personally provide services for compensation, directly or indirectly, to a person or organization who is requesting an approval, investigation, or determination from the body or department of which the officer or employee is a member. This restriction does not apply to outside employment of an officer if the employment is the officer's primary source of income.
- (7) Accept other employment or engage in outside activities incompatible with the full and proper discharge of his duties and responsibilities with the city, or which might impair his independent judgment in the performance of his public duty.
- (8) Personally participate in a decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, investigation, or rendering of advice in a proceeding, application, request for ruling or determination, contract, claim, or other matter under the jurisdiction of the city, if the officer or employee is negotiating or has an arrangement concerning prospective employment with a person or organization which has a financial interest in the matter, and, in the case of an employee, it has been determined by the city manager that a conflict of interest exists. If an officer or employee begins negotiation or enters an arrangement concerning prospective employment with a person or organization that has a financial interest in a matter in which the officer or employee has been participating, the officer or employee shall:
 - (i) In the case of an employee, immediately notify the official responsible for appointment to his position of the nature of the negotiation or arrangement and, if the city manager or mayor determines that a conflict of interest exists, follow the instructions of the city manager or mayor with regard to further involvement in the matter; or
 - (ii) In the case of a board member, immediately notify the board of which he is a member the nature of the negotiation or arrangement and:
 - (a) Refrain from discussing the matter at any time with other board members or members of the city council if the city council will also consider the matter;
 - (b) Leave the room during debate hearing on the matter; and
 - (c) Abstain from voting on the matter; or
 - (d) In the case of the Mayor or a member of the city council, file an affidavit with the city secretary regarding the nature of the negotiation or arrangement and:

- (i) Refrain from discussing the matter at any time with other council members or members of a board that will consider the matter;
 - (ii) Leave the room during debate or hearing on the matter; and
 - (iii) Abstain from voting on the matter.
- (9) Receive any fee or compensation for his services as an officer or employee of the city from any source other than the city, except as may be otherwise provided by law. This shall not prohibit his performing the same or other services for a public or private organization that he performs for the city if there is no conflict with his city duties and responsibilities.
- (10) In the case of a member of the city council or an employee, personally represent, or appear in behalf of, the private interest of others:
- (i) Before the city council or any city board or department;
 - (ii) In any proceeding involving the city; or
 - (iii) In any litigation to which the city is a party.
- (11) In the case of a board member, personally represent or appear in behalf of, the private interests of others:
- (i) Before the board of which he is a member;
 - (ii) Before the city council;
 - (iii) Before a board which has appellate jurisdiction over the board of which he is a member; or
 - (iv) In litigation or a claim to which the city or an employee of the city is a party if the interests of the person being represented are adverse to the city or an employee of the city and the subject of the litigation or claim involves the board on which the board member is serving or the department providing support services to that board.
- (12) Use the prestige of his position with the city in behalf of any political party.
- (13) Knowingly perform or refuse to perform any act in order to deliberately thwart the execution of the city ordinances, rules or regulations or the achievement of official city programs.
- (14) Use city supplies, equipment or facilities for any purpose other than the conduct of official city business.

(15) Engage in any dishonest or criminal act or any other conduct prejudicial to the government of the city or that reflects discredit upon the government of the city.

Section 100.11 - Exceptions

(a) The restrictions in this section do not apply to business associates of officers or employees, but only personally to the officers and employees themselves.

(b) The restrictions and requirements of subsection (a) (5) do not apply to an officer or employee of the city serving as a member of any board, commission, or other entity when transacting business on behalf of the city in an official capacity with that board, commission, or entity, if the officer or employee:

(1) Was appointed by the mayor, city council, or city manager to represent the city on the board, commission, or entity; and

(2) Has no financial interest in the board, commission or entity or in the business.

Section 100.12- Financial interests.

Any officer, whether elected or appointed, who has a financial interest in any matter that is pending before, or that might be considered by, the body of which the officer is a member shall:

(a) Disclose such interest to the other members of the body;

(b) Refrain from discussing the matter at any time with any other member of the body of which the officer is a member or with a member of any other body that might consider the matter;

(c) Leave the room during debate or hearing; and

(d) Refrain from voting on the matter.

Section 100.13 Political activities of officers.

(a) In elections other than for city council, a member of the city council may not:

(1) Use the prestige of the member's position with the city on behalf of a candidate;

(2) Solicit or receive contributions; or

(3) Serve as the designated campaign treasurer for a candidate as required by V.T.C.A. Election Code, ch. 14.

(b) In any election, a member of a city board, commission, or committee, whether governmental or advisory, may not:

(1) Use the prestige of the member's position with the city on behalf of a candidate;

(2) Serve as the designated campaign treasurer for a candidate as required by V.T.C.A. Election Code, ch. 14;

(3) Personally solicit or receive contributions for a candidate. A member, however, is not prohibited from serving on a steering committee to plan a program of solicitation and listing the member's name without reference to the office held when the committee as a whole is listed.

(c) Subsections (a)(1) and (b)(1) do not prohibit a member of the city council or of a board from lending the member's name in support of a candidate so long as the office held with the city is not mentioned in connection with the endorsement.

Section 100.14 Additional employment.

An employee of the city may accept outside employment if:

(a) The employment complies with the Personnel Policy Handbook; and

(b) The employment does not conflict with his duties as an employee of the city.

Section 100.15 Restrictions on contracting with the city or providing representation of others.

(a) An officer or employee in a position that involves significant reporting, decision-making, advisory, or supervisory responsibility who leaves the service or employment of the city may not, within 12 months after leaving that service or employment, represent any other person or organization in any formal or informal appearance:

(1) Before the city concerning a project for which the person had responsibility as a city officer or employee; or

(2) Before any other agency on a project for which the person had responsibility as an officer or employee.

(b) A former officer or employee who is subject to the requirements of subsection (a) shall, during the 24 months after leaving the service or employment of the city, disclose the officer or employee's previous position and responsibilities with the city when representing any other person or organization in any formal or informal appearance before a city agency.

(c) A member of the city council or an employee may not, within 12 months after leaving the service or employment of the city, either individually or as the officer or principal of a private business entity:

(1) Submit a proposal, on behalf of the member or employee or on behalf of a private business entity, to make any city contract that is not required by state law to be competitively bid;

(2) Negotiate or enter into any city contract that is not required by state law to be competitively bid; or

(3) Have or acquire any financial interest, direct or indirect, in any city contract that is not required by state law to be competitively bid.

Section 100.16 Limitations on employee political activity and on the holding of elective public office by an employee.

(a) An employee of the city immediately forfeits employment with the city if:

(1) The employee becomes a candidate for election to the city council;

(2) The employee becomes a candidate for nomination or election in a partisan election for public office within the county or in a partisan election for a public office, the constituency of which includes all or part of the county;

(3) The employee becomes a candidate for nomination or election to an elective public office where the holding of that office will conflict with the full and proper discharge of the employee's duties with the city; or

(4) A managerial or supervisory exempt city employee becomes a candidate for nomination or election to an elective public office of an entity having contractual relations with the city that involve the employee's department.

Section 100.17 Penalty for violation of article; appeals.

(a) The failure of any officer or employee to comply with this article or the violation of one or more of the standards of conduct set forth in this article, which apply to him, shall constitute grounds for all legal remedies provided by law which may include, if permissible, expulsion, reprimand, censure, removal from office, or discharge. In the case of a city council member, the matter shall be decided by a vote of two-thirds of the entire membership of the city council.

(b) The city council hereby adopts the following procedures to implement a censure policy:

(1) Two or more Elected City Officials may file a written notice of censure against another Elected City official with the City Secretary. The written notice shall set forth the allegation(s) of conduct which the accused Elected Official shall have allegedly violated. A copy shall be delivered to all elected members. A written response to the allegation(s) may be filed by the accused Elected Official ten days after receipt thereof. A copy of the notice of censure and response thereto shall be delivered to each Elected Official within two days after the response is filed.

(2) On the first regularly called meeting of the City Council, which complies with the Texas Open Meetings Act, after the filing of the notice and response, the City Secretary shall formally read the notice and response into the public record. The City Council, by majority vote, shall thereafter determine whether or not good cause shall exist to set a formal hearing on the merits of the notice of censure or dismiss the allegation(s). If it is determined, based upon the merits, a public hearing is required, a public hearing shall be set on the allegation(s) by the City Council. A vote to hold a public hearing shall not be construed to be a vote of censure.

(3) At a public hearing, the accused Elected Official has the right to be represented by legal counsel and present witnesses relative to the allegation(s).

(4) A public hearing on the allegation(s) and response shall be held at either a regular or special called meeting of the city council, which shall be open to the public.

(5) At a public hearing, the City Council will hear evidence concerning the notice of censure. The Elected Officials proffering the charges shall present evidence in support of the allegation(s) contained in the notice of censure. The Elected Official who is the subject of the censure shall have the opportunity to present evidence to support his or her position with respect to the notice of censure. After receiving evidence at an open public meeting, the city council shall then take a roll-call vote, after motion duly made and seconded, two-thirds of all members of the City Council shall be required to sustain the censure of the council member.

(c) In the case of an employee of the city, disciplinary action and appeals therefrom shall be in conformance with procedures established by the city charter and personnel rules and regulations.

(d) In the case of members of boards or committees, the matters shall be decided by a majority vote of the city council.

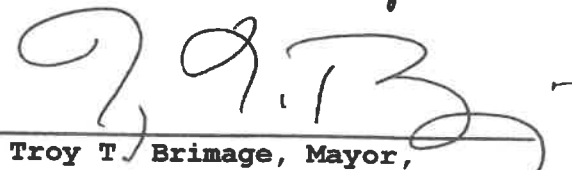
(e) The decision of the bodies authorized to hear violations shall be final in the absence of bias, prejudice or fraud.

Section 100.18 Annual Review and Re-adoption

This ordinance must be reviewed by the City Council on or before each anniversary of its adoption and may be amended at anytime.

Second, this ordinance shall take effect and be in force from and after its adoption.

READ, PASSED AND ADOPTED this 19th day of February, 2019.



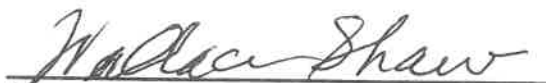
Troy T. Brimage, Mayor,
City of Freeport, Texas

ATTEST:



Laura Tolar, Assistant City Secretary
City of Freeport, Texas

APPROVED AS TO FORM ONLY:



Wallace Shaw, City Attorney,
City of Freeport, Texas

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