

**Planning Commissioner Ethics
American Planning Association
2005 National Planning Conference**

“Six Types of Ethics-Related Legal Requirements to Be Aware of” from *A Local Official’s Guide to Ethics Laws*, **The Institute for Local Self Government**

1. Public Disclosure of Personal Economic Interests
2. Receipt of Loans, Gifts, Travel Payments and Honoraria
3. Conflicts of Interest, Campaign Contributions and Bias
4. Having an Interest in a Contract
5. Dual Office-Holding/Incompatible Offices
6. Criminal Misconduct in Office

“Top Seven Things to Know About Ethics Codes” from *Developing a Local Agency Ethics Code: A Process Oriented Guide*, **The Institute for Local Self Government**

1. **What an Ethics Code Is.** An ethics code reflects the agency's shared values in public service, leadership and decision-making. A code reflects upon the agency and gives the public confidence about the agency's values and priorities.
2. **The Process Is As Important As the Product.** While it makes complete sense to start with a review of other agencies' codes, it is important to have your agency's code reflect the unique values and priorities for your community. It is also important for those whose conduct will be guided by the code to have input into the content.
3. **Style Matters.** An agency's code should be written in simple, direct language. Standards should be stated as much as possible in the positive (what kinds of conduct are desired as opposed to what is prohibited). Illustrate the standards for greater clarity and understandability (What does a particular standard or value look like in practice? What kinds of behavior are inconsistent with the particular standard or value?). Avoid legalistic language at all costs.
4. **Values-Based versus Rule-Based Codes.** Rules-based codes speak in terms of "don'ts." Values-based codes speak more in terms of aspirations and priorities ("do's"). The concept underlying this guide is that values-based codes serve as a positive complement to the current framework of ethics laws in California.
5. **Adoption of the Code Is Just the First Step.** For the agency's ethics code to truly make a difference, the values expressed in the code need to be communicated and applied. The code needs to be communicated to all whose behavior is intended to be guided by the code; training/orientation sessions need to cover the code and its importance to the community. This is how officials "walk-the-talk," and the "walk" needs to start at the upper-most levels of the organization.
6. **Periodic Review Helps.** Periodically reviewing the principles in the code (this guide recommends an annual review) keeps the code current and in everyone's consciousness—including the public's. This process can include the addition or revision of standards, as well as the expansion of the code's application to others in the agency.
7. **Accountability.** Self-accountability is the most constructive approach. A helpful question to pose in a situation in which it appears conduct inconsistent with the code will occur or has occurred is whether a particular course of action is or isn't (was or wasn't) consistent with the agency's ethics code and values. When a heavier hand is necessary, any warning and

counseling of individuals about the importance of adhering to the code should be done in a fair, consistent and even-handed manner.

Codes of Ethics on the Web

American Planning Association, American Institute of Certified Planners

- The code of ethics for the AICP is currently being revised. More information is available at <http://www.planning.org/ethics/>

Cabinet Office, Machinery of Government Secretariat, United Kingdom

- The Civil Service Code, www.cabinet-office.gov.uk/central/1999/cscodet.htm

Center for the Study of Ethics in the Professions, Illinois Institute of Technology

- This website includes codes of ethics from many organizations, including government at <http://ethics.iit.edu/codes/index.html>

Connecticut State Ethics Commission

- Code of Ethics for Public Officials (Chapter 10, part I, Connecticut General Statutes) http://www.ethics.state.ct.us/Statutes_and_Regulations/po_code_2004.htm

Georgia Municipal Association

- Model Code of Ethics for Georgia City Officials, <http://www.gmanet.com/data/pdf/CodeOfEthics.pdf>

Miami-Dade County Commission on Ethics and Public Trust

- Conflict of Interest and Code of Ethics Ordinance in Plain Language at www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/ethics/plain.asp

National Association of Counties (NACo)

- NACo's Code of Ethics for County Officials at http://www.naco.org/Content/NavigationMenu/About_Counties/Code_of_Ethics/NACo_Code_of_Ethics.htm
- Links to full County Codes of Ethics at http://www.naco.org/Template.cfm?Section=Codes_and_Ordinances&Template=/cfiles/counties/codescat_res.cfm&Category_Code=C14

New York State Ethics Commission

- Provides many resources including training at www.dos.state.ny.us/ethc/ethics.html

Ethics Training

Local Government Institute

- "Ethics: Honesty and Fairness in the Public Service," at www.lgi.org/Publications/Ethics.htm

Geoffrey Hunt

- "How to Write a Code of Ethics/Conduct," at www.freedomtocare.org/page25.htm