

CHAPTER 28  
ETHICS CODE

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**28.1 STATEMENT OF PURPOSE.** (a) The proper operation of democratic government requires that public officials and employees be independent, impartial and responsible to the people; that government decisions and policy be made in proper channels of the government 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, there is hereby established in this Chapter a Code of Ethics for all Town of Brookfield officials and employees, whether elected or appointed, paid or unpaid, including members of boards, committees and commissions of the Town, as well as any individuals who are candidates for elective office as soon as such individuals file nomination papers with the Town.

(b) The purpose of this Ethics Code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all such officials and employees by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the best interests of the Town of Brookfield and by directing disclosure by such officials and employees of private financial or other interests in matters affecting the Town. The Town Board believes that a Code of Ethics for the guidance of elected and appointed officials and employees will help them avoid conflicts between their personal interests and their public responsibilities, will improve standards of public service and will promote and strengthen the faith and confidence of the citizens of this Town in their elected and appointed officials and employees. The Town Board hereby reaffirms that each elected and appointed Town official and employee holds his or her position as a public trust, and any intentional effort to realize substantial personal gain through official conduct is a violation of that trust. The provisions and purpose of this Ethics Code and such rules and regulations as may be established are hereby declared to be in the best interests of the Town of Brookfield.

**28.2 DEFINITIONS.** The following definitions shall be applicable in this Chapter:

(a) **PUBLIC OFFICIAL.** Those persons serving in statutory elected or appointed offices provided for in Chapter 60 of the Wisconsin Statutes, and all members appointed to boards, committees and commissions established or appointed by the Town Board Chairperson and/or Common Board pursuant to this Code of Ordinances, whether paid or unpaid.

(b) **PUBLIC EMPLOYEE.** Any person excluded from the definition of a public official whom the Town employs.

(c) **ANYTHING OF VALUE.** Any gift, favor, loan, service or promise of future employment, but does not include reasonable fees and honorariums, or the exchange of seasonal, anniversary or customary gifts among relatives and friends.

(c) **BUSINESS.** Means any corporation, partnership, proprietorship, firm, enterprise, franchise, association, organization, self-employed individual or any other legal entity, which engages in profit-making activities.

(d) **PERSONAL INTEREST.** The following specific blood or marriage relationships:

(1) A person's spouse, mother, father, child, brother or sister; or

(2) A person's relative by blood or marriage who receives, directly or indirectly, more than one-half (1/2) support from such person or from whom such person receives, directly or indirectly, more than one-half (1/2) of his support.

(f) **SIGNIFICANT INTEREST.** Owning or controlling, directly or indirectly, at least ten percent (10%) or Five Thousand Dollars (\$5,000.00) of the outstanding stock of any business.

(g) **FINANCIAL INTEREST.** Any interest, which shall yield, directly or indirectly, a monetary or other material benefit to the officer or employee or to any person employing or retaining the services of the officer or employee.

(h) **STAFF.** Any full- or part-time employee of the Town.

**28.3 STATUTORY STANDARDS OF CONDUCT.**

There are certain provisions of the Wisconsin Statutes which should, while not set forth herein, be considered an integral part of any Code of Ethics. Accordingly, the provisions of the following sections of the Wisconsin Statutes, as from time to time amended, are made a part of this Code of Ethics and shall apply to public officials and employees whenever applicable, to wit:

(a) Sec. 19.59 - State Ethics Law.

(b) Sec. 946.10 - Bribery of Public Officers and Employees.

(c) Sec. 946.12 - Misconduct in Public Office.

(d) Sec. 946.13 - Private Interest in Public Contract Prohibited.

**28.4 RESPONSIBILITY OF PUBLIC OFFICE.** Public officials and employees are agents of public purpose and hold office for the benefit of the public. They are bound to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of this State and carry out impartially the laws of the nation, state and municipality, to observe in their official acts the highest standards of morality and to discharge faithfully the duties of their office regardless of personal considerations, recognizing that the public interest must be their prime concern. Their conduct in both their official and private affairs should be above reproach so as to foster respect for government.

**28.5 DEDICATED SERVICE.** (a) Officials and employees should adhere to the rules of work and performance established as the standard for their positions by the appropriate authority.

(b) Officials and employees should not exceed their authority or breach the law or ask others to do so, and they should work in full cooperation with other public officials and employees unless prohibited from so doing by law or by officially recognized confidentiality of their work.

(c) Members of the Town staff are expected to follow their appropriate professional code of ethics. Staff members shall file a copy of such professional ethics codes with the Town Administrator. The Town Administrator may notify the appropriate professional ethics board of any ethics violations involving Town employees covered by such professional standards.

**28.6 FAIR AND EQUAL TREATMENT.** (a) **USE OF PUBLIC PROPERTY.** No official or employee shall use or permit the unauthorized use of Town-owned vehicles, equipment, materials or property for personal convenience or profit, except when such services are available to the public generally or are provided as Town policy for the use of such official or employee in the conduct of official business, as authorized by the Town Board or authorized board, commission or committee.

(b) **USE OF TOWN STATIONERY.** No official or employee shall use, or permit the unauthorized use of, Town stationery for personal use.

(c) **OBLIGATIONS TO CITIZENS.** No official or employee shall grant any special consideration, treatment or advantage to any citizen beyond that which is available to every other citizen. No official or employee shall use or attempt to use his or her position with the Town to secure any advantage, preference or gain, over and above his/her rightful remuneration and benefits, for himself/herself or for a member of his or her immediate family.

(d) **POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS.** No official shall personally solicit from any Town employee, other than an elected official, a contribution to a political campaign committee for which the person subject to this Chapter is a candidate or treasurer.

**28.7 CONFLICT OF INTEREST.**

(a) **FINANCIAL AND PERSONAL INTEREST PROHIBITED.**

(1) No official or employee of the Town, whether paid or unpaid, shall engage in any business or transaction or shall act in regard to financial or other personal interest, direct or indirect, which is incompatible with the proper discharge of official duties in the public interest contrary to the provisions of this Chapter or which would tend to impair independence of judgment or action in the performance of official duties.

(3) Any member of the Town Board who has a financial interest or personal interest in any proposed legislation before the Town Board shall disclose on the records of the Town Board the nature and extent of such interest; such official shall not participate in debate or vote for adoption or defeat of such legislation. If the matter before the Board involves a members personal interest with persons involved, the member may participate in debate or discussion and vote on the matter following disclosure, unless an ordinance or contract is involved; if an ordinance or contract is involved, such official shall not participate in debate or discussion and vote on the matter.

(4) Any non-elected official who has a financial interest or personal interest in any proposed legislative action of the Town Board or any board, commission or committee upon which the official has any influence or input or of which the official is a member that is to make a recommendation or decision upon any item which is the subject of the proposed legislative action shall disclose on the records of the Town Board or the appropriate board, commission or committee the nature and extent of such interest. Such official shall not participate in debate or discussion or vote for adoption or defeat of such legislation.

(5) Any Town employee who has a financial interest or personal interest in any proposed legislative action of the Town Board or any board, commission or committee upon which the employee has any influence of input, or of which the employee is a member, that is able make to a recommendation or decision upon any item which is the subject of the proposed legislative action shall disclose on the records of the Town Board or the appropriate board, commission or committee the nature and extent of such interest.

(b) **DISCLOSURE OF CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION.** No official or employee shall, without proper legal authorization, disclose confidential information concerning the property, government or affairs of the Town, nor shall such information be used to advance the financial or other private interests of the official or employee or others.

(c) **GIFTS AND FAVORS.**

(1) No official or employee, personally or through a member of his immediate family, may solicit or accept, either directly or indirectly, from any person or organization, money or anything of value if it could be expected to influence the employees official actions or judgments or be considered a reward for any action or inaction on the part of the official or employee.

(2) No official or employee personally, or through a member of his immediate family, shall accept any gift, whether in the form of money, service, loan, thing or promise, from any person which could reasonably be expected to impair his independence of judgment or action in the performance of his duties or grant in the discharge of his duties any improper favor, service or thing of value. However, it is not a conflict of interest for any public official or employee to receive hospitality that is unsolicited and unrelated to government business, such as a meal, and that is not intended to influence the official.

(3) An official or employee is not to accept hospitality if, after consideration of the surrounding circumstances, it could reasonably be concluded that such hospitality would not be extended were it not for the fact that the guest, or a member of the guest's immediate family, was a Town official or employee. Participation in celebrations, grand openings, open houses, informational meetings and similar events are excluded from this prohibition. This paragraph further shall not be construed to prevent candidates for elective office from accepting hospitality, as a properly reported political contribution, from citizens for the purpose of supporting the candidate's campaign. (The State Ethics Board has interpreted "hospitality" as it applies to state officials as including meals, beverages and lodging which a person offers at his residence and would have been offered if the recipient were not an official).

(4) Gifts received by an official or employee or his immediate family under unusual circumstances shall be referred to the Town Board within ten (10) days of receipt for recommended disposition. Any person subject to this Chapter who becomes aware that he/she is or has been offered any gift, the acceptance of which would constitute a violation of this Subsection, shall, within ten (10) days, disclose the details surrounding said offer to the Town Board. Failure to comply with this reporting requirement shall constitute an offense under this Chapter.

**(d) REPRESENTING PRIVATE INTERESTS BEFORE TOWN AGENCIES OR COURTS.**

(1) Non-elected Town officials and employees shall not appear on behalf of any private person (other than him or herself, his or her spouse or minor children) before any Town agency, board, commission or the Town Board if the official or employee or any board,

commission or committee of which the official or employee is a member has any jurisdiction, discretion or control over the matter which is the subject of such representation.

(2) Elected Town officials may appear before Town agencies on behalf of constituents in the course of their duties as representatives of the electorate or in the performance of public or civic obligations. However, the disclosure requirements of Subsection (a) above shall be applicable to such appearances.

**(e) AD HOC COMMITTEE EXCEPTIONS.** No violation of the conflict of interest restrictions of this Section shall exist, however, where an individual serves on a special ad hoc committee charged with the narrow responsibility of addressing a specific issue or topic in which that individual, or the employer or a client of that individual, has an interest so long as the individual discloses to the Town Board that such interest exists.

**(f) CONTRACTS WITH THE TOWN.** No Town official or employee who, in his capacity as such officer or employee, participates in the mailing of a contract in which he has a private pecuniary interest, direct or indirect, or performs in regard to that contract with some function requiring the exercise of discretion on his part shall enter into any contract with the Town unless, within the confines of § 946.13, Wis. Stats.:

(1) The contract is awarded through a process of public notice and competitive bidding or the Town Board waives the requirement of this Section after determining that it is in the best interest of the Town to do so.

(3) The provisions of this Subsection shall not apply to the designation of a public depository of public funds.

**(g) CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS.** Campaign contributions shall be reported by all candidates for Town office in strict conformity with the provisions of the Wisconsin Statutes. Any campaign contribution tendered to or accepted by a candidate subsequent to the final statutory report shall be reported to the Ethics Board.

**28.8 ADVISORY OPINIONS.** When an official or employee has doubt as to the applicability of a provision of this Ethics Code to a particular situation or definition of terms used in this Chapter, he/she should apply to the Town Attorney for an advisory opinion and will be guided by that opinion when given. The official or employee shall have the opportunity to present his/her interpretation of the facts at issue and of the applicability provisions of this Chapter before such advisory decision is made. This Chapter shall be operative in all instances covered by its provisions except when superseded by an applicable statutory provision and statutory action is mandatory, or when the application of a statutory provision is discretionary, but determined by the Town Attorney to be more appropriate or desirable. Advisory

requests and opinions shall be kept confidential, except when disclosure is authorized by the requestor, in which case the request and opinion may be made public.

**28.9 HIRING RELATIVES.** (a) This Section governs the proposed hiring of individuals for full-time or part-time work as Town employees who are members of the immediate family of Town employees or elected officials. "Immediate family" includes those relatives by blood or marriage defined in § 26.2(e) as personal interests.

(b) Hiring an immediate family member of any current Town employee or elected Town official will be considered only if that individual has the knowledge and skills, experience or other job-related qualifications that warrant consideration for the position. A person cannot be hired for either full-time or part-time employment in a position immediately supervised by a member of that person's immediate family.

(c) This Section does not apply to non-elected officials who are asked to accept appointment as members of a Town board, commission or committee; non-elected officials, however, will be expected to disqualify themselves from participation in matters under consideration which may affect the hiring, retention, classification or compensation of their immediate family if currently employed or being considered for employment by the Town.

**28.10 EMPLOYEES COVERED BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS.** In the event an employee, covered under a collective bargaining agreement, is allegedly involved in an Ethics Code violation, the terms and conditions set forth in the applicable collective bargaining agreement shall prevail in the administration and interpretation of this Ethics Code Chapter.

**28.11 SANCTIONS.** (a) A determination that a public official's or public employee's actions constitute improper conduct under the provisions of this Chapter may constitute a cause for removal from office, termination of employment, suspension, reprimand, removal from committee assignment, or other appropriate disciplinary action. As an alternative or in addition to sanctions imposed herein, any individual violating the Ethics Code shall be subject to a non-reimbursable forfeiture as determined by the Brookfield Town Board.

(b) Sanctions, including any disciplinary action that may affect employees covered under a labor agreement will be consistent with the terms and conditions set forth in the labor agreement, unless State or Federal law prescribes otherwise.

(c) Sanctions, including any disciplinary action that may affect employees covered by the Police and Fire Commission jurisdiction, will be consistent with both applicable Police and Fire Commission statutes and Commission rules and regulations.

**28.12 EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.** The Town of Brookfield Employee Personnel Policies and Procedures, and its amends, is adopted and incorporated herein by reference.