



City of Tampa
Ethics Office
2024 Annual Report

The Ethics Office

The duties of the Ethics Office and the Ethics Officer were created as a result of the revised City of Tampa Code of Ethics, effective January 1, 2004. The duties and responsibilities of the office are set forth in Division 7 as well as other sections of the Code of Ethics.

The Ethics Office is a part of the Department of Human Resources with existing staff absorbing the additional work tasks to administer the ordinance. Other departments continue to have substantial responsibility for enforcement of various aspects of the ordinance. This includes the Purchasing, City Clerk, and Legal departments.

Accomplishments

Highlights of the accomplishments of the Ethics Office for the reporting period (June 2023-June 2024) are as follows:

➤ **Financial Disclosure**

- ❖ Designed and distributed the Financial Disclosure forms for the July 15, 2023 reporting for calendar year 2022. These two forms, City Form 6 for elected officials and City Form 1 for appointed employees (both current and those who separated but worked in 2022), were sent with instructions directly to the persons required to complete them. Newly appointed employees complete the form as part of their employee orientation, Successful Beginnings, in order to comply with the Code. All Financial Disclosure forms have been filed in the employee's or elected official's personnel file. All City Form 6 reports were received in a timely manner from elected officials. All but one City Form 1 reports were received in a timely manner from designated current employees.
- ❖ Preparation for the July 15, 2023 disclosure was completed with distribution of the updated forms in mid-May, 2024.
- ❖ Newly appointed employees complete the Financial Disclosure form as part of their new employee orientation in order to comply with the Code. All forms have been filed in the employee's personnel file.

➤ **Real Estate Disclosure**

- ✧ Newly appointed employees complete the Real Estate Disclosure form as part of their new employee orientation in order to comply with the Code. All forms have been filed in the employee's personnel file.
- ✧ Based on the prior determination from the Legal Department defining which Boards or Commissions of the city include "appointed officials" required to complete the Real Estate disclosure requirement, the Ethics Office is notified of new appointments in order to distribute and obtain completed disclosure forms. All forms are maintained by the Ethics Office. A review of any outstanding forms is done on a monthly basis to ensure compliance.

➤ **Approval of Non-City Employment/Private Business Entity**

- ✧ The Request for Approval of Non-City Employment/Private Business Entity form is provided to all new employees as part of their employee orientation and replaces the prior disclosure form.
- ✧ A City-wide effort was made to distribute and collect an Approval of Non-City Employment/Private Business Entity form from all employees as a way to update all information. Further, this task was included in a yearly checklist for supervisors to ensure updated information on every employee each year as a part of the annual performance evaluation process.
- ✧ As specified in the ordinance, employees who do not receive approval from their department director for their Request for Approval of Non-City Employment/Private Business Entity form receive an appeal hearing with the Ethics Commission. The Ethics Office continues to be responsible for the scheduling of the hearings and presenting information to the Commission as part of the appeal process.

➤ **Ethics Commission Support**

- ✧ Commission Meetings - The Ethics Commission held three meetings during this period. The Ethics Office supported the Ethics Commission with the drafting and issuance of all meeting agendas, public notice of the Commission meetings, meeting minutes, and correspondence. The Ethics Office also drafted the Ethics Commission's 2023 Annual Report for their approval.
- ✧ Updated Ethics Notebooks for each Commissioner - These notebooks contain a copy of the Code of Ethics, the annotated version, copies of referenced state laws, related legal opinions, and other material as needed for their responsibilities. The Commissioners each have a notebook at the Ethics Office in addition to their personal copy to avoid the need for them to retrieve and bring the notebook to Commission meetings. Three legal opinions were provided during the 2023-2024 reporting period.

- ✧ Commission Rules & Regulations - The Ethics Office continues to maintain the Commission's Rules & Regulations, updated immediately upon amendment, on the City's INET and the City's web site. On October 15, 2015, the Ethics Commission amended the Rules & Regulations, Article G, Section 2, whereby the reporting period for the annual reports remains June 1 to June 1; however, the reports are to be sent to the Mayor and Tampa City Council by October 1 of each year. The change in the reporting date to October 1 allows the Ethics Commission to meet, review, and approve the drafted report after June 1 and send it in a timely manner by October 1.
- ✧ Ethics Complaints – The Ethics Office is responsible for the processing and investigation of ethics complaints. One complaint was received during the 2022-2023 reporting period.
- ✧ Non-City Employment Appeal – One appeal was heard during this reporting period.

➤ **Lobbyist Disclosure**

- ✧ On November 3, 2016, an amendment to the Ethics Ordinance was passed, Ordinance No. 2016-161, revising the definition of lobbying and creating a new registration system for lobbyists and visitors. On February 2, 2017, the new electronic lobbyist registration and visitor log went live. The Ethics Office provided training on the electronic process to all Department Directors and Ethics Liaisons for purposes of training those affected personnel as specified in the amendment.
- ✧ The Ethics Office will continue to report the progress of tracking the Lobbyist Annual Financial Disclosure Reports via the electronic lobbyist registration system and will provide follow-up correspondence to those lobbyists with delinquent reports.
- ✧ On April 6, 2022, Mayor Jane Castor formally requested that the Ethics Commission conduct a comprehensive review of the City of Tampa lobbyist disclosures and registrations, ethics enforcement process, and conflict of interest disclosure requirement for all elected city officials. This project was completed by the Ethics Commission in October, 2022. The Legal Department is currently working to update the Ethics Code with the recommended language for final approval and presentation to Tampa City Council.

➤ **Ethics Training**

- ✧ Since May 11, 2009, the Ethics in Government training has been provided to all new employees in “Successful Beginnings,” the City of Tampa’s employee orientation program. This training is considered mandatory and a certificate of completion is issued to each participant and maintained in the personnel file.
- ✧ Ethics in Government training is now available as on-line training for all new employees and contains a new opener with new material. Additionally, a new introductory refresher training was added to update the material. This training will remain available with a new update to be created to incorporate the new recommended changes to the Ethics Ordinance, when approved by Tampa City Council.