

ORDINANCE NO. 06-146

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT A CODE OF ETHICS FOR THE TOWN OF UNICOI, TENNESSEE OFFICERS AND EMPLOYEES.

CODE OF ETHICS¹

SECTION 1. Applicability. This Chapter is the code of ethics for personnel of the Town of Unicoi. It applies to all full-time and part-time elected or appointed officials and employees, whether compensated or not, including those of any separate board, commission, committee, authority, corporation, or other instrumentality appointed or created by the Town. The words, “municipal” and “Town” or “Town of Unicoi” include these separate entities.

SECTION 2. Definition of “personal interest.”

- (1) For purposes of Sections 3 and 4, “personal interest” means:
 - (a) Any financial, ownership, or employment interest in the subject of a vote by a municipal board not otherwise regulated by state statutes on conflicts of interests; or
 - (b) Any financial, ownership, or employment interest in a matter to be regulated or supervised; or
 - (c) Any such financial, ownership, or employment interest of the official’s or employee’s spouse, parent(s), stepparent(s), grandparent(s), sibling(s), child(ren), or stepchild(ren).
- (2) The words “employment interest” include a situation in which an official or employee or a designated family member is negotiating possible employment with a person or organization that is the subject of the vote or that is to be regulated or supervised.
- (3) In any situation in which a personal interest is also a conflict of interest under state law, the provisions of the state law take precedence over the provisions of this chapter.

¹State statutes dictate many of the ethics provisions that apply to municipal officials and employees. For provisions relative to the following, see the Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) sections indicated:

Campaign finance – T.C.A. Title 2, Chapter 10.

Conflict of interests – T.C.A. §§ 6-54-107, 108; 12-4-101, 102.

Conflict of interest disclosure statements – T.C.A. § 8-50-501 and the following sections.

Consulting fee prohibition for elected municipal officials – T.C.A. §§ 2-10-122, 124.

Crimes involving public officials (bribery, soliciting unlawful compensation, buying and selling in regard to office) – T.C.A. § 39-16-101 and the following sections.

Crimes of official misconduct, official oppression, misuse of official information – T.C.A. §39-16-401 and the following sections.

Ouster law – T.C.A. § 8-47-101 and the following sections.

A brief synopsis of each of these laws appears in the appendix of the municipal code.

SECTION 3. Disclosure of personal interest by official with vote. An official with the responsibility to vote on a measure shall disclose during the meeting at which the vote takes place, before the vote and so it appears in the minutes, any personal interest that affects or that would lead a reasonable person to infer that it affects the official's vote on the measure. In addition, the official may excuse himself² from voting on the measure.

SECTION 4. Disclosure of personal interest in nonvoting matters. An official or employee who must exercise discretion relative to any matter, other than casting a vote, and who has a personal interest in the matter that affects or that would lead a reasonable person to infer that it affects the exercise of the discretion shall disclose, before the exercise of the discretion when possible, the interest on a form provided by and filed with the recorder. In addition, the official or employee may, to the extent allowed by law, charter, ordinance, or policy, excuse himself from the exercise of discretion in the matter.

SECTION 5. Acceptance of gratuities, etc. An official or employee may not accept, directly or indirectly, and money, gift, gratuity, or other consideration or favor of any kind from anyone other than the Town:

- (1) For the performance of an act, or refraining from performance of an act, that he would be expected to perform, or refrain from performing, in the regular course of his duties; or
- (2) That might reasonably be interpreted as an attempt to influence his action, or reward him for past action, in executing municipal business.

SECTION 6. Use of information.

- (1) An official or employee may not disclose any information obtained in his official capacity or position of employment that is made confidential under state or federal law except as authorized by law.
- (2) An official or employee may not use or disclose information obtained in his official capacity or position of employment with the intent to result in financial gain for himself or any other person or entity.

SECTION 7. Use of municipal time, facilities, etc.

- (1) An official or employee may not use or authorize the use of municipal time, facilities, equipment, or supplies for private gain or advantage to himself.
- (2) An official or employee may not use or authorize the use of municipal time, facilities, equipment, or supplies for private gain or advantage to any private person or entity, except as authorized by legitimate contract or lease that is determined by the governing body to be in the best interests of the Town.

SECTION 8. Use of position or authority.

- (1) An official or employee may not make or attempt to make private purchases, for cash or otherwise, in the name of the municipality.
- (2) An official or employee may not use or attempt to use his position to secure any privilege or exemption for himself or others that is not authorized by the charter, general law, or ordinance or policy of the Town.

²Masculine pronouns include the feminine. Only masculine pronouns have been used for convenience and readability.

SECTION 9. Outside employment. An official or employee may not accept or continue any outside employment if the work unreasonably inhibits the performance of any affirmative duty of the municipal position or conflicts with any provision of the Town's charter or any ordinance or policy.

SECTION 10. Ethics complaints.

- (1) The city attorney is designated as the ethics officer of the Town. Upon the written request of an official or employee potentially affected by a provision of this chapter, the city attorney may render an oral or written advisory ethics opinion based upon this chapter and other applicable law.
- (2) (a) Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, the city attorney shall investigate any credible complaint against an appointed official or employee charging any violation of this chapter, or may undertake an investigation on his own initiative when he acquires information indicating a possible violation and make recommendations for action to end or seek retribution for any activity that, in the attorney's judgment, constitutes a violation of this code of ethics.
(b) The city attorney may request that the Board of Mayor and Aldermen to hire another attorney, individual, or entity to act as ethics officer when he has or will have a conflict of interests in a particular matter.
(c) When a complaint of a violation of any provision of this chapter is lodged against a member of the Town's Board of Mayor and Aldermen, the Board of Mayor and Aldermen shall either determine that the complaint has merit, determine that the complaint does not have merit, or determine that the complaint has sufficient merit to warrant further investigation. If the Board determines that a complaint warrants further investigation, it shall authorize an investigation by the city attorney or another individual or entity chosen by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen.
- (3) The interpretation that a reasonable person in the circumstances would apply shall be used in interpreting and enforcing this code of ethics.
- (4) When a violation of this code of ethics also constitutes a violation of a personnel policy, rule, or regulation or a civil service policy, rule, or regulation, the violation shall be dealt with as a violation of the personnel or civil service provisions rather than as a violation of this code of ethics.

SECTION 11. Violations. An elected official or appointed member of a separate municipal board, commission, committee, authority, corporation, or other instrumentality who violates any provision of this chapter is subject to punishment as provided by the Town's charter or other applicable law and in addition is subject to censure by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen. An appointed official or an employee who violates any provision of this chapter is subject to disciplinary action.

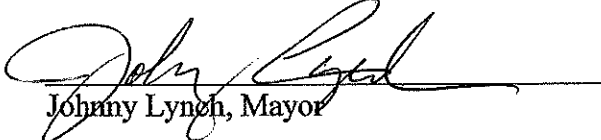
NOW, THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED, by the Board of Mayor and Aldermen of the Town of Unicoi, Tennessee that this ordinance shall be effective from and after its passage, the public welfare requiring it.

Voting by the Board, as follows, on December 18, 2006:
First Reading:

	<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>
Dwight Bennett	<u>✓</u>	_____
Doug Hopson	<u>✓</u>	_____
Ken Kisiel	<u>✓</u>	_____
Mark Ramsey	<u>✓</u>	_____
Mayor Johnny Lynch	<u>✓</u>	_____

Voting by the Board, as follows, on January 15, 2006:
Second and Final Reading:

	<u>AYE</u>	<u>NAY</u>
Dwight Bennett	<u>✓</u>	_____
Doug Hopson	<u>✓</u>	_____
Ken Kisiel	<u>✓</u>	_____
Mark Ramsey	<u>✓</u>	_____
Mayor Johnny Lynch	<u>✓</u>	_____


Johnny Lynch, Mayor

Attest:

Connie R. Mullens
Town Recorder

Town of Unicoi

Disclosure of Personal Interest

This form should be filled out and filed with the recorder or clerk by any municipal employee or official, except those who serve on boards or other bodies, who must exercise discretion relative to any matter and who has a personal interest in the matter. A personal interest is any financial, ownership, or financial interest in a matter to be regulated or supervised by the employee or official that could affect the employee's or official's discretion. This includes any financial, ownership, or employment interest of the employee's or official's spouse, parent(s), step parent(s), grandparent(s), sibling(s), child(ren), or stepchild(ren). "Employment interest" includes any situation in which the employee or official or one or more of his or her family members designated above is negotiating possible employment with a person or organization that is to be regulated or supervised by the employee or official in carrying out municipal business. Use item 1 of this form to report individual occurrences and item 2 to make a yearly report of situations that will occur more than once during a calendar year.

NAME OF EMPLOYEE OR OFFICIAL: _____

1. Individual occurrence

BRIEFLY DESCRIBE THE SITUATION IN WHICH YOU MUST EXERCISE DISCRETION AND IN WHICH YOU HAVE A PERSONAL INTEREST THAT COULD AFFECT THAT DISCRETION:

2. Continual occurrences

FOR INDIVIDUALS, BUSINESSES, OR ENTITIES THE MUNICIPALITY WILL ENTER INTO TRANSACTIONS WITH MORE THAN ONCE EACH CALENDAR YEAR AND IN WHICH YOU HAVE A PERSONAL INTEREST, YOU MAY MAKE ONE (1) DISCLOSURE FOR THE CALENDAR YEAR BY REPORTING HERE:

Name of Individual, Business, or Entity _____

Briefly describe the transactions that will take place between the municipality and the named entity during the calendar year in which you will exercise discretion and in which you have a personal interest that could affect that discretion:

Date: _____

Employee's or Official's Signature