

ETHICS ORDINANCE

City of Duluth
State of Georgia

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, CITY OF DULUTH, GEORGIA TO PROVIDE A NEW ARTICLE X, CHAPTER 2 OF THE DULUTH CODE OF ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO PROVIDE FOR CODIFICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the duly elected governing authority of the City of Duluth Georgia is authorized by O.C.G.A. § 36-35-3 to adopt ordinances relating to its property, affairs and local government; and

WHEREAS, the duly elected governing authority of the City of Duluth, Georgia is the Mayor and Council thereof; and

WHEREAS, the governing authority deems it essential to the proper operation of democratic government that the public officials be, and give the appearance of being, independent, impartial, and responsible to the people; that governmental decisions and policies be made in the proper channels of the governmental structure; and that public office not be used for personal gain; and

WHEREAS such measures are necessary to provide the public with confidence in the integrity of its government.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED: That the Code of Ordinances of the City of Duluth, Georgia is hereby amended by deleting Article X of Chapter 2 Code of Ethics in its entirety and replacing said Article with the following:

ARTICLE X – CODE OF ETHICS

Sec.2- 221 PURPOSE

The purpose of this code of ethics is to:

- (a) Encourage high ethical standards in official conduct by city officials;
- (b) Establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all such officials by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the interest of the city;
- (c) Require disclosure by such officials of private financial or other interest in matters affecting the city; and
- (d) Serve as a basis for disciplining those who refuse to abide by its terms.

Sec. 2-222 SCOPE

The provisions of this code of ethics shall be applicable to all elected or appointed city officials. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, state law and the charter of the city shall be controlling in the event of an actual conflict with the provisions of this code of

ethics. This ordinance shall be interpreted to supplement, and not replace, said provisions of state law and the charter.

Sec.2-223 DEFINITIONS

Solely for the purpose of this code of ethics:

(a) City official or official, unless otherwise expressly defined does not include city employees but does mean the mayor, members of the city council, municipal court judges (including substitute judges), city manager, city clerk, city attorney, and all other persons holding positions designated by the city charter, as amended. The term “city official” also includes all individuals, including city employees, appointed by the mayor and/or city council as appropriate to city authorities, commissions, committees, boards, task forces, or other bodies which can or may vote or take formal action or make official recommendations to the mayor and/or city council provided however, that “city official” shall not mean a city employee who is a non-voting member of a commission, authority, commission, board, task force or other body and is required to serve by virtue of the employee’s position.

(b) Decision means any ordinance, resolution, contract, franchise, formal action or other matter voted on by the city council or other city board or commission, as well as the discussions or deliberations of the council, board, or commission which can or may lead to a vote or formal action by that body.

(c) Employee means any person who is a full-time or part-time employee of the city.

(d) Immediate family means the spouse, mother, father, grandparent, brother, sister, son or daughter of any city official related by blood, adoption or marriage. The relationship by marriage shall include in-laws.

(e) Incidental interest means an interest in a person, entity or property which is not a substantial interest as defined herein and which has insignificant value.

(f) Remote interest means an interest of a person or entity, including a city official, which would be affected in the same way as the general public. For example, the interest of an official in the property tax rate, general city fees, city utility charges or a comprehensive zoning ordinance or similar matters is deemed remote to the extent that the official would be affected in common with the general public.

(g) Substantial interest means an interest, either directly or through a member of the immediate family, in another person or entity, where:

- (1) the interest is ownership of five percent or more of the voting stock, shares or equity of the entity or ownership of \$5,000.00 or more of the equity or market value of the entity; or

(2) the funds received by the person from the other person or entity during the previous 12 months either equal or exceed (a) \$5,000.00 in salary, bonuses, commissions or professional fees, or \$5,000.00 in payment for goods, products or services, or (b) ten percent of the recipient's gross income during that period, whichever is less;

(3) the person serves as a corporate officer or member of the board of directors or other governing board of a for-profit entity other than a corporate entity owned or created by the city council; or

(4) the person is a creditor, debtor, or guarantor of the other person or entity in an amount of \$5,000.00 or more.

Sec. 2-224 PROHIBITIONS

(a) No city official shall use such position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others, or to secure or divulge confidential information for any purpose other than official duties on behalf of the city.

(b) No city official, in any matter before the council or other city body, relating to a person or entity in which the official has a substantial interest, shall fail to disclose for the record such interest prior to any discussion or vote or fail to recuse himself/herself from such discussion or vote as applicable.

(c) No city official shall act as an agent or attorney for another in any matter before the city council or other city body.

(d) No city official shall directly or indirectly receive, or agree to receive, any compensation, gift, reward, or gratuity in any matter or proceeding connected with, or related to, the duties of his office except as may be provided by law.

(e) No city official shall enter into any contract with, or have any interest in, either directly or indirectly, the city except as authorized by state law.

(i) This prohibition shall not be applicable to the professional activities of the city attorney in his or her work as an independent contractor and legal advisor on behalf of the city.

(ii) This prohibition shall not be applicable to an otherwise valid employment contract between the city and a city official who is not elected (such as, by way of example, a city manager or chief of police).

(iii) Any official who has a proprietary interest in an agency doing business with the city shall make that interest known in writing to the city council and the city clerk.

(f) All public funds shall be used for the general welfare of the people and not for personal economic gain.

(g) Public property shall be disposed of in accordance with state law.

(h) No city official shall solicit or accept other employment to be performed, or compensation to be received, while still a city official if the employment or compensation could reasonably be expected to impair such official's judgment or performance of city duties.

(i) If a city official accepts or is soliciting a promise of future employment from any person or entity who has a substantial interest in a person, entity or property which would be affected by any decision upon which the official might reasonably be expected to act, investigate, advise, or make a recommendation, the official shall disclose the fact to the city council and shall recuse himself/herself and take no further action on matters regarding the potential future employer.

(j) No city official shall use city facilities, personnel, equipment or supplies for private purposes, except to the extent such are lawfully available to the public.

(k) No city official shall grant or make available to any person any consideration, treatment, advantage or favor beyond that which it is the general practice to grant or make available to the public at large.

(l) A city official shall not directly or indirectly make use of, or permit others to make use of, official information not made available to the general public for the purpose of furthering a private interest.

(m) A city official shall not use his or her position in any way to coerce, or give the appearance of coercing, another person to provide any financial benefit to such official or persons within the official's immediate family, or those with whom the official has business or financial ties amounting to a substantial interest.

(n) A city official shall not order any goods and services for the city without prior official authorization for such an expenditure. No city official shall attempt to obligate the city nor give the impression of obligating the city without proper prior authorization.

(o) No city official shall draw travel funds or per diem from the city for attendance at meetings, seminars, training or other educational events and fail to attend such events without promptly reimbursing the city therefore.

(p) No city official shall attempt to unduly influence the outcome of a case before the Municipal Court of the City of Duluth, Georgia nor shall any city official engage in ex parte communication with a municipal court judge of the City of Duluth, Georgia on any matter pending before the Municipal Court of the City of Duluth, Georgia.

Sec. 2-225 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- (a) A city official may not participate in a vote or decision on a matter affecting an immediate family member or any person, entity, or property in which the official has a substantial interest.
- (b) A city official who serves as a corporate officer or member of the board of directors of a nonprofit entity must disclose their interest in said entity to the mayor and council prior to participating in a vote or decision regarding funding of the entity by or through the city.
- (c) Where the interest of a city official in the subject matter of a vote or decision is remote or incidental, the city official may participate in the vote or decision and need not disclose the interest.

Sec. 2-226 BOARD OF ETHICS

- (a) The Board of Ethics of the City shall be composed of three (3) residents of the City to be appointed as follows: the mayor and councilmembers shall each designate two (2) qualified citizens to provide a pool of twelve (12) number of individuals who have consented to serve as a member of such Board of Ethics and who will be available for a period of four (4) years to be called upon to serve if needed. The City Clerk shall maintain a listing of these qualified citizens. Upon receipt of a properly verified complaint and timely forwarding of that complaint to the city official charged in the complaint, the Mayor and Council, at the next regularly scheduled public meeting or at a specially called public meeting, shall draw names randomly from the listing of qualified citizens until three (3) members of the Board of Ethics have been appointed. Such Board will elect one of its members to serve as chair.
- (b) All members of the Board of Ethics shall be residents of the city for at least one (1) year immediately preceding the date of taking office and shall remain a resident while serving on the Board.
- (c) All members of the Board of Ethics shall serve a four (4) year term.
- (d) No person shall serve as a member of the Board of Ethics if the person has, or has had within the preceding one (1) year period, any interest in any contract or contracting opportunity with the city or has been employed by the City.
- (e) Members of the Board of Ethics with any permit or rezoning application pending before the city, or any pending or potential litigation against the city or any city official charged in the complaint shall be disqualified from serving on the Board of Ethics for that complaint. An alternate member of the Board of Ethics shall be selected in the same manner as the disqualified individual.
- (f) The members of the Board of Ethics shall serve without compensation. The city council shall provide meeting space for the Board of Ethics and, subject to

budgetary procedures and requirements of the City, such supplies and equipment as may be reasonably necessary for the Board to perform its duties and responsibilities.

(g) No person shall serve on the Board of Ethics who has been convicted of a felony in this state or any other state, unless such person's civil rights have been restored and at least ten years have elapsed from the date of the completion of the sentence without a subsequent conviction of another felony.

(h) No person shall serve on the Board of Ethics who is less than 21 years of age, who holds a public elective office, or who is not qualified to be a registered voter in the City of Duluth, Georgia.

(i) Members of the Board of Ethics may be removed by majority vote of the city governing authority for cause including, but not limited to, failure to maintain any requirement for qualification to serve on the Board of Ethics.

Sec. 2-227 RECEIPT OF COMPLAINTS

(a) All complaints shall be submitted and signed under oath, shall be legibly drawn and shall clearly address matters within the scope of this ordinance.

(b) All complaints against city officials shall be filed with the city clerk, who will give it to the Board of Ethics. Upon receipt of a complaint in proper form, the city clerk or the clerk's designee shall forward a copy of the complaint to the city official or officials charged in the complaint within no more than seven (7) calendar days.

(c) Upon receipt of a complaint in proper form, the Board shall review it to determine whether the complaint is unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or fails to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction of the City Council. The Board of Ethics is empowered to dismiss in writing complaints that it determines are unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or fail to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction of the City Council; provided, however, that a rejection of such complaint by the Board of Ethics shall not deprive the complaining party of any action such party might otherwise have at law or in equity against the city official. For complaints that are not dismissed, the Board of Ethics is empowered to collect evidence and information concerning any complaint and add the findings and results of its investigations to the file containing such complaint.

(d) Upon completion of its investigation of a complaint, the Board of Ethics is empowered to dismiss in writing those complaints which it determines are unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or which fail to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction of the City Council; provided, however, that a rejection of such complaint by the Board of Ethics shall not deprive the complaining party of any action such party might otherwise have at law or in equity against the city official.

(e) The Board of Ethics is empowered to review the Complaint and other written materials submitted in support thereof, to take evidence, and to hold hearings to address the subject matter of a complaint.

(f) The Board of Ethics is empowered to adopt forms for formal complaints, notices, and any other necessary or desirable documents within its jurisdiction where the city council has not prescribed such forms.

(g) Findings of the Board of Ethics shall be submitted to the City Council for action.

(h) To discourage the filing of ethics complaints solely for political purposes, complaints will not be accepted against a person seeking election as a city official, whether currently serving as a city official or not, from the date qualifying opens for the elected office at issue through the date the election results for that office are certified. The time for filing complaints will not run during this period. Properly filed complaints will be accepted and processed after the election results have been certified.

Sec. 2-228 SERVICE OF COMPLAINT AND HEARING

- a. The city clerk or Board of Ethics as appointed herein set forth shall cause the complaint to be served on the city official charged as soon as practicable but in no event later than seven (7) calendar days after receipt of a proper, verified complaint. Service may be by personal service, by certified mail, return receipt requested or by statutory overnight delivery.
- b. Unless the Complaint is dismissed as the result of the Board's initial review, a hearing shall be held within sixty (60) calendar days after filing of the complaint.
- c. The Board of Ethics shall conduct hearings in accordance with the procedures and regulations it establishes. At any hearing held by the Board of Ethics, the city official who is the subject of inquiry shall have the right to written notice of the hearing and the allegations at least seven (7) calendar days before the first hearing, to be represented by counsel, to hear and examine the evidence and witnesses and, to oppose or try to mitigate the allegations. The city official subject to the inquiry shall have also have the right but not the obligation of submitting evidence and calling witnesses.
- d. The decision of the Board of Ethics shall be rendered to Mayor and Council within seven (7) calendar days after completion of the final hearing.
- e. Failure to comply with any of time deadlines in this section of the ordinance shall not invalidate any otherwise valid complaint or in any way affect the power or jurisdiction of the Board of Ethics or the city council to act upon any complaint.

Sec. 2-229 RIGHT TO APPEAL

(a) Any city official or complainant adversely affected by the findings or recommendations of the Board of Ethics may obtain judicial review of such decision as provided in this Section.

(b) An action for judicial review may be commenced by filing an application for a writ of certiorari in the Superior Court of Gwinnett County within thirty (30) days after the decision of the Board of Ethics. The filing of such application shall act as supersedeas.

Sec. 2-230 PENALTY

Any violations of this article shall be punishable up to the maximum extent permitted by law. Any sanction shall be carried out in accordance with the provisions of this article, as well as any other applicable law and may include public admonition, public reprimand, suspension, demotion, removal from office and/or termination from employment as allowed by applicable law.

Section 2.

The sections, subsections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and phrases of this ordinance are severable, and if any section, subsection, paragraph, sentence, clause or phrase shall be declared illegal by the valid judgment or decree of any court of competent jurisdiction, such illegality shall not affect any of the remaining section, subsections, paragraphs, sentences, clauses and phrases of this ordinance.

Section 3.

All ordinances and parts of ordinances in conflict herewith are expressly repealed.

IT IS SO ORDAINED this _____ day of _____ 2021.

Mayor Nancy Harris

Those councilmembers voting in favor:

Marsha Anderson, Bomar, Post 1

Marline Thomas, Post 2

Billy Jones, Post 3

Kelvin J. Kelkenberg, Post 4

Greg Whitlock, Post 5

Those councilmembers voting in opposition:

ATTEST: _____
Teresa S. Lynn, City Clerk