



Ethics Matters

An eNewsletter of the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics

Volume 2, Issue 1

February 2007

[Subscribe](#)
[Forward to a Friend](#)

Contact Us

City of Atlanta
Ethics Office
68 Mitchell Street, SW
Suite 3180
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
Tel: 404.330.6286
Fax: 404.658.7720
ethicsofficer@atlantaga.gov

Integrity Line
1.800.884.0911

Links

- [Board of Ethics](#)
- [Electronic Filing](#)
- [Search Disclosure Statements](#)

Matters Preview

- [Top Ten Steps to Instill a Culture of Ethics in 2006](#)
- [Ethics Office Creates Two Honor Rolls](#)
- [Ethics Complaints Allege Improper Use of City Property](#)
- [Ask the Ethics Officer: May I Attend a Local Seminar Hosted by a City Vendor?](#)
- [A Matter of Fact - Employees and Officials Filing Earlier in 2007](#)

Top Ten Steps to Instill a Culture of Ethics in 2006

In 2006, the Board of Ethics and Ethics Office continued to bring the city into compliance with the ethical standards outlined in the Code of Ethics and to create a culture of ethics within city government. Here is our list of ten accomplishments from last year:

1. Successfully supported legislation amending the Code of Ethics to redefine immediate family members, and opposed amendments that would have expanded gifts allowed from prohibited sources
2. Launched the Integrity Matters public education program
3. Established the Integrity Line for reporting unethical, illegal, and fraudulent conduct
4. Issued four formal advisory opinions, rendered ten informal advisory letters, and wrote sixty-seven advisory emails
5. Produced eight investigative reports

Upcoming Key Dates

Efiling Day in the Atrium	2/08/2007
2007 Financial Disclosure Statement Filing Deadline	2/15/2007

6. Conducted training on conflicts of interest for 918 new employees
7. Developed a conflicts of interest form for evaluators in procurement processes to sign
8. Published initial two issues of *Ethics Matters*, an enewsletter
9. Produced four new ethics publications
10. Upgraded the Electronic Filing System registration system and online forms

Projects Planned for 2007

- Develop a refresher classroom course on ethics featuring film clips
- Initiate ethics training for new board members and neighborhood planning unit officers
- Develop online ethics training for city employees
- Update the Integrity Matters campaign
- Establish clear remedies for enforcing board decisions against violators
- Continue to advise employees on actual and potential conflicts of interest
- Improve compliance with the city's efiling policy for ethics disclosure forms

[\(top\)](#)

Ethics Office Creates Two Honor Rolls

The Ethics Office has announced the creation of two financial disclosure honor rolls to publicly recognize city departments with exemplary performance in their employees' compliance with the annual financial disclosure filing requirements. These honor roles are the Ethics Roll of Honor and the Ethics Roll of Merit.

For departments to make the Roll of Honor, every *current and former* departmental employee who is required to file must file a timely, complete 2007 Financial Disclosure Statement. A timely statement is one filed by the February 15, 2007, deadline, and a complete statement is one that answers every question required on the online form. For departments to make the Roll of Merit, every *current* employee who is required to file must file a complete statement by the filing deadline. The honor rolls will be announced in March.

The Board of Ethics will again publish a Roll of Delinquent Filers. The 2006 list included 22 individuals who failed to file any financial disclosure statement and nine late filers who failed to timely pay the administrative sanction for filing late.

Midway through the official filing period, half of the 1,500 city employees and officials required to do so have filed their 2007 City Financial Disclosure Statement. With the number of early filers running well ahead of past years, the city is on target to match its timely filing rate of 96 percent achieved in 2005.

The Ethics Office will hold its second and final eFiling Day in the City Hall Atrium, 55 Trinity Avenue, on Thursday, February 8, 2007, from 9 a.m. to 4:30

p.m.



Troubleshooting Common eFiling Problems

- User ID not recognized – your email address is your User ID
- Password not recognized – you must register to receive a password
- Password doesn't work – copy and paste the password sent to you
- Name not recognized – check the online list of required filers to see how your name is listed in the eFiling database
- Signature not recognized – your email address is your User ID and electronic signature
- Email address needs to be changed – email ethicsofficer@atlantaga.gov with “update email address” in the subject line
- Name needs to be changed – email ethicsofficer@atlantaga.gov with “update name” in the subject line

For more information, visit the Board's [Electronic Filing System](#) webpage.

[\(top\)](#)

Ethics Complaints Allege Improper Use of City Property

The Ethics Office has received two formal ethics complaints this month alleging that city officials and employees have used city property for their own personal use. Both complaints are based on investigative reports by the Law Department.

The first complaint alleges that the former head of general services and a city council member have held rent-free galas, weddings, and parties on city property, using city services, without paying for their use. The second complaint alleges that the chief operating officer, chief of staff, and former office manager have made personal charges on city credit cards that incurred late fees and penalties.

In its first formal advisory opinion after the Code of Ethics was revised in 2002, the Board of Ethics determined that city officials were not entitled to a reduction or waiver of a rental fee for the personal use of city property or for its use by any other person or entity on terms that are not available to the general public. Subsequently, the board was asked to define what is considered “official city business,” which would entitle a city official to use a city facility without paying the rental fee customarily charged to the public. The board set out a general definition that city officials and employees are conducting official city business when they act in an official capacity and perform official duties on behalf of the

city.

The Ethics Office will conduct an investigation of the complaints and report to the board on its findings and recommendations. The investigations are expected to take 60 to 90 days.

To read the full text of opinions 2003-1 on the waiver of rental fees and 2004-1 on official city business, visit the Board's [Advisory Opinions](#) webpage.

[\(top\)](#)

**Ask the Ethics Officer:
May I Attend a Local Seminar Hosted by a City Vendor?**

I have been invited to attend a local seminar after work that is being hosted by a potential city vendor for local, state, and federal employees. There is no charge to attend the event, and food and beverages will be provided. May I attend?

You may attend the event since it is open to other members of the public, and you may accept the food because it is furnished in connection with your appearance in an official capacity at a seminar, convention, or conference.

One of the exceptions to the ban on gratuities permits city employees and officials to accept "reasonable meals or refreshments" furnished when they attend a "public, civic, charitable, or non-profit ceremony, event, convention, or conference" in their official capacity, whether or not the sponsor of the event does business with the city. There is no requirement to disclose the gift of the meal under this exception because the public nature of the event serves as the notice or disclosure.

Send your questions to ethicsofficer@atlantaga.gov.

[\(top\)](#)

A Matter of Fact -- Employees and Officials Filing Earlier in 2007

- 764 persons filed their 2007 City Financial Disclosure Statement by January 31, 2007
- 383 persons filed their 2006 City Financial Disclosure Statement by January 31, 2006
- 335 persons filed their 2005 City Financial Disclosure Statement by January 1, 2005

[\(top\)](#)

Ethics Matters is produced by the City of Atlanta Ethics Office.
If you would like to unsubscribe from this mailing list, please [click here](#).