

## Report on City of Atlanta Ethics Office Work Plan July 1, 2005 – June 30, 2007

The Ethics Officer, in conjunction with the City of Atlanta's Board of Ethics, proposed a two-year work plan in July 2005. The work plan sought to execute faithfully the duties of the office as established by the City Code, create a culture of ethics in the City, and assure that the City enjoys the full credit and trust of its citizens as a government that truly conducts itself in an ethical manner. This report chronicles the action that the Board and Ethics Office have taken to implement each item outlined in the work plan.

### Administrative

1. Establish a Public Integrity Unit in conjunction with the Office of City Auditor to provide for closer collaboration and sharing of resources between the offices.

**Action Taken:** Jointly interviewed, hired, and supervised an investigation manager for the Ethics and City Auditor's offices; conferred weekly to assign Integrity Line calls; and periodically received assistance from auditor's staff on administrative, editorial, and research matters.

2. Add additional staff to become more effective in promoting and enforcing the ethical standards for city officials and employees.

**Action Taken:** Abolished administrative assistant position; created new positions for an administrative analyst, senior, and an investigation manager; and added two new staff members in May 2006 for a three-person office.

3. Develop a strong committee structure for the Board of Ethics and give appropriate recognition for the work of board members.

**Action Taken:** Held two board retreats, 18 board meetings, three committee meetings, and one meeting with the Mayor to support ethics initiatives; interviewed 15 city officials and employees to evaluate the Ethics Office's work; enacted resolutions recognizing the contributions of departing board members; and staff regularly consulted and reported to board members on code interpretation, financial disclosure, publications, Integrity Matters campaign, administrative matters, and proposed legislation.

### Public Education

4. Develop and distribute public educational materials on the Code of Ethics related to employees, neighborhood planning unit officers, former officials, prohibited sources, citizens, and gratuities.

**Action Taken:** Published six new publications.

- *Ethics Matters*, a bi-monthly e-newsletter (five issues)
- *Ethical Guidelines for Elected Officials* (June 2006)
- *Ethical Guidelines for NPU Officers* (Oct. 2006)
- *Key Ethics Rules Every Board Members Needs to Know* (Oct. 2006)
- Fact sheet on Ethics Disclosure Forms
- Illustrated “How to” instructions on e-filing

5. Establish policies and procedures to notify new employees in writing about the city’s ethical standards and financial disclosure requirements and notify employees who leave about the one-year revolving door rule.

**Action Taken:** Work in progress to draft a form for new employees to sign acknowledging receipt of the city’s ethical standards, a form for departments to use in exit interviews with employees when they leave their job, and a letter to former employees about the one-year cooling off period and financial disclosure requirements.

6. Assist with the proposed City of Atlanta Code of Conduct.

**Action Taken:** Work in progress with the Law Department.

7. Write board members, hearing officers, and NPU officers annually about the city’s ethical standards and how they apply to them as city officials.

**Action Taken:** Wrote letters to 500 city board members, hearing officers, and NPU officers in October 2006 and to 128 new officials in April 2007 about the city’s ethical guidelines and financial disclosure; and sent *Ethics Matters* e-newsletter every other month to all city board members and NPU officers.

8. Produce and distribute a bi-monthly ethics e-newsletter.

**Action Taken:** Published five issues of *Ethics Matters*, beginning in November 2006, and distributed to 1,500 subscribers.

9. Maintain and upgrade the Board of Ethics website by updating content monthly, adding new sections and features, and improving capacity to search financial disclosure statements.

**Action Taken:** Expanded Board’s website to 90 web pages, adding new pages on advice, education, legislation, enforcement, closed cases, board meetings, minutes, and services; and enhanced the homepage, registration, and public search features in the Electronic Filing System.

## Training

10. Develop training programs specially designed for board members, NPU officers and online training of employees; update annually the presentation on conflicts of interest for new employees; develop new ethics training program for supervisors and an “*Ethics in the Movies*” training program using film clips.

**Action Taken:** Annually updated new employee presentation, “*Don’t Get Conflicted Out*”; began ethics training for Department of Aviation’s new employees; developed custom-made classroom presentations on “*There’s No Free Lunch*” for six different city offices; developed PowerPoint presentation on Integrity Matters program; and provided individual training on the e-filing system on request.

11. Present training workshops for supervisors and inspectors in city departments, new board members, NPU officers, and citizens.

**Action Taken:** Conducted hour-long ethics training program for 1,625 new employees at 22 monthly sessions of New Employees Orientation in City Hall and 10 sessions at the Department of Aviation; and presented workshops on Code of Ethics to 580 city employees and officials in these offices:

- Council President and City Council
- Executive Offices
- Atlanta Development Authority
- Municipal Court employees
- Public Works management
- Watershed Management supervisors

12. Seek adoption of a city policy and practice requiring mandatory ethics training every three years for the 1,200 officials and employees who are required under the Code of Ethics to disclose conflicts of interest and financial interests.

**Action Taken:** Work in progress to develop training plan.

## Rendering Advice

13. Respond to requests for advice in a timely, consistent, understandable, and persuasive manner.

**Action Taken:** Wrote 16 informal advisory letters, 147 emails, and four memoranda advising officials, employees, and citizens about the ethics provisions in the City’s Standards of Conduct; responded to 161 telephone or walk-in inquiries for advice and 97 requests for general information about ethics; and developed conflicts of interest form for evaluators on procurement panels.

14. Identify appropriate topics for Board to resolve in formal advisory opinions and draft formal advisory opinions.

**Action Taken:** Researched, drafted, and adopted nine formal advisory opinions by Board of Ethics on:

- board members appearing before city agencies (three opinions)
- board members doing business with the City
- solicitations for city programs
- use of city property in political campaigns
- one-year post-employment rule
- use of confidential information
- disclosure of expense reimbursements for travel

Used board opinions to establish city guidelines on (1) use of city property for official city business; (2) solicitations by city officials and employees for city programs; and (3) board members' representation of others before city agencies.

### **Investigations and Enforcement Actions**

#### 15. Establish the Integrity Line as a responsive and effective ethics hotline.

**Action Taken:** Established the Integrity Line, a 24/7 ethics hotline, to enable employees and the general public to report unethical, fraudulent, and illegal acts; contracted with The Network to operate the call center, provide a case management system, and produce literature; served as hotline coordinator, developed protocol for handling Integrity Line calls, and met weekly with the City Auditor and Compliance staff to review calls, assign cases, and share information.

Received 320 hotline calls during the first year of operation; referred 170 incident reports to departments for handling, followed up on 49 cases in which departments were required to report back, and entered case outcome and disposition in 218 cases in case management system; contacted by telephone or email 83 callers to explain how case was handled or to make a referral.

#### 16. Promote the Integrity Line through a well-coordinated public education campaign.

**Action Taken:** Launched the Integrity Matters campaign to encourage employees to do the right thing and to speak up when they see others doing the wrong thing; developed a communications plan and participated in the Mayor's press conference and City Council briefing announcing the hotline; drafted and designed the letter, posters, brochure, wallet cards, fact sheets, banner, messages on paycheck and water bill insert, and managers' guide explaining the hotline; distributed 28 awareness centers and 200 posters to 20 city agencies and collated 8,500 letters and wallet cards distributed with city payroll in initial launch; and distributed 200 new posters every six months.

Incorporated Integrity Matters information into new employees training and made 18 presentations to 975 employees in Corrections, Executive Offices, Finance, Municipal Court, Planning, Public Works, and Watershed Management.

17. Improve ethics investigations by hiring an investigator and initiating enforcement actions.

**Action Taken:** Hired Investigation Manager in May 2006 and developed protocol for handling ethics complaints; met regularly with other city investigators to share information about ongoing cases; conducted 23 preliminary investigations, wrote 13 investigative reports, including two for Board of Ethics, and closed 70 cases; referred three cases to other agencies for enforcement; and responded to eight Open Records Act requests.

18. Review and analyze data on calls and reports received by the Ethics Office and the Integrity Line to identify patterns of misconduct.

**Action Taken:** Drafted a report on the first year of the Integrity Line with the City Auditor's Office and Department of Law's Compliance Unit; and reported on closed cases at board website.

### **Legislation and Lobbying**

19. Establish a system for identifying lobbyists at City Hall and define problems with the current version of the City's Standards of Conduct that may require legislative changes.

**Action Taken:** Held initial discussions with Mayor and executive offices and conducted preliminary research on registration of local lobbyists. On specific legislation:

- compared conflicts of interests provisions in Charter, Code of Ordinances, and Code of Ethics for City Council working group and recommended ways to reconcile discrepancies
- worked with Committee on Council chair to draft changes to section 2-813 and require online disclosure of conflicts of interest
- testified against amendments to Code of Ethics that would have permitted gifts of meals and tickets and Board passed resolution opposing legislation
- prepared written analysis for Mayor on legislation amending the definition of "immediate family members" in the Charter and Code of Ethics

### **Disclosure Statements and Reports**

20. Improve the financial disclosure system.

**Action Taken:** Honored 13 offices with exemplary performance in complying with the financial disclosure filing requirements; established a uniform, city-wide system

of employees required to file annual financial disclosure statements based on job title and job code, with input from each department; maintained a database of city board members; posted online each year the list of employees and board members required to file; revised financial disclosure form to clarify information to be disclosed about sources of income, property ownership, and family members; established rules for the filing of expense reimbursements and gift reports; made written requests to Oracle project team to identify employees required to file in the new system; established forms, procedures, and process for enforcing board orders; and collected \$2,620 in fines imposed in the 2005 and 2006 filing years.

21. Improve the Electronic Filing System.

**Action Taken:** Enhanced the homepage, registration process, administrative tool, and public search tool in the Electronic Filing System; and updated the online 2007 City Financial Disclosure Statement to reflect legislative changes in filing requirements.

22. Mandate online filing of all city disclosure forms.

**Action Taken:** Achieved electronic filing by 95% of all filers in 2007 after mandating online filing by all filers except persons 65 years or older; achieved electronic filing by 82% of all filers in 2006 after mandating online filing by all elected city officials and current employees in 2006; held three e-filing days in the Atrium, helped 267 persons file electronically, answered 663 telephone calls, and sent 667 emails to assist filers over two-year period.

23. Establish an audit process for reviewing all city disclosure statements to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the information disclosed; and write an annual report on financial disclosure statements and other city disclosure reports.

**Action Taken:** Published annual financial disclosure reports in September 2005, October 2006, and March 2007; reviewed forms filed in 2006 by elected officials, department heads, and employees in three departments for conflicts of interest; and developed work plan to review all 2007 City Financial Disclosure Statements for potential conflicts of interest and conduct a random sample of statements for completeness.

24. Prepare and issue an annual report on the "State of Ethics in the City of Atlanta" to present to the Mayor, City Council, and Atlanta citizens.

**Action Taken:** Issued report, "*Ethics Is Everybody's Business*," in October 2005 on the state of ethics in the City of Atlanta; work in progress on 2007 report.

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