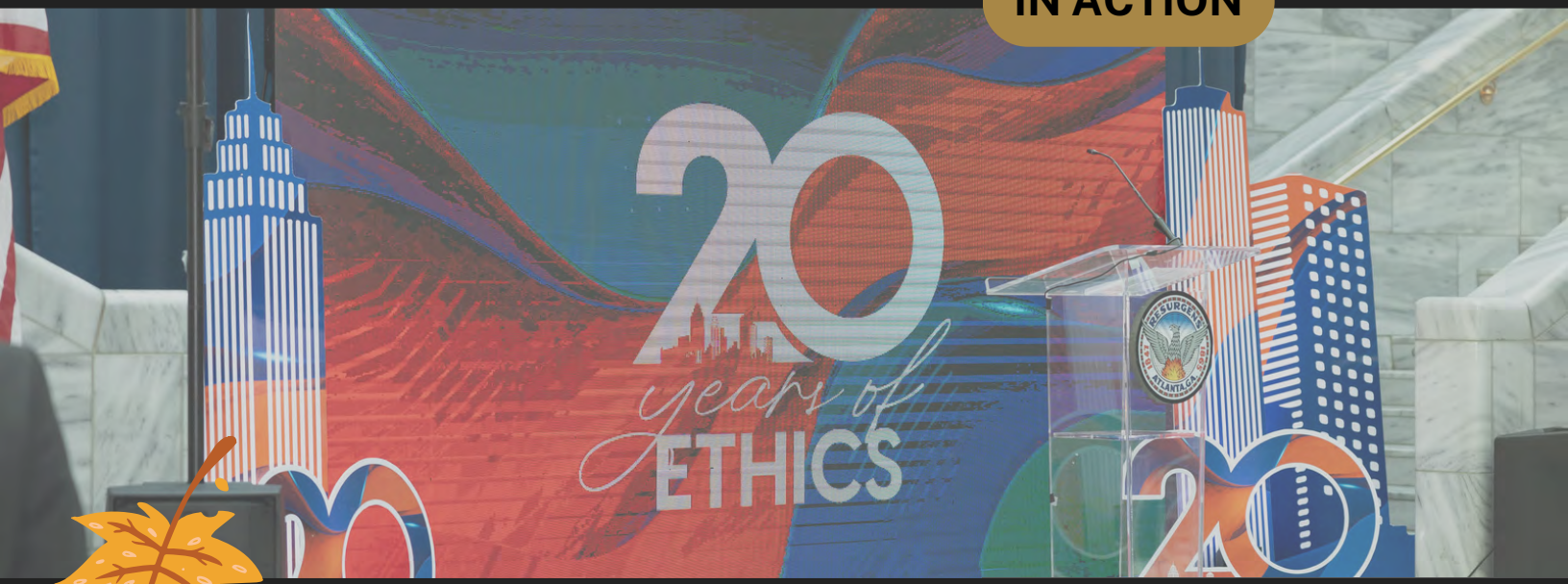


ATLANTA ETHICS

IN ACTION



HISTORY OF ATLANTA ETHICS

By: Ibidapo Onabanjo, *Ethics Advisor II*

This year the city celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Ethics Office but, unbeknown to most, Ethics in Atlanta has a history that spans back more than 60 years.

In 1963, Ivan Allen, Jr. the Mayor of Atlanta at the time was considered to be a liberal-minded and progressive leader. He is credited with leading the “Forward Atlanta” campaign initiative during the 1960’s which helped to bring huge economic growth and revitalization to Atlanta by recruiting talent, attracting big businesses, and bringing major sports franchises to the city.

IN THIS ISSUE

- HISTORY OF THE ETHICS OFFICE
- ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IS FOR EVERYONE
- OUR ETHICAL REQUIREMENT TO REPORT UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR
- 20 YEARS OF ETHICS
- TRIVIA QUESTIONS: WIN PRIZES!!!
- REPORTING MISCONDUCT
- ETHICAL REMINDER

However, due to the conviction of two city alderman for corruption, former Mayor Allen was keenly aware that, in order for his plan of economic, social, and urban growth to advance, public trust had to be a vital key component. Thereafter, Mayor Allen and the City Council worked together to create a plan of ethics reform. The plan involved strengthening the current laws and creating a mechanism that would ensure compliance with the new laws. From that collaboration, the Atlanta Ethics Board was born, making Atlanta one of the first cities in the country to have an ethics board, even before the federal government. In 1984, before representing Atlanta for over 33 years in Congress, former Congressman John Lewis (RIP) served as an Atlanta City Councilmember.



Often accused of not being a “team player” and going against the status quo, Lewis began pointing out ethical issues at play that also involved city lobbyists. The majority African American city council at the time responded to the impropriety issues by once again, enacting stronger ethics laws and strengthening the compliance component by giving the Ethics Board further authority to not only advise individuals on ethical matters but also to investigate them as well. Fast forward to 2002, then-Mayor Shirley Franklin, having similar ideals of urban and economic growth and facing recognizable issues of corruption within the administration, responded to the dilemma by doing exactly what her predecessors did - advocating for and prioritizing ethics reform. She did this by creating an ethics task force that recommended stronger laws and a stronger compliance mechanism that turned into what is now today, the independent Ethics Office.

ETHICAL LEADERSHIP IS FOR EVERYONE

Good ethics is good business. Every employee in the City should aspire to be an ethical leader. This is not always easy, especially when pressures to “bend the rules” intensify.

When ethics issues arise, we want to do the right thing. Yet instead of speaking up, silence may seem like the easier option. We may choose to live with an uneasy conscience rather than risk our reputation and our relationships at work.

It helps to remember that ethical leaders are made, not born, and we can take steps to improve our own integrity by acquiring the right set of attitudes and skills.

The first step is to recognize that ethics issues are a normal part of business life. Whatever our area, whatever our role, it is normal that our values and personal integrity will be put to the test on occasion.

We can connect with our fellow employees by tactfully reminding them of shared values such as respect, honesty, and fairness. Reasons and rationalizations, such as “everyone does it,” “it’s not our problem,” “no one will find out,” are predictable. If we anticipate these reasons and rationalizations, we can develop clear, concise counterarguments. It helps enormously to be prepared.

Try to remember what has enabled or disabled you in the past. An honest self-appraisal can help you draw on or work around these factors.

Most of us are neither moral heroes nor villains. On any given day, each of us can stand up for what is right or do nothing and let others determine what happens. But when workplace ethics issues do come up, which they will, it’s important to know that we can exercise effective ethical leadership.

Credit: Abridged edition of article published in Compliance Wave 2023



OUR ETHICAL REQUIREMENT TO REPORT UNETHICAL BEHAVIOR

By: Janet Keene, *Ethics Analyst*

I attended the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners' annual conference in June. I was reminded of the importance of not just doing the right thing in the workplace, but also that our actions and what may appear to be improper are equally significant. For example, if you see someone in your office misusing their work time for their personal benefit, this could point to unethical behavior and should be reported to the Ethics Office. I have learned that as ethics professionals, we are constantly reminded of real-life episodes of unethical behavior and even fraudulent conduct in the workplace. Reporting these observations should not be an option but an ethical requirement.

There are different ways to blow the whistle on suspected fraud and unethical behavior. A report may be made orally, or in writing, and may be done anonymously. The facts and circumstances to include in a report are also at the whistleblower's discretion. If you have questions about how to file a complaint, please contact our office at 404-330-6286 or ethicsofficer@atlantaga.gov

CODE OF ETHICS: THE CODE AND THE ROAD

You're driving to a wedding. You thought the directions to the address were clear but suddenly nothing looks familiar. You drive in circles as you're anxiously aware of the time. Finally, in a moment of clarity, you remember the road map in your glove box. Quickly, you re-orient yourself, and arrive breathlessly just as the ceremony begins.

Like a good road map, our city Code of Ethics can help you get your bearings in a tough situation. Our Code is a navigation tool designed to guide your daily decisions in the right direction. But just like the map in the glove box, the Code won't help if it's sitting on the shelf. To reap its benefits, you should understand its contents and access it when needed.

The Code – like a Road Map

Our Code is a road map for ethical behavior on the job. It outlines the responsibility of each employee and summarizes policies and procedures. Important topics such as Conflicts of Interests, Gifts and Gratuities, Outside Jobs, Tickets, and Confidential Information are defined in the Code. The Code applies not only to employees but also to elected officials, city board members, contractors, and vendors. It is distributed internally to every employee as well as publicly available online.

How to Use the Code

Just like the road map, the Code is a resource. Here are some ways to use it to make your trip easier.

- Become familiar with the sections that relate to your job.
- Ask for clarification on sections that are unclear to you.

If you are a supervisor:

- Consider ways to help your employees understand the topics in the Code and how to use the Code as a resource.
- Determine which topics of the Code present higher risk for your work group and focus on those areas.
- Check your own behavior to be sure that you are applying the policies in the Code evenly and accurately no matter who is involved.
- Practice ethical decision making and show employees around you that you always include ethical considerations in your decisions.

Reaching Our Destination

Our Code of Conduct sends a clear message. When you understand and reflect the Code in your decisions, you are protecting the City's reputation. If you have any questions, please ask for guidance from your supervisor, HR, or the Ethics Office.

Credit: Abridged edition of article published in Compliance Wave 2023

20 YEARS OF ETHICS

By: Portia Reeves, *Business Manager I*

Since its establishment in 2003, the Ethics Office has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to providing city officials and employees with the knowledge and tools to make ethical decisions. Through educational programs, ethical guidance and training sessions, the office has empowered individuals to navigate ethical challenges with clarity and integrity.

The enduring success of the Ethics Office began with the invaluable groundwork laid by former Mayor Shirley Franklin and the visionary leadership of the late Ginny Looney, the first Ethics Officer. With their remarkable dedication to ethical principles, Looney spearheaded the development of robust policies, procedures, and training programs that became the solid foundation of the City of Atlanta's ethical infrastructure. The expertise and unwavering commitment of both leaders have left an indelible legacy that continues to guide and shape the Ethics Office's ongoing achievements.



The Ethics Office has also maintained a strong focus on ethics investigations and sound ethical guidance. The investigative team has diligently and impartially addressed concerns presented by employees and citizens alike. This steadfast dedication to comprehensive and unbiased investigations has played a vital role in maintaining the integrity of the city's operations. The advisory team has provided practical and consistent guidance to officials and employees empowering them to make better ethical decisions.



"REACHING THIS 20-YEAR MILESTONE IS A TESTAMENT TO THE DEDICATION AND RESILIENCE OF THE ETHICS OFFICE," SAID JABU M. SENGOVA, ETHICS OFFICER. "OUR JOURNEY HAS BEEN FILLED WITH CHALLENGES, NONETHELESS, MARKED BY OUR UNWAVERING COMMITMENT TO PROMOTING ETHICAL PRINCIPLES AND ENSURING THAT OUR CITY'S ACTIONS ARE GUIDED BY HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND TRUST. I AM PROUD TO BE PART OF THAT STORY."





Ethics Challenge: Test Your Knowledge!!!

How To Play:

The first 10 people to email the correct answers to ethicstraining@atlantaga.gov by November 30, 2023, will win ETHICS SWAG!!!

A city employee has been invited to a cocktail party by a notable host who is not a prohibited source. May she attend?

A

Yes

B

No

Your manager asked you to review bids from several vendors and recommend one for the project. You notice that one of the lowest bids has been highlighted and that the owner of that company is a friend of your manager.

Is there an ethics issue here?

A

Yes

B

No

Janine is a city employee whose brother gave her a tennis racket for her birthday. Can she keep it even though he works for a contractor that does business with the city?

A

Yes

B

No

You work in the IT department for the city and your co-worker has a computer repair business. You notice your co-worker is using their city computer during lunch hour to research things for their business. You also notice that your co-worker is calling their customers using their city cell phone. Are the activities of your co-worker an ethics violation?

A

Yes

B

No

Reporting Misconduct in the City of Atlanta

Observing and reporting employee misconduct while working remotely may not seem as obvious as it is while working onsite. After all, if people are not in the office, they should not be doing anything unethical, right? Unfortunately, that is not always the case. Ethical misconduct and fraud can happen even in a remote workplace, and the opportunity to do so, rationalizing why it happens, as well as the pressure to behave improperly, remain present.

If you notice anyone engaging in ethical misconduct or fraud, misusing a city position or city funds or resources, it is important that you call the **Integrity Hotline** at **1-800-884-0911**. The complaints are sent directly to the **Office of the Inspector General** and thoroughly reviewed by the **Ethics Office and the Inspector General's Office**. If you are not comfortable providing your name, you can file an anonymous complaint and your call will be confidential. You can also visit www.atlantaga.ethicspoint.com to file a complaint online. The site is confidential and secure. We want to hear from you, and we take all complaints seriously.



INTEGRITY HOTLINE



ETHICAL REMINDER

ANNUAL GIFT TO THE CITY REPORT

If your department has received a gift this year on behalf of the City of Atlanta from a prohibited source, because of soliciting a donation, as an honorarium, and/or as an addition to City assets, your department should file a Gift to the City report before December 31. Please contact our office if you have questions.