

**CITY OF BAINBRIDGE ISLAND  
ETHICS PROGRAM  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

***What is the COBI Ethics Program?***

The ethics program was instituted by City Council Resolution 2006-25 to establish standards of conduct for elected officials and to provide training and clarification concerning ethical standards.

***Where can I find the Code of Ethics?***

The complete Code of Ethics can be accessed at <http://www.ci.bainbridge-isl.wa.us> or obtained from the City Clerk.

***Who administers the Ethics Program?***

The Ethics Board, which is an appointed board consisting of five members, is responsible for administering the program, training public officials, issuing advisory opinions and waivers.

***To whom does the Ethics Code apply?***

Only City of Bainbridge Island elected officials (the mayor and members of the city council) are covered by the Code.

***How can citizens express ethical concerns about their elected officials?***

Citizens can request “advisory opinions” about any behavior of an elected official which they think might violate the Code of Ethics. The Ethics Board will consider the facts alleged and issue a written opinion on whether or not the behavior violates the Code. Elected officials may also request advisory opinions. Advisory opinions may be rendered on potential future actions, as well as past behavior.

***How are advisory opinions issued?***

Advisory opinions can be requested by filing a form with the city clerk or on-line at <http://www.ci.bainbridge-isl.wa.us>

***What happens if the Board finds a violation of the Code?***

If the behavior is found to violate the Code, a citizen may then file a complaint with the City Clerk, which will be addressed by the City Council. The accused official may request a hearing before the City Hearing Examiner.

***What sorts of behavior violate the Code of Ethics?***

The prohibited behaviors fall into the following categories:

1. Prohibited gifts;
2. Use of City property;
3. Disclosure of confidential information; and
4. Conflicts of interest.

***What are prohibited gifts?***

With a few exceptions that will be noted below, elected officials and members of their immediate families are prohibited from receiving gifts of any kind, directly or indirectly relating to their duties with the City. Gifts include goods, services, dispensations, discounts and other things of value; honoraria or payment for participation in events; loans or rental of money, goods, equipment; event tickets; and transportation, lodging and travel expenses.

***Are there permissible gifts?***

Yes. Certain items of small or ceremonial value; appropriate awards; properly reported campaign contributions; reasonable and necessary expenses to

attend official events; and appropriate gifts connected to holidays and family events, such as weddings are permitted. The Code contains a complete list of exceptions and should be consulted before any gift is accepted.

It is also permissible for immediate family members of elected officials to accept gifts arising from independent relationships if the official does not benefit from the gift and it cannot be reasonably inferred that the gift is intended to influence the official.

***What uses of City property are prohibited?***

Except in emergency and incidental circumstances, use of City vehicles, equipment, materials and property by elected officials is prohibited.

In addition, from the time an elected official announces that she or he is going to run for re-election until the completion of the general election, the official may not use or request City funds for any media containing the name or image of the official unless the names and images of all City elected officials appear in the media purchased.

***What information must be treated as confidential?***

Except as required by law, elected and former elected officials must not disclose or use privileged, confidential or proprietary information obtained in executive session or otherwise in the course of their duties as a result of their position.

***What are conflicts of interest?***

In general, conflicts of interest involve an elected official's direct or indirect vote, instruction or other action in the course of his or her official duties which affect, or appear to affect, a matter in which the elected official or member of his or her family have a financial, property or other interest.

***Do conflicts of interest disappear when an elected official leaves office?***

No. For two years after leaving office, an elected official is prohibited from obtaining employment which would allow the official to take direct or indirect advantage of matters on which the official acted during his or her service with the City. Nor may an official engage in litigation in which the City is involved on behalf of any other person or entity and involving matters in which the official took direct action while in office.

***May family members of elected officials be employed by the City?***

There is no prohibition against family members being employed by the City, but they may not be appointed or hired by a related elected official, or supervised by that official, unless a waiver is obtained from the Ethics Board.

***May waivers to other potential Ethics Code violations be sought by an elected official?***

Yes. Any current, former or prospective elected official may submit a written request for waiver of any provision of the Ethics Code. The Ethics Board must consider such a request at an open meeting, with notice to the public. The Board must issue its decision in writing within six weeks.

***What are the duties of the Ethics Board?***

The Ethics Board is charged with providing training to elected officials and others who deal with the City regarding the Ethics Code, issuing advisory opinions and waivers. It is also required to issue an annual report of its activities, including recommendations to the Mayor and City Council for any modifications to the Ethics Code.

***Where can I get more information about government ethics?***

City of Bainbridge Island Ethics Code, advisory opinions and additional resources are available on the City's website or from the City Clerk.

<http://www.ci.bainbridge-isl.wa.us>

(Click on "Citizen Commissions and Committees," then on "Ethics Board")

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**Frequently asked questions**