

The Seattle Ethics & Elections Commission

The SEEC is a seven-member, independent panel of citizen volunteers. The Commission and its staff are responsible for administering the City of Seattle Ethics, Elections, and Whistleblower Protection Codes and Lobbying Regulations, as well as the Democracy Voucher Program. Three Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, three by the City Council, and the seventh by the other six. They are confirmed by the City Council and serve overlapping three-year terms.

The Commission is supported by a staff of six employees who provide training, investigate complaints, and issue advisory opinions.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION

Ethics training and brochures are available by request. Information is also available at the Commission website at <http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/etpub/faqadvisory.htm>.

COMMISSION MEETINGS

You are invited to attend any Commission meeting. Meetings are usually the first Wednesday of the month in the Seattle Municipal Tower.

Copies of the meeting agenda, including time and location, are in our office and on our web site under Commission/ Agendas and Minutes. You can also call 206-684-8500 for meeting times and locations.

The Commission encourages City Board and Commission members to call SEEC staff for advice.



This brochure highlights portions of the Seattle Ethics Code, SMC 4.16. The complete law is on the City Clerk's Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) web site, <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>.

Copies are also available in the SEEC office.

ETHICS COMPLAINTS AND CONSEQUENCES

Anyone who feels a City officer or employee has violated the Ethics Code may complain in writing to the Ethics and Elections Commission. Commission staff will investigate whether there is a Code violation.

If it is found that a member of an advisory committee violated the City's Ethics Code, the Commission may fine that person and/or order restitution, depending on the circumstances. The Commission may fine an advisory committee member up to \$1,000 for failure to disqualify him or herself from matters in which the member has a financial interest, or up to \$250 for failure to disclose circumstances of apparent impaired judgment. The Commission may fine an advisory committee member up to \$5,000 per violation of other prohibitions in the Code. The Commission may also recommend that an advisory committee member be censured or dismissed and/or that the City cancel or rescind actions influenced by the violator.



206.684.8500

Fax: 206.684.8590

E-mail: ethicsandelections@seattle.gov

Postal mail: PO Box 94729 Seattle, WA 98124-4729

Web: <http://www.seattle.gov/ethics/>

Contacts:

Wayne Barnett, Executive Director, 206.684.8577

wayne.barnett@seattle.gov

Marc Mayo, Trainer, 206.684.0595

marc.mayo@seattle.gov

6/2021



Highlights of the Ethics Code

Seattle Municipal Code (SMC) 4.16

For Members of City Advisory Committees



This pamphlet is intended to help members of City advisory committees to understand the conduct expected of them under the Seattle Ethics Code.

SEATTLE ETHICS AND ELECTIONS COMMISSION

Your advocate for fair, open, and honest government.

Congratulations on your committee appointment!



We appreciate your service to the City of Seattle. This brochure explains the City's Ethics Code and how it relates to your responsibilities as an advisory committee member. This is a general summary of the Ethics Code. If you have a specific issue, have questions, or need additional help, please contact the Executive Director.

THE ETHICS CODE SEATTLE MUNICIPAL CODE ~ SMC 4.16

The Seattle Ethics Code was created to inspire public trust in City government and ensure that City officers and employees are “independent, impartial, and responsible to the people.” The law is administered by an independent commission of citizen volunteers.

The Code sets ethical standards about work activities, business relationships, and the use of City resources that apply to all City employees, elected officials, and members of most City boards and commissions.

This brochure highlights areas of the Code that relate to the activities of individuals serving on City Advisory Committees, Boards, and Commissions. The Ethics Code does not apply to members of “ad hoc” advisory committees, which are not established by law.

A copy of the full Ethics Code is available from the Ethics and Elections Commission or on line at the City Clerk’s web site, <http://clerk.ci.seattle.wa.us/~public/code1.htm>.

ETHICS CODE HIGHLIGHTS

FINANCIAL CONFLICTS

You must disqualify yourself from Committee matters* in which you have a **financial interest**, personally or through a member of your immediate family.* SMC 4.16.070 (6)(a)

You cannot act on matters involving **current or former partners or clients**, for twelve months after ending the relationship, except that your department may request a waiver based on compelling City need for you to participate. SMC 4.16.070(1)(b)

You must disclose your interests in City contracts. SMC 4.16.070(5)(b)

APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT

If you engage or have engaged in a transaction or activity that would appear to be in conflict with your official duties or which would appear to **impair your independence of judgment**, you must fully disclose the facts to your committee and to the SEEC in writing prior to engaging in such duties. SMC 4.16.070(6)(b)

USE OF POSITION

You cannot **assist others in City matters*** involving your committee. SMC 4.16.070(2)(c)

Generally, you cannot use your City title when supporting or endorsing a product or service. When acting in this manner, you should not identify yourself by your City position or association. SMC 4.16.070(2)(a)

CITY FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

City resources—including telephones, equipment, office space, stationery, and staff—are to be used for City purposes. These and other City resources should not be used for purposes other than those related to the function, duties, and responsibilities of your committee. SMC 4.16.070(2)(b)

GIFTS OR ITEMS OF VALUE

Generally speaking, you may not solicit or accept anything of value from individuals with an interest in your board’s work. SMC 4.16.070(3)



CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

You cannot disclose or use any confidential information gained through your official position on the board. SMC 4.16.070(4)

AFTER LEAVING CITY APPOINTMENT

For **one year** after leaving, you may not compete for a contract when you assisted the City in determining the scope of work or selection process. You may also not disclose or use any confidential information gained through your appointment even after leaving your position on the committee. SMC 4.16.075

* Definitions

“Immediate family” means a spouse or domestic partner, child, child of a spouse or domestic partner, sibling, sibling of a domestic partner, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, parent, parent of a spouse or domestic partner, a person for whom the Covered Individual is a legal guardian, or a person claimed as a dependent on the Covered Individual’s most recently filed federal income tax return.

“Matter” means an application, submission, request for a ruling or other determination, permit, contract, claim, proceeding, case, decision, rule-making, legislation, or other similar action. Matter includes the preparation, consideration, discussion, or enactment of administrative rules or legislation. **Matter does not include** advice or recommendations regarding broad policies and goals.