

## Code of Conduct for Council Procedure

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**Section:** Governance

### References and Related Documents

Municipal Act 2001

Municipal Conflict of Interest Act

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

Criminal Code of Canada

[Freedom of Information Requests Procedure](#)

Procedural By-law 5003-18

[Employee Use of Computers \(new format\)](#)

[Employee Use of Internet and Electronic Mail \(new format\)](#)

### Forms

Form 1 - Formal Complaint Council Code of Conduct

Form 2 - Formal Complaint Council Code of Conduct

Form 3 - Complaint Form for Gifts, Benefits & Hospitality

## Procedure Statement

The public expects the highest standard of conduct from the Members elected to local government. These leaders are expected to carry out their duties in a fair, impartial, transparent and professional manner.

## Purpose

A written Code of Conduct helps to ensure a common basis of acceptable behaviour. These standards demonstrate how elected representatives conduct themselves with integrity and respect.

These standards are designed to provide a reference guide and a supplement to the legislative parameters within which the members must operate. These standards should serve to enhance public confidence that Grey County's elected and appointed representatives operate from a base of integrity, justice and courtesy.

# Scope

The Code of Conduct shall apply to all members of council, advisory committees and local boards of the municipality as defined in the Municipal Act.

## 1.0 Definitions

- 1.1 “Agent” means a representative who acts on behalf of other persons or organizations, but does not include Members performing official duties.
- 1.2 “Assets” means all property of the Municipality, including equipment, financial assets, land, vehicles, material, paper and electronic documents, , inventories, tools, electronic equipment, computers, email, internet services and intellectual property.
- 1.3 “By-Law” means a regulation passed by Council for the government of its affairs.
- 1.4 “Chief Administrative Officer” or “CAO” means the senior executive appointed by Council who is responsible for managing the Municipality. The CAO also includes City Manager and Clerk-Administrator.
- 1.5 “Clerk” means the person as appointed by Council pursuant to Section 228 of the Municipal Act, 2001.
- 1.6 “Confidential Information” means:
  - a) Information in the possession of, or received in confidence by the Municipality, that it is prohibited from disclosing, or has decided to refuse to disclose, under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act;
  - b) A matter that has been debated or discussed at a meeting of Council closed to the public, unless the matter is subsequently discussed in Open Session, or it is authorized to be released by Council;
  - c) Information concerning litigation, negotiation, or personnel matters; and
  - d) Reports of consultants, draft documents and internal communications, which, if disclosed may prejudice the reputation of the Municipality, its officers and employees, or its effective operation.
- 1.7 “Employee” means a person employed by the Municipality, including those employed on a personal services contract and volunteers but does not include Members.
- 1.8 “Family Relationship or Member” means:

- a) spouse, including but not limited to common-law spouse and same-sex partner;
- b) child, mother, father, sibling, grandchild, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece or nephew;
- c) parent-in-law or sibling-in-law;
- d) step-parent, step-sibling, or step-child;
- e) parent or child in a relationship where the role of the parent has been assumed; or
- f) any person who lives with the Member on a permanent basis.

1.9 “Head of Council” means the Warden.

1.10 “Local Board” means a local board as defined in Section 223.1 of the Municipal Act, 2001.

1.11 “Members” means a member of Council or a member of a Local Board.

1.12 “Municipality” means the County of Grey.

1.13 “Official Duties” means functions performed by Members necessary to provide responsible and accountable governance.

1.14 “Personal Information” as defined in the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990 c, M56 (MFIPPA), means recorded information about an identifiable individual and includes:

- a) Information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual;
- b) Information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relation to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved;
- c) Any identifying number, symbol or other particular assigned to the individual;
- d) The address, telephone number, fingerprints or blood type of the individual;
- e) Correspondence sent to an institution by the individual that is implicitly or explicitly of a private or confidential nature, and replies to that correspondence that would reveal the contents of the original correspondence;
- f) The views or opinions of another individual about the individual;
- g) The individual’s name if it appears with other personal information relation to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other

personal information about the individual.

## **Policy Requirements**

### **2.0 Statutory Provisions Regulating Conduct**

- 2.1 This Code of Conduct complements the existing legislation governing the conduct of Members. The following federal and provincial legislation governs conduct:
- a) Municipal Act, 2001
  - b) Municipal Conflict of Interest Act
  - c) Municipal Elections Act, 1996
  - d) Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
  - e) Provincial Offences Act
  - f) Ontario Human Rights Code
  - g) Criminal Code of Canada.
- 2.2 Complaints regarding statutory matters outlined in 5.1 a), should be directed to the appropriate process or authority.
- 2.3 Members will follow by-laws, policies and decisions of Council as adopted and amended from time to time.

### **3.0 General Principles and Values**

- 3.1 Members will respect the role of Council as set out in the Municipal Act, 2001.
- 3.2 Members will support the mission, vision and values of the Municipality.
- 3.3 Members will respect the decision-making process of Council by accurately communicating the decision reached by majority of Council, even if they disagree with the outcome.
- 3.4 Members will maintain professionalism, integrity, respect, and trust.
- 3.5 Members will promote open, accountable and transparent local government.
- 3.6 Members will encourage public respect for the Municipality, its by-laws and policies.

### **4.0 Standards of Behaviour and Conduct**

- 4.1 Respect and Dignity
- a) Members have a duty to treat members of the public, one another, and staff

with respect and without abuse, bullying or intimidation.

- b) Members will ensure their work environment is free from discrimination and harassment.
- c) Members will conduct themselves according to legislative requirements, including the municipal workplace harassment and violence policies.
- d) Members will observe decorum and conduct themselves as outlined in the procedural by-law.
- e) Members will refrain from public criticism of other Members, staff or any other person that questions their professional reputation, competence and credibility.

#### 4.2 Conduct Respecting Staff

- a) Members will be respectful of the fact that staff work for the Municipality and are charged with making recommendations and advice based on political neutrality that reflects their professional expertise and objectivity, without undue influence from any individual member or group of members.
- b) Members acknowledge that only Council, in a duly called meeting with a quorum present, has the capacity to direct staff members.
- c) Members recognize that the Chief Administrative Officer is the only staff person directly reporting to Council. Members will direct any concerns respecting staff through the Chief Administrative Officer.
- d) Members of Council will not:
  - i) Maliciously or falsely injure the professional or ethical reputation of staff;
  - ii) Compel staff to engage in partisan political activities or be subjected to threats or discrimination for refusing to engage in such activities; or
  - iii) Use, or attempt to use, their authority or influence for the purpose of intimidating, threatening, coercing, commanding or influencing any staff member with the intent of interfering in staff's duties.

#### 4.3 Gifts, Benefits and Hospitality

- a) Members will not accept a fee, advance, gift or personal benefit connected directly or indirectly to the performance of duties, unless permitted by law.
- b) Members will make decisions free from the influence of gifts, favours, hospitality, and entertainment.
- c) Members will decline any personal gift where the acceptance of such gift may imply a contractual agreement with or obligation to the donor.

- d) Notwithstanding 4.3 a), b), and c), Members may accept tokens, mementoes, souvenirs, or such gifts or benefits up to and including a value of \$300.00 that are received as a result of the responsibilities of the office. Tokens, mementoes, souvenirs or gifts with a value greater than \$300.00 shall be the property of the Municipality.
- e) Exceptions outlined in Section 4.3 d) must be reported to the Clerk by the Member in writing using Form 3. These exceptions will be reported to Council on an annual basis.
- f) Members will not seek or obtain by reason of their office any personal privilege or advantage with respect to municipal services not otherwise available to the general public and not following as a result of official duties.

#### 4.4 Use of Municipal Assets

- a) Members may only use municipal property, equipment, services or supplies of consequence for official duties or associated community activities, unless previously approved by Council.
- b) Members will comply with corporate policies related to the use of municipal assets, including but not limited to municipal vehicles, municipally owned computers, internet and email.
- c) Members will not seek or gain personal benefit from the use of municipally developed intellectual property, computer programs, technological innovations or other patentable items, while an elected official or thereafter. All such property remains the exclusive property of the Municipality.

#### 4.5 Confidentiality, Privacy and Use of Information

- a) All information, documentation or deliberations received, reviewed or taken in closed session meetings are confidential, except as otherwise directed by Council.
- b) Members will not disclose or release by any means to any Member of the public either in verbal or written form any confidential information acquired by virtue of their office, except when required by law to do so.
- c) Requests for information should be referred to the Clerk to be addressed in conformity with the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.
- d) Members will follow the established practices within the municipality for closed meeting materials.
- e) Members will not use information gained in the execution of their duties that is not available to the general public for any other purpose.

#### 4.6 Personal and Political Interests

- a) Members will not use municipal facilities, services or property for personal business gain.
- b) Members will not use the services of employees for personal business during the hours in which the employees are in the paid employment of the Municipality.
- c) Members will not use municipal resources for political purposes, including re-election, in conformity with municipal policy and in compliance with the Municipal Elections Act.
- d) Members will not borrow money from any person who regularly does business with the Municipality unless such person is an institution or company whose shares are publicly traded and who is regularly in the business of lending money.
- e) Members will not act as a paid agent before Council or its committees, agencies or boards.
- f) Members will recognize their obligations to follow and respect both the letter and the spirit of the provisions of the Municipal Act, 2001 as amended and the Municipal Conflict of Interest Act, or successor legislation, or successor legislation.
- g) Members shall not attempt to influence any outcome or decision regarding or based on a family relationship or member.

### 5.0 Implications

- 5.1 This policy supports open, transparent, accessible and accountable government providing clear guidance on Council conduct and mechanisms to bring forward complaints.

### 6.0 Complaints Protocol (See Diagram 1)

#### 6.1 Informal Complaint

- a) Any individual who identifies or witnesses behaviour or activity by a Member that appears to breach the Code of Conduct may:
- b) Advise the Member that the behaviour or activity appears to breach the Code of Conduct;
- c) Encourage the Member to acknowledge and agree to stop the prohibited behaviour or activity and to avoid future occurrences of the prohibited behaviour or activity;

- d) Document the incidents including dates, times, locations, other persons present, and any other relevant information;
- e) Request the Head of Council or designate to assist in informal discussion of the alleged complaint with the Member in an attempt to resolve the issue;
- f) If applicable, confirm satisfaction with the response of the Member, or if applicable, advise the Member of dissatisfaction with the response; and
- g) Consider the need to pursue the matter in accordance with the formal complaint procedure outlined in 7.1.2, or in accordance with any other applicable process or complaint procedure.

## 6.2 Formal Complaint

- a) Any individual who identifies or witnesses behaviour or an activity by a Member that they believe is in contravention of the Code of Conduct may file a formal complaint in accordance with the following:
- b) All formal complaints shall be made in writing using Form 1, filed with the Clerk.
- c) The complaint must set out reasonable and probable grounds for the allegation that the Member has contravened the Code of Conduct.
- d) The identity of the complainant shall be protected through a closed session meeting due to personal matters about an identifiable individual, including the opinions contained in the written complaint.
- e) The Clerk will protect any personal information about the complainant and provide a summary of the complaint to the Member of Council. The Member will have the opportunity to prepare a response using Form 2.
- f) Council will review the formal complaint (Form 1) and the response (Form 2) in closed session due to personal matters about an identifiable individual being the complainant. The named Member will not be included in the closed session.
- g) Determination of any reprimand will be completed in open session. Council will report out in open session and Council will state its reasons for the decision. If Council decides there was a breach in the code of conduct, Council will decide if there will be a penalty.

## 6.3 Ombudsman

- a) Pursuant to Section 14 of the Ombudsman Act, the Ombudsman can investigate any decision or recommendation made or any act done or omitted in the course of the administration of a public sector body, including municipalities.

- b) Those making complaints are encouraged to pursue the informal and formal complaint options outlined in this Code of Conduct policy before contacting the Ombudsman.

## **7.0 Sanctions**

7.1 If Council determines that a breach has occurred under the Municipal Act, 2001 Council may impose the following:

- a) Issue a reprimand; or
- b) Suspend the remuneration paid to the Member in respect of his or her services as a Member of Council or of the local board, as the case may be, for a period of up to 90 days.

Council may also require:

- c) A written or verbal apology;
- d) Return of property or reimbursement of the property's dollar value;
- e) Removal from membership of a committee or board; and/or
- f) Removal as chair of a committee.

7.2 If an apology is required, the apology shall be presented at a regular open meeting of Council and shall include statements related to the occurrence, the relevant sections of the Code, and an acknowledgement of the findings.

## **8.0 Authority**

8.1 Section 223.2 (1) of the Municipal Act, 2001 authorizes the Municipality "to establish codes of conduct for Members of Council of the Municipality and of local boards of the Municipality."

8.2 Section 223.2 (2) of the Municipal Act, 2001 further provides that "a by-law cannot provide that a Member who contravenes a code is guilty of an offence."

## **9.0 Contact**

9.1 Questions pertaining to the Code should be directed to the Head of Council, Chief Administrative Officer or Clerk.

## Diagram 1 – Complaints Protocol

