

ORDINANCE No. 18- 01

City of Sky Valley

State of Georgia

ETHICS ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, CITY OF SKY VALLEY, GEORGIA TO PROVIDE A NEW ETHICS CODE SECTION; TO PROVIDE FOR PENALTIES; TO PROVIDE FOR CODIFICATION; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO REPEAL CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; TO PROVIDE ANEFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the duly elected governing authority of the City of Sky Valley, Georgia is authorized by O.C.G.A. § 36-35-3 to adopt ordinances relating to its property, affairs and local government; and

WHEREAS, the duly elected governing authority of the City of Sky Valley, Georgia is the Mayor and Council thereof; and

WHEREAS, the governing authority deems it essential to the proper operation of democratic government that the public officials be, and give the appearance of being, independent, impartial, and responsible to the people; that governmental decisions and policies be made in the proper channels of the governmental structure; and that public office not be used for personal gain; and

WHEREAS such measures are necessary to provide the public with confidence in the integrity of its government.

NOW THEREFORE it is the policy of the city that its officials, employees, appointees, and volunteers conducting official city business:

- Serve others and not themselves;
- Be independent, impartial and responsible;
- Use resources with efficiency and economy;
- Treat all people fairly;
- Use the power of their position for the well-being of their constituents; and
- Create an environment of honesty, openness and integrity.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED:

- I. That the Code of Ordinances of the City of Sky Valley, Georgia is hereby amended by repealing and replacing Ordinance 04-02 Code of Ethics with a new Code of Ethics, which said sections read as follows:

Sec. 1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this code of ethics is to:

- (a) Encourage high ethical standards in official conduct by city officials;
- (b) Establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for all such officials by setting forth those acts or actions that are incompatible with the interest of the city;
- (c) Require disclosure by such officials of private financial or other interest in matters affecting the city; and
- (d) Serve as a basis for disciplining those who refuse to abide by its terms.

Sec. 2 SCOPE

The provisions of this code of ethics shall be applicable to all elected or appointed city officials. Notwithstanding anything herein to the contrary, state law and the charter of the city shall be controlling in the event of an actual conflict with the provisions of this code of ethics. This ordinance shall be interpreted to supplement, and not replace, said provisions of state law and the charter.

Sec. 3 DEFINITIONS

Solely for the purpose of this code of ethics:

(a) City official or official, unless otherwise expressly defined does not include city employees but does mean the mayor, members of the city council, municipal court judges, city manager, city clerk, city attorney, and all other persons holding positions designated by the city charter, as amended.

The term "city official" also includes all individuals, including city employees, appointed by the mayor and/or city council as appropriate to city authorities, commissions, committees, boards, task forces, or other bodies which can or may vote or take formal action or make official recommendations to the mayor and/or city council.

(b) Decision means any ordinance, resolution, contract, franchise, formal action or other matter voted on by the city council or other city board or commission, as well as the discussions or deliberations of the council, board, or commission which can or may lead to a vote or formal action by that body.

(c) Employee means any person who is a full-time or part-time employee of the city.

(d) Immediate family means the spouse, mother, father, grandparent, brother, sister, son or daughter of any city official related by blood, adoption or marriage. The relationship by marriage shall include in-laws.

(e) Incidental interest means an interest in a person, entity or property which is not a substantial interest as defined herein and which has insignificant value.

(f) Remote interest means an interest of a person or entity, including a city official, which would be affected in the same way as the general public. For example, the interest of an official in the property tax rate, general city fees, city utility charges or a comprehensive

zoning ordinance or similar matters is deemed remote to the extent that the official would be affected in common with the general public.

(g) Substantial interest means an interest, either directly or through a member of the immediate family, in another person or entity, where:

(1) the interest is ownership of five percent or more of the voting stock, shares or equity of the entity or ownership of \$5,000.00 or more of the equity or market value of the entity; or

(2) the funds received by the person from the other person or entity during the previous 12 months either equal or exceed (a) \$5,000.00 in salary, bonuses, commissions or professional fees, or \$5,000.00 in payment for goods, products or services, or (b) ten percent of the recipient's gross income during that period, whichever is less;

(3) the person serves as a corporate officer or member of the board of directors or other governing board of a for-profit entity other than a corporate entity owned or created by the city council; or

(4) the person is a creditor, debtor, or guarantor of the other person or entity in an amount of \$5,000.00 or more.

Sec. 4 PROHIBITIONS

(a) No city official shall use such position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself or others, or to secure confidential information for any purpose other than official duties on behalf of the city.

(b) No city official, in any matter before the council or other city body, relating to a person or entity in which the official has a substantial interest, shall fail to disclose for the record such interest prior to any discussion or vote or fail to recuse himself/herself from such discussion or vote as applicable.

(c) No city official shall act as an agent or attorney for another in any matter before the city council or other city body.

(d) No city official shall directly or indirectly receive, or agree to receive, any compensation, gift, reward, or gratuity in any matter or proceeding connected with, or related to, the duties of his office except as may be provided by law.

(e) No city official shall enter into any contract with, or have any interest in, either directly or indirectly, the city except as authorized by state law.

(i) This prohibition shall not be applicable to the professional activities of the city attorney in his or her work as an independent contractor and legal advisor on behalf of the city.

(ii) This prohibition shall not be applicable to an otherwise valid employment contract between the city and a city official who is not elected (such as, by way of example, a city manager, city administrator or chief of police).

(iii) Any official who has a proprietary interest in an agency doing business with the city shall make that interest known in writing to the city council and the city clerk.

(f) All public funds shall be used for the general welfare of the people and not for personal economic gain.

(g) Public property shall be disposed of in accordance with state law.

(h) No city official shall solicit or accept other employment to be performed, or compensation to be received, while still a city official if the employment or compensation could reasonably be expected to impair such official's judgment or performance of city duties.

(i) If a city official accepts or is soliciting a promise of future employment from any person or entity who has a substantial interest in a person, entity or property which would be affected by any decision upon which the official might reasonably be expected to act, investigate, advise, or make a recommendation, the official shall disclose the fact to the city council and shall recuse himself/herself and take no further action on matters regarding the potential future employer.

(j) No city official shall use city facilities, personnel, equipment or supplies for private purposes, except to the extent such are lawfully available to the public.

(k) No city official shall grant or make available to any person any consideration, treatment, advantage or favor beyond that which it is the general practice to grant or make available to the public at large.

(l) A city official shall not directly or indirectly make use of, or permit others to make use of, official information not made available to the general public for the purpose of furthering a private interest.

(m) A city official shall not use his or her position in any way to coerce, or give the appearance of coercing, another person to provide any financial benefit to such official or persons within the official's immediate family, or those with whom the official has business or financial ties amounting to a substantial interest.

(n) A city official shall not order any goods and services for the city without prior official authorization for such an expenditure. No city official shall attempt to obligate the city nor give the impression of obligating the city without proper prior authorization.

(o) No city official shall draw travel funds or per diem from the city for attendance at meetings, seminars, training or other educational events and fail to attend such events without promptly reimbursing the city therefore.

(p) No city official shall attempt to unduly influence the outcome of a case before the Municipal Court of the City of Sky Valley nor shall any city official engage in ex parte communication with a municipal court judge of the City of Sky Valley on any matter pending before the Municipal Court of the City of Sky Valley.

Sec. 5 CONFLICT OF INTEREST

(a) A city official may not participate in a vote or decision on a matter affecting an immediate family member or any person, entity, or property in which the official has a substantial interest.

(b) A city official who serves as a corporate officer or member of the board of directors of a nonprofit entity must disclose their interest in said entity to the mayor and council prior to participating in a vote or decision regarding funding of the entity by or through the city.

(c) Where the interest of a city official in the subject matter of a vote or decision is remote or incidental, the city official may participate in the vote or decision and need not disclose the interest.

Sec. 6 BOARD OF ETHICS

The Municipal Court of the City of Sky Valley shall hear and render decisions on all proper verified complaints filed under this ordinance.

Sec. 7 RECEIPT OF COMPLAINTS

All complaints against city officials shall be filed with the Clerk of the Municipal Court of the City of Sky Valley at City Hall. Upon receipt of a complaint in proper form, the Municipal Court Clerk shall forward a copy of the complaint to the city official or officials charged in the complaint within no more than seven (7) calendar days.

(b) All complaints shall be submitted and signed under oath, shall be legibly drawn and shall clearly address matters within the scope of this ordinance.

(c) Upon receipt of a complaint in proper form, the Municipal Court shall review it to determine whether the complaint is unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or fails to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction of the City Council. The Municipal Court is empowered to dismiss in writing complaints that it determines are unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or fail to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction of the City Council; provided, however, that a rejection of such complaint by the Municipal Court shall not deprive the complaining party of any action such party might otherwise have at law or in equity against the city official. For complaints that are not dismissed, the Municipal Court is empowered to collect evidence and information concerning any complaint and add the findings and results of its investigations to the file containing such complaint.

(d) Upon completion of its investigation of a complaint, the Municipal Court is empowered to dismiss in writing those complaints which it determines are unjustified, frivolous, patently unfounded or which fail to state facts sufficient to invoke the disciplinary jurisdiction of the City Council; provided, however, that a rejection of such complaint by the Municipal Court shall not deprive the complaining party of any action such party might otherwise have at law or in equity against the city official.

(e) The Municipal Court is empowered to conduct investigations, to take evidence, and to hold hearings to address the subject matter of a complaint.

(f) The Municipal Court is empowered to adopt forms for formal complaints, notices, and any other necessary or desirable documents within its jurisdiction where the city council has not prescribed such forms.

(g) Findings of the Municipal Court shall be submitted to the City Council for action.

(h) To discourage the filing of ethics complaints solely for political purposes, complaints will not be accepted against a person seeking election as a city official, whether currently serving as a city official or not, from the date qualifying opens for the elected office at issue through the date the election results for that office are certified. The time for filing complaints will not run during this period. Properly filed complaints will be accepted and processed after the election results have been certified.

Sec. 8 SERVICE OF COMPLAINT

All complaints against city officials shall be filed with the Clerk of the Municipal Court of the City of Sky Valley at City Hall. Upon receipt of a complaint in proper form, the Municipal Court Clerk shall forward a copy of the complaint to the city official or officials charged in the complaint within no more than seven (7) calendar days. Service may be by personal service, by certified mail, return receipt requested or by statutory overnight delivery. A hearing shall be held within sixty (60) calendar days after filing of the complaint. The Municipal Court shall conduct hearings in accordance with the procedures and regulations it establishes but, in all circumstances, at least one hearing shall include the taking of testimony and the cross-examination of available witnesses. The decision of the Municipal Court shall be rendered to Mayor and Council within seven (7) calendar days after completion of the final hearing. At any hearing held by the Municipal Court, the city official who is the subject of inquiry shall have the right to written notice of the hearing and the allegations at least seven (7) calendar days before the first hearing, to be represented by counsel, to hear and examine the evidence and witnesses and, to oppose or try to mitigate the allegations. The city official subject to the inquiry shall have also have the right but not the obligation of submitting evidence and calling witnesses. Failure to comply with any of time deadlines in this section of the ordinance shall not invalidate any otherwise valid complaint or in any way affect the power or jurisdiction of the Municipal Court or the city council to act upon any complaint.

Sec. 9 RIGHT TO APPEAL

(a) Any city official or complainant adversely affected by the findings or recommendations of the Municipal Court may obtain judicial review of such decision as provided in this Section.

(b) An action for judicial review may be commenced by filing an application for a writ of certiorari in the Superior Court of Rabun County within thirty (30) days after the decision of the Municipal Court. The filing of such application shall act as supersedeas.

Sec. 10 PENALTY

Any person violating any provision of this article is subject to:

(a) Public reprimand or censure by the city council; or

(b) Request for resignation by the city council.”

- II. SHOULD ANY SECTION OR PROVISION OF THIS ORDINANCE BE DECLARED BY A COURT OF COMPETENT JURISDICTION TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL OR INVALID SUCH DECLARATION SHALL NOT AFFECT THE VALIDITY OF THE ORDINANCE AS A WHOLE OR ANY PART THEREOF OTHER THAN THE PART SO DECLARED TO BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL OR INVALID. ALL RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES AND PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THIS ORDINANCE ARE HEREBY REPEALED.

- III. THIS ORDINANCE WILL BECOME EFFECTIVE UPON ADOPTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL AND APPROVED BY THE MAYOR AS PROVIDED BY THE CHARTER OF THE CITY OF SKY VALLEY.

It is so ordained and approved by vote of the City Council of the City of Sky Valley this 27th day of March, 2018.

Approved:



Robert MacNair, Mayor



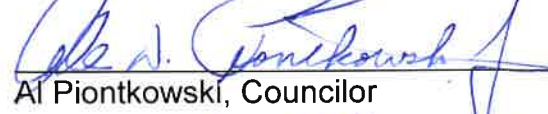
Chip Durpo, Council President



Neil Howard, Councilor



Connie Larsen, Councilor



Al Piontkowski, Councilor



Paul Wheeler, Councilor

Attest:



Ella Fast, City Clerk

Read and introduced on the 27th day of March, 2018.

Adopted on the 27th day of March, 2018.