

Civic Agencies Training: Module #6

Conduct, Communications, Confidentiality



- Council and civic agency members are required to act in accordance with the *Code of Conduct By-law* No. 12886, which provides rules on standards and values, confidentiality, conflict of interest, and personal gifts and benefits.
- Members are expected to uphold the following standards and values: competence; fairness; integrity; leadership in the public interest; respect; responsibility; and transparency. Members must treat members of the public, one another, and staff respectfully, without abuse, bullying, or intimidation.
- The *Code of Conduct By-law* also outlines the process for bringing a conduct complaint against a Council or civic agency member, through the City's Integrity Commissioner.
- The conduct of City staff is governed under a separate Code of Conduct policy. Complaints regarding staff conduct should be directed to the relevant departmental General Manager.

- **Conflict of interest**

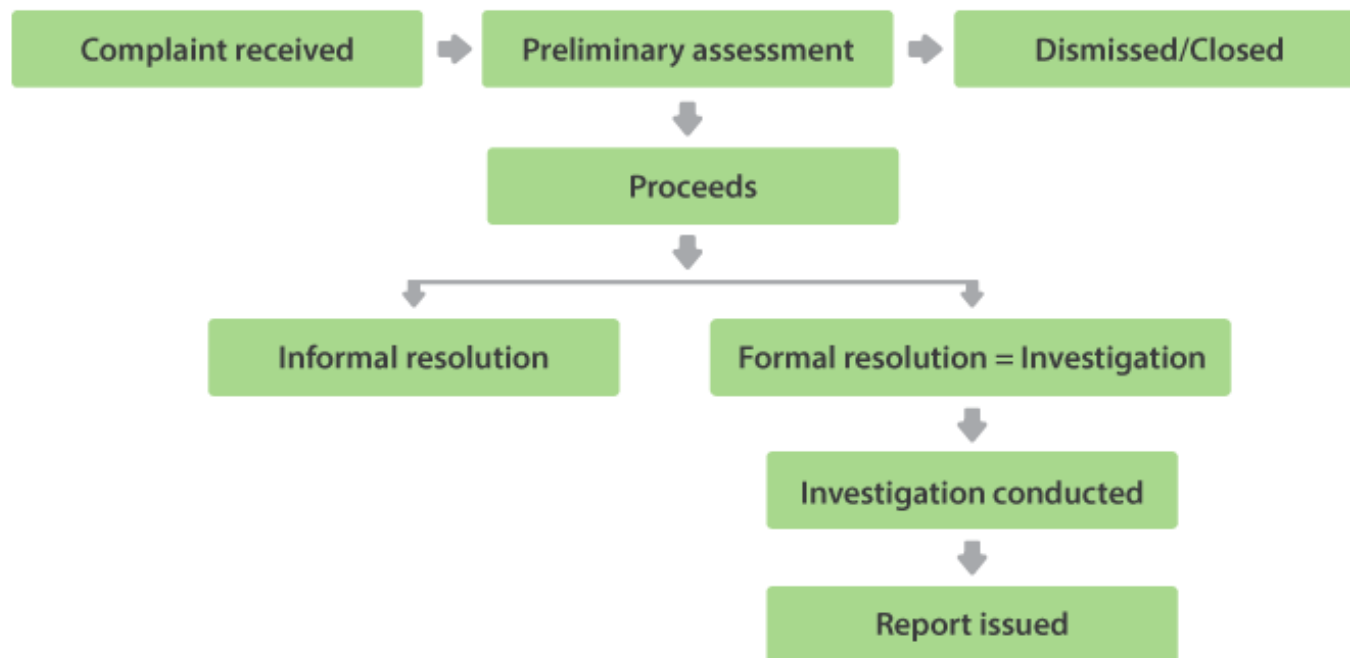
- A conflict of interest occurs when a member is involved in an activity that could compromise the motivation for an act as part of their civic agency work. Members must avoid improper use of influence and avoid all conflicts of interest (both real and perceived).
- Members must declare a conflict of interest when there is a direct or indirect financial interest in the matter, or another interest in the matter (often a personal relationship) that constitutes a conflict of interest.
- To declare a conflict of interest during a meeting, the member must state the nature of the conflict, leave the meeting, and not re-enter until the relevant agenda item has been completed.

- **Political activity**

- A member is not required to resign their civic agency seat if they run in a municipal election, and the chair is not required to step down (in both cases, they must do so if they win the election).
- However, a member running for office should be aware of the increased potential for conflicts of interest, and may find it simpler to take a leave of absence during the election period.
- Members must not use other members' contact information, or any other City land, facilities, equipment, supplies, or services to engage in election activities.
- As public bodies, civic agencies may not support or endorse specific candidates or parties during elections at any level of government. To avoid the perception of impropriety, civic agencies should not engage with candidates through surveys, town halls, debates, etc.

Complaint Process

- If you feel that there has been a breach of the *Code of Conduct By-law*, you may submit a complaint in writing to the City's Integrity Commissioner, who will initiate the below process:



- **Communicating with members**

- Members receive a contact list for their civic agency, which must not be shared, and may only be used for civic agency purposes.
- Civic agencies are encouraged to work together, and chairs may be connected to each other through shared contact information. Joint meetings of chairs are held periodically, and chairs are encouraged to connect with other civic agencies that may be conducting similar work.

- **External communications**

- Civic agencies may correspond with external groups or individuals using the following process:
 1. Pass a resolution in a regular or special meeting approving the letter. The letter should be prepared and circulated before the meeting, and changes may be agreed upon before approval; however, it is permissible to approve the letter in principle, by including a general, bullet-point description of its contents in the resolution.
 2. Send the letter to administrative staff, who will format and add a disclaimer that the civic agency is not expressing views on behalf of the City.
 3. Administrative staff will forward the letter to relevant parties, copying the City Manager, City Clerk, and Mayor and Council.

- **Civic agency webpages**

- Each civic agency has its own page on the City website. These pages include:
 - Description of the civic agency and links to relevant terms of reference or by-law;
 - Membership requirements and a list of all current members;
 - Past and upcoming meeting dates, including agendas and minutes;
 - Additional documents like work plans and annual reports.

- **Social media**

- With the support of Civic Engagement and Communications (CEC), civic agencies may create and manage City-affiliated social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter).
- Civic agencies may not establish any webpages or social media accounts not affiliated with the City.
- To set up a social media account for your civic agency, read the City's *Social Media Handbook* and sign the *Social Media Practitioner Responsibilities Statement of Acknowledgement Form* (both available on request), and book an appointment with the Social Media Strategist at social.media@vancouver.ca.

- **Speaking to the media**

- Members of the media may occasionally contact members for comment or information on a City initiative or community issue. They should be referred to the chair or alternate designated spokesperson.
- The chair must make it clear they are not speaking on behalf of the City of Vancouver. The chair should also be mindful that they do not bring their personal opinions into the matter; only those matters that have been addressed or agreed upon by the civic agency should be discussed with the media.
- If you are contacted by the media and wish to express a personal opinion without the approval of your civic agency, you must make it clear that you are speaking as an individual, and not on behalf of the civic agency or the City.
- Immediately inform CEC about any interaction with the media by emailing media@vancouver.ca and stating the media outlet and topic(s) discussed.

- **FIPPA**

- The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) allows the public to request any records in the custody or control of the City of Vancouver.
- FIPPA applies to all correspondence related to City business, including records sent to or received from personal email accounts.
- FIPPA also details penalties for any individual who acts in contravention of the Act, up to and including a fine of \$50,000.

- **Member responsibilities**

- Members are responsible for protecting all correspondence and documentation related to the work of their civic agency.
- Common documents like draft agendas, contact lists, motions, calendars, or letters should not be shared outside of the civic agency.
- At the end of their term, members are required to remove any saved civic agency records from their personal computers or email inboxes.

- **Staff responsibilities**

- Civic agency members' personal contact information is confidential. Membership lists containing personal contact information are only accessible to other members of the civic agency and select City staff.
- If a member of the public, the media, or a staff group outside of the City Clerk's Office wishes to contact a civic agency, administrative staff will provide the inquirer's contact information to the civic agency for a direct response.

- 1. When must a civic agency member resign their position?**
 - A. After winning an election
 - B. When running for office
 - C. When they propose a resolution that is defeated
 - D. When a member of the public wants to replace them

- 2. Who is responsible for investigating *Code of Conduct* complaints?**
- A. The Mayor
 - B. The City Manager
 - C. The City Clerk
 - D. The Integrity Commissioner

- 3. Which department should a civic agency contact to set up a social media account?**
- A. Engineering Services
 - B. Civic Engagement and Communications
 - C. Arts, Culture, and Community Service
 - D. Planning, Urban Design, and Sustainability

4. What does FIPPA stand for?

- A. Finding Information Pertaining to Private Accounts
- B. Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- C. Foxes Initiate Problematic Pandemonium Always
- D. Forged Identification Provided Per Annum

Module #6 Quiz Answers

1. A

2. D

3. B

4. B

- Do you think you will be able to adhere to the *Code of Conduct By-law*, and uphold the standards and values that it details? Are there any activities or relationships in your life that may constitute a conflict of interest, once you begin your civic agency work?

- Do you have any communications skills that may assist your civic agency? For example, are you a talented public speaker, a good writer and editor, or knowledgeable about social media? Even if you feel like none of these apply to you, remember they are skills that can be developed like any other, and that your civic agency work may be a good opportunity to jumpstart this process.

Module Complete