

# Charter Township of Plymouth

## Citizen's Advisory Council

### Government Accountability Committee

#### Subcommittee on Ethics and Culture

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Based on the assigned topic of Ethics and Culture given to the subcommittee at the May 4, 2017 meeting of the Government Accountability Meeting the group convened and defined the following detailed objectives we believe appropriate for the subcommittee:

1. Establish whether there is a Code of Ethics for Plymouth Township.
2. Determine if a code exists, whether the ordinance has been enforced.
3. Determine whether the code has been effectively communicated to township residents.
4. Ascertain whether there are ways to improve the code.

**1. Establish whether there is a Code of Ethics policy for Plymouth Township.**

It was determined that a revised Code of Ethics Ordinance was adopted in February, 2017.

**2. Determine if a code exists, whether the ordinance has been enforced.**

Currently, the Township Clerk is responsible for administration of the Code of Ethics adopted by the Board of Trustees on February 28, 2017. The Office of the Clerk is currently working on the development of forms necessary for the annual disclosure statement as well as drafting procedures for the Code's implementation. It is anticipated that the disclosure statement and procedures will be ready by the end of the summer. Efforts to meet with the Township Clerk prior to our June 21 Meeting to secure additional details were unsuccessful.

**3. Determine whether the code been effectively communicated to township residents.**

The subcommittee believes very little has been done to communicate that there is a code of ethics policy or that anything has been done to communicate the content of that policy.

After having reviewed the policy the subcommittee believes that as presented in the ordinance (due to the level of detail and the legal language used) there is little likelihood that the public will read the entire policy or easily interpret it.

We recommend the following actions:

- a. The attached letter (please see Attachment A) be approved by the Board of Trustees and be adopted by each elected official of Plymouth Township as well as at least department heads employed by Plymouth Township.

We believe this letter synthesizes the essence of the Code of Ethics ordinance in a concise, understandable manner.

- b. We recommend this letter be printed as a poster and placed prominently in the council chambers and various other locations throughout Township Hall as well as placed on the

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township website and printed in the township newsletter. Assuming all elected officials and department heads have signed the letter, that fact can be noted as well.

- c. We also recommend additional research be conducted to determine if additional communication possibilities would make sense regarding all actions covered by this Report.
- d. Consideration should be given to participation in National Sunshine Week to emphasize efforts to promote transparency in local government.

#### **4. Ascertain whether there are ways to improve the code.**

The subcommittee reviewed codes of ethics in Northville, Canton, Westland, St. Joseph, Plymouth Township and the Michigan Model Code of Ethics Ordinance.

We recommend the following actions designed to improve the current Plymouth Township Code of Ethics Ordinance:

- Establish an independent Code of Ethics Panel to oversee and manage code issues.
- Consider a total ban on gifts, meals and other items with no exceptions.

# Annual Core Ethical Practices Commitment Letter

I agree that I will follow the Core Ethical Practices described below. I understand that the conduct defines the values and practices which each elected official and management employee of the Charter Township of Plymouth, Michigan is required to follow. I subscribe to them in order to ensure maintenance of a culture of trust and respect within the township government, its citizens and those with whom the Township conducts business.

## Core Values

Integrity –

- Absolute honesty.
- Place the community first.
- Follow not only the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law.
- Ensure personal opinions are understood as such and cannot be construed as representing those of the township.
- Act in a way that does not or could not be perceived negatively.
- Ensure there is no way that there might be a question of impropriety.

Trust –

- Maintain strict confidentiality.
- Make decisions objectively.
- Be willing to fully explain why a decision was made.
- Be accountable by taking responsibility for my actions.

Respect –

- Question ideas not people.
- Behave in a way that does not make others feel uncomfortable.
- Do not engage in conduct that is discriminatory, harassing, intimidating or humiliating.

## Practices

Citizens –

- Treat all citizens with respect and courtesy.
- Differentiate personal opinions from those of the township.
- Never use the position as a township official for personal gain.

Internal Township Governance –

- Follow the letter and spirit of the Township Ethics Ordinance.
- Treat fellow elected officials and employees of the township government with respect and courtesy.
- Always place community interests before personal gain and family interests.
- Adhere to the requirement that township resources or facilities will not be used for personal benefit.
- Disclose all potential conflicts of interest or activities that might be perceived as such.

Business Relationships –

- Follow the letter and spirit, of the Township Ethics Ordinance.
- Recuse self from any activity that poses or may be perceived as a conflict of interest.
- Report any gifts received, whether they fall under the limits of the Township Ethics Ordinance or not.

Respectfully Submitted,