

17. CODE OF ETHICS – ANNUAL REVIEW

As briefly discussed last month, Article 17 of the adopted Code of Ethics requires an annual review of the document by the Board of Supervisors. A copy of the adopted Code of Ethics is attached for your review. If there are no changes, each member should sign and date the very last page and leave them at your seats.

The Code of Ethics was reviewed by the Planning Commission at their April 10 meeting, with no recommendations for revision at this time.

ACTION REQUIRED: Each member should sign and date the last page of the Code of Ethics and leave them at your places (Supervisors Jones and Phillips returned theirs last month).

**SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
CODE OF ETHICS**

Preamble

The citizens and businesses of Southampton County, Virginia, are entitled to fair, ethical, and accountable local government, which serves as a model for integrity. Effective democratic government requires that public officials, both elected and appointed, comply with both the letter and spirit of the laws and policies affecting them; that public officials be independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions; that public office be used for the public good, not for personal gain; and that public deliberations and processes be conducted openly, unless legally confidential, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and civility.

To this end, the Southampton County Board of Supervisors has adopted this Code of Ethics for members of the Board and of the County's boards, commissions, and committees, to assure public confidence in the integrity of local government and its effective and fair operation.

1. Act in the Public Interest

Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern, members will work for the common good of the people of Southampton County and not for any private or personal interest, and they will assure fair and equitable treatment of all persons, claims, and transactions coming before the Southampton County Board of Supervisors, or its appointed boards, commissions, and committees.

2. Comply with the Law

Members shall comply with the laws of the United States, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and Southampton County in the performance of their public duties. These laws include, but are not limited to: the United States and Virginia constitutions; the Code of Virginia; the Code of the County of Southampton; laws pertaining to conflicts of interest, election campaigns, financial disclosures, employer responsibilities, and open processes of government; and uncodified county ordinances and policies.

3. Conduct of Members

The professional and personal conduct of members must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the Board of Supervisors, its appointed boards, commissions, and committees, the staff or public.

4. Respect for Process

Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the Board of Supervisors and its boards, committees, and commissions governing the deliberation of public policy issues, meaningful

involvement of the public, and implementation of policy decisions of the Board of Supervisors by county staff.

5. Conduct of Public Meetings

Members shall fully prepare themselves for public issues; listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body; and focus on the business at hand. They shall refrain from interrupting other speakers; making personal comments not germane to the business of the body; or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings.

6. Decisions Based on Merit

Members shall base their decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand, rather than on unrelated considerations.

7. Communication

Members shall publicly share substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration by the Board of Supervisors or its boards, committees, and commissions, which they may have received from sources outside of the public decision-making process.

8. Conflict of Interest

In order to assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good, members shall not use their official positions to influence government decisions in which they have a material financial interest and shall disclose any substantial organizational responsibility or personal or business relationship to the parties in any matter coming before them. This paragraph is not intended to unduly restrict members who have minor business or professional dealings with clients whose matters come before them.

In accordance with the law, members shall disclose investments, interests in real property, sources of income, and gifts; and they shall abstain from participating in deliberations and decision-making where conflicts may exist.

9. Gifts and Favors

A member should never accept for himself/herself or for family members, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of governmental duties.

10. Confidential Information

Members shall respect the confidentiality of information concerning the property, personnel, or affairs of the County. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization, nor use such information to advance their personal, financial, or other private interests.

11. Use of Public Resources

Members shall not use public resources that are not available to the public in general, such as county staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities, for private gain or personal purposes.

12. Representation of Private Interests

In keeping with their role as stewards of the public interest, members of the Board shall not appear on behalf of the private interests of third parties before the Board of Supervisors or any board, committee, commission, or proceeding of the County, nor shall members of boards, committees, or commissions appear before their own bodies or before the Board of Supervisors on behalf of the private interests of third parties on matters related to the areas of service of their bodies.

13. Advocacy

Members shall represent the official policies or positions of the Board of Supervisors, boards, commissions, or committees to the best of their ability when designated as delegates for this purpose. When representing their individual opinions and positions, members shall explicitly state they do not represent their body or Southampton County, nor will they allow the inference that they do.

14. Policy Role of Members

The Board of Supervisors determines the policies of the County with the advice, information, and analysis provided by the public, boards, commissions, and committees, and county staff. The Board of Supervisors delegates authority for the administration of the County to the County Administrator.

Members, therefore, shall not interfere with the administrative functions of the County or the professional duties of county staff; nor shall they impair the ability of staff to implement Board policy decisions.

15. Independence of Board and Commissions

Because of the value of the independent advice of boards, committees, and commissions to the public decision-making process, members of the Board of Supervisors shall refrain from using their positions to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of board, committee, or commission proceedings.

16. Positive Work Place Environment

Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive workplace environment for county employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the County. Members shall recognize their special role in dealings with county employees and in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction to staff.

17. Implementation

As an expression of the standards of conduct for members expected by the county, the Southampton County Code of Ethics is intended to be self-enforcing.

It therefore becomes most effective when members are thoroughly familiar with and embrace its provisions.

For this reason, these ethical standards shall be included in the regular orientations for candidates for the Board of Supervisors, applicants to boards, committees, commissions, and newly elected and appointed officials. Members entering office shall sign a statement affirming they have read and understood the Southampton County Code of Ethics. In addition, the Board of Supervisors, boards, committees, and commissions, shall annually review the Code of Ethics and the Board of Supervisors shall consider recommendations from boards, committees, and commissions to update it as necessary.

18. Compliance and Enforcement

The Southampton County Code of Ethics expresses standards of ethical conduct expected of members of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors, and its boards, committees, and commissions. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to assure that ethical standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government.

The chairs of boards, committees, and commissions and the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors have the additional responsibility to intervene when actions of members that appear to be in violation of the Code of Ethics are brought to their attention.

The Board of Supervisors may impose sanctions on members whose conduct does not comply with the County's ethical standards, such as public or private reprimand, formal censure, or loss of seniority or committee assignment. Where allowed by law, the Board of Supervisors also may remove members of Board-appointed boards, committees, and commissions from office.

In enforcing the provisions of this code of ethics, the Board shall take reasonable steps to assure a fair hearing guided by the principles of due process that is guaranteed by the Constitution of Virginia and the 14th amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

A violation of this Code of Ethics shall not be considered a basis for challenging the validity of a Board of Supervisors, board, committee, or commission decision.

**SOUTHAMPTON COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS,
AND ITS BOARD, COMMITTEE, AND COMMISSION APPOINTEES
MEMBER STATEMENT**

As a member of the Southampton County Board of Supervisors, or of a Southampton County board, committee, or commission, I agree to uphold the Code of Ethics for elected and appointed officials adopted by the County and conduct myself by the following standards. I will:

- Recognize the worth of individual members and appreciate their individual talents, perspectives, and contributions;
- Help create an atmosphere of respect and civility where individual members, County staff, and the public are free to express their ideas and work to their full potential;
- Conduct my personal and public affairs with honesty, integrity, fairness, and respect for others;
- Respect the dignity and privacy of individuals and organizations;
- Keep the common good as my highest purpose and focus on achieving constructive solutions for the public benefit;
- Avoid and discourage conduct which is divisive or harmful to the best interests of Southampton County;
- Treat all people with whom I interact in the manner I wish to be treated.

I affirm that I have read and understand the Southampton County Code of Ethics.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Name (printed): _____

Office or Position: _____