

Washington County Ethics Commission

Rules of Procedure

1. The Commission shall meet quarterly and as necessary to issue advisory opinions or to conduct proceedings related to complaints at the call of the Chair.
2. Proceedings of the Commission shall be open and advertised to the public, except when the Commission is considering a request for an advisory opinion or a complaint or is in closed session as provided for by the Open Meetings Act.
3. The concurrence of three members shall be required for an advisory opinion or a final determination of a complaint.
4. The County Attorney shall assist the Commission in carrying out the Commission's duties. If a conflict exists for the County Attorney in a specific matter, the County shall provide sufficient funds for the hiring of independent counsel for the duration of the conflict.
5. The Commission shall hear and decide, with the advice of the County Attorney or independent counsel, if authorized, all complaints filed regarding alleged violations of the Ethics Ordinance by any person.
6. The County Attorney shall retain as a public record all financial disclosure forms submitted by any person for at least four years after receipt by the Commission.
7. Any person subject to the Ethics Ordinance may request an advisory opinion from the Commission concerning the application of the Ethics Ordinance. The Commission shall respond promptly to a request for an advisory opinion and shall provide interpretations of the Ethics Ordinance based on the facts provided or reasonably available to the Commission. All proceedings of the Commission prior to issuance of any advisory opinion are confidential.
8. The Ethics Commission only has jurisdiction to consider violations arising under the specific provisions and terms of the Ethics Ordinance. General allegations that conduct is "unethical" cannot be considered unless the conduct would constitute a violation of the Ethics Ordinance. Any person may file a complaint with the

Commission alleging a violation of any of the provisions of the Ethics Ordinance on a form provided by the Commission and should identify the specific section or sections of the Ethics Ordinance alleged to have been violated.

9. The Commission may dismiss a complaint that fails to allege a violation of the Ethics Ordinance or permit an amendment of a deficient complaint, if authorized, for investigation and review.
10. The Commission may dismiss a complaint if the Commission determines that there are insufficient facts upon which to base a determination of a violation.
11. If there is a reasonable basis for believing a violation has occurred, the subject of the complaint shall be given an opportunity to meet with the Commission or to otherwise respond to the Commission concerning the complaint.
12. A final determination of a violation shall be supported by a written decision of the Commission.
13. Upon finding of a violation, the Commission may take any enforcement action provided for in the Ethics Ordinance.
14. After a complaint is filed and until a final finding of a violation by the Commission, all actions regarding a complaint are confidential. The Commission and its staff shall not disclose any information relating to the complaint, including the identity of the subject of the complaint or the person making the complaint.
15. A finding of a violation of the Ethics Ordinance is public information.

Adopted this 9th day of May, 2019.

Washington County Ethics Commission
BY: J. Emmet Burke, Chair