

Information Paper: The Meade County Ethics Commission and Ethics Complaints

Purpose: To inform Meade County Residents About Ethics Complaints Filed Under the Meade County Ethics Code.

Background:

1. Kentucky law provides that counties shall adopt a code of ethics for county officials and certain county employees. These officials and employees occupy positions of public trust. Kentucky Revised Statutes chapter 65.003(1). Standards of conduct are promulgated in the Meade County Ethics Code, a County Ordinance which defines terms and assigns ethics responsibilities within the County.

2. This Ethics Code provides these officers and employees, and any other interested resident, with a forum which can render advice; provide opinions and judgments; and otherwise adjudicate alleged violations of the Meade County Ethics Ordinance. This forum is the Meade County Ethics Commission.

3. The Ethics Code was passed by the Meade County Fiscal Court, which has also amended the Code from time to time. It is found in Ordinances 2005-12, 2008-06, and 2011-06.

Facts:

1. The Ethics Code provides that no officer or employee shall

- a. Have a private interest which conflicts with the duties of his or her official position,
- b. Act in an official capacity in any matter in which he or a close relative or an affiliated business might be affected,
- c. Undertake any activity which reasonably prejudices his independent judgment on public matters,
- d. Solicit or accept any favor or thing of value for influencing him on public matters, or
- e. Use official but generally unknown information to secure financial gain.

2. Any officer, employee, candidate, or resident of the County may inquire about possible ethics issues. The Ethics Commission shall respond to the inquiry. In addition, any officer, employee, candidate, or resident of the County, including members of the Commission itself, may file a complaint against an officer or employee, alleging a violation of the Ethics Code. The Commission shall investigate the alleged violation.

3. The jurisdiction of the Ethics Commission is limited to ethics violations noted in the Code. It does not have general jurisdiction to inquire into just any allegation of misconduct, abuse, or negligence by an officer or employee. Accordingly, an allegation of an Ethics Code violation must assert that a specific provision of the Code has been violated. The Commission is not the appropriate forum to adjudicate policy disagreements, personnel issues, or other matters not specifically pertaining to alleged violations of the Code itself.

4. Complaints will be filed using the approved form. The form is available from the Ethics Commission, and is also available on this website. Following the submission of a complaint, the Commission will provide due process to the officer against whom the complaint has been lodged; investigate the alleged violation; and render a decision on the complaint. The Commission may impose a fine not to exceed \$1000 for violations of the Ethics Code. Complaints may be filed with the Office of the County Clerk.

Approved for Release by the Chairman, Meade County Ethics Commission, May 27, 2014. Ethics Commission, care of the Meade County Clerk, 516 Hillcrest Drive, Brandenburg, KY 40108.