

**Code of Ethics of the Chatham County
Board of County Commissioners**

Preamble

The stability and proper operation of democratic representative government depends upon the continuing consent of the governed, upon the public confidence in the integrity of the government and upon reasonable exercise of the trust conferred by the people. Government decisions and policy must be made and implemented through proper channels and processes of the government structure. The purpose of this code is to establish guidelines for ethical standards of conduct for county commissioners. It should not be considered a substitute for the law.

County Commissioners must be able to act in a manner to maintain their integrity and independence and they must be responsive to the interests and needs of those they represent. County commissioners serve in an important advocacy capacity in meeting the needs of their citizens and should recognize the legitimacy of this role as well as the intrinsic importance of this function to the proper functioning of representative government. At the same time, county commissioners must, at times, act in an adjudicatory or administrative capacity and must, when doing so, act in a fair and impartial manner. County commissioners must know how to distinguish these roles and when each role is appropriate and they must act accordingly. County commissioners must be aware of their obligation to conform their behavior to standards of ethical conduct that warrant the trust of their constituents including avoiding the appearance of conflicts of interest.

Canon One

A County Commissioner Shall Obey the Law

County commissioners shall support the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of North Carolina and the laws enacted by the Congress of the United States and the General Assembly.

Canon Two

**A County Commissioner Should
Uphold the Integrity and Independence of His or Her Office**

County Commissioners should demonstrate the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty and fortitude in all their public activities in order to inspire public confidence and trust in county government. County commissioners should participate in establishing, maintaining and enforcing, and should themselves observe, high standards of conduct so that the integrity and independence of their office may be preserved. The provisions of this Code should be construed and applied to further these objectives.

Canon Three

A County Commissioner Should Avoid Impropriety and the Appearance of Impropriety in All His or Her Activities

- A.** It is essential that county government attract those citizens best qualified and willing to serve. County commissioners have legitimate interests-economic, professional and vocational-of a private nature. County commissioners should not acquire, retain or pursue private interests, economic or otherwise, when such action conflicts with their responsibility to the public or creates the appearance of such a conflict.
- B.** County commissioners should respect and comply with the law and should conduct themselves at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity of the office of county commissioner and of county government.
- C.** County commissioners should not allow family, social, or other relationships to unduly influence their conduct or judgment and should not lend the prestige of the office of county commissioner to advance the private interests of others; nor should they convey or permit others to convey the impression that they are in a special position to influence them. Where there is a clear appearance of such undue influence, a county commissioner should recuse himself or herself from voting on the matter or participating in its deliberations.

Canon Four

A County Commissioner Should Perform the Duties of the Office Diligently

County commissioners should, while performing the duties of the office as prescribed by law, give precedence to these duties over other activities. In the performance of these duties, the following standards should apply:

A. Legislative Responsibilities

- 1.** County commissioners should actively pursue policy goals they believe to be in the best interest of all residents within the parameters of orderly decision-making, rules of the Board of County Commissioners and open government.
- 2.** County commissioners should respect the legitimacy of the goals and interests of other county commissioners and should respect the rights of others to pursue goals and policies different from their own.

B. Adjudicative Responsibilities

1. County commissioners should be faithful to the general and local laws pertaining to the office and strive for professional competence in them. They should not be swayed by partisan interests, public clamor, or fear of criticism.
2. County commissioners should demand and contribute to the maintenance of fair, open and courteous proceedings before the Board of County Commissioners and afford full opportunity for citizens to be heard and to express their views.
3. County Commissioners should be honest, patient, dignified and courteous to those with whom they deal in their official capacity, and should require similar conduct of their staff and others subject to their direction and control.
4. County commissioners should accord every person who is interested in a proceeding before the commission full right to be heard according to law.
5. County Commissioners should dispose of the business of the county in a deliberate manner that assures that citizens have meaningful knowledge of and input into their commissioners' decisions.

C. Administrative Responsibilities

1. County commissioners should require county employees to be aware of and carry out the State's Open Meetings and Public Records Laws.
2. County commissioners should conserve the resources of the county in their charge. They should employ county equipment, property, funds and personnel only in legally permissible pursuits and in a manner that exemplifies excellent stewardship.
3. County commissioners should require county employees subject to their direction and control to observe the standards of fidelity and diligence that apply to commissioners as well as those appropriate for employees.
4. County commissioners should take or initiate appropriate disciplinary measures against a county employee for improper conduct.
5. County commissioners should exercise the power of employment only on the basis of merit, avoid favoritism and refrain from illegal discrimination and nepotism. They should not approve compensation of employees beyond the fair value of services rendered.

Canon Five

A County Commissioner Should Conduct the Affairs of the Board in an Open and Public Manner

County commissioners should be aware of the letter and intent of the State's Open Meetings Law, should conduct the affairs of the Board of County Commissioners consistent with the letter and spirit of that law and consistent with the need to inspire and maintain public confidence in the integrity and fairness of county government and the office of county commissioner. Consistent with this goal of preserving public trust, county commissioners should be aware of the need for discretion in deliberations when the lack of discretion would pose a clear threat to the resources of the county, to the reputation of current or potential county employees, to the integrity of other governmental processes or to other legitimate interests of the county. County commissioners should only utilize closed meetings as allowed under the Open Meeting Law when absolutely necessary to carry out the intent and letter of those provisions.

Canon Six

A County Commissioner Should Regulate His or Her Extra-Governmental Activities to Minimize the Risk of Conflict with His or Her Official Duties.

- A. County commissioners should refrain from financial and business dealings that tend to reflect adversely on the Board or on county government or to interfere with the proper performance of official duties.
- B. County commissioners should manage their personal financial interests to minimize the number of cases in which they must abstain from voting on matters coming before the Board.
- C. Information acquired by county commissioners in their official capacity should not be used or disclosed in their personal or business financial dealings or for any other purpose not related to official duties.

Canon Seven


A County Commissioner Should Refrain from Political Activities Inappropriate to His or Her Office

- A. County commissioners have a civic responsibility to support good government by every available means, to continue to inform and educate the citizenry about the affairs and processes of county government, and to make themselves available to citizens of the county so that they may ascertain and respond to the needs of the community. In doing so, county commissioners may and should join or affiliate with civic organizations whether partisan or non-partisan, may and should attend political meetings, may and should advocate and support the principles or policies of civic or political organizations consistent with the Constitution and laws of the United States and North Carolina.

B. Candidates for the office of county commissioner, including incumbents:

1. Should inform themselves concerning the laws of this state with regard to campaigns, campaign finance and relevant disclosure requirements, conflict of interest provisions and other appropriate state and federal laws and should scrupulously comply with the provisions of such laws;
2. Should maintain the dignity appropriate to the office, and should encourage members of their families to adhere to the same standards of political conduct that apply to commissioners;
3. Should not make pledges or promises of conduct in office that they will not or cannot perform or would be illegal if they were performed;
4. Should not misrepresent their identity, qualifications, present position, or other fact;
5. Should avoid pledges or promises of conduct in office other than the faithful and impartial performance of the duties of the office: and
6. Should refrain from personal or professional financial arrangements with fellow county commissioners, appointed advisory board members or other elected and appointed county and municipal officials that could, or would appear to, unduly influence either party's conduct or judgment.


Adopted this the 4th day of December, 2006



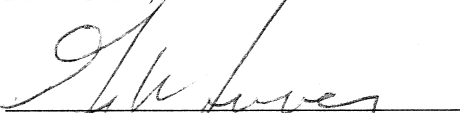
Patrick Barnes, Commissioner



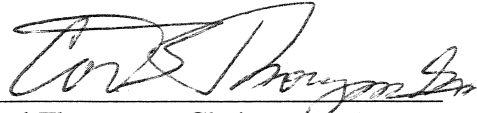
Mike Cross, Commissioner



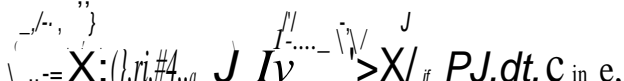
Tom Vanderbeck, Commissioner



George Lucier, Vice Chairman



Carl Thompson, Chairman


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Santlrn Sublett, Clerk to the Board -

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