

Pittsburgh's Ethics Law in Plain Language

Offering, Soliciting or Accepting Gifts (§197.07)

- As a general rule, you, as a member of the Board, cannot solicit anything of value from any person or interested party. However, there are a few exceptions:
 - o Any gift from an immediate family member;
 - o Food or beverages of a nominal value (not to exceed 4 times per year from the same individual or organization);
 - o Expenses related to the attendance of a public event or ceremony when offered by a sponsoring organization and attended in an official capacity (not to exceed two tickets per event, 4 events per year) or accompaniment of an immediate family member to such events;
 - o Business-related events associated with any Board of which you are a member;
 - o Nonpecuniary awards or gifts of nominal value when given in recognition of public service;
 - o Gifts from other employees or individuals for a special occasion, such as illness, holiday, births, marriage, retirements;
 - o Reasonable business related travel expenses; and
 - o Other non-pecuniary gifts.
- Gifts that value over \$100 per gift or aggregate if gifts for an individual giver (except those from a family member) must be part of a financial disclosure under Pennsylvania Public Official and Employee Ethics Act and entered in the electronic city system.
- Immediate family members may accept gifts from an interested party which arises from an independent relationship of the family member, so long as it cannot be reasonably inferred that the gift was intended to influence you as a Board Member.

Conflicts of Interest (§197.03)

- Conflicts of interest may occur in relation to property interests, political interests, and licensing. A member of the board shall not use their position to exert influence on any person with association to these interests or the interests of an immediate family member.
- If any voting conflicts arise, the conflict must be disclosed on the record and handled in a manner provided by State Statute and the City Charter.
- No Board Member or member of their immediate family can engage in any activity that is regulated by the Pennsylvania Race Horse Development and Gaming Act or own any portion of any slot machine, manufacturer, or supplier licensee, or other entity licensed by the Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board.

Lobbyist Registration (§161.37)

- Any individual who qualifies as a lobbyist must register his or her name and the name of the lobbying firm (if applicable), the lobbyist's business address and phone number, and a statement of understanding with the City Controller within 10 days of such qualification or knowledge of the obligation to register, and must register individually for each client compensating the lobbyist. Registration must occur each year and may be terminated at will.
- Exemptions apply for board members' activities only while acting within his or her official capacity or scope of employment, while participating in the publication of a

newspaper, periodical, or news station not purposed for the influence of municipal legislation, or while acting without compensation or reimbursement outside of payment of reasonable travel expenses. Board members do not qualify for exemption for contract bidding, unless bidding in the capacity of or as an employee of a tax exempt or federally funded organization.

- Any knowing violation of this section will lead to civil action brought by the City Solicitor for civil penalties not greater than two thousand dollars (\$2,000.00).

Campaign Finance Regulations: Contributions (§198.02)

- Although no member of the Ethics Hearing Board may run for any public office or hold office with any political party or political committee, participation in partisan political activities through the making of campaign contributions is permitted. Contribution limitations are regulated by the Federal Election Commission, and all contributions made by an individual and/or a political committee must be made with adherence to these guidelines. Volunteer labor hours, generally understood to include any uncompensated and voluntary campaign work, are exempt from these limitations. Contributions include anything having a monetary value, including money, gifts, forgiveness of a debt, and loans.