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Ethics Matters

An eNewsletter of the City of Atlanta Board of Ethics

Volume 6, Issue 2

Fall 2011

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Search Committee Announced

Board of Ethics Chair Caroline Johnson Tanner has announced the members of a search committee to oversee the search for a new Ethics Officer. The nine-member committee is chaired by John Lewis, Senior Managing Compliance and Global Anti-Bribery Counsel at The Coca-Cola Company and immediate past chair of the Ethics Board.

The other members of the committee are:

- Charlie Crawford, President, Private Bank of Buckhead
- Linda DiSantis, Executive in Residence, Center for Ethics and Corporate Responsibility, J. Mack Robinson College of Business, Georgia State University
- Johnita Due, Assistant General Counsel, Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.
- Paula Frederick, General Counsel, State Bar of Georgia
- MaryAnne F. Gaunt, Associate Director, Principals Center, College of Education, Georgia State University
- Walter R. Huntley Jr., President, Huntley Partners
- Charis L. Johnson, Counsel, Ronnie Moore & Associates, Staff Counsel for Allstate and Encompass Insurance Companies
- John D. Marshall Jr., Part-time Associate Legal Counsel, Kennesaw State University

The committee is responsible for interviewing and recommending candidates to lead the

Ethics Office.

"I am pleased with the thoughtful, talented, and dedicated group that we have helping us," said Ms. Tanner. "Their experience in ethics and compliance in city government, the public sector, and private business should help in identifying the best candidates for the job."

Ginny Looney, the current ethics officer, is leaving the City at the end of September to take a job with the Georgia Supreme Court, where she previously worked. Ms. Looney came to the City in 2003 to set up the Ethics Office as the inaugural ethics officer. Her work is chronicled in a 2009 report entitled [Ethics Is the Only Deal](#).

In announcing her resignation, Ms. Looney said, "Serving as ethics officer has been challenging, engaging, satisfying, and never dull, and I will miss working with city employees and officials. After eight years, I feel that I have done what I intended to do - set up a functioning, effective office for enforcing ethical standards in the City. Now it is time for the City to gain someone with fresh energy to work in the position."

Mr. Lewis says he expects the committee to recommend three to five candidates to the Board. The application filing period closes on Friday, September 16, 2011, and the Board hopes to make its final selection for the position in November. The position is subject to confirmation by the City Council and approval by the Mayor.

Visit www.atlantaethics.org to learn more about the job opening and application process.

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Fostering an Ethical Culture

Following a year-long training exercise involving nearly 1,000 employees, the Board of Ethics has identified the five core values essential to an ethical culture as honesty, integrity, trust, accountability, and transparency. The Board is planning a public education initiative focused on these values to encourage city officials and employees to engage in ethical conduct.

As part of this education initiative, the Ethics Office is working with the Departments of Watershed Management and Information Technology to develop an ethics e-learning course to help employees connect these core values to their work. Current plans are to produce the e-learning course in-house to tailor the content to the specific standards in Atlanta's Ethics Code, use employees as actors to reflect the diversity of the city's workforce, and allow the City to own the final product. After taking the course, employees will be asked to sign an ethics pledge agreeing to abide by the code.

The goal is to require ethics training once every two years for employees and elected officials and within six months of appointment for board members. An amendment to the city code or an executive order will be required to make training mandatory.

To build awareness, the Ethics Office has ordered five videos and six new posters that focus on educating employees on the core values of an ethical culture while continuing to encourage officials and employees to comply with the Ethics Code. Called RealBiz Shorts, the videos are humorous and engaging shorts that concentrate on ethics in the workplace;

they will be embedded in ethics presentations and posted on the IntraWeb. The posters will be displayed in message centers and on bulletin boards throughout the City. Watch for the first video and poster to rollout this fall.

Having identified its five core values, the Board has revised its mission statement to incorporate these values. The mission statement now states: "The Board of Ethics builds public trust, promotes open and transparent government, and fosters a strong ethical culture through educating, advising, and enforcing the city's ethical standards and encouraging city officials and employees to act with honesty, integrity, and accountability."

The Ethics Office will continue to offer classroom training at the New Employees' Orientation and on request to active employees, board members, and neighborhood planning unit officers. In the past year, employees in the Departments of Aviation, Fire, and Police have attended ethics workshops scheduled by their departments.

To download a pledge form, visit the [Ethics Pledge](#) webpage.

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Fewer Integrity Line Calls But More Investigations

A review of Integrity Line calls in 2010 shows that the ethics and compliance hotline received fewer calls last year than in any previous year, although more of the calls were serious enough to require an investigation. Of the 105 unduplicated calls received, 71 (68%) warranted an investigation, 17 were operational matters referred to departments for internal handling, and 17 were closed without an investigation because there was insufficient information or they were outside the city's jurisdiction. Since the Integrity Line began in 2006, less than half of all calls (44%) have warranted an investigation.

Of the 126 cases closed in 2010, 85 (67%) cases were investigated. Allegations were sustained in 30 (35%) of the investigated cases, well above the five-year average of 21 percent. The 30 closed cases resulted in 19 changes in departmental policies or procedures; two employees receiving an oral admonishment; two employees being suspended, with one later being terminated; and the referral of a private citizen to police for prosecution.

Over the past five years, there has been a steady increase in issues being reported to management before a call is made to the Integrity Line. In 2010, 30 percent of all calls had previously been reported to management compared to 17 percent in 2006. The types of calls have remained consistent, with employee relations, policy issues, theft of time, and customer relations accounting for two-thirds of the calls both in 2010 and over the five-year period.

For copies of reports on the Integrity Line, visit the [Reports](#) webpage.

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Ethics News in Brief

- At enforcement hearings in July, the Board of Ethics found that three former employees violated the financial disclosure laws by failing to timely file their 2011 City Financial Disclosure Statement. The Board fined Maurice Hill and Oladele Olagbegi \$500 each for failing to file any statement and fined Larry Gardner \$50 for filing late. The remaining 13 cases were resolved prior to the July board meeting and included three delinquent filers who paid fines totaling \$350.
- The Board of Ethics approved a settlement agreement in May in which City of Atlanta Municipal Clerk Rhonda Dauphin Johnson agreed to pay \$801.55 for spending city funds to rent a pick-up truck that was used to move personal furniture and using city staff to assist with the move during work hours.
- Two new publications explain ethics rules to employees and companies doing business with the City. The Board of Ethics adopted an [Ethics Advisory on Gift Rules](#) that succinctly sets out the key rules on prohibited gifts, acceptable gifts, and gift disclosure requirements. In addition, the Ethics Office has produced a brochure for contractors, vendors, regulated parties, customers, and other prohibited sources explaining the city's ethical standards on gifts, conflicts of interest, and post-employment.

To obtain a copy of the new publications, visit the [Ethics Advisories](#) and [Ethical Guidelines](#) webpages.

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Ask the Ethics Officer: How Can I Thank an Employee?

We have a particular officer who has endeared himself to the neighborhood residents, and some would like to show their appreciation to him for his above-and-beyond-the-call-of-duty service to us. I know gift cards are on the prohibited list. Could you provide me a list of acceptable ways to show appreciation to our Atlanta Police Department personnel?

You should not give cash, lunch, tickets, or other personal gifts to a police officer or city employee. The best way to thank city employees for their work is to write a note, email, or letter of praise to their supervisor. You may also make a donation in their honor to a city department or city-related foundation or give them an honorary title. As examples, one neighborhood association planted a tree in a city park in appreciation of an employee's work in designing the park; another group designated their favorite officer as an honorary neighborhood citizen; and a citizen grateful for the efforts of firefighters in saving his cat made a donation in the employees' names to the Fire Rescue Foundation.

Visit the [Ask the Ethics Officer](#) webpage to review previously asked questions.

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A Matter of Fact - Employees Don't Volunteer for Training

Of approximately 7,000 city employees, 375 board members, and 50 NPU chairs and vice chairs, just over half of the employees and 16 percent of the volunteer officials have received ethics training in the last five years.

- 730 new employees and 250 active employees received ethics training in 2007
- 202 new employees, 152 active employees, and 40 board members received ethics training in 2008
- 124 new employees and 417 active employees received ethics training in 2009
- 442 new employees, 462 active employees, 25 board members, and 14 elected officials received ethics training in 2010
- 378 new employees and 568 active employees have received ethics training in 2011

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