

COUNTY OF BARROW

STATE OF GEORGIA

BARROW COUNTY ETHICS ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF BARROW COUNTY, TO ESTABLISH THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR BARROW COUNTY; TO FURTHER AND INCORPORATE THE POLICIES AND LAWS OF THE STATE OF GEORGIA RELATING TO ETHICAL STANDARDS; TO CREATE THE BOARD OF ETHICS AND PROVIDE FOR ITS CONSTITUENT MEMBERSHIP, DUTIES, AND RESPONSIBILITIES; TO PROVIDE FOR THE INVESTIGATION OF ETHICS COMPLAINTS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF ETHICAL STANDARDS; TO PROVIDE FOR SEVERABILITY; TO PROVIDE FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the State of Georgia, approved by the voters of the State in November of 1982, and effective July 1, 1983, provides in Article IX, Section II, Paragraph I thereof, that the governing authority of the county may adopt clearly reasonable ordinances, resolutions, and regulations;

WHEREAS, O.C.G.A. § 36-1-20 authorizes counties to enact ordinances for protecting and preserving the public health, safety, and welfare of the population of the unincorporated areas of the County;

WHEREAS, the governing authority of Barrow County, to wit, the Board of Commissioners, desires to exercise its authority in adopting this Ordinance;

WHEREAS, it is essential to the proper operation of democratic government that public officials be independent and impartial, that governmental decisions and policy be made in the proper channels of the governmental structure, that public office not be used for private gain other than the remuneration provided by law, and that there be public confidence in the integrity of government;

WHEREAS, the attainment of one or more of these ends is impaired whenever there exists a conflict between the private interests of an elected official or a governmental employee and his duties as such;

WHEREAS, the public interest, therefore, requires that the law protect against such conflicts of interest and establish appropriate ethical standards with respect to the conduct of elected officials and government employees in situations where conflicts exist;

WHEREAS, it is also essential to the proper operation of government that those best qualified be encouraged to serve the government. Accordingly, legal safeguards against conflicts of interest must be so designed as not unnecessarily or unreasonably to impede the recruitment and retention by the government of those men and women who are best qualified to serve it;

WHEREAS, an essential principle underlying the staffing of our government structure is that its elected officials and employees should not be denied the opportunity, available to all other citizens, to acquire and retain private economic and other interests, except where conflicts with the responsibility of such elected officials and employees to the public cannot be avoided;

WHEREAS, in recognition of these goals and principles, it is the policy of the Board of Commissioners to institute, establish, promote, and enforce standards of ethical conduct for all of Barrow County's officers and employees; and

WHEREAS, it is a further policy of the Board of Commissioners that the proper administration of Barrow County's government and the promotion and enforcement of standards of ethical conduct for Barrow County's officers and employees would be best served by the creation of a Barrow County Board of Ethics for the investigation of complaints related to ethical standards;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED AND RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF BARROW COUNTY, GEORGIA AS FOLLOWS:

ARTICLE ONE: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section One. Short Title.

This Ordinance shall be known as "The Barrow County Ethics Ordinance," and may be cited and referred to as such.

Section Two. Definitions.

For the purposes of this Ordinance, the following terms, phrases, words, and their derivations shall have the meaning provided herein. When not inconsistent with the context, words used in the present tense include the future, words in the plural number include the singular number, and words in the singular number include the plural number.

- (A) **"Board"** means the Barrow County Board of Commissioners.
- (B) **"Board of Ethics"** means the Barrow County Board of Ethics as formed and described herein.
- (C) **"Business Entity"** means any business of whatever nature regardless of how designated or formed, whether a sole proprietorship, partnership, joint venture, association, trust, corporation, limited liability company, or any other type of business enterprise, and whether a person acting on behalf of, or as a representative or agent of, the business entity.
- (D) **"Confidential Information"** means any information that, by law or practice, is not reasonably available to the public.
- (E) **"County Official"** means the Barrow County Board of Commissioners, any member of a board, commission, or authority appointed by the Board, the Chief of

Operations or his/her equivalent, and any other elected or appointed officer or employee of Barrow County, including those employees who are exempt from the Barrow County Civil Service System, except to the extent prohibited by law.

- (F) **“Employee”** means all those persons employed on a regular or part-time basis by the County, as well as those persons whose services are retained under the terms of a contract with the County, including those employees who are exempt from the Barrow County Civil Service System, except to the extent prohibited by law.
- (G) **“Family”** means the spouse, parents, children, brothers and sisters, related by blood or marriage, of a county official or employee.
- (H) **“Interest”** means direct or indirect pecuniary or material benefit accruing to a County Official or Employee as a result of a contract or transaction which is or may be the subject of an official act or action by or with the County, except for such contracts or transactions which, by their terms and by the substance of their provisions, confer the opportunity and right to realize the accrual of similar benefits to all other persons and/or property similarly situated. The term “interest” shall not include any remote interest. For purposes of this Ordinance, a County Official or Employee shall be deemed to have an interest in the affairs of:
- (1) His or her family;
 - (2) Any business entity in which the county official or employee is a member, officer, director, employee, or prospective employee;
 - (3) Any business entity as to which the stock, legal ownership, or beneficial ownership of a county official or employee is in excess of five percent (5%) of the total stock or total legal and beneficial ownership, or which is

controlled or owned directly or indirectly by the county official or employee.

- (I) "Official Act" or "Official Duties" means any legislative, administrative, appointive, or discretionary act of any County Official or Employee of the County or any agency, board, authority, or commission thereof.

ARTICLE TWO: CODE OF ETHICS FOR COUNTY SERVICE GENERALLY AND FOR EMPLOYEES

This Article Two is intended to adopt and incorporate herein for local enforcement the ethical standards of O.C.G.A. § 45-10-1, as it may be amended from time to time.

Any person in County service shall:

Section One.

Put loyalty to the highest moral principles and to country above loyalty to persons, party, or government department.

Section Two.

Uphold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and the State of Georgia and of all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.

Section Three.

Give a full day's labor for a full day's pay and give to the performance of his duties his earnest effort and best thought.

Section Four.

Seek to find and employ more efficient and economical ways of getting tasks accomplished.

Section Five.

Never discriminate unfairly by the dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether for remuneration or not, and never accept, for himself or his family, favors or benefits under circumstances which might be construed by reasonable persons as influencing the performance of his governmental duties.

Section Six.

Make no private promises of any kind binding upon the duties of office, since a government employee has no private word that can be binding on public duty.

Section Seven.

Engage in no business with the government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of his governmental duties.

Section Eight.

Never use any information coming to him confidentially in the performance of governmental duties as a means for making private profit.

Section Nine.

Expose corruption wherever discovered.

Section Ten.

Uphold these principles, ever conscious that public office is a public trust.

**ARTICLE THREE: CODE OF ETHICS FOR COUNTY OFFICIALS AND
DEPARTMENT DIRECTORS**

This Article Three is intended to adopt and incorporate herein for local enforcement the ethical standards of O.C.G.A. § 45-10-3, as it may be amended from time to time.

All County Officials and Department Directors shall:

Section One.

Uphold the Constitution, laws, and regulations of the United States, the State of Georgia, the County of Barrow, and all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.

Section Two.

Never discriminate by the dispensing of special favors or privileges to anyone, whether or not for remuneration.

Section Three.

Not engage in any business with the government, either directly or indirectly, which is inconsistent with the conscientious performance of his governmental duties.

Section Four.

Never use any information coming to him confidentially in the performance of governmental duties as a means for making private profit.

Section Five.

Expose corruption wherever discovered.

Section Six.

Never solicit, accept, or agree to accept gifts, loans, gratuities, discounts, favors, hospitality, or services from any person, association or corporation under circumstances from which it could reasonably be inferred that a major purpose of the donor is to influence the performance of the member's official duties.

Section Seven.

Never accept any economic opportunity under circumstances where he knows or should know that there is a substantial possibility that the opportunity is being afforded him with intent to influence his conduct in the performance of his official duties.

Section Eight.

Never engage in other conduct which is unbecoming to a member or which constitutes a breach of public trust.

Section Nine.

Never take any official action with regard to any matter under circumstances in which he knows or should know that he has a direct or indirect monetary interest in the subject matter of such matter or in the outcome of such official action.

ARTICLE FOUR: SPECIFIC PROVISIONS RELATED TO CONFLICT OF INTEREST TRANSACTIONS AND DISCLOSURES

The following provisions related to conflict of interest transactions and disclosures are intended to supplement and elaborate upon the Code of Ethics set forth in Articles Two and Three above, and all such provisions shall be read and interpreted in accordance therewith.

Section One. **Compliance with Applicable Law.**

No County Official or Employee shall engage in any activity or transaction that is prohibited by law, now existing or hereafter enacted, which is applicable to him or her by virtue of his or her office or employment. Other provisions of law or regulations shall apply when any provisions of this Ordinance shall conflict with the laws of the State of Georgia or the United States, except to the extent that this Ordinance permissibly sets forth a more stringent standard of conduct. The laws of the State of Georgia or the United States shall apply when this Ordinance is silent.

Section Two. **Conflict of Interest Transactions.**

(A) No County Official or Employee shall acquire or maintain an interest in any contract or transaction if a reasonable basis exists that such an interest will be

affected directly by his or her official act or action or by official acts or actions of the County, which the County Official or Employee has a reasonable opportunity to influence, except consistent with the disclosure and abstention provisions set forth herein.

(B) Barrow County shall not enter into any contract involving services or property with a County Official or Employee or with a business entity in which the County Official or an Employee has an interest. Provided that the disclosure and abstention provisions set forth herein are followed, this paragraph shall not apply to the following:

- (1) The designation of a bank or trust company as a depository for county funds;
- (2) The borrowing of funds from any bank or lending institution which offers competitive rates for such loans;
- (3) Contracts entered into with a business which employs a consultant, provided that the consultant's employment with the business is not incompatible with this Ordinance;
- (4) Contracts for services entered into with a business which is the only available source for such goods or services; and
- (5) Contracts entered into under circumstances that constitute an emergency situation, provided that a record explaining the emergency is prepared by the Board and submitted to the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) to be kept on file.

Section Three. **Financial Disclosures.**

Financial disclosures shall be governed by federal and state law as it may be amended from time to time, and this Ordinance shall not require any additional financial disclosure reports to be filed other than those required by federal and state law.

Section Four. **Zoning Application Disclosures.**

All disclosures with regard to zoning applications shall be governed in their entirety by the Conflict of Interest in Zoning Actions provisions contained in O.C.G.A. § 36-67A-1, et seq., as it may be amended from time to time.

Section Five. **Disclosures Related to Submission of Bids or Proposals for County Work or Contract.**

Persons submitting bids or proposals for county work who have contributed \$250.00 or more to a County Official must disclose on their bid or proposal the name of the County Official(s) to whom the contribution was made and the amount contributed. Such a disclosure must also be made prior to a request for any change order or extension of any contract awarded to the person who submitted the successful bid or proposal.

Section Six. **Withholding of Information.**

No County Official or Employee shall knowingly withhold any information that would impair the proper decision making of the Board or any of the County's boards, agencies, authorities, or departments.

Section Seven. **Incompatible Service.**

No County Official or Employee shall engage in or accept private or public employment or render service for any private or public entity, when such employment or service is incompatible with the proper discharge of his or her official duties or would tend to impair his or her independence of judgment or action in the performance of his or her official duties, unless

otherwise permitted by law and unless public disclosure is made.

Section Eight. Unauthorized Use of Public Property.

No County Official or Employee shall request or permit the unauthorized use of county-owned vehicles, and equipment, including but not limited to computers, pagers, and cellular telephones, materials or property for personal convenience or profit.

Section Nine. Political Recrimination and Activity.

(A) No County Official or Employee, whether elected or appointed, shall either cause the dismissal or threaten the dismissal from any county position as a reward or punishment for any political activity. No County Official or Employee shall direct any person employed by the County to undertake political activity on behalf of such County Official or Employee, any other County Official or Employee, or any other individual, political party, group, or business organization, during such time that the Employee is required to conduct county business. This section does not prohibit incidental telephone calls made for the purpose of scheduling a County Official's daily county business.

(B) Employees of the county are encouraged to exercise their right to vote, but no employee shall make use of government time or equipment to aid a political candidate, party, or cause; or use a government position to influence, coerce, or intimidate any person in the interest of a political candidate, party, or cause. No employee shall be hired, promoted, favored, or discriminated against with respect to employment because of his or her political opinions or affiliations.

(1) *Seeking elective office.* A government employee seeking elective office within the county may, upon declaring candidacy, either resign or submit a

request in writing to the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) for a leave of absence without pay from the date of his or her announcement through the duration of the campaign or announcement of the election results. In the alternative, the government employee seeking elective office within the County may continue to work for the County, provided, however, that the employee shall not engage in election activities during his or her County working hours or with use of County equipment. If elected to office, the employee shall immediately, upon the date of election, be separated from employment with the county upon written request and approval of the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent).

- (2) *Political campaign involvement.* A government employee may not be involved in any political activity which would constitute a conflict of interest; including participation in any aspect of any political campaign for any office in Barrow County Government.
- (3) *Solicitation of contributions.* A government employee may not knowingly solicit, accept, or receive political contributions from any person, to be used in support of or opposition to any candidate for office in the county.

Section Ten. **Appearance Before County Entities.**

No County Official or Employee shall appear on behalf of any private person other than himself or herself, his or her spouse, or his or her minor children, before any county agency, authority or board. However, a member of the Board of Commissioners may appear before such groups on behalf of his constituents in the course of his duties as a representative of the electorate or in the performance of public or civic obligations.

Section Eleven. **Timely Payment of Debts to the County and Fiscal Responsibility.**

All County Officials and Employees shall pay and settle, in a timely and prompt fashion, all accounts between them and Barrow County, including the prompt payment of all taxes and shall otherwise demonstrate personal fiscal responsibility.

Section Twelve. **Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts.**

- (A) County Officials and Employees shall not accept gifts, gratuities, or loans from organizations, business concerns, or individuals with whom he or she has official relationships on business of the county government. These limitations are not intended to prohibit the acceptance of articles of negligible value which are distributed generally, nor to prohibit employees from accepting social courtesies which promote good public relations, or to prohibit employees from obtaining loans from regular lending institutions. It is particularly important that inspectors, contracting officers, and enforcement officers guard against relationships which might be construed as evidence of favoritism, coercion, unfair advantage, or collusion.
- (B) Consistent with the provisions set forth in Articles Two and Three and Section 12(A) above, there shall be no violation of this Ordinance in the following circumstances:
- (1) Meals and beverages given in the usual course of entertaining associated with normal and customary business or social functions.
 - (2) An occasional gift from a single source of \$101.00 or less in any calendar year.
 - (3) Ceremonial gifts or awards.

- (4) Gifts of advertising value only or promotional items generally distributed to public officials.
- (5) Awards presented in recognition of public service.
- (6) Reasonable expenses of food, travel, lodging and scheduled entertainment for a meeting that is given in return for participation in a panel or speaking engagement at the meeting.
- (7) Courtesy tickets or free admission extended for an event as a courtesy or for ceremonial purposes, given on an occasional basis, and not to include season tickets of any nature.
- (8) Gifts from relatives or members of the County Official or Employee's household.
- (9) Honorariums or awards for professional achievement.
- (10) Courtesy tickets or free admission to educational seminars, educational or information conventions, or other similar events.

Section Thirteen. Disclosure of Interest.

Any member of the Board who has a financial or personal interest in any proposed legislation or action before the Board shall immediately disclose publicly the nature and extent of such interest.

Any other County Official or Employee who has a financial or personal interest in any proposed legislation or action before the Board and who participates in discussion with or gives an official opinion or recommendation to the Board in connection with such proposed legislation or action shall disclose publicly the nature and extent of such interest.

Section Fourteen. Abstention to Avoid Conflicts of Interest.

- (A) Except as otherwise provided by law, no County Official or Employee shall participate in the discussion, debate, deliberation, vote, or otherwise take part in the decision-making process on any item before him in which the County Official or Employee has a conflict of interest as set forth above.
- (B) To avoid the appearance of impropriety, if any County Official or Employee has a conflict of interest or has an interest that he or she has reason to believe either violates this Ordinance or may affect his or her official acts or actions in any matter, the County Official or Employee shall immediately leave the meeting room, except that if the matter is being considered at a public meeting, the County Official or Employee may remain in the meeting room.
- (C) In the event of a conflict of interest, the County Official or Employee shall announce his or her intent to abstain prior to the beginning of the discussion, debate, deliberation, or vote on the item, shall not participate in any way, and shall abstain from casting a vote.

ARTICLE FIVE: THE BOARD OF ETHICS

Section One. Creation and Composition of Board of Ethics.

There is hereby created a five-member Barrow County Board of Ethics, which shall consist of the following members:

- (A) One appointee of the Barrow County Bar Association;
- (B) One appointee selected by a majority of the voting County elected officials (not including the members of the Board of Commissioners) who shall each have one vote for such appointee;

- (C) One appointee selected by a majority of the voting employees of Barrow County (not including the County elected officials or the members of the Board of Commissioners) who are in the employ of Barrow County on a full-time basis on the effective date of the vote, which vote shall be conducted by the Director of Human Resources or his/her designee;
- (D) One appointee of the Barrow County Personnel Review Board; and
- (E) One appointee of the Barrow County Board of Commissioners, which appointee shall be selected by a majority vote of the Board of Commissioners.

Section Two. **Appointment Procedures.**

The initial appointments of the members of the Board of Ethics shall be accomplished as follows: Within five (5) business days of the effective date of this Ordinance, the Barrow County Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) or his/her designee shall notify the respective appointing body or individuals of the duty to appoint or vote upon a member for placement on the Board of Ethics. The body or individuals so notified shall have thirty (30) days in which to conduct their appointment process and provide the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) with the name of the appointment, or the name of the individual for whom he or she is voting as the appointee in the case of the elected officials. Within five (5) business days of receipt of the appointment information, or calculation of the votes as the case may be, the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) shall thereafter provide the names of the appointees to the Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners shall appoint the five persons so identified at the next regular meeting of the Board of Commissioners following receipt of the names of the appointees from the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent).

All appointments following the expiration of the initial terms and all appointments made

in the cases of vacancies created during a particular term shall be made by the applicable body or individuals as indicated in Section One of this Article. The Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) or his/her designee shall notify the applicable body or individuals responsible for making an appointment at least forty-five (45) days prior to the expiration of the respective term or immediately upon knowledge of a vacancy created during a term. Upon such notification, the appointment process shall proceed as set forth above in this Section.

Section Three. **Qualifications of Members of Board of Ethics.**

A person is eligible to be appointed as a member of the Board of Ethics if the person, while serving:

- (A) Resides in the County and is a registered voter;
- (B) Is not an Employee or County Official and has not been an Employee or County Official during the three (3) months immediately preceding his or her appointment, or be the spouse, parent, child or sibling of an Employee or County Official;
- (C) Is not an officer or employee of any political party;
- (D) Does not hold any elected or appointed office and is not a candidate for office of the United States, this State or the County, and has not held any elected or appointed office during the three (3) months immediately preceding his or her appointment.

Section Four. **Terms; Vacancies.**

Members of the Board of Ethics shall each serve a two (2) year term without compensation, and shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed and qualified. The Board positions appointed pursuant to sub-sections (A), (B), and (C) of Section One of this

Article shall serve an initial full two-year term, and shall thereafter serve two-year terms upon appointment. The Board positions appointed pursuant to sub-sections (D) and (E) of Section One of this Article shall serve an initial one-year term, and shall thereafter serve two-year terms upon appointment. If any vacancy occurs during a term, the remaining members shall at that time choose an alternate member mutually agreed upon to temporarily serve until the position is filled by appointment as provided in Section One and Section Two to fulfill the remainder of the then existing term.

Section Five. **Removal of Member.**

The Board of Commissioners may remove a member of the Board of Ethics on the grounds of neglect of duty, misconduct in office, or engagement in political activity in violation of this Ordinance. Before initiating the removal of a member from the Board of Ethics, the Board of Commissioners shall give the member written notice of the reason for the intended action, and the member shall have the opportunity to reply. Thereafter, the Board of Commissioners shall afford such member an opportunity for a hearing before the Board of Commissioners.

Section Six. **Organization and Internal Operating Regulations.**

- (A) Members of the Board of Ethics shall not be compensated.
- (B) The Board of Ethics shall elect one of its members to act as Chairperson for a term of one year, or until a successor is duly elected. The Board of Ethics shall also elect one of its members to act as Vice-Chairperson for the same term and to act for the Chairperson in his or her absence, because of disqualification, or vacancy.
- (C) There shall be no regularly scheduled monthly or bimonthly meetings of the

Board of Ethics, however, the Board of Ethics shall have semi-annual meetings. By majority vote, or by call of the Chairperson, the Board of Ethics may call a special meeting, if necessary. The Board of Ethics shall, however, have semi-annual meetings with the first meeting commencing at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month following the appointment of the initial members of the Board of Ethics by the Board of Commissioners, and with the second meeting commencing at 7:00 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of the month six months subsequent to the first meeting. The semi-annual meetings shall continue thereafter on the fourth Thursday of the month in six-month intervals. The meetings of the Board of Ethics shall be conducted in the public hearing room utilized by the Board of Commissioners, shall be duly publicized, and shall be otherwise conducted in accordance with the Open Meetings requirements under state law. The dates and times of the meetings may be altered by a majority vote of the Board of Ethics.

- (D) Three members of the Board of Ethics shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The Chairperson shall be entitled to the same voting rights as the other members of the Board of Ethics.
- (E) No official action concerning complaints shall be taken by the Board of Ethics, except by the affirmative vote of at least four (4) members of the Board of Ethics.

Section Seven. Duties and Powers.

The Board of Ethics shall have the following duties and powers:

- (A) To establish any procedures, rules and regulations governing its internal organization and conduct of its affairs, provided that such procedures, rules and

regulations do not conflict with any provision contained herein.

- (B) To receive and hear complaints of violations of standards required by this Ordinance.
- (C) To make investigations as it deems necessary to determine whether any person has violated this Ordinance, but only after at least four (4) members of the Board of Ethics have voted affirmatively to conduct the investigation.
- (D) To take such action as provided in this Ordinance as deemed appropriate because of any violation of this Ordinance.
- (E) To perform any other function authorized by this Ordinance.
- (F) To issue advisory opinions as provided in this Ordinance.

Section Eight. **Staffing and Expenses.**

The Board of Ethics shall be provided sufficient meeting space and other reasonable supportive services to carry out its duties required under this Ordinance. The Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent) shall designate an administration employee who shall serve as the filing clerk for the Board of Ethics and who shall be authorized to receive all filings before the Board of Ethics, to publish notices of all meetings upon request of the Board of Ethics' Chairperson, and to serve as the recording clerk for the Board of Ethics.

Section Nine. **Counsel.**

The Board of Ethics may petition the Barrow County Board of Commissioners for appointment of counsel on a case-by-case basis to assist it in carrying out its responsibilities or to act as a hearing officer. Any such appointed counsel shall be approved by the Board of Commissioners, shall perform services at an approved hourly rate, and shall serve at the joint pleasure of the Board of Ethics and the Board of Commissioners.

Section Ten. **Adherence to Ethics Ordinance.**

The Board of Ethics shall be governed by and subject to this Ordinance, except as to any requirements related to financial disclosures. If a member of the Board of Ethics has a conflict of interest or must disqualify himself under this Ethics Code or by law, the remaining members shall at that time choose an alternate person mutually agreed upon to hear that matter.

Section Eleven. **Prohibition Against Certain Conflicting Political Activity.**

(A) **Definitions.** The following words, terms, and phrases, when used in this section, shall have the meanings ascribed to them, except where the context clearly indicates a different meaning:

- (1) **“Member of the Board of Ethics”** means an individual who occupies the position of a member of the Board of Ethics or a prospective member of the Board of Ethics.
- (2) **“Political Party”** means a national political party, a state political party, a political action committee, and/or any affiliated organization.
- (3) **“Election”** includes a primary, special, and general election.
- (4) **“Nonpartisan Election”** means:
 - (a) An election at which none of the candidates is to be nominated or elected as representing a political party, any of whose candidates for presidential elector received votes in the last preceding election at which presidential electors were selected; and
 - (b) An election involving a question or issue which is not specifically identified with a political party, such as a constitutional amendment, referendum, approval of a governmental ordinance, or

any question or issue of similar character.

- (5) **"Partisan"** when used as an adjective, refers to a political party.
- (6) **"Political Fund"** means any fund, organization, political action committee or other entity that, for purposes of influencing in any way the outcome of any partisan election, receives or expends money or anything of value or transfers money or anything of value to any other fund, political party, candidate, organization, political action committee or other entity.
- (7) **"Contribution"** means any gift, subscription, loan, advance, deposit of money, allotment of money, or anything of value given or transferred by one person to another, including in cash, by check, by draft, through a payroll deduction or allotment plan, by pledge or promise, whether or not enforceable, or otherwise.

(B) **Permissible Activities.** All members of the Board of Ethics are free to engage in political activity to the widest extent consistent with the restrictions imposed in this Section, which restrictions are imposed for the sole purpose of ensuring neutrality and the appearance of neutrality of the Board of Ethics. Each member of the Board of Ethics retains the right to:

- (1) Register and vote in any election;
- (2) Participate in the nonpartisan activities of a civic, community, social, labor, or professional organization or of a similar organization;
- (3) Be a member of a political party or other political organization and participate in its activities to the extent consistent with law;

- (4) Attend a political convention, rally, fundraising function, or other political gathering;
- (5) Sign a political petition as an individual;
- (6) Make a financial contribution to a political party or organization;
- (7) Take an active part, as a candidate or in support of a candidate, in a nonpartisan election;
- (8) Be politically active in connection with a question which is not specifically identified with a political party, such as a constitutional amendment, referendum, approval of a governmental ordinance or any other question or issue of a similar character;
- (9) Serve as an election judge or clerk or in a similar position to perform nonpartisan duties as prescribed by state or local law; and
- (10) Otherwise participate fully in public affairs in a manner which does not materially compromise his or her efficiency or integrity as a member of the Board of Ethics or the neutrality, efficiency or integrity of the Board of Ethics.

(C) **Prohibited Activities.**

- (1) A member of the Board of Ethics may not take an active part in political management or in a political campaign, except as permitted by subsection (B) of this section.
- (2) A member of the Board of Ethics shall not take part in or be permitted to do any of the following activities:
 - (a) Serve as an officer of a political party, a member of a national,

state, or local committee of a political party, an officer or member of a committee of a partisan political club, or be a candidate for any of these positions;

- (b) Organize or reorganize a political party organization or political club;
- (c) Directly or indirectly solicit, receive, collect, handle, disburse, or account for assessments, contributions or other funds for a partisan political purpose;
- (d) Organize, sell tickets to, promote or actively participate in a fundraising activity of a candidate in a partisan election or of a political party or political club;
- (e) Take an active part in managing the political campaign of a candidate for public office in a partisan election or a candidate for political party office;
- (f) Become a candidate for, or campaign for, an elective public office in a partisan election;
- (g) Solicit votes in support of or in opposition to a candidate for public office in a partisan election or a candidate for political party office;
- (h) Act as recorder, watcher, challenger or similar officer at the polls on behalf of a political party or a candidate in a partisan election;
- (i) Drive voters to the polls on behalf of a political party or a candidate in a partisan election;
- (j) Endorse or oppose a candidate for public office in a partisan

- election or a candidate for political party office in a political advertisement, broadcast, campaign literature, or similar material;
- (k) Serve as a delegate, alternate or proxy to a political party convention;
 - (l) Address a convention, caucus, rally or similar gathering of a political party in support of or in opposition to a partisan candidate for public office or political party office;
 - (m) Initiate or circulate a partisan nominating position.
- (3) Nothing contained in this section shall prohibit activity in political management or in a political campaign by any member of the Board of Ethics connected with a nonpartisan election or a nonpartisan issue of any type.

Section Twelve. Limitation of Liability.

No member of the Board of Ethics, or any person acting on behalf of the Board of Ethics, shall be liable to any person for any damages arising out of the enforcement or operation of this Ethics Ordinance, except in the case of willful or wanton conduct. This limitation of liability shall apply to the County, the members of the Board of Ethics, the employees of the Board of Ethics, and any person acting under the direction of the Board of Ethics.

Section Thirteen. Advisory Opinion.

The Board of Ethics shall render an advisory opinion based on a real or hypothetical set of circumstances when requested to do so in writing by a County Official or Employee related to that County Official's or Employee's conduct or transaction of business. Such advisory opinions shall be rendered pursuant only to a written request, fully setting forth the circumstances to be

reviewed by the Ethics Board. The proceedings of the Ethics Board pursuant to this section shall be held in public to the extent consistent with state law, and the opinions of the Ethics Board shall be made available to the public.

Section Fourteen. Complaints.

The Board of Ethics shall be responsible for hearing and deciding any complaints filed regarding alleged violations of this Ordinance by any person. The following procedures shall be followed when filing a complaint:

- (A) Any person may file a complaint alleging a violation of any of the provisions of this Ordinance by submitting it to the Chief of Operations (or his/her equivalent), who shall immediately deliver such complaint to the Chairman of the Board of Ethics or his or her designee. A copy of such complaint shall immediately be forwarded by registered mail to the County Official or Employee against whom the complaint was filed. The complaint must be supported by affidavits based on personal knowledge, shall set forth such facts as would be admissible in evidence, and shall show affirmatively that the affiant is competent to testify to the matters stated therein. All documents referred to in an affidavit(s) should be attached to the affidavit(s). The person filing the complaint shall verify the complaint by his or her signature thereon. A complaint must be filed within six (6) months of the date the alleged violation is said to have occurred, or in case of concealment or nondisclosure within six (6) months of the date the alleged violation should have been discovered after due diligence. In the event the Board of Ethics makes an initial determination that a complaint is technically deficient, the Board of Ethics shall submit a list of deficiencies to the complainant and offer the complainant the

opportunity to correct the deficiencies within seven (7) days prior to the complaint being dismissed for technical deficiencies.

- (B) Upon receipt of a complaint alleging misconduct, the County Official or Employee against whom the complaint was filed may reply to the complaint within thirty (30) days, unless such time for reply is extended by the Board of Ethics upon good cause shown. The response of the County Official or Employee must be supported by affidavits based on personal knowledge, must set forth such facts as would be admissible in evidence, and must show affirmatively that the affiant is competent to testify to the matters stated therein. All documents referred to in an affidavit(s) should be attached to the affidavit(s).
- (C) Within sixty (60) days of receipt of a complaint, the Board of Ethics shall conduct an investigatory review to determine whether specific substantiated evidence from a credible source(s) exists to support a reasonable belief that there has been a violation of this Ordinance. If after reviewing the complaint the Board of Ethics by vote determines that no specific, substantiated evidence from a credible source(s) exists to support a reasonable belief that there has been a violation of this Ordinance or determines that no violation occurred, it may dismiss the complaint without further proceedings. In the event a complaint is dismissed based upon the merits of the complaint, the complaint may not be re-filed.
- (D) If the Board of Ethics determines that specific, substantiated evidence from a credible sources(s) exists to support a reasonable belief that there has been a violation of this Ordinance, certified written notice of a hearing, containing the time, date and place of such hearing, shall be given to each party by the Board of

Ethics, and a formal public hearing shall be conducted and both parties afforded an opportunity to be heard. Any formal public hearing shall be conducted in accordance with the requirements of due process. The Board of Ethics is authorized to swear witnesses.

- (E) Any final determination resulting from the hearing shall include written findings of fact and conclusions of law. The Board of Ethics shall determine if clear and convincing evidence shows any violation of this Ordinance.
- (F) Nothing in this section shall be considered to limit or encumber the right of the Board of Ethics to initiate an investigation on its own cognizance as it deems necessary to fulfill its obligations under this Ordinance.

Section Fifteen. **Disciplinary Action.**

- (A) Upon a determination that an employee has violated this Ordinance, the Board of Ethics may recommend the following penalties and actions:
 - (1) Written warning or reprimand;
 - (2) Suspension without pay;
 - (3) Termination of employment; and
 - (4) Repayment to the County of any unjust enrichment.
- (B) Upon a determination that a County Official has violated this Ordinance, the Board of Ethics may recommend the following penalties and actions:
 - (1) Written warning, censure, or reprimand;
 - (2) Removal from office to the extent provided by Georgia law; and
 - (3) Repayment to the County of any unjust enrichment.
- (C) Upon direction of the Board of Ethics, a petition may be filed for injunctive relief,

or any other appropriate relief, in the county superior court, or in any other court having proper venue and jurisdiction, for the purpose of requiring compliance with the provisions of this Ordinance. In addition, the court may issue an order to cease and desist from the violation of the Ordinance. The court also may void an official action that is the subject of the violation, provided that the legal action to void the matter was brought within ninety (90) days of the occurrence of the official action, if the court deems voiding the action to be in the best interest of the public. The court, after hearing and considering all the circumstances in the case, may grant all or part of the relief sought. However, the court may not void any official action appropriating public funds, levying taxes or providing for the issuance of bonds, notes or other evidences of public obligation under this Ordinance.

(D) In addition to any other remedy provided herein, upon determination of a violation of this Ordinance, the Board of Ethics may recommend to the Board of Commissioners in writing that any contract, bid, or change order that was the subject of the violation should be cancelled or rescinded. The Board of Commissioners, however, shall retain the discretion to determine whether such a cancellation or rescission would be in the best interest of the County and shall not be bound in any way by a recommendation of the Board of Ethics.

(E) The Ethics Board may also forward its findings of fact and conclusions of law to the Barrow County District Attorney's Office and/or the Office of the Governor for appropriate action.

Section Sixteen. **Judicial review.**

(A) Any party against whom a decision of the Board of Ethics is rendered may obtain

judicial review of the decision by writ of certiorari to the superior court of the County. The application for the writ must be filed within thirty (30) days from the date of the written decision. Judicial review shall be based upon the record. No party shall be entitled to a de novo appeal.

- (B) Upon failure to timely request judicial review of the decision by writ of certiorari as provided in this section, the decision shall be binding and final upon all parties.
- (C) The appellate rights afforded hereunder shall be in lieu of any right to appeal an adverse employment action under the Barrow County Civil Service System, to the extent the County Official or Employee may be subject to the Civil Service System.

ARTICLE SIX: MISCELLANEOUS

Section One. Severability.

If any provision of this Ordinance is found by a court of competent jurisdiction to be invalid or unconstitutional, or if the application of this Ordinance to any person or circumstances is found to be invalid or unconstitutional, such invalidity or unconstitutionality shall not affect other provisions or applications of this Ordinance which can be given effect without the invalid or unconstitutional provision or application.

Section Two. Repealer.

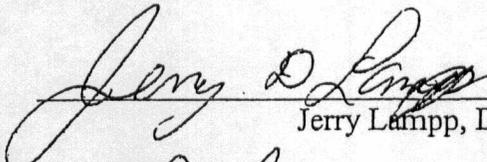
All laws, resolutions, or ordinances or parts thereof that conflict with the provisions of this Ordinance are hereby repealed.

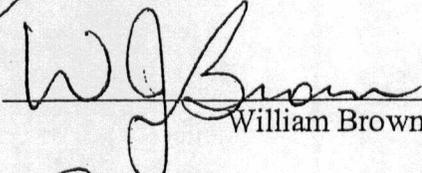
Section Three. Effective Date.

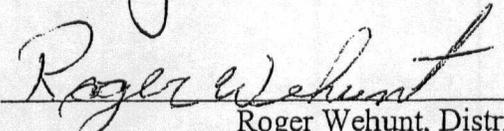
The effective date of this Ordinance shall be July 1, 2004.

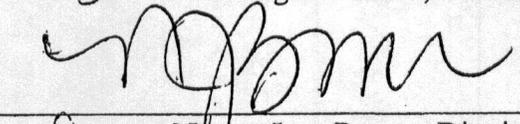
PASSED AND ADOPTED THIS 13th DAY OF June, 2004.

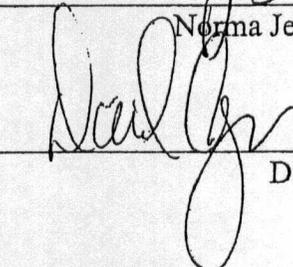
BARROW COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS


Jerry Lampp, District 1


William Brown, District 2

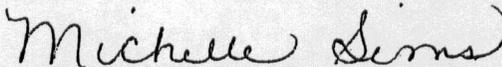

Roger Wehunt, District 3


Norma Jean Brown, District 4


David Dyer, District 5

Thad Brasfield, District 7

Attest:


Michelle Sims, Clerk
Barrow County Board of Commissioners