

Clark County Charter Review 2026

Ethics Laws & Policies

Governing State Law

- Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Title 42
 - 42.23.020 – No Public Officer Shall:
 - Be beneficially interested, directly or indirectly, in any contract involving such officer; or
 - Accept, directly or indirectly, any compensation, gratuity or reward.
 - 42.23.050 – Local Charter Controls:
 - City/County Charters shall control if stricter than state law.
 - 42.23.070 – No Public Officer Shall:
 - Use their position to secure special privileges or exemptions for themselves;
 - Give or receive any compensation, gift, reward, or gratuity related to their office;
 - Accept employment or engage in business that would induce to disclose confidential information acquired through their position;
 - Disclose confidential information for personal benefit.
 - 42.41.010 – Local Government Whistleblower Protection:
 - Local government employees are encouraged to report improper government actions by public officials
 - 42.41.040 – Retaliatory Action Unlawful

Governing County Code

- Charter Review Commission
 - Resolution No 2021-5 – Ethics Code Sec.8.12:
 - Created the Ethics Review Board;
 - Voter approved in Nov. 2021;
 - Responsible for hearing, investigating, and ruling on complaints of violations of the code of ethics in Clark County Code 2.07.01;
 - Applies to elected officials, appointed committee or advisory board members, and county employees.
 - Chapter 2.07.010 – Code of Ethical Conduct:
 - Adheres to state law and Clark County Human Resources policy 13.1
 - Promotes honesty, openness, and accountability in all public matters involving county government.

Governing County Code

- Clark County Human Resources Policy 13.1
 - Scope -
 - Applies to all county employees, volunteers, and those representing the County, such as elected officials, appointed committee, or advisory board members;
 - Intended to amplify, clarify and expand RCW 42.23;
 - Responsible for hearing, investigating, and ruling on complaints of violations of the code of ethics in Clark County Code 2.07.01.
 - Four Factors - the degree to which:
 - The employee was benefitted personally;
 - *A friend or relative benefitted* by the actions of the employee;
 - A decision or action was or might be influenced by personal interest;
 - The consideration was solicited by the employee.

Governing County Code (Continued...)

- Clark County Human Resources Policy 13.1
 - Duty to Disclose -
 - Disclose to Department Head or Elected Official;
 - Any situated involving an apparent or potential conflict of or the appearance of a conflict between personal and official responsibilities;
 - Once disclosed – goes to PA’s Office & HR to determine if a conflict exists & remedy;
 - Remedy may include disqualification in the decision (among other options);
 - Official may also voluntarily recuse themselves.
 - Exceptions/De Minimus Situations - not viewed as unethical:
 - Lunch or coffee bought by a friend whom official has had existing relationship with;
 - Participating in county-wide programs available to everyone (ex. Employee discounts/memberships);
 - Unsolicited items of insignificant value (ex. Trinkets, calendars, note pads, pens).

Governing County Code (Continued...)

- Clark County Human Resources Policy 13.1
 - EXAMPLES OF UNETHICAL OR BORDERLINE BEHAVIORS
 - An official attempts to intervene/influence the outcome of a County decision regarding a friend/relative;
 - A buyer accepts sports tickets from a potential vendor;
 - A building inspector “looks the other way” on a code violation in the home of County official;
 - Accepting a donation from outside contractor for a County sponsored event such as a golf tournament;
 - An official/supervisor grants an early salary increase to the employee because they are close friends;
 - Accepting a stipend for a speaking engagement done as a representative of the County;
 - A supervisor “strongly encourages” staff to donate to a charitable organization he supports;
 - Using County bulletin boards and mail systems to advertise a private business;
 - Using contacts/influence to obtain a vehicle registration without having to wait in line with the public;
 - Work assignments in a unit are based on who the supervisor “likes” the most;
 - An employee sends personal correspondence on County/department letterhead or uses an envelope with a County/department logo, giving the impression of County authority.