

Agenda Item [11]37, Political Gifts

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August 18, 2020

Basic Issue

- Ethics advisory board investigated a complaint
- Was councilor's paid travel unethical?
- Complaint received before the summer election
- Finding was delayed until after election
- Delay itself probably unethical

City Law

- 35.053 Conflicts of interest; City council members
- "City officials shall not ... accept any gift whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, thing or promise, or any other form, under circumstances in which it could reasonably be inferred that the gift was intended to influence, or could reasonably be expected to influence the officer, in the performance of their official duties ..."
- Don't accept gifts or bribes

Ethics Board Findings

- Letter dated August 11, 2020
- With regard to third party paid travel, “the practice appears to be common”
- “The facts here do not warrant individual sanction”
- Travel gifts should be publicly pre-approved

Impact of Findings

- Accepting paid travel was OK because everyone did it – not
- Ethics board approves unethical conduct
- Recommending public pre-approval of travel gifts is a distraction
- When would a gift of travel ever be ethical?
- Ethics board delay appears unethical

Recommendations

- Don't accept industry gifts
- City should pay for seminars, travel
- Respect city ordinance
- Council, mayor should report their paid travel from the last 2 years