



Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board



2023 ANNUAL REPORT

Maintaining A Culture of Accountability

Prepared by:
Tasker Levenson-Green

Presented by:
Dwight Floyd



(850) 545-5756
www.talgov.com/Main/ethics.aspx

Our Mission

To promote the actual and perceived integrity of our city government and to prevent unethical conduct before it occurs.



MAINTAINING A CULTURE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Our Core Values

1

Integrity- Adhere to strong moral and ethical principles and values.

2

Honesty- Be transparent and truthful when communicating with others.

3

Commitment- Be dependable, fair, thorough, and objective.

4

Excellence- Hold oneself accountable.

5

Respect- Be courteous to others and treat each person with equal value.

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Board Members

Carlos Rey
Chairman

Kristen Costa
Vice Chair

Ernie Paine
Board Member

Rica Calhoun
Board Member

Patrick Kelly
Board Member

Adam Komisar
Board Member

Executive Staff

Dwight Floyd
Executive Director

Tasker Levenson-Green
Administrative Specialist

John Reid
Board Attorney



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Word from the Chair

Carlos Rey



Throughout the fiscal year, the Independent Ethics Board has worked with the City of Tallahassee to emphasize maintaining a culture of accountability. We want elected City officials and City employees who model the ethical standards and the City of Tallahassee's organizational values, hold themselves accountable, and are willing to hold others accountable. Through the training of elected officials, the annual ethics refresher training for City employees, and additional training for new employees, we delivered this message to every City employee and elected official associated with the City.

The response to the ethics training has been encouraging. Employees and elected officials have expressed their appreciation for training that they say is "relevant and engaging." And they continue to contact our office to ask questions and request advisory opinions.

This year, we began another Campaign Contribution Refund Program promotion leading to the City of Tallahassee election in November 2024. We have received more than half the refund requests than the previous election cycle. By the end of this election cycle, we expect to exceed the number of refund requests from previous years.

We recently replaced two members of the Board. We welcomed Florida A&M's Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer Attorney Rica Calhoun and the Public Defender's Office appointee Attorney Adam Komisar to the Board. We also gave our thanks and goodbyes to Ms. Lucy Atkins for her outstanding years of service to the Board. We welcomed Administrative Specialist Tasker Levenson-Green to the office. With these additions, the Board remains committed to ensuring transparency, accountability, and honesty in City governance.

We thank the staff for their commitment to performing ethically and professionally, following our direction through the strategic plan, and responding to our monthly meetings. We also thank the City of Tallahassee for their financial and technical support and continued cooperation.

As we seek to grow and improve, we face challenges. Our goal is to maintain the integrity of the City government and ensure that the City of Tallahassee upholds the ethical standards in state statute, City policy, the Ethics Code, and the public. Where there may be weaknesses in the structure of our local government, we will seek to make improvements. And where the City of Tallahassee is doing well, we will surely recognize their accomplishments.

Word from the Executive Director Dwight Floyd



When I give briefings to the City's new employees, it goes something like this:

"I know that when you sought employment with the City of Tallahassee, it was to make a living, improve your quality of life, and maybe take care of a family. And up to now, you may not have realized that you are a public servant. There are a lot of resources within the City, and there will be times when you may see an opportunity to use those resources or gifts from outside sources to benefit you. You benefit personally from salaries and benefits, the working relationships you will build over time, and the opportunity for growth. But the City's resources are to benefit the public, and as public servants, you are here for them."

The Tallahassee Ethics Board is here to ensure that corruption does not become a part of the City's organizational culture. In that regard, the City of Tallahassee's elected officials and employees are an extension of the Ethics Board. As public servants, we all have a responsibility to ensure accountability and public trust. We must be willing to model ethical standards, hold ourselves accountable, and report ethics violations when we become aware.

The staff, including myself, Board Attorney John Reid, and Administrative Specialist Tasker Levenson-Green, are committed to maximizing resources and effort to serve the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board and the City of Tallahassee. We are a small staff with a sizeable responsibility. And it is encouraging when City elected officials and employees respond positively to our efforts.

When we began developing the course for the 2023 annual ethics refresher training, we knew that it needed to be relevant and relatable. We called on City employees and staff to serve as subject matter experts. Denise Hart of Human Resources and Workforce Development became the primary editor. Kathleen Wright of Diversity and Inclusion also edited and critiqued the training. We knew what we wanted to emphasize, but it was William Pace in the Inspector General's Office who introduced us to "All the Queen's Horses," a documentary about a corrupt comptroller in a small town, which helped us conceptualize the focal points. Deputy City Attorney Amy Toman and Ethics Board Attorney John Reid conducted legal reviews and provided other feedback. Ashante' Petties from Housing and Resilience and Administrative Specialist Tasker Levenson-Green of our staff gave suggestions, provided critical feedback, and helped develop job-related scenarios. On top of that, staff from the Human Resources and Workforce Development field tested the training before it was delivered.

It is my hope that through the continued collaboration between the City, Ethics Board, and Ethics Board staff, we can work together to maintain a culture of accountability.

About Us

In 2014, the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board was established through a citizen referendum. The City Commission funds the Ethics Board within its discretionary budgetary authority at a level sufficient to discharge the Board's responsibilities. The Board is an independent, appointed Board, whose members are registered City of Tallahassee electors who have appropriate subject matter expertise, none of whom may be an officer or employee of local government. The Board consists of seven volunteers, five of whom are selected individually by the City Commission, Florida A&M University, Florida State University, State Attorney's Office Second Judicial Circuit, and the Public Defender's Office Second Judicial Circuit. In addition, the Board chooses two at large members. According to the Board's bylaws, each member may serve up to two full three-year terms.

The City Charter establishes the Ethics Hotline to receive calls that allege a violation of the ethics code. The Ethics Office receives the complaints, determines if there should be an investigation, and facilitates the process for administrative hearings. The Ethics Office is responsible for conducting extensive ethics training for elected officials and city employees, City Commission appointed advisory committees, commissions, and boards. At the request of City officials and employees, the Ethics Board is authorized to provide written opinions on the application of the ethics code. And the Ethics Office administers the Campaign Contribution Refund Program, which was also established through the referendum.



Maintaining A Culture of Accountability

Meet the Board Members



Carlos Rey
Chairman



Kristen Costa
Vice Chair

CHAIRMAN REY

Carlos Rey is the General Counsel for the Florida Senate. Before becoming general counsel, he served as a Senior Attorney on the Florida Senate Committee on Ethics and Elections. As a Senior Attorney, Mr. Rey drafted and analyzed bills concerning the state ethics code and election laws. Earlier in his career, he served as an Assistant General Counsel for the Florida Department of State, and as an Assistant Attorney General prosecuting Medicaid fraud. He is a 2004 graduate of the Florida State University Law School and a 2012 graduate of their Applied Economics Masters Program.

VICE CHAIR COSTA

Kristen Costa is a Physician Assistant at Southeastern Plastic Surgery in Tallahassee. She is a national trainer for injectables, a faculty member at the Allergan Medical Institute, and Florida State University in the Physician Assistant Program. She worked previously as a Neurosurgery Clinical Coordinator at the Tallahassee Memorial Hospital and the Organ Procurement Coordinator in Gainesville. She has served as the liaison between the American Society of Plastic Surgeons and the American Academy of Physician Assistants, the Secretary for the Florida Academy of Physician Assistants, Treasurer for the Fellowship of Christian Physician Assistants, Youth Leadership Tallahassee Development Steering Committee, and President of Lakeshore Gardens Homeowners Association. She currently serves on several boards, including the Young Actors Theatre, Treasurer for the Association of Plastic Surgery Physician Assistants, Advisory Board Member for Alpha Chi Omega, and the House of Delegates for the American Academy of Physician Assistants. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing from Florida State University and a Masters Degree in Physician Assistant Studies at the University of Florida.

Meet the Board Members



Patrick Kelly
Board Member



Ernie Paine
Board Member

Patrick Kelly

Patrick Kelly manages prevention programs and conducts investigations into controlled substance prescription fraud and diversion for a Fortune 500 pharmaceutical and healthcare organization. He has over 30 years of public service experience, including chief executive law enforcement positions with two different Florida municipalities and the Florida Attorney General's Office. He also served as a long-time member and Chair of the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Criminal Justice Standards and Training Commission. He has his Bachelor's Degree in Criminology from Florida State University, a Master of Science in Management from St. Thomas University, and an Educational & Human Resource Development Doctorate, ABD, from Florida International University. In addition, he has years of law enforcement consulting experience and has trained police and corrections professionals in diversity, cross-cultural communications, conflict resolution, leadership, and ethics. He is also a graduate of the Florida Martin Luther King Jr. Institute for Nonviolence and has taught undergraduate and graduate business and criminal justice courses for the University of Phoenix Online for over 20 years.

Ernie Paine

Ernie Paine retired from the Florida Department of Financial Services in 2017 as a network/systems administrator. He was responsible for drafting Security and Acceptable Use standards for the information technology system. He was the custodian for preserving and providing public records when requested by the public or in response to a subpoena. In addition, he maintained the confidentiality of data protected by HIPAA or under privileged status. Finally, he assisted forensic accountants and attorneys with the use and interpretation of data produced in conjunction with litigation. Since retirement, he has stayed involved with the community by working with the League of Women Voters as well as the Ethics Board.

Meet the Board Members



Adam Komisar
Board Member



Rica Calhoun
Board Member

Adam Komisar

Adam Komisar is an attorney practicing criminal defense and civil litigation with Komisar Spicola, P.A. in Tallahassee. A graduate of Chiles High School, he attended the University of Florida, where he received an undergraduate degree in Business Finance and a Law Degree. After law school, he returned to Tallahassee, where he served as an Assistant State Attorney from 2010-12. He is the current president of the Tallahassee chapter of the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Attorneys and a former Chair of the Florida Bar's local grievance committee.

Rica Calhoun

Rica Calhoun serves as Chief Compliance and Ethics Officer at Florida A&M University. She is responsible for collaborating with University stakeholders throughout the institution to promote ethical decision-making and compliance with the law, regulation, and policy. Prior to her arrival at FAMU, she served as General Counsel, Ethics and Freedom of Information Officer for Western Illinois University (WIU). She also served as a member of the enterprise risk management committee, which identified and analyzed risk and compliance across WIU. She received her Juris Doctor from the College of William and Mary Marshall-Wythe School of Law in Illinois. She graduated from Florida State University with a Master's Degree in International Affairs and received her Bachelor's Degree in Political Science from the University of Central Florida.

Meet the Executive Staff



Dwight Floyd
Director/Ethics Officer



Tasker Levenson-Green
Administrative Specialist

Dwight Floyd

Dwight Floyd joined the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board in February 2020 as the Executive Director and Ethics Officer. Before joining the City of Tallahassee, he served thirty-four years with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE). During his tenure, he directed the training of law enforcement officers, corrections officers, and correctional probation officers statewide. He gave oversight to the development and administration of entry-level testing and state officer certification examinations. He also managed officer discipline cases for administrative hearings. He is native to Tallahassee, where he attended public schools before completing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science with Concentration in Public Administration from Florida A&M University. He is a member of the Council on Governmental Ethics and Laws.

Tasker Levenson-Green

Tasker Levenson-Green joined the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board in February 2023 as the Administrative Specialist II. She is the assistant to the Executive Director and/or Ethics Officer. She helps manage the office, oversees the budget, and organizes Board meetings. She also assists with the development and delivery of ethics training. Before joining the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board, she served fifteen years with the City of Tallahassee Disbursement Services Department as an Accounts Payable Specialist/Purchase Card Administrator. During her tenure, she conducted purchase card training for new cardholders. She gave oversight to all City of Tallahassee purchase card holders. She also managed and updated the purchase card policy and procedure manual and was the liaison between the City purchase cardholders and the bank. She is a native of Quincy, where she attended public schools before completing a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Flagler College.

Meet the Executive Staff



John Reid
Board Attorney

John Reid

John L Reid is an attorney with decades of legal experience and is the founder of the Law Office of John Reid PLLC. His practice encompasses government and administrative law as well as family law, civil litigation, state appeals, and governmental relations. He also serves on the Federal Judicial Nominations Conference, which is tasked with recommending judicial nominees and other federal officials to the President of the United States.

John Reid advises the Board on enforcement responsibilities and training curricula. His work is essential to ensuring that the Board operates in compliance with the mandate provided by the charter and that the training curricula align with the applicable laws, ordinances, and rules. He assists the Ethics Officer in evaluating current administrative procedures, bylaws, and city ordinances. In addition, he reviews complaints for legal sufficiency and probable cause, drafts advisory opinions and final orders, and provides recommendations to the Tallahassee Code of Ethics and the Ethics Board's bylaws and administrative procedures.

Additionally, he serves as the Town Attorney to the Town of Greenville in Madison County, which is the childhood home of music legend Ray Charles. In Greenville, he is responsible for drafting ordinances and advising public officials on all aspects of local government and has rewritten the Town's Charter and revised the Code of Ordinances for the Town.

A graduate of the University of Miami School of Law, he has been a licensed attorney since 2000. He is admitted to practice law in Florida and the District of Columbia and is admitted to the United States Supreme Court, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit, and the U.S. District Courts for the Northern, Middle, and Southern Districts of Florida. John is a founding member of the North Florida Chapter of the American Constitution Society.

Strategic Planning

The Ethics Code was established through a referendum in 2014, creating the Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board, a seven-member body appointed by the City Commission, Florida A&M University, Florida State University, State Prosecutor's Office, Public Defender's Office, and two selected at large by the Board members. Staff for the Ethics Office includes a director/ethics officer and administrative specialist. The Board contracts with a legal advisor.

The Board oversees ethics training for City officials, appointees, employees, and advisory board members. The Board has subpoena power and investigates alleged violations of the Ethics Code. The Board relies on citizens, vendors, City employees, and City officials to report violations of the Ethics Code.

The Board reviews its strategic plan at the end of the fiscal year and updates its priorities and strategies. To preserve continuity, the Board maintains a three-year plan. Accordingly, the Board has established the following priorities.

***** Priorities *****

1. Investigate alleged violations of the Ethics Code and administer a formal process for resolving complaints.
2. Encourage Tallahassee residents, City officials, City employees, advisory board members, and those conducting business with the City, to maintain the highest ethical standards and report any perceived violations.
3. Ensure every City official, City employee, and advisory board or committee member attends ethics training annually and can apply what they learn.
 - * Provide ethics training to newly elected and current City officials, their aides, and City appointees.
 - * Administer a refresher course online for City employees.
 - * Conduct ethics training for new and existing employees.
 - * Provide Advisory opinions concerning the Ethics Code.
4. Make recommendations to the City Commission that strengthen local ordinances governing the conduct of elected and appointed City officials, City employees, vendors, contractors, and lessees.
5. Create an environment that encourages citizens in the community to actively participate in election campaigns, and candidates and City officials prioritize their interests and concerns.

Advisory Opinions

The Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board may issue advisory opinions related to ethics, conflict of interest, and any other topic over which it has jurisdiction. An advisory opinion is an interpretation of the City Charter as it applies to a set of facts provided in writing by the individual requesting the opinion. The purpose of an advisory opinion is to guide public officials and city employees before they engage in activities that may be prohibited.

The Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board issued these opinions during the 2022-2023 fiscal year:

Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts - October 18, 2022

Q: Does a public official violate the Tallahassee Ethics Code ban on solicitation and acceptance of a gift by accepting a free meal paid for by a city vendor during personal time while attending a conference sponsored by a city vendor when the meal in question is not included in the cost of the conference registration?

A: Under the circumstances presented, this question is answered in the affirmative as it applies to the inquirer.

Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts - November 15, 2022

Q: Does a City of Tallahassee employee serving in her or his capacity as a member of a city committee violate the municipal ethics code's ban on the solicitation or acceptance of gifts by seeking and receiving goods on behalf of a local charity?

A: Under the circumstances presented, this question is answered in the negative.

Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts - March 21, 2023

Q: Does a city employee who has been invited to be a presenter at a conference held by a city vendor violate the Tallahassee Ethics Code ban on solicitation and acceptance of a gift by accepting free admission to the conference as well as airfare and lodging to attend the conference?

A: Under the circumstances presented, this question is answered in the negative.

Misuse of Public Position - March 21, 2023

Q: Does a city employee violate the Tallahassee Ethics Code if he or she participates in a promotional video prepared by and for the benefit of a private company that does business with the City of Tallahassee?

A: Under the circumstances presented, this question is answered in the affirmative.

Solicitation or Acceptance of Gifts - September 19, 2023

Q: Does an employee with the Consolidated Dispatch Intergovernmental Agency (hereinafter referred to as "CDA") who is not an employee of the City of Tallahassee, violate the municipal Code of Ethics if he or she consumes food and beverages provided by vendors of the CDA?

A: Under the circumstances presented when the CDA employee is not a city employee, this question is answered in the negative.

Q: Does an employee with the CDA, who is an employee of the City of Tallahassee but is not a "covered individual," violate the municipal Code of Ethics if he or she consumes food and beverages provided by vendors of the CDA?

A: Under the circumstances presented, this question is answered in the negative.

Q: Does an employee with the CDA who is an employee of the City of Tallahassee and a "covered individual" violate the municipal Code of Ethics if he or she consumes food and beverages provided by vendors of the CDA?

A: Under the circumstances presented, this question is answered in the affirmative only if the end or providing the food and beverages is also a vendor with the City of Tallahassee.

Training

New Employee Ethics Training

The Ethics Code requires extensive training of the City of Tallahassee Elected Officials, their aides, and City employees. Each year, the Ethics Board selects a theme. For 2022/2023, the Board selected “Maintaining a Culture of Accountability.” **Newly elected officials** completed an online course to introduce them to the Ethics Code and a four-hour training with other **elected officials and their aides** covering State and local training requirements, and a special session on maintaining a culture of accountability. Over a twelve-month period, The Ethics Office conducted training sessions through classroom instruction and online training for **new employees** and **new member orientation**. One of the highlights was conducting ethics training for over 76 high schoolers during the **Future Leaders Training Academy** summer program. The students learned what it means to uphold ethical standards and be accountable. They also had an opportunity to demonstrate collaboration through an exercise where, in small groups, they created an auto manufacturing company and named, designed, and engineered cars of the future. And they made presentations to the class to share their creations. With the help of City employees serving as subject matter experts, the Ethics Office created an engaging **annual ethics refresher course** for 2023. Over 3,500 City employees completed the web-based training course.

Quotes

“Real-life examples helped a lot. Thought-provoking.”

“Mr. Floyd was very knowledgeable and open to everyone’s opinions”

“Gave insight on different situations at hand and what was the correct way to handle them”

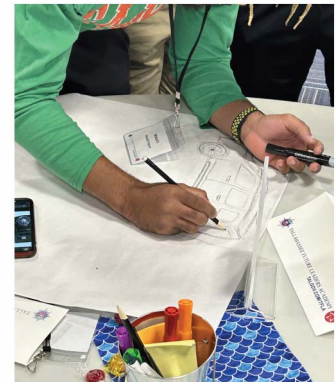
“It was helpful information to help me move forward in my career”



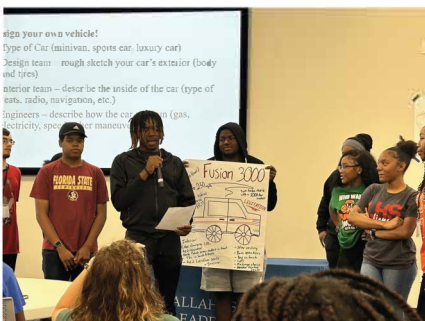
High school students participating in the collaboration project during the Ethics training.



Students collaborating and exploring ideas



Student designing car



Students explaining their group project.



Students explaining their group project.



Students collaborating and exploring ideas

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION REFUND PROGRAM

Under the City Charter, a registered voter of the City of Tallahassee may claim a refund equal to the voter's monetary contributions made in the calendar year to candidates for the City Commission. The maximum refund for an individual is \$25.00. No individual may file more than one claim per election cycle. Two seats are open for election every four years and three years in between.

In 2023, the Leon County Supervisor of Elections dedicated a page on their website to explain the Campaign Contribution Refund Program. The Ethics Office created a brochure explaining the program and distributed copies to the election candidates, members of the Board, and non-governmental organizations. The election candidates were encouraged to take advantage of the program and given a promotional package to assist them. **The Ethics Office also announced the program and distributed copies to local media.**

The election process will culminate in November 2024, and registered voters will have until January 20, 2025, to request a refund.

CONTACT US

The Ethics Office of the City of Tallahassee is working to connect residents with the refund program and City Commission candidates. For more information, go to www.talgov/Main/ethics.

Your participation matters!

850-545-5756
ethics@talgov.com
300 S Adams St., Box A-25, Tallahassee, FL 32301

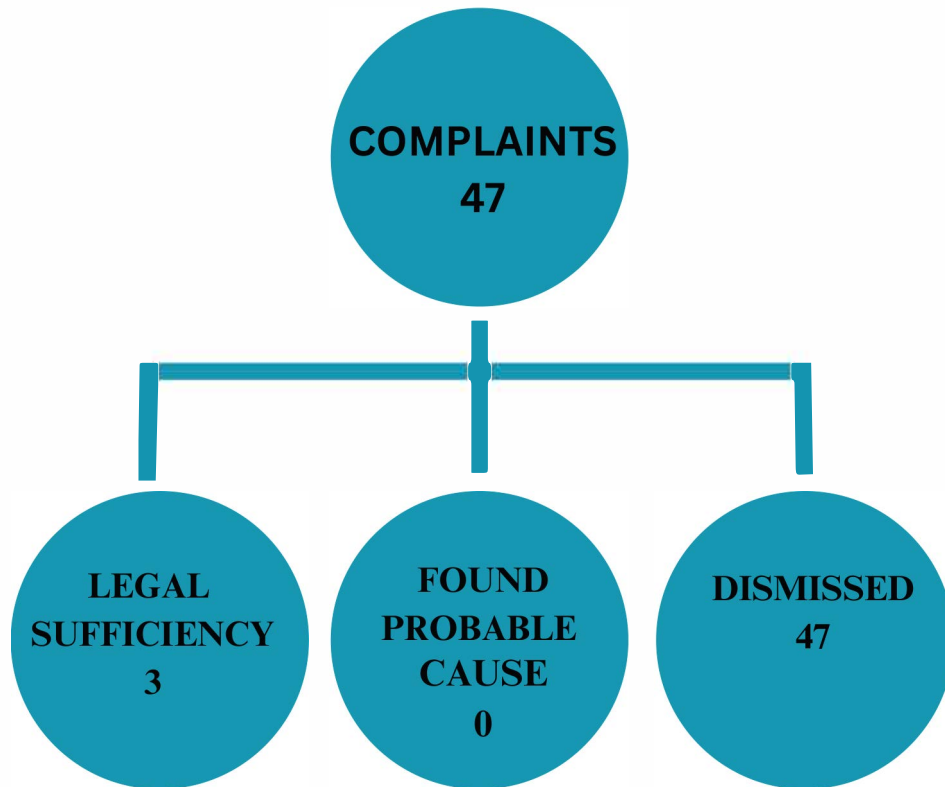
TALLAHASSEE INDEPENDENT ETHICS BOARD
EST. 2014

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION REFUND PROGRAM

www.talgov/Main/ethics

Complaints

The ethics officer receives complaints, investigates the allegations, and facilitates the process for administrative hearings. The majority of the complaints dismissed occur when the Ethics Office first receives the complaint and determines whether it is a potential violation of the Ethics Code. At that time the ethics officer may refer the complainant to other sources.



Methods Complaints Received

PHONE	HOTLINE	EMAIL	USPS
9	29	5	1

HAND
DELIVERED
3

*YOU MAY REMAIN
ANONYMOUS!*

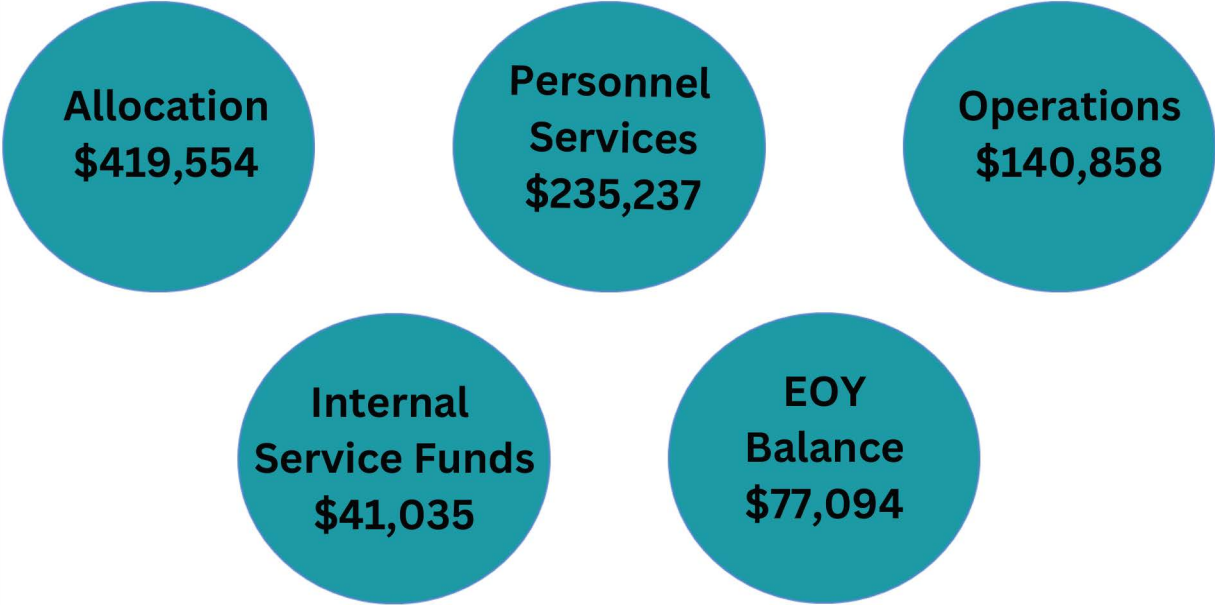
REFERRALS
13

Budget Review

Sec. 62. - Ethics Office Established.

The ethics code established pursuant to Section 61 shall provide for the establishment of a citywide Ethics Office under the exclusive jurisdiction of and reporting to the Independent Ethics Board to discharge the duties and responsibilities of the Ethics Board as provided herein. The Ethics Office shall include an Ethics Officer/Director who may be a full time or part time city employee or independent contractor. The Ethics Office shall be funded by the City Commission within its discretionary budgetary authority at a level sufficient to discharge the Office's responsibilities.

The Board remains fiscally sound. We were able to support staff attendance at two ethics conferences, and an ethics training seminar. The staff was also able to replace damaged furniture and malfunctioning office computers.



Resources

Sworn Complaint Form

<https://www.talgov.com/uploads/public/documents/ethics/eb-complaint-form.pdf>

Campaign Contribution Refund Program

<https://www.talgov.com/Main/ethics>

Ethics Code Municipal Ordinances

[https://library.municode.com/fl/tallahassee/codes/code_of_ordinances?](https://library.municode.com/fl/tallahassee/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOGEOR_CH2AD_ARTIINGE_DIV3ETCO)

[nodeId=PTIICOGEOR_CH2AD_ARTIINGE_DIV3ETCO](https://library.municode.com/fl/tallahassee/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOGEOR_CH2AD_ARTIINGE_DIV3ETCO)



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Website

www.talgov.com/Main/ethics.aspx



TALLAHASSEE INDEPENDENT ETHICS BOARD

*Maintaining a Culture of
Accountability*



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