

Leadership Ethics in Local Government

VLGMA

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An Opening Case

The Use of Public Funds

“It’s For A Good Cause”

Habitat For Humanity is eligible under existing ordinance to receive, upon request, a waiver of water and connection fees for new development on previously undeveloped property. Habitat recently initiated a new build and paid connection fees in order to meet a self-imposed deadline. The organization now realizes that if it uses charitable contributions to cover the \$3,100.00 worth of fees, it will have to account for that value in the cost basis of the home and pass the cost on to the homeowner. This results in an increase in mortgage costs of \$15.00 per month. In order to avoid this extra cost for the homebuyer, Habitat has now requested a refund of the fees which it will not enter into its books as a charitable contribution. The City Attorney indicates that a refund, which is not contemplated in the City Code must be considered a gift to the non-profit and requires a super majority of Council for approval. Should Council approve this request?



Introduction to Leadership Ethics

Ethics in Supervision

“When Can I Squeal?”

As a member of the Senior Management Team, you are aware that budgetary limitations are likely to require reductions in staffing on certain units. You have been asked to keep this information confidential, because the specific decisions as to how the cuts will be made have not yet been finalized. One of your direct supervisees is in the process of buying a new home and has expressed his excitement at finally having a stable enough job to make home ownership possible. Should you warn the employee of the upcoming cuts and recommend that he wait on buying the house until after his position is secure?

Moral Management

“Being Nice Vs. Being Ethical”

Supererogation

Moral Management

“Identify the Default Assumptions”

Background Obligations

Moral Management

“The Source of Obligation”

What Is Your Role?

Moral Management

“The Source of Obligation II”

What Are Your Relationships?

Moral Management

“How Relationships Work”

Tacit Expectations

Explicit Promises

Moral Management

“What Ethical Leaders Do”

- Identify Default Obligations
- Recognize Distinct Obligations Across Individuals, Disciplines and Departments
- Prioritize Conflicting Obligations
 - Support Valid Processes

Identifying The Core Issue

Confidentiality vs. Boundaries

While discussions around the opening case generally begin with concerns of confidentiality, the core ethical issue is not actually one of privacy. The primary ethical issue in this case is one of boundaries and potential dual relationships.

Leaking vs.
Whistle Blowing

Public Service Ethics

“Someone Has To Blow The Whistle”

While staff member F, who works for the Department of Parks and Recreation, was recently inspecting a walking trail for possible improvement, she noticed a deep ditch along the side of the trail out of which a large amount of garbage seemed to emanating. Upon further study, it became clear that Ms. F had discovered the edge of an old landfill that had been closed decades earlier. The ground was now eroding and leachate was spilling out toward the hiking trail. Ms. F reported the matter to her superior, who brought it to the attention of the Department of Public Works. That department quickly sent a crew in to cover the eroded boundary of the landfill with dirt. Ms. F is concerned, however, that children playing in the neighborhood center that is now adjacent to the old landfill site could be exposed to harmful substances. She is told to keep her mouth shut, however, since the landfill was closed before environmental regulations required ongoing monitoring and remediation of the site could cost millions of dollars if anyone makes a fuss. Ms. F is now considering leaking the story to the press. How should she proceed?



The Structure of Ethical Argument

The Process of Moral Reasoning

The Default Assumption

The Burden of Proof

Casuistic Exploration

Application to the Current Case

The Ethics of Whistleblowing

Satisfaction of the Burden of Proof

Actual Misconduct

Verification of Facts

Failure of the Chain of Command

(Last Resort)

Least Destructive Path of Correction

