

Ethics Matter!

7 Tips for '17

Lon Pluckhahn, ICMA Committee on Professional Conduct

ICMA Code of Ethics

- Integrity
- Commitment
- Professional Respect
- Competency
- Equity and Fairness
- Trust and Honor
- Political Neutrality

ethical tone & behavior



transparency



engagement



performance



accountability



Public trust

Morningstar 2015 CEO Award



“Chief executive who exhibits **commendable corporate stewardship**, demonstrates independent thinking, creates lasting value for shareholders, and puts his or her stamp on an industry.

Fall from grace



Wells Fargo's CEO Forfeited \$41 Million in Unsuccessful Fight to Keep his Job

Wells Fargo created as many as 2 million fake bank and credit card accounts between 2011 and 2015.

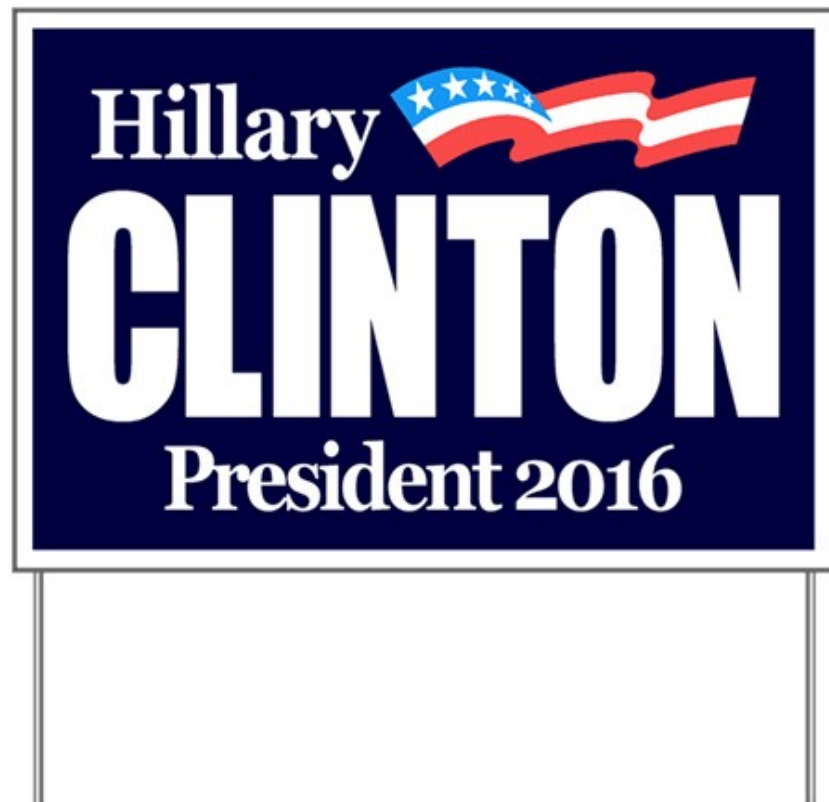
The tone is set at the top

“**Credibility**, which you get by being **honest** about things, is the most important asset we have going as managers.

If you lose it, your effectiveness is gone – no matter how smart you are!”

Mike Walker
City Manager (retired)
Brentwood, TN

What was in your yard?



David Uhl running for sheriff



Veteran law enforcement officer and Dundee Village Manager David W. Uhl is running for Monroe County sheriff.

Can you be appointed to fill an unexpired term?



City Manager
City Of Clay

Primary



What else will be on your ballot? [Click on the Ballot](#) [Click on the Sample Ballot](#) [Click on the](#)

**[Hide] Jefferson County Schools,
Place 1 Republican Primary Election, 6-Year
Term, 2016**

<u>Donna Pike</u>	40.92%	12,931
Ronnie Dixon	34.87%	11,021
<u>Samuel Staggs</u>	24.21%	7,651
Total Votes		31,603

Source: [WBRC, "Alabama Election Results,"](#)
[accessed March 1, 2016](#)

Political neutrality (Tenet 7)

For candidates running for public office, don't

- Sign petitions
- Endorse
- Donate to the campaign
- Donate to entity that supports
- Be one!
 - Start an exploratory committee?

New guideline

Personal Advocacy of Issues

Members share with their fellow citizens the right and responsibility to voice their opinion on public issues. Members may advocate for issues of personal interest only when doing so does not conflict with the performance of their official duties.



City funded housing authority

- You serve as Executive Director appointed by the city
- Housing authority offers a loan program
 - You meet the lending criteria
 - All city employees are eligible

Outline the steps you should take in order to make applying ethical?

Ask yourself...

- Am I taking some official action, directing an employee, or using a city resource to do anything that involves my spouse, child, parent, friend, or sibling?
- Do I have a personal connection to a work issue?
- Will I gain from an official decision?

Priceline CEO loses job over personal relationship with employee



ICMA City Manager

Is living with his assistant

- Got permission to date
- Relationship doesn't violate state law (no city policy on this)
- Pay increases were approved by city council
- No evidence that staff object

Is this an ethics violation?



New proposed Tenet 3

“Demonstrate by word and action the highest standards of ethical conduct and integrity in all public, professional, and personal relationships in order that the member may merit the trust and respect of the elected and appointed officials, employees, and the public.”

Tenet 4

“Recognize that the chief function of local government at all times is to serve the best interests of all of the people.”

The Tenure “Rule”

- Professional tenure is 2 years
 - Short tenures should be the exception
 - Do your homework
 - Special exceptions, i.e. totally unusual and unpredictable
 - **Applies to all members working in local government**

"Grow a pair Lester"

"I wasn't planning to Twittercide my career. As you can imagine, I threw a giant pity party for myself yesterday."

Colleen Reinke, the now ex-PIO, North Dakota Department of Health.

Censured for...

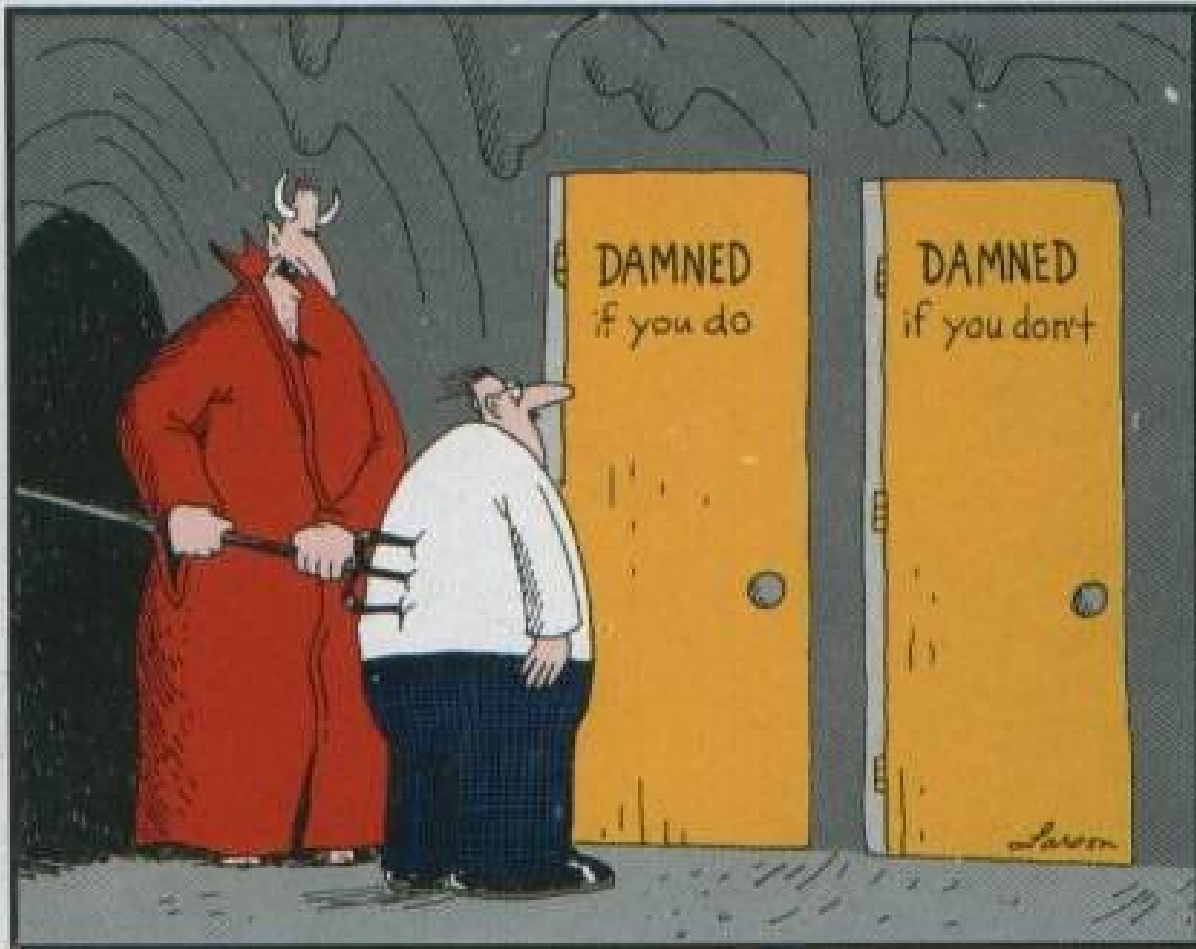
- Dui...interfering with the process
- Took a position with a school district but didn't show; accepted a preferred city administrator position
- Someday, just in case
 - Negotiated an employment agreement while the position was still occupied

Censured for...

- Manager reimbursed for \$366k supplies, personal items, equipment, travel and meals that appeared unrelated to duties
- Manager directed staff to provide her with benefits that were in violation of county policy; lied to her board

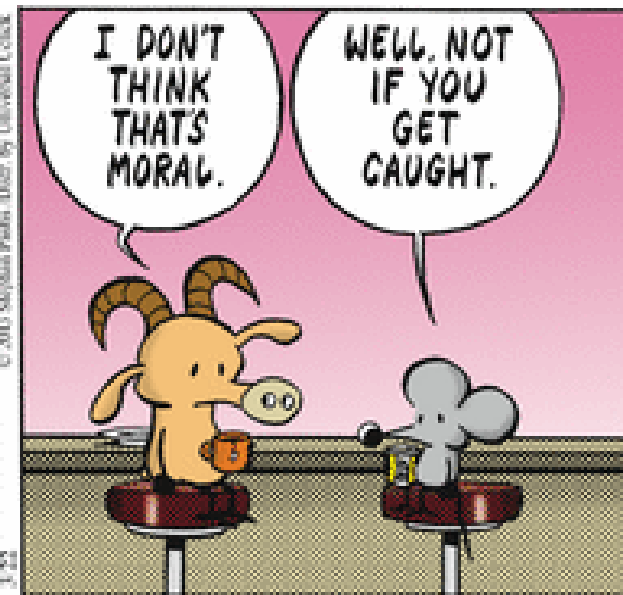
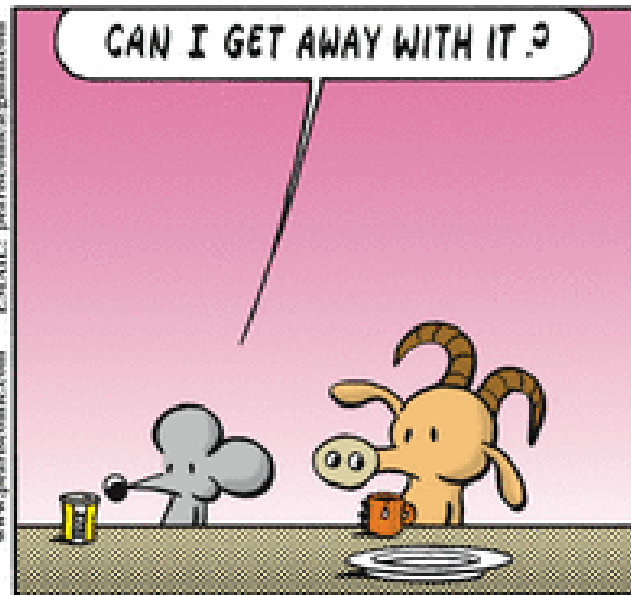
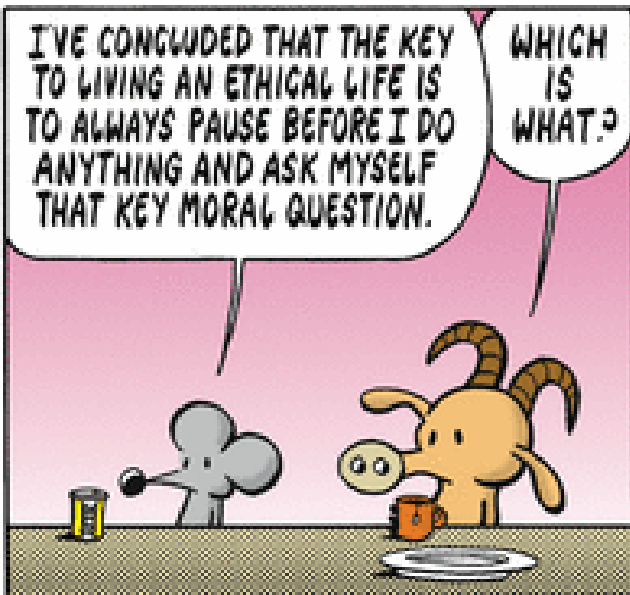
Censured for...

- Said yes and bailed after signing employment agreement
- **Verrrry short tenure (3 months)**
- Smell test violations
 - Too close for comfort with a subordinate employee
 - Made broad assertions not backed with facts



"C'mon, c'mon — it's either one or the other."

Secrecy is a 5 second head start...



Ask before you act

- Sound legal advice is a starting not ending point
- Coach, mentor, trainer, BFF
- ICMA
 - Confidential advice
 - Talking about an ethics mistake doesn't trigger a review
 - In an ethics hole? Strategy to extricate you!

7 tips for 2017

1. The tone is set at the top
2. Big “P” versus little “p” politics
3. Intersections of personal and work
4. Professional commitments
5. Appearances matter
6. Stand your ethical ground
7. Ask before you act

Ask Yourself



- It's legal! But is it ethical?
- What would Google or worse, my Mom have to say?
- Are you being candid or just answering the question asked?
- Will you think well of yourself when you look back on this decision in ten years?
- Is it keeping you up at night?
- **If you have to think twice about it, don't do it?**

The Last Word



There is only one way to achieve happiness on this terrestrial ball,

And that is to have either a clear conscience or none at all.

Ogden Nash