

Thomas P. Gordon
County Executive



David Grimaldi
Chief Administrative Officer

County Executive Gordon Proposes Sweeping New Ethics Reform

NEW CASTLE, February 25, 2013 - County Executive Thomas P. Gordon is introducing a comprehensive ethics reform package aimed at restoring public trust through enhanced public disclosure, tightened internal controls and increased oversight of our land use process.

Executive Gordon worked closely with County Chief Administrative Officer David Grimaldi, Councilman Bob Weiner (R) and Council President Chris Bullock (D) in drafting this bipartisan proposal that will offer unprecedented transparency through online public disclosure of all vendor agreements, employee salaries and FOIA requests. This information will be posted on our newly created webpage, www.nccde.org/open, which already contains 2013 contract data. "I am pleased to collaborate in this bipartisan initiative to foster good government and transparency in County government" said Councilman Weiner.

This proposal will promote fairness through our procurement process by requiring new vendors to disclose, on the bidding documents, campaign contributions made to County Officials within the previous 24 months. It will require legislators to disclose the authors, in whole or in part, of proposed legislation. The County Executive firmly believes that the public has a right to know which, if any, special interest group took part in the advancement of legislation.

"The goal of this ethics reform package is to restore public confidence in certain aspects of County government," said Council President Bullock. "The proposals in this reform package are ambitious and achievable through bipartisan cooperation and through cooperation between the Council and the Administration. I am also particularly interested in promoting fairness in our procurement process for minority vendors."

The annual Statements of Financial Interests (SFI) filing will be expanded, clarified and made publicly available, on the County website, for all who are required to file.

Similar to the banking sector, the Department of Land use will be placed under the oversight of a Compliance Manager, who will be tasked with monitoring the communications of Land Use employees while ensuring compliance with State and County code. Further, this proposal seeks to expand and reorganize the Office of the County Auditor by raising the number of auditors from one to three full time employees and changing its reporting structure to include both the Executive and Legislative branches of government. The new audit department will play a crucial role in creating and maintaining proper internal controls throughout the other operating departments.

This proposal requires a mandatory 4-hour ethics training class for all managers, prohibits employees from conducting County business through personal cell phones and email addresses, and explicitly disallows secret agreements between the government and private enterprises. "An open and democratic form of government does not engage in secret agreements. It does not operate, from within the shadows, to advance the economic interests of the few at the peril of the many" said Executive Gordon.

Proposal Highlights

1. Enhanced Disclosure:

- Disclosure of outside business interests held by the filer or immediate family(spouse & children)
- Disclosure of all private sources of income in excess of \$1,000
- Disclose all fiduciary positions, or positions of trust, held whether compensated or uncompensated
- County Vendor Ethics Disclosure Statement – New vendors will be required to disclose campaign contributions made to County Officials within the previous 24 months.
- Disclose the author, in whole or in part, of proposed legislation
- Disclosure of real property in which an interest was held in New Castle County by filer, their spouse and immediate family
- Disclosure of family members employed by New Castle County

2. Operational Changes

- Disallow secret agreements with private enterprises
- Prohibit the use of personal email while conducting County business
- Prohibit employee use of personal cell phones while conducting County business within the Department of Land Use
- Disallow 'free meals': Although it is a common business practice to take clients to lunch or dinner, or to allow them to take you, this is not acceptable for public employees.
- Impose fines for ethics violations and allow wage garnishments for those who fail to pay.
- Offer reward to those who report fraud, waste or abuse.
- Mandatory 4 hour ethics training for County Officials and department heads.

3. Increased Oversight:

- Land Use Compliance Manager- This newly created position will be tasked with monitoring the communications of land use employees and ensuring compliance with State and County code.

- County Auditor - Expand from one to three full time auditors. Reorganize department to have dual reporting requirement (Both Executive & Legislative branches)
- Add County Attorney and legal aide positions to County Council to reduce the potential need to seek advice of outside council.

4. Open Government:

- Make Statement of Financial Interest (SFI) publicly available online for all who are required to file
- Post all external contract info (vendor, amount, description of services) online
- Post position and salary info for all County employees online
- Post all FOIA requested documents online