



BOARD OF ETHICS  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Today, the Board of Ethics is publishing settlement agreements in two important recent ethics cases.

The first involves the Honorable Howard Brookins, Alderman of the 21<sup>st</sup> Ward, who was investigated by the former Office of the Legislative Inspector General. Following that investigation, the Board dismissed all allegations except one, involving timesheets for aldermanic staff. It found probable cause to conclude that the Alderman violated the provision in the Governmental Ethics Ordinance requiring aldermen to keep, have certified, and make available to the public timesheets for their personal staff. This single allegation proceeded to a merits hearing before an administrative law judge after the Alderman declined to settle the matter. After the hearing, the Board received the administrative law judge's report and recommendations. The Alderman then agreed to settle the matter for a \$5,000 fine (the maximum fine for this violation). In the settlement agreement, the Board makes clear that the Governmental Ethics Ordinance requires aldermen to keep, have certified, and make available for public inspection time records for their staff, and that, while an alderman may delegate that function to a Chief of Staff or other individual, any failure to keep, have certified, or make such records publicly available is the alderman's responsibility. See Case No. 13039.OLIG.

The second involves a former department head, Evelyn Diaz. She interviewed with an organization for post-City employment during the time the organization had numerous contracts, grants, and modifications and renewals pending before her City department, and signed these during the job negotiation period, but did not recuse from or delegate these actions. The Board discovered this in the course of preparing a formal advisory opinion she requested addressing her post-City employment/revolving door restrictions, which she request after she had accepted the position. The Board concluded that there was an apparent violation of the Ordinance provision prohibiting City employees or officials from negotiating future employment with persons with City matters pending before them. The Board advised her of the provision in the Governmental Ethics Ordinance providing for self-reporting of past violations to the Office of Inspector General ("OIG"). After she self-reported, as advised, the OIG investigated, and confirmed the Board's conclusion that there was a past violation. After finding probable cause to conclude that she violated the Ordinance, the Board

settled the matter for a \$1,500 fine. This case underscores the importance of seeking timely, confidential advice from the Board of Ethics – **before** taking actions like negotiating post-City employment with firms having matters pending before one’s City department – **and** the importance of ethics training, as this topic was covered in mandatory ethics training the very year before these actions were taken. The purpose of ethics training is to raise awareness of and sensitivity to potential ethics problems, and encourage City government personnel to seek confidential guidance to avoid these problems **before** taking action. See Case No. 17023.IG.

These agreements are posted on the Board’s settlement agreement page:  
<https://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/ethics/provdrs/reg/svcs/SettlementAgreements.html>