

**CITY OF TALLAHASSEE
INDEPENDENT ETHICS BOARD**

AO 2026-01 – February 17, 2026

**SOLICITATION OR ACCEPTANCE OF GIFTS
ORD. NO.: 2-15**

To: Name withheld at person's request.

SUMMARY:

An employee may use properly authorized City funds to purchase a commemorative plaque for a retiring consultant as a gesture of appreciation. The Tallahassee Ethics Code restricts certain employees from accepting or soliciting gifts from vendors or lobbyists, but it does not prohibit the City or its employees from providing an officially authorized token of appreciation as a gift to a vendor or consultant.

QUESTION:

Does the Tallahassee Ethics Code prohibit an employee, acting with supervisory approval and in accordance with City purchasing rules, from using City funds to purchase a plaque for a longtime consultant upon the consultant's retirement, recognizing his or her years of service to the City of Tallahassee?

This question is answered in the negative.

The inquirer is a program coordinator for a department within the City. In that capacity, the inquirer's office maintained a longstanding professional relationship with a consultant operating through his Florida corporation as an independent contractor. The consultant provided employee training services to the City of Tallahassee over a number of years. The corporation is a registered City vendor. The consultant recently announced his retirement, and the inquirer's office wishes to recognize his or her years of service by presenting a commemorative plaque.

The inquirer seeks guidance on whether the Tallahassee Ethics Code prohibits his or her office from presenting a gift to an individual affiliated with a City vendor. The relevant ordinance provides as follows:

No covered individual shall knowingly, directly or indirectly, accept or solicit a gift of any value from any person or business entity that the recipient knows, or should know with the exercise of reasonable care, is a vendor, lessee of city property, lobbyist or any principal or employer of a lobbyist who lobbies, sells or leases to the city, or from any potential vendor or lessee that is currently engaged in procurement or negotiations with the city or a bid protest.

§ 2-15(a), TALLAHASSEE, FLA., CODE OF ORDINANCES (2026).

By its plain language, the ordinance governs the acceptance or solicitation of gifts by covered City employees or officials from vendors and other prohibited sources. It does not prohibit the City, or City employees acting in an official capacity, from providing an officially authorized gift as a token of appreciation to a vendor or consultant. Accordingly, the proposed action does not fall within the scope of the gift prohibition set forth in the Tallahassee Ethics Code.

This advisory opinion is limited to its interpretation of the Tallahassee Ethics Code and does not address separate requirements related to City purchasing policies, procurement rules, or the authorization of municipal expenditures. The inquirer is encouraged to consult with the Office of the City Attorney regarding compliance with those requirements.

CONCLUSION:

In sum, the inquirer may, consistent with the Tallahassee Ethics Code, use properly authorized City funds to purchase and present a commemorative plaque recognizing a retiring consultant as a gesture of appreciation.

ORDERED by the City of Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board meeting in public session on February 17, 2026, and **RENDERED** this 17th day of February 2026.

APPROVED:



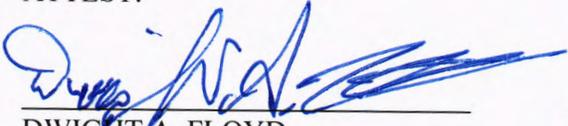
PATRICK KELLY, Chair
Tallahassee Independent Ethics Board

APPROVED AS TO FORM:



JOHN LAURANCE REID
Board Counsel

ATTEST:



DWIGHT A. FLOYD
Independent Ethics Officer