

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Dr. Susan Spice

**From:** Bree Robinson

**Date:** April 28, 2019

**RE:** Ethics Reflection & Decision Tree

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### **My View:**

I believe that leadership skills and strong ethics go hand in hand, especially when working in the public sector. While public officials are held to a higher standard, they are just normal people who have made the choice to make a difference and work for the greater good of those around them. I believe that the public looks to public service workers as an example to follow. There are always ethical dilemmas to face in life, but when you enter the world of public service you're taking on an ethical responsibility to serve the public honestly and unbiasedly.

As a future public service worker, I believe that I could have the best leadership skills around, but if I'm not leading ethically then it is a waste and I would be doing a disservice to my community and the citizens that I serve. Jody Williams, a political activist, is quoted saying, "For me, the difference between an 'ordinary' and an 'extraordinary' person is not the title that person might have, but what they do to make the world a better place for us all." (Williams, 2006) I want my work and ethical values to outshine any title in public service that I ever possess. I want to make the world a better place. By her definition, I want to be extraordinary.

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### **This I Believe:**

- **Part I – *Why are ethics critical to public service?***

Public service workers are serving citizens. While I believe that everyone should make ethical decisions, public service workers should be held to a higher standard. As a worker in the public service field, you are serving something much bigger than yourself. You are serving everyone around you. Public officials are trusted to make ethical decisions that respect and take all citizens into account. I believe there is no place for personal bias or misrepresentation in public service.

Public service officials should serve as an example to the others around them. Through ethical leadership, they can build trust among their coworkers and citizens. I believe that a huge role of public service is building trust among your community! I do not believe that true trust can be built on unethical or immoral values. Ethical values are critical to public service because they create trust and ensure that all citizens are

treated with respect and fairness! “Once you have developed an ethical mind, you become more like an impartial spectator of the team, the organization, the citizenry, the world.” (Fryer, 2007) Public service workers have a large responsibility to be ethical, which can come with making sacrifices and hard decisions. It’s critical to keep ethics a priority in the world of public service.

- **Part II – *What ethical values are critical to me? What do I believe in as it relates to ethics in my profession?***

One of the most important, and challenging, ethical values that I prioritize in my life is being courageous. Sometimes it can be hard to make the right decision, and it takes courage to stand up for what is right. While values such as integrity and fairness are also extremely important to me, they are useless without the courage to stand up and make the right decision. Ethical decisions are not always the easy choice. I believe that ethical decisions and actions coincide and need to be consistent over time.

In my future profession as a public servant, I will more than likely be placed in some ethical dilemmas. I will have to make choices, while keeping the public that I am serving a priority. I’ve been in situations where making the ethical decision costs me time, money, and friendships. It can be tempting to overlook certain details to avoid unpleasantness. However, in my professional career I will need to stick to my ethical values and stay consistent in following them. “Ethical leadership is part – although by no means all – of the definition of good leadership. Being an ethical leader is a full-time job – it isn’t something you can put on and off at will. You either are or you aren’t, and if you are, you have to try to be one all the time.” (Rabinowitz, N.D.) Ultimately, I believe that the best ethical leaders are courageous and consistent. As a public servant, I will be faced with ethical decisions to be made. It is my goal and responsibility to maintain strong ethical values for myself throughout my career, as well as adapt to any changes that may arise.

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### **This I Will Do:**

- **Part I – *How will I treat others in a way that contributes to a respectful and inclusive workplace? How will I serve my clients/customers citizens?***

In order to make sure I am treating others with the utmost respect and be as inclusive as possible, I will make sure that I follow all policies and procedures set forth by my organization. I will be attentive to any cultural differences and be aware of my own cultural influence, as well. By focusing on acknowledging and embracing any diversity in my workplace, I will empower others around me. I will treat others with respect and act accordingly in all workplace interactions, whether that be with coworkers or citizens. By being aware of my own biases, I will be able to take my

personal opinion out of the picture and assess ethical situations. When speaking to me, citizens will know that their voice is being heard.

I will keep my passion for public service alive by reminding myself that I am lucky to be in a position where I am able to serve others. I will serve my citizens happily, respectfully, and impartially. To protect my citizens, as well as myself, I will keep detailed documentation of all interactions and communications. Kristin Reeder, the Human Resources Director for the City of Auburn, spoke to our class about how important it is to know that a leader is not defined by their title, but in how they listen to others. I will listen and serve as a voice for my citizens and diagnose issues from all standpoints, before making any final decisions.

- **Part II – *How will I incorporate my professional code of conduct?***

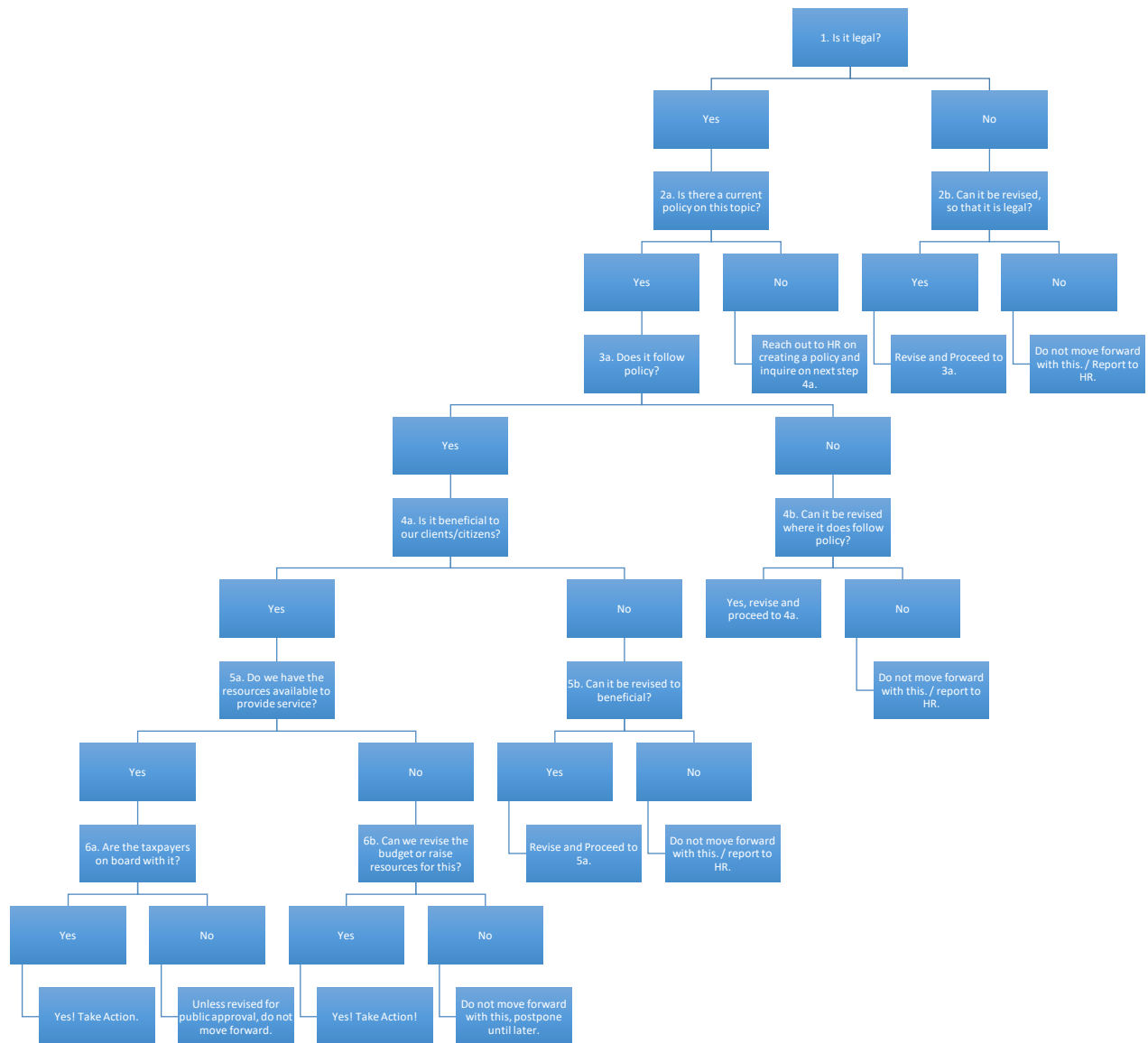
I consider myself to be a fairly tolerant person. As a public service worker, I will need to practice tolerance in my profession, but I cannot assume or expect my citizens to uphold that same tolerance. My personal code of conduct in my professional life will be to treat others how I would want to be treated, and then even better. I can achieve this by following policy when applicable, and making ethical decisions at every possible opportunity. My professional code of conduct will involve: upholding the law, upholding any existing policies within my organization, keeping the public interest as a priority, and always keeping accurate records. “Ethical leadership doesn’t end, and neither should your effort to continue to explore and practice ethical leadership.” (Rabinowitz, N.D.) While I can incorporate my professional code of conduct every day, improving and reexamining my ethics is a lifetime long commitment.

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### **Decision Tree:**

When presented with an issue, I will follow the decision tree I have created below. It will give me some general guidelines and questions to ask myself if, and when, I find myself in an ethical dilemma! It can be easy to get caught up in the details of an issue, so it can sometimes be helpful to step back and ask yourself some big questions. I formulated this tree with the question, “Should we provide this service?” in mind, however I have developed it so that I will be able to use it in many different workplace scenarios. Ultimately, I will use this decision tree to help make ethical decisions while keeping the citizens in mind, but I cannot be afraid to reach out to the Human Resources Department in times of doubt!

\* I have also submitted my decision tree as a PDF, as the text gets pretty small towards the end of the tree. \*



## References:

Fryer, B. (2007, March). The Ethical Mind. Retrieved from <https://hbr.org/2007/03/the-ethical-mind>

(Posted Reading 20)

Rabinowitz, P. (n.d.). Section 8. Ethical Leadership. Retrieved from <https://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/leadership/leadership-ideas/ethical-leadership/main> (Posted Reading 12)

Williams, J. (2006, January 09). When Ordinary People Achieve Extraordinary Things. Retrieved from <https://thisibelieve.org/essay/7/>