

# THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

MARCH 2025

Editor: Rob Casimir

## AN ETHICAL DISPUTE

The Conflicts of Interest Board has been very happy to welcome our newest hire: an ethics trainer named *Dovregubben*, who — yes, keen-eyed reader — *is*, in fact, the legendary Troll King of Nordic legend. And that’s fine.

I wasn’t on the hiring committee, but apparently sitting under a bridge outside Oslo for a few centuries peppering serfs with increasingly cryptic riddles counts as “client-focused” experience. He’s claiming *thirteen centuries* of “professional communications work” — but again: I wasn’t on the hiring committee, so it’s not my problem.

What *is* my problem is now I share an office with Dovregubben! And his training philosophy is *entirely* different from my own! I’ve long held that the best way to communicate about a public servant’s [obligations under Chapter 68](#) was [live instruction](#) deployed and tailored to each agency’s real-life scenarios and needs. Also: [silly videos](#) and [social media](#) campaigns. Dovregubben, of course, prefers riddles. And eating three dozen hard-boiled eggs for lunch every single day. I find both offensive.

Look, there’s only one way to solve this difference in opinion: an experiment. Below are seven of the troll’s riddles. To me, they just look like a bunch of gibberish. But apparently **every answer is a prohibition of Chapter 68 and can be found in this [Frequently Asked Questions](#) page on the COIB website.** If someone especially impressive — like last month’s Puzzler winner, **Valerie Wald (DOE)** — is able to **correctly glean the prohibition each riddle is alluding to**, I will concede the point to Dovregubben, admit the pedagogical and ethical value of riddles, and induct another winner into the esteemed *Jonathan Hoffman + Peter Kontogiannis Hall of Ethics and Excellence*. It’s that simple! As always, send your answers to [Contest@coib.nyc.gov](mailto:Contest@coib.nyc.gov) by March 31st for your chance to win. Good luck!



“Piles of silver or duty might tempt one’s soul,  
To claim a throne above their station.  
But trolls who try to buy such a role,  
Find ruin, not coronation.”  
**Prohibition? \_\_\_\_\_**

# THE PUBLIC SERVICE PUZZLER

MARCH 2025

Editor: Rob Casimir

“Should a shiny trinket jingle into your hand,  
Though troll eyes gleam, be wary of cheer.  
Past fifty gold coins, the gift is banned,  
Lest mischief lurk in the bounty so dear.”

**Prohibition?** \_\_\_\_\_

“A charitable cause might tug your beard,  
Urging your troll heart to help for free.  
Yet if your city realm’s involved or feared,  
Best ask permission, before roaming with glee.”

**Prohibition?** \_\_\_\_\_

“If a glittering offer at your gate should stand,  
While you handle deals with that very band,  
Tread careful, dear friend, across the land,  
Lest your job-hunt weave an illicit strand.”

**Prohibition?** \_\_\_\_\_

“By moon’s pale glow, you toil at another hearth,  
Perhaps forging wares or spinning yarn.  
But if that shop haggles and crosses city folk’s path,  
One requires a certain, waiver-y charm.”

**Prohibition?** \_\_\_\_\_

“On troll bridges, we work from dawn’s first light,  
never tinkering with side tasks for our own delight.  
For if we filch quills or parchment in private flight,  
the Knights of Ethics will take quite a bite.”

**Prohibition?** \_\_\_\_\_

“Forgotten scrolls in a cave of lore,  
Whisper secrets you gleaned as a city troll.  
Guard them well beyond your final chore,  
Or run afoul of watchers on patrol.”

**Prohibition?** \_\_\_\_\_

Remember: every correct answer is a bullet point on the Conflicts of Interest Board’s [Frequently Asked Questions](#) list.

# NYC CONFLICTS OF INTEREST BOARD

## **THE JONATHAN HOFFMAN + PETER KONTOGIANNIS**

### **HALL OF ETHICS AND EXCELLENCE**

**LUKE SZABADOS – BUILDINGS**

**AMY HOM – DFTA**

**ELISABETH TOPALTZAS – DORIS**

**CHRISTOPHER LYNCH – LAW DEPT**

**HUNTER IGOE – LAW DEPT**

**HEATHER MURAKAMI – HONOLULU ETHICS COMMISSION**

**MELISSA HESTER – ACS**

**MARY LANE – FINANCE**

**KATIE MILLER – TIC**

**EVA GAMBINO – FINANCE**

**TOBY SINGER – DEP**

**ROBERT ROLANDI – FINANCE**

**JAMES TOBACK – OCME**

**FLORENCE MALLETTE – FINANCE**

**SHAWNORA GULLEY – BUILDINGS**

**MELINDA GALDERON – OCME**

**IVAN SANTIAGO – DSS**

**WILLIAM FLETCHER – NYPD**

**STYLIANI KARPADAKIS – OCME**

**BERNARD BRAUN – LAW DEPT**

**NIGEL G.O. MANUEL – BUILDINGS**

**MICHELE SIMENSKY – LAW DEPT**

**NANCY SULTAN-LORMIL – BUILDINGS**

**SHIVAJEET CHAKRABORTY – TIC**

**CHARLOTTE YIH – COMPTROLLER**

**JONATHAN HOFFMAN – DEP**

**MICHAEL GREENE – DSS**

**GARFIELD S. SCARDER – SCA**

**SARAH ROBERSON – PARKS**

**KIMFA CARRINGTON – DOT**

**VINCENT RIVELLESE – BRONX DA**

**YVONNE CHOW – DSNY**

**SIMONE KING – DOT**

**ALEXANDER YELLEN – NYCHA**

**LISA BRANDQUIST – FDNY**

**KELIAN STANNER – PARKS**

**PUI CHING – SBS**

**SANDRA COLLYMORE – FINANCE**

**JAMES DAVIE JR. – BUILDINGS**

**ROLANDA OSBOURNE – FINANCE**

**EUJEAN PARK – SBS**

**CHRIS K. PAPA – ACS**

**KATHY TUZNAK – DDC**

**MONICA DOYLE – FINANCE**

**DIANA HERRERA – FISA-OPA**

**MARIE SAMPLES – OCME**

**LAURA GODFREY – DCA**

**JOHN RAYALI – FINANCE**

**TORREY FISHMAN – MOIA**

**MICHAEL LEVARIO – APPOINTMENTS**

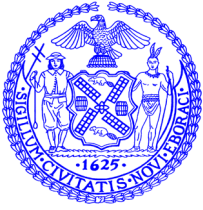
**PETER KONTOGIANNIS – DEP**

**EUGENE MASSEY (2X) – DOHMH**

**CINDY CHEN – DOT**

**VALERIE WALD – EDUCATION**





# Conflicts of Interest Law Plain Language Guide\*

- 1. Misuse of Position.** Public servants may not use their City positions to benefit themselves, their close family members, or any person or firm with whom they have a business or financial relationship.
- 2. Misuse of City Time and City Resources.** Public servants may not pursue personal activities (especially business or political activities) during times when they are required to work for the City, nor may they use any City resources (such as City supplies, letterhead, telephone, e-mail, computer, or equipment), their City title, or City personnel for any non-City purpose.
- 3. Gifts.** Public servants may not accept anything valued at \$50 or more from any person or firm that does or seeks to do business with the City.
- 4. Gratuities.** Public servants may not accept anything from anyone other than the City for performing their official duties.
- 5. Volunteer Activities.** Public servants may have an unpaid position (such as a board member) at a not-for-profit with business dealings with the City if they do this work on their own time, the not-for-profit has no dealings with their City agency, and the public servant is not involved in the not-for-profit's business with the City. If the not-for-profit has dealings with the public servant's City agency, they may only have the position with their agency head's approval.
- 6. Seeking Other Jobs.** Public servants may not seek or obtain a private sector job with any person or firm with whom they are dealing with in their City job.
- 7. Moonlighting.** Public servants may not have a job with any firm that does business with the City. For certain part-time public servants, this prohibition applies only to their City agency.
- 8. Owning Businesses.** Public servants may not own any part of a firm that does business with the City, nor may their spouses, domestic partners, or unemancipated children. For certain part-time public servants, this prohibition applies only to their City agency.
- 9. Permission to Moonlight or Own a Business.** Public servants may, with the written authorization of the head of their City agency, seek permission from the Board (called a "waiver") to have a job with a firm that does business with the City or to own some or all of a firm that does business with the City.
- 10. Confidential Information.** Public servants may not disclose confidential City information or use it for a private advantage, even after they leave City service.
- 11. Lawyers.** Public servants may not act as a lawyer, whether paid or unpaid, against the City's interests in any lawsuit brought by or against the City.
- 12. Expert Witnesses.** Public servants may not act as a paid expert in any lawsuit brought by or against the City.

**13. Paid Appearances Before the City.** Public servants may not communicate with any City agency on behalf of a private employer or client, when they are seeking City business, or are otherwise paid. For certain part-time public servants, this prohibition applies only to their City agency.

**14. Buying Office or Promotion.** Don't.

**15. Business with Subordinates.** Public servants may not enter into any business or financial dealings with another public servant who is their subordinate or supervisor. A public servant is the superior of another public servant if they can affect the terms and conditions of the subordinate's City employment.

**16. Political Solicitation of Subordinates.** Public servants may not ask a subordinate to make a campaign contribution or to participate in any electoral campaign activity.

**17. Coercing Political Activity.** Public servants may not force or try to force anyone to participate in any electoral campaign activity, nor may they directly or indirectly threaten anyone or promise anything to anyone to obtain a campaign contribution.

**18. Political Activities by Certain High-Level Appointed Officials.** Deputy mayors, agency heads, deputy or assistant agency heads, members of boards or commissions, or any other person designated by their City agency as exercising substantial policy discretion may not ask anyone to contribute to the campaign of any candidate for City elected office or to the political campaign of any City elected official running for any elected office. These officials, as well as elected officials, may not hold certain political party positions.

#### **19. Post-Employment Communication Ban.**

- For one year after leaving City service, former public servants may not communicate with their former City agency on behalf of their private employer or client, when they are seeking City business, or are otherwise paid.

For certain high-level officials, if leaving after January 1, 2022:

- For two years after leaving City service, a former agency head (except if listed below), the executive director or highest-ranking paid public servant employed by a board or commission, and any paid member of a board or commission; may not communicate with their former City agency on behalf of their private employer or client, when they are seeking City business, or are otherwise paid.
- For two years after leaving City service, elected officials, deputy mayors, the chair of the City Planning Commission, and the heads of the Office of Management and Budget, the Law Department, and the Departments of Citywide Administrative Services, Finance, and Investigation may not communicate with their former branch of City government on behalf of their private employer or client, when they are seeking City business, or are otherwise paid.

**20. Post-Employment Particular Matter Bar.** After leaving City service, former public servants may never work on a particular matter they personally and substantially worked on for the City.

\* This material is intended as a general guide. It is not intended to replace the text of the law (City Charter § 2604). For more information or to obtain answers to specific questions, you may write or call the Board. Also, individual agencies may impose additional restrictions on its employees, such as on the acceptance of gifts or moonlighting. Contact your agency's ethics liaison for more information.

**New York City Conflicts of Interest Board**  
**+1 (212) 442-1400**  
**[nyc.gov/ethics](http://nyc.gov/ethics)**