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American Planning Association
California Chapter
Northern

APA Ethics Cases of the Year Panel Discussion

October 25, 2019

Created by the Ethics Committee, American Institute of Certified Planners, April 2019

Ethics Cases of the Year Panel

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Agenda

Refresher on Planning Ethics

Ethical Scenarios

1. Taking Credit
2. Workplace Harassment
3. Professional Comments
4. Gifts
5. Discrimination
6. Political Donations

Your Ethics Questions

APA's Ethical Principles of Planning

Adopted by the APA Board of Directors in 1980; revised in 1992

Guidelines for those who participate in the process of planning as advisors, advocates, and decision makers

1. Serve the public interest

Provide accurate information, provide opportunity for all, protect natural and built environment, pay attention to long-range consequences of action, etc.

2. Maintain high standards of integrity/proficiency

Provide independent judgment, disclose personal interests, seek no gifts or favors, avoid conflicts of interest, don't disclose confidential information, don't misrepresent facts, respect rights of all persons, etc.

3. Improve planning competence

Provide high level of professionalism, commit no wrongful acts, contribute time for groups lacking planning resources, treat other professionals fairly, etc.

AICP's Ethics Code

Adopted in 1948 by the American Institute of Planners; revised in 1959, 1970, 1978, 1991, 2005, and 2016

*NOTE: Please turn **on** your cell phones: planning.org/ethics*

A. Aspirational Principles

Responsibility to Public, Clients/Employees, and Profession/Colleagues

B. Rules of Conduct

Twenty-Six Rules to Which AICP Members Are Held Accountable

C. Advisory Opinions

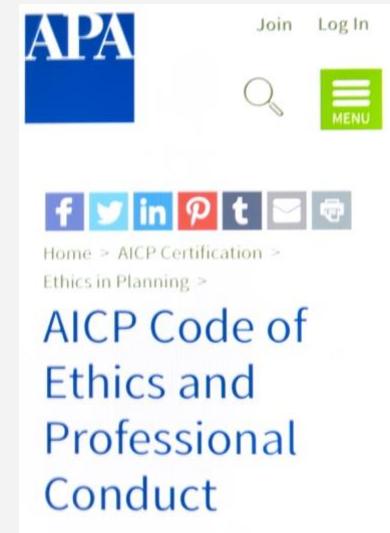
Informal Advice, Formal Advisory Opinions, Annual Report

D. Complaints of Misconduct

Filings, Preliminary Charge/Dismissal, Settlement, Decision, Appeal

E. Discipline of Members

Confidential Letter of Admonition, Public Censure, Suspension, Revocation



Ethical Misconduct Cases in 2019

Four Cases Dismissed

(No preliminary charge filed)

Three Cases Dismissed

(After a preliminary charge is filed)

Six Cases Settled

(Five for misuse of AICP credential)

One Disciplinary Action

(Letter of Admonition: for disclosure of confidential information)



Credit: abovethelaw.com

Actions Cited in Misconduct Charges (2019)

- *Rule of Conduct #1*
Providing inaccurate information (an out-of-date building code)
- *Rule of Conduct #4*
Working on secondary job (as realtor) without notifying supervisor
- *Rules of Conduct #6 and #14*
Working on a rezoning that could benefit planner's personal residence
- *Rule of Conduct #7*
Revealing confidential information on a project (two cases)
- *Rule of Conduct #10*
Misrepresenting the views of another professional

Ethics Topics

Derived from misconduct cases and informal inquiries in 2018

Honest and Fair Dealing

Conflicts of Interest

False/Deceptive Statements

Respect for Confidentiality

Abuse of Position

Quality of Practice

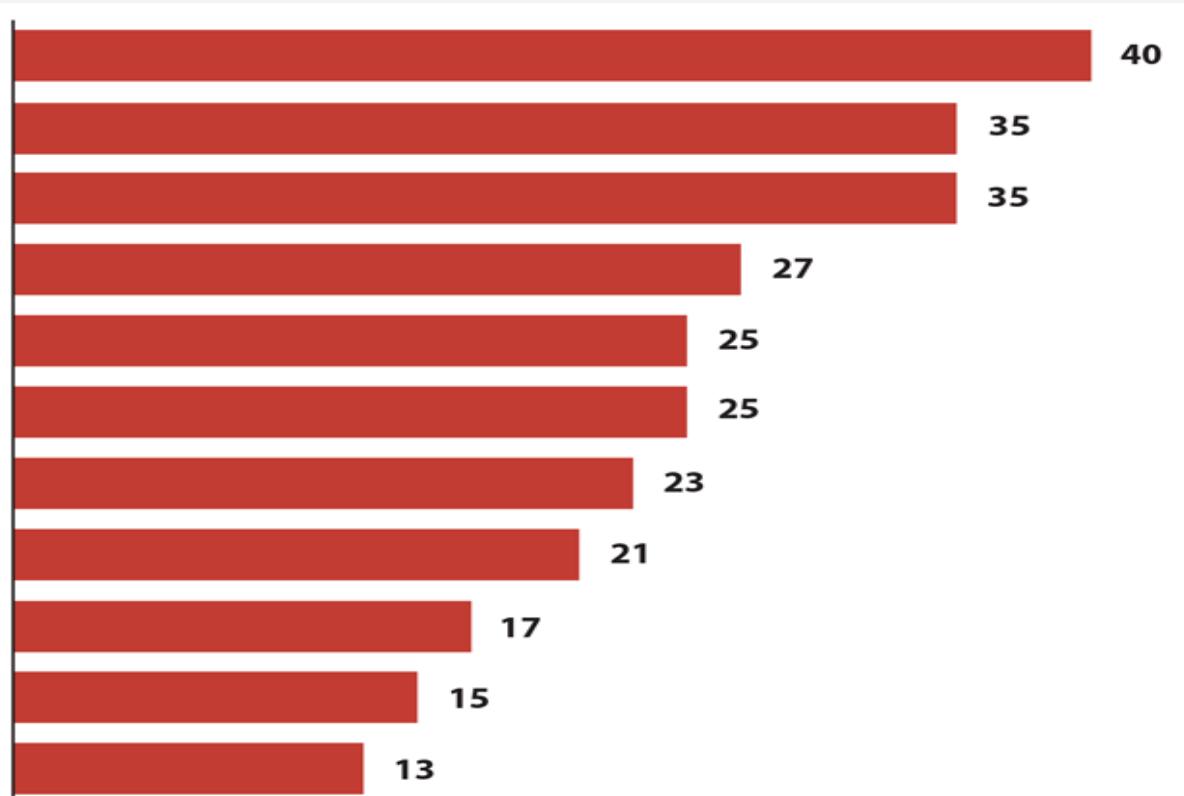
Legal and Ethical Conduct

Misuse of AICP Credential

Loyalty to Employer

Private Communication

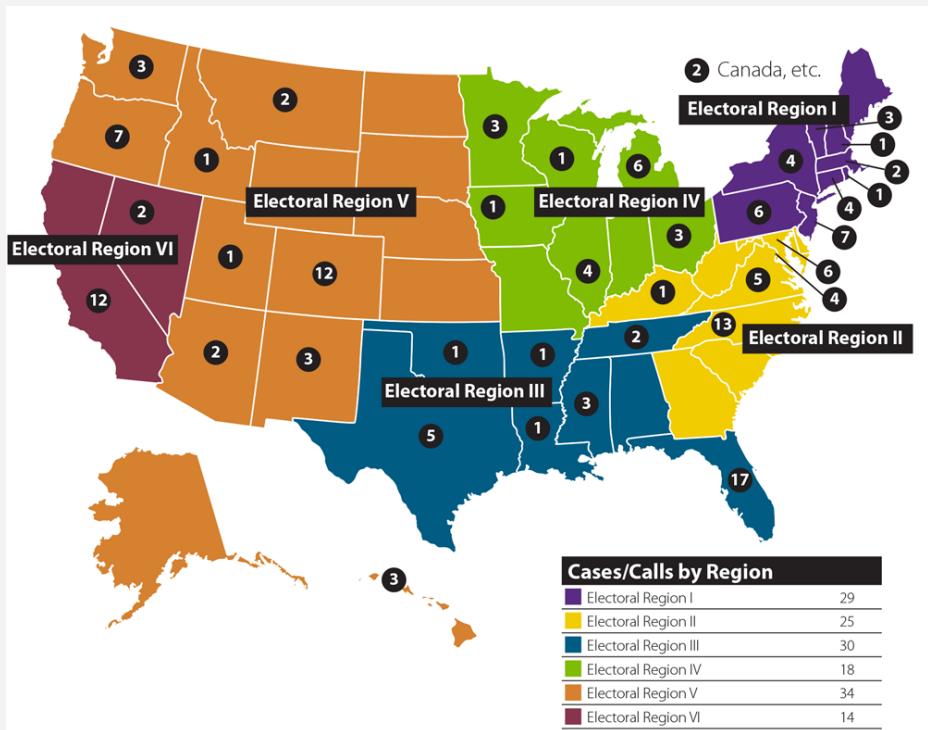
Lack of Cooperation



Cases of the Year

The following ethical scenarios are based on real situations from 2018 and early 2019—although the names and locations are all fictional.

The case scenarios were derived from informal inquiries or misconduct complaints reviewed by the AICP Ethics Officer and the AICP Ethics Committee.



Cast of Characters



Consultant
Jane, AICP



County Planner
Dan, AICP



Town Planner
Catherine, AICP



Consultant
Marion, AICP



City Planner
Ian, AICP

Scenario 1

Taking Credit

Jane, AICP, who runs a small consulting firm, worked on a new comprehensive plan for Hudson County, as a sub-consultant to a larger firm, GarGan.

The comp plan recently won an APA award and GarGan has been actively promoting the project at national and state planning conferences.



Jane, AICP



Marion, AICP



Credit: Yvonne Bambrich; Flickr CC

Scenario 1

Meanwhile, GarGan's chief planner, Marion, AICP, has told the firm's subcontractors on the plan, including Jane, that they are not permitted to mention the plan in their own marketing materials.

Marion says that, since the contract was GarGan's, the only credit should go to GarGan, not its subs.



Marion, AICP



Credit: beleaderly.com

Scenario 1

Questions

Q:

Is this appropriate behavior on the part of Marion and GarGan?

Q:

Could Marion be the subject of a potential ethics misconduct complaint?



Marion, AICP

Scenario 1

Additional Question

Q:

What if the client, Hudson County's planning director, Dan, AICP, told GarGan the same thing: It should not promote its work on the plan since it was the County who paid for—and adopted—the plan?

Is this an ethically appropriate action on the part of Dan?



Dan, AICP

Scenario 1

Ethical Issues

AICP Ethics Code—Principles

#3c: “We shall describe and comment on the work and views of other professionals in a **fair and professional** manner.”

AICP Ethics Code—Rules of Conduct

#10: “We shall neither deliberately, nor with reckless indifference, **misrepresent the qualifications**, views, and findings of other professionals.”

#12: “We shall not **misstate** our education, experience, training, or other facts which are relevant to our professional qualifications.”

#17: “We shall not **use the product of others' efforts** to seek professional recognition or acclaim intended for producers of original work.”

#25: “We shall neither deliberately, nor with reckless indifference, commit any **wrongful act**, whether or not specified in the Rules of Conduct, that reflects adversely on our professional fitness.”



Credit: wync.org

The screenshot shows the AICP website's navigation bar with 'Join' and 'Log In' options. Below the logo, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, and Email. The main content area displays the 'Ethics in Planning' section of the 'AICP Certification' page, specifically the 'AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct'.

Scenario 2

Workplace Harassment

Marion, AICP, a planning consultant, is approached by two staff planners.

They tell her that Dan, AICP, the planning director of Hudson County, has made unwanted sexual comments to each of them at APA chapter events.

Dan also is an APA chapter officer.



Dan, AICP



Credit: Getty Images

Scenario 2

Questions

Q:

**Does Marion have *any* obligations under the
AICP Ethics Code?**

Q:

Should she talk directly to Dan?

Q:

**Should she talk to someone else, such as the
Chapter President?**



Marion, AICP

Scenario 2

Ethical Issues

AICP Ethics Code—Principles

#3a: “We shall protect and enhance the integrity of our profession.”

AICP Ethics Code—Rules of Conduct

#25: “We shall neither deliberately, nor with reckless indifference, commit any wrongful act, whether or not specified in the Rules of Conduct, that reflects adversely on our professional fitness.”



Lorraine Sorlet; tampabay.com



NYC Commission on Human Rights

Scenario 3

Professional Comments

Catherine, AICP, a planner with the Town of Wurster, has been telling developers not to hire Jane, AICP, a local planning consultant.

Catherine has been saying that Jane's performance on previous projects has been unsatisfactory.



Credit: Leadingwithtrust.com

Scenario 3

Questions

Q:

Are Catherine's negative comments about Jane a potential ethics violation?

Q:

How else could Catherine have handled this situation?



Credit: twocents.lifehacker.com

Scenario 3

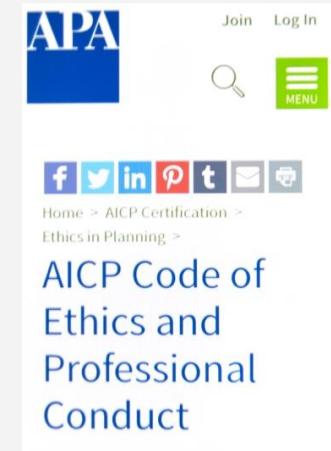
Ethical Issues

AICP Ethics Code—Principles

#3c: “We shall describe the work and views of other professionals in a fair and professional manner.”

AICP Ethics Code—Rules of Conduct

#10: “We shall neither deliberately, nor with reckless indifference, misrepresent the qualifications, views, and findings of other professionals.”



Scenario 4

Gifts

Bollards R Us (BRU), which sells street furniture, is sponsoring an exhibit booth at the state planning conference.



Credit: zaun.co.uk

BRU also is hosting an evening reception at the conference, featuring free food and cocktails. However, BRU has only invited municipal planners (i.e., their potential clients) to the reception.



Credit: PepperLaw

Scenario 4

Questions

Q:

**Is this a potential violation of the
AICP Ethics Code—either for BRU or
for any AICP public planners who
attend the reception?**

Q:

**If so, what should the conference
organizers do?**



Credit: Rice Business

Scenario 4

Ethical Issues

The image shows the top navigation bar of the APA (American Planning Association) website. It features the APA logo, a search icon, and links for 'Join' and 'Log In'. Below the main menu are social media links for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, and Email. A breadcrumb navigation path is visible: Home > AICP Certification > Ethics in Planning >. To the right, a sidebar displays the 'AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct'.

AICP Ethics Code—Principles

#1c: "We shall pay special attention to the **interrelatedness of decisions**."

#2a: "We shall exercise **independent professional judgment** on behalf of our clients and employers."

AICP Ethics Code—Rules of Conduct

#5: "We shall not, as public officials or employees, **accept from anyone other than our public employer any compensation**, commission, rebate, or other advantage that **may be perceived as related to our public office or employment**."

Scenario 5

Discrimination

Davis, AICP, is a planner with Clydebank. One of the projects she manages is scheduled to go to the City Council next month for approval.

It is a project that requires data analysis to determine whether a property should be inside an empowerment zone or not. She has done this several times before.

However, Davis' boss, Ian, AICP, decides that Patrick, a non-AICP planner who Davis supervises, should present the application to the City Council.



Credit: Mark Airs; IEEE Spectrum

Scenario 5

A few weeks later, Davis is passed over for a promotion, despite her excellent performance reviews and years of experience. Instead, Patrick is given the job.

A month before the City Council meeting (where Davis was taken off the project), she began her gender transition and asked people to use the pronouns “she, her, hers” when referring to her. In the past, she had always dressed gender neutral, but now she occasionally wears a skirt to work.



Credit: vexels.com

Davis, AICP

Soon after Patrick’s promotion, Davis decides to quit.

Scenario 5

Questions

Q:

**Does Davis have any recourse under the
AICP Ethics Code?**

Q:

**Are there any grounds for a misconduct
case against her former boss, Ian, AICP,
on the basis of “unlawful
discrimination?”**



Credit: bzbilibrary.com

Scenario 5

Ethical Issues

AICP Ethics Code—Principles

#1a: “We shall always be conscious of the [rights of others.](#)”

#2b: “We shall [accept the decisions of our client or employer](#) concerning the objectives and nature of the professional services we perform unless the course of action is illegal or plainly inconsistent with our primary obligation to the public interest.”

AICP Ethics Code—Rules of Conduct

#20: “We shall not [unlawfully](#) discriminate against another person.”

#25: “We shall neither deliberately, nor with reckless indifference, commit any [wrongful act](#)...that reflects adversely on our [professional fitness.](#)”

The screenshot shows the official website for the American Planning Association (APA). The top navigation bar includes links for "Join" and "Log In". Below the bar is a blue header with the letters "APA". To the right are icons for a magnifying glass (search) and a menu. Underneath the header, there are social media links for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, and Email. The main content area displays the "AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct" page, with a breadcrumb trail showing "Home > AICP Certification > Ethics in Planning >". The page title is "AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct".

Scenario 6

Political Donations

GarGan, a consulting firm, has had several planning contracts with Hudson County over the last few years, including one current project.

Several County Board members are up for reelection and GarGan has made campaign contributions to them.

Marion, AICP, a GarGan principal, also has made donations to the candidates, after confirming there are no violations of state or local laws.



Marion, AICP



Credit: Jim Peters

Scenario 6

Questions

Q:

Does the *AICP Ethics Code* permit these campaign contributions—either by Marion or other principals of GarGan who are AICP members?

Q:

Should these campaign contributions preclude GarGan from bidding on any future projects with Hudson County?



Credit: complianceandethics.org

Scenario 6

Additional Question

Q:

What if campaign contributions were being made by Dan, AICP, Hudson County's planning director?

Is that permissible, according to the *AICP Ethics Code*?



Dan, AICP

Scenario 6

Ethical Issues

The screenshot shows the American Planning Association (APA) website. At the top right are 'Join' and 'Log In' buttons. Below them is the 'APA' logo. To the right of the logo are a magnifying glass icon for search and a green 'MENU' button. The main content area has a blue header bar with social media icons (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, YouTube, Email, Print). Below the header, the URL 'planning.org/ethics' is visible, followed by navigation links: 'Home > AICP Certification > Ethics in Planning >'. On the right side, a sidebar with a blue background displays the title 'AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct'.

AICP Ethics Code—Principle

#1c: "We shall pay special attention to the **interrelatedness of decisions**."

AICP Ethics Code—Rules of Conduct

#9: "We shall not engage in **private discussions** with decision makers in the planning process **in any manner prohibited** by law or by agency rules, procedures, or customs."

#11: "We shall not **solicit prospective clients** or employment through use of false or misleading claims, harassment, or duress."

Final Note

- For informal advice regarding ethical conduct, please contact the AICP Ethics Officer, Jim Peters, FAICP, at 312-786-6360 or ethics@planning.org.
- For more information, please visit planning.org/ethics

AICP Ethics Committee

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Your Ethics Questions

Thank You!

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