

# CITY OF HARTFORD

## Ethics Commission

550 Main Street, Room 210  
Hartford, CT 06103  
757-9700

Barbara Ness, Chairperson  
A.J. Sierra  
David Klein  
Chuck Culliton

### ETHICS COMMISSION OPINION #12-01

December 21, 2012

Valda Washington, M.S.H.R., PHR  
Director of Human Resources  
and Labor Relations  
City of Hartford  
550 Main Street  
Hartford, CT 06103

**RE: REQUEST FOR ADVISORY OPINION**

Dear Ms. Washington:

This letter has been prepared in response to your letter request dated October 2, 2012, and is limited in scope to the facts and issues presented in said letter (letter attached hereto) That letter asked for an advisory opinion from the Ethics Commission concerning the scope of the City's Anti-Nepotism Policy and the ethical implications, appropriate remedial action, and the professional obligations of the parties, if any, required by the City's Ethics Code where an elected City Official serves as the immediate supervisor of his spouse.

The Ethics Commission has reviewed your letter, as well as the City's Policy for Nepotism and the City of Hartford Ethics Code. The Commission has also requested and received an advisory opinion from the Corporation Counsel addressing the issues you raise. Two Ethics Commission meetings were held to discuss the matter, one on November 13, 2012, and one on November 27, 2012.

The facts are as follows. City Treasurer Adam Cloud was elected to that office in the 2011 general election and took office in January 2012. Prior to that he served as Assistant City Treasurer and, upon the retirement of City Treasurer Kathleen Palm Devine, was appointed acting City Treasurer in January 2011. His wife Nicole Plessy-Cloud has been employed for many years by the Office of the Treasurer. Currently as Treasurer, Mr. Cloud has direct supervisory responsibility over Mrs. Plessy-Cloud. When a question was raised about this

circumstance, Mayor Segarra temporarily assigned Mrs. Plessy-Cloud to the Finance Department. But she refuses this re-assignment and remains working in the Office of the Treasurer under her husband's supervision.

At the Ethics Commission meeting held November 13, 2012, the matter was discussed, but Mr. Cloud and Mrs. Plessy-Cloud did not attend that meeting. At the November 27, 2012, Ethics Commission meeting Mr. Cloud did attend and spoke to the Ethics Commission members about the aspects surrounding the matter.

The relevant section of the City's Code of Ethics requiring compliance with the City's anti-nepotism policy, §2-902(H), provides as follows:

... the employment of relatives shall not:

\* \* \*

(2) Create a situation where an individual who is appointed or elected into a supervisory role not of their creation continues to supervise a relative;

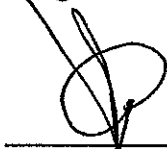
\* \* \*

(3) Create an actual conflict of interest or the potential for appearance of conflicts of interest;

\* \* \*

The incontrovertible facts are that both City Treasurer Adam Cloud and his wife Nicole Plessy-Cloud currently remain employed in the Office of the Treasury and Mr. Cloud exercises by virtue of his position a supervisory role over his wife in her employment.

The Commission concludes that because the Clouds both work in the same Office of the Treasurer, there is a potential for appearance of conflicts of interest constituting a violation of §2-902(H) of the City's Ethics Code. It appears that this potential for appearance of conflicts of interest would be most easily remedied by Mrs. Plessy-Cloud accepting Mayor Segarra's re-assignment of her to the Finance Department.



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Arnaldo J. Sierra  
Commissioner

cc: Adam Cloud  
Nicole Plessy-Cloud