

**Question #2**

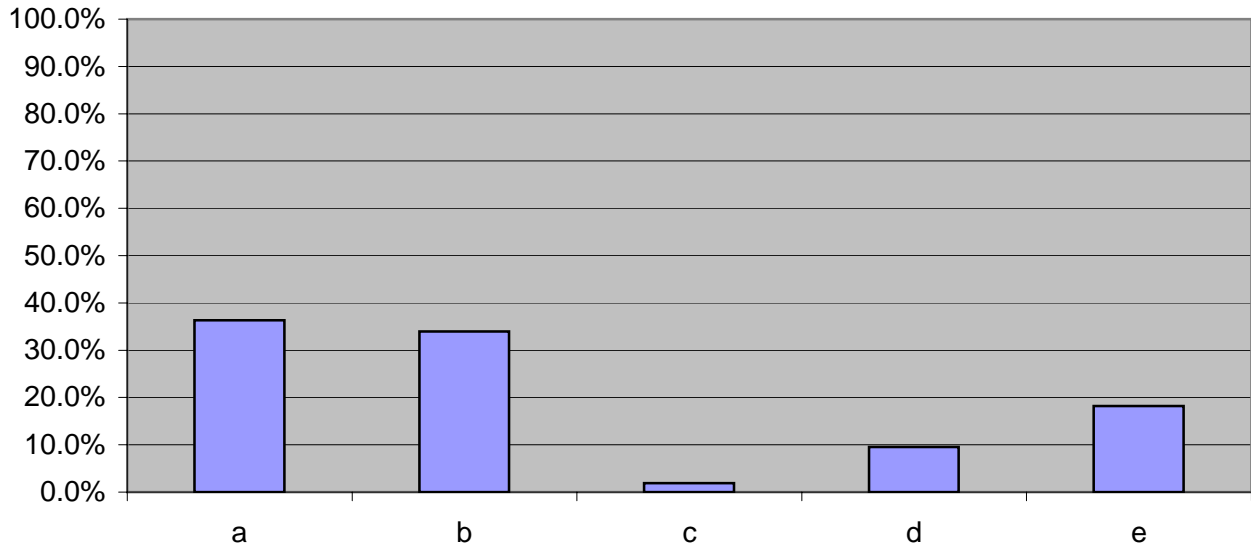
Question 2:

Background: In 2007 the City implemented a comprehensive ethics ordinance. This ordinance requires that Council persons recuse themselves (not vote) on issues brought before Council by persons who have made significant financial contributions to their political campaigns.

In my opinion Council persons should be required to recuse themselves on issues brought before Council by persons who have contributed the following amount to their individual political campaigns:

- a. Over 250
- b. Over 500
- c. Over 1000
- d. Over 1000
- e. Council persons should never have to recuse themselves because of financial contributions to their individual campaigns.

76	71	4	20	38
a	b	c	d	e
36.4%	34.0%	1.9%	9.6%	18.2%



## March 2008 Survey Comments on the Ethics Ordinance

We have a very good ethics ordinance and every council member knew it when they ran for office. Each person running for public office can choose to accept or decline campaign contributions. Each council member must be held accountable to the public trust and not to any one campaign contributor. Each has given at the very least, implied consent to be held accountable when they filed to run and when they accepted public office. If they cannot/will not recuse themselves because of financial contribution obligations they should resign from the public trust. Contributors who attempt to buy preferential treatment through excessive campaign contributions deserve to be penalized by the recusal/recusals.

\* \* \*

Much of the nastiness of our last election was bought by developers who were more interested in their own pockets than doing anything to help the island. Any Tybee tour will reveal unsold houses and subdivisions that may very well predict our future. Tybee's elected officials need to be above this kind of behavior.

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It's a sad time for Tybee when only one month after a new council takes office we already have to start taking these types of surveys.

\* \* \*

I sincerely hope that the new TI City Council does not try to change the comprehensive ethics ordinance. They knew that it was in force when they were running for election. Hopefully they would have had enough foresight to see these current issues coming.

\* \* \*

Political leaders should not make decisions based on financial contributions and should make that clear to all contributors.

\* \* \*

Since the average Tybee candidate does not spend much over \$1000.00 running for office it does not seem reasonable to allow one person to give most of the support

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Historically, Tybee elections have not been an expensive endeavor for candidates i.e. campaign funds of around \$1,000.00 or so suffice for advertising, signs, brochures, etc. I would like this to continue to be the case. Elections should be about the individuals, not their pocketbooks or their access to "big money." I do not like the recent trend toward expensive campaigns, fundraisers (with contributions in the range of \$750.00). In the past, an individual could generate enough money with small contributions (i.e. \$25.00 to \$50.00) from many individuals. On Tybee Island, the process is challenging enough for individuals without adding an additional fundraising burden to the mix.

\* \* \*

Councilpersons should not be restricted due to contributions to their campaigns. It is their right to accept donations and the right of Tybee citizens to donate to their campaigns. If enough citizens trusted them to be elected, then they should be given the opportunity to do their jobs. If the citizens are unhappy with the way they voted on issues, they can be voted out the next election. That is what happened in the last election. Believe it or not, the skateboard park was an issue. It was not about development vs. environment. It was about the Council not listening to the voice of the people.

\* \* \*

The ethics ordinance reflects the community's interest in transparent, impartial government that benefits resident's common interests. With the new council, we need it more than ever.

\* \* \*

I hardly think any of the above amounts would be considered significant. political donations are nothing new to political campaigns, they should vote as they wish.

\* \* \*

As for the ethics question: If one receives a contribution of \$250 recusal should be highly recommended and if \$500 or more it should be mandatory. Tybee is a small island and the campaigns shouldn't cost thousands of dollars. I'm also interested in seeing on the disclosures where the money has come from to support our local candidates. Why does someone running for our council need to accept loads of money from various Atlanta residents?

The current ethics ordinance was written by a comprehensive and committed group of individuals including continuous legal input from our city attorney and should stand as is.

\* \* \*

The Ethics ordinance is mandatory to prevent city council votes simply going to the highest bidder. Other governmental bodies are beginning to look at the ongoing concern of "democracy for sale" that has long plagued our government. The Tybee Ethics Ordinance is a model of a consistent and enforceable ethics ordinance that has been long needed and should not be "tweaked" or

otherwise modified by this council.

Any modifications to the ethics ordinance should be voted on by the citizens of Tybee during the next city election, and not changed during this council's tenure.

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The intent of the ethics ordinance is to make sure that officials don't have to account to anybody but the public's best interest. No public official should feel obligated or be tempted to show partiality because of a campaign contribution

\* \* \*

Thank you for the opportunity to comment. The financial state of the island, as I understand it is in distress. I feel that it is very important to publish the financial information as soon as possible to alert the voting public of the financial disaster the previous council has brought to bear on the citizens of this Island. Any delay in presenting this info may cast a poor light on the New council both now and when our next election takes place. Thank you for your consideration.

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The Ethics ordinance is just fine as is and should be left intact.

\* \* \*

The city charter states, "Elected and appointed officials of the city are trustees and servants of the residents of the city and shall act in a fiduciary capacity for the benefit of such residents." Citizens don't benefit from donations to political campaigns; if candidates for office don't have the integrity to refuse large contributions, they must recuse themselves from voting on any issue in which they have a financial relationship with the petitioner.

Unless Tybee citizens want developers to buy the votes of our council, we better insist on full disclosure and recusal.

\* \* \*

My heart agrees with restrictions on political campaign contributions and tying them to mandatory recusal of elected officials. However, my mind tells me to stick to the principles upon which this country was founded. Restriction on political contributions and forcing recusal of elected officials because of political contributions are an attack on the First Amendment to the US Constitution. The ethics ordinance which forces recusal of an elected official because of a campaign contribution of whatever legal amount violates the right of individual to political free expression. If an cap on contributions relating to mandatory recusal is upheld, then contributions will continue...but "under the table" and won't be reported. Certainly, that happens now, but it will happen on a more widespread basis in future if draconian rules are upheld.

\* \* \*

People contribute to a persons' campaign for many different reasons. Mostly I think on Tybee they do it because of friendship. I think the ethic ordinance should remain in place and not be deleted from the codes. A revision to the codes might be in order. We are in a unique situation because of the number of council members getting campaign donation from the same person. I think I read it in the paper that the amount of the contribution was \$500.00 each. This figure could be made higher. I would like to hear the City Attorneys' take on this problem and how to solve it.

\* \* \*

Tybee has a checkered past. We move a step forward with a council of integrity, then periodically, take a step backward into the past. Remember that Tybee once owned all Fort Screven, then squandered its inheritance by nearly giving away land to those who were politically connected. We can look back and think how nice it would be to have a nine hole golf course-gone, our batteries - almost all gone, parking facilities for the theatre - gone, historical buildings -gone, greenspace -gone, gone, gone. We must do what we can to keep elected officials from giving away what remains that makes Tybee Tybee. Keeping developers on a level playing field with residents by limiting their influence is one strategy that should be given a chance. The ethics ordinance and its recusal clause are that strategy.

\* \* \*

The problem with a lack of a quorum could be dealt with by randomly selecting enough of the recused council members to achieve a quorum.

\* \* \*

You are to recuse yourself for a contribution of cash handed to. In the case in which Tybee is talking about 5 of the 6 council members submitted as (in-kind) contributions, meaning no money has change hands. Party was open to ALL candidates and all of Tybee. They were invited guess along with a few other 400 people. They would only have to recuse themselves from voting on a property if they are to have a personal gain from the property!

Also I viewed the other candidates worksheet, and .... was at the party and didn't submit that on her form. I also attended the GREEN Team party in Memorial Park and none of that party was submitted on ..... sheet.

\* \* \*

There are ways to structure contributions to avoid ethics ordinance problems.

\* \* \*

Recusal on issues concerning contributors of \$250 or more should be our standard. This is a small city and 250 dollars represents a sum of money that many residents can never match. This same sum of money is large compared to how much money in total each candidate spends on their election. Recusal is the only fair way to insure the appearance of impartiality.

\* \* \*

I CANNOT IMAGINE ANYTHING WORSE THAN BECOMING KNOWN FOR OUR CROOKED POLITICIANS....SHAME ON ANYONE SUGGESTING THAT WE LIGHTEN UP ON OUR ETHICS POLICIES!

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Regarding the ethics codes, I think that the intention is good. Unfortunately, as we have seen in the past, some individuals don't respect the rules... We've had enough "good old boy" politics.

\* \* \*

How can \$500 be considered "significant"? Yes, council should recuse themselves if they have received "significant" contributions but "significant" shouldn't be less than \$2,500 to \$5,000. They should also recuse themselves if they have any sort of personal interest in any project.

\* \* \*

Tybee's ethics ordinance is well written and very necessary, and we need to keep the limits where they are. Public officials should learn to pay closer attention, not expect to sidestep these boundaries placed to help rebuild the public's trust.

\* \* \*

If Tybee remains the city it has always been, big money is not necessary for election to City Council. Acceptance of large campaign contributions just leads to distrust and unrest. Keep Tybee, Tybee!!

\* \* \*

Money was a huge factor in the outcome of the last election. City council members should recuse themselves at any dollar amount.

\* \* \*

It is very evident that certain individuals were trying to influence the past election with large donations. Do not change the ethics code, to allow this type of control.

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The ethics ordinance has been approved already after much work by the committee. It should stand with very little change

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Any amount of money received by a candidate poses a conflict of interest when the contributor is asking for a ruling and the former candidate is voting.

\* \* \*

If a politician who has received a contribution of this amount or more, should recuse themselves as not to appear bought. I am in the construction trade, for example, and I know personally from conversations I have overheard that when the contractor makes a contribution, they expect an edge when they go before council. Let's not let anyone entertain such a notion.

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On the contributions, it depends on what they are voting on and what conflict there might be. I can see that some issues might have a conflict of interest while others may not. It must be looked at by a case by case basis.

\* \* \*

The present council is an embarrassment. The labor of love for Tybee that went into the best ethics legislation ever should not be trifled with by politicians clearly bent on rewarding campaign contributors. This smells like a Louisiana bayou. Why not just have closed meetings too (like the committees at the State capital) and then we won't be an extraordinary little municipality any longer.

\* \* \*

Most City Council members would never be able to run for election if they did not receive financial contributions from friends, family and members of the community. The reason you vote for an individual is because you have similar ideas and opinions and campaign contributions are a way of showing support.

If we cannot trust the council members to vote on issues in a manner that is in the best interest of Tybee Island, regardless of who brought the issue to the council, then we have a more serious problem. The council members should be ethical in every vote they make.

\* \* \*

Once decided, an Ethics Ordinance should be honored with the possibility of minor changes going forward. Again it appears that the members of council want to make this issue suit their needs.

\* \* \*

As for campaign contributions-- I believe in a very small community --as ours-- anyone giving large contributions has expectations --at least in my opinion. 1000.00 in a national campaign is a "drop in the bucket" but on Tybee that amount is fairly significant. On the other hand if we limit contributors -- will they just go "under the table"? If it's out in the open at least everyone would know. COMPLEX ISSUE.

I don't really have the answer -- I pray for moral officials.

\* \* \*

Money and politics unfortunately have been partners forever. There is no way to control this and at the end of the day the one's that seek to control this end up wanting to be in more control than the ones giving the money .They sit on the sidelines, judging who or what needs to be done to " fix" the system yet do not enter into the political arena to actively participate in the process themselves.

\* \* \*

I CAN NOT IMAGINE THAT A COUNCIL PERSON WHO RECEIVED A LARGE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION WOULD NOT BE HAPPY TO RECUSE THEMSELVE FROM A VOTE ON THE DONORS BEHALF. THIS REMOVES ALL QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INTENT OF THE DONOR & THE RECIPIENT

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People who stand to gain financially from serving on council should not run for office – PERIOD! In the event that they do, the public deserves full disclosure.

\* \* \*

The law of unintended consequences arose from the donation and recusal situation in the ethics ordinance. So long as donations are within lawful limits established by the State of GA and properly disclosed, I don't want councilmen to avoid responsibility by recusing themselves. If voters aren't satisfied with council, they can take action at the ballot box during the next election.

Anytime a petitioner has an issue for council to consider (vote on), then the petitioner should disclose on a special form if he/she donated more than \$101 to a council person's election. That would be more disclosure and openness in government than the current City requirement of \$250.

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The new Council seems to feel free to totally disregard (or undo the work of past Councils. They were elected to REPRESENT the PEOPLE, not to serve personal vendettas. Some of the behavior we have witnessed from our elected officials is very disappointing.

\* \* \*

Ethics should be the number one strong point of every government. This last election showed just how blatant people seeking favors can be. They wanted to develop and they wanted to stop the skate board park and that's what they donated for. While that is their right, there does need to be some kind of statement on the amount that would require recusal from elected officials.

On the other note, taxes, I would hope that people on Tybee would get behind the desire to keep more of our tax money where it belongs, on Tybee. It is amazing to see the portion of Tybee property taxes that go toward our public schools considering Tybee doesn't even have one anymore.

\* \* \*

Political leaders should not make decisions based on financial contributions and should make that clear to all contributors.

\* \* \*

As for political campaigns, let candidates fund their own campaigns and then there would not be this quid pro quo we have now. Any candidate who accept contributions is going to favor the giver whether he or she wants to or not. It's human nature.

\* \* \*

Because our Ethics Ordinance makes recusal "highly recommended" with a political contribution or gift that exceeds \$250. I strongly support our Ethics Ordinance and those who believe politician's votes cannot be influenced by money live on a different planet than I do.

\* \* \*

There should be no monetary limitation on how much a candidate can accept for a campaign. If it can be proven that a candidate is on the take, then fight like hell to keep him out of office. Anyway, at Tybee do you think that a candidate who receives large hunks of money from one person or organization or PAC is going to be elected? I believe we are smart enough to defeat those type candidates. If we aren't, then we pay the piper. Don't sell the electors short. If an elected official appears to be on the take

(obvious examples: 7-day free cruise for two; an all expense paid vacation to a high-end vacation spot; taking money under the table .... etc, then bring it to light; charge the b-----d and let the courts decide his/her guilt. INTEGRITY is the one trait that we must demand from all our elected officials at all levels of government.

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Council persons should always disclose significant contributions and acknowledge them in a public forum.

\* \* \*

ETHICS< ETHICS< ETHICS We must keep the ethics ordinance in place. Without it the Council will have no accountability. This also means keeping promises made by the prior Council. Let the skate park be built.