



Department of Human Resources

INTER-OFFICE COMMUNICATION

Date: February 19, 2026

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Department of Human Resources, Office of Corporation Counsel

Subject: Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct Policy – Approved Amendment to the County Executive’s 2026 Recommended Budget

File Type: Informational Report

REQUEST

Draft Code of Conduct Policy in response to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors approved amendment to the County Executive’s 2026 recommended budget.

POLICY

Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances
2026 Adopted Budget Amendment

Wisconsin State Statutes:	
Milwaukee County Code of General Ordinances:	§ 1.29, Decorum of supervisors in committee meetings.
Specific Adopted Budget:	2026
Specific Adopted Budget Amendment:	29
Specific Adopted Capital Project:	

BACKGROUND

Amendment 29 to the County Executive’s Recommended 2026 Budget requested that the Office of Corporation Counsel and the Department of Human Resources develop a Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct policy for County Board review and consideration. The policy should be based on the principles outlined in Milwaukee County General Ordinance (MCGO) § 1.29, Decorum of supervisors in committee meetings. The draft policy for the Board’s consideration is submitted with this file.

Related File No’s:	25-668
Associated File No’s (Including Transfer Packets):	
Previous Action Date(s):	

ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Describe how the item aligns to the objectives in the [strategic plan](#):

- 1A: Reflect the full diversity of the County at every level of County government
- 1B: Create and nurture an inclusive culture across County government
- 1C: Increase the number of County contracts awarded to minority and women-owned businesses
- 2A: Determine what, where, and how we deliver services to advance health equity
- 2B: Break down silos across County government to maximize access to and quality of services offered
- 2C: Apply a racial equity lens to all decisions
- 3A: Invest “upstream” to address root causes of health disparities
- 3B: Enhance the County’s fiscal health and sustainability
- 3C: Dismantle barriers to diverse and inclusive communities

FISCAL EFFECT

None

TERMS

Not applicable

VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES

William Davidson, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Office of Corporation Counsel
Jennifer Pickett, Assistant Corporation Counsel, Office of Corporation Counsel
Peter LaBonte, Program Manager, Department of Human Resources

PREPARED BY:

William Davidson, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Office of Corporation Counsel
Jennifer Pickett, Assistant Corporation Counsel, Office of Corporation Counsel
Peter LaBonte, Program Manager, Department of Human Resources

APPROVED BY:

Margo Franklin, Chief Human Resource Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Draft Code of Conduct Policy

- cc:
- Kelly Bablitch, Chief of Staff, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors
 - Janelle M. Jensen, Legislative Services Division Manager, Office of the County Clerk
 - Supervisor Patti Logsdon, Chair of the Personnel Committee
 - Supervisor Willie Johnson, Jr., Chair of the Finance Committee
 - Scott Brown, Corporation Counsel
 - Margo Franklin, Chief Human Resources Officer
 - Mary Jo Meyers, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive
 - William Davidson, Deputy Corporation Counsel, Office of Corporation Counsel
 - Jennifer Pickett, Assistant Corporation Counsel, Office of Corporation Counsel

MILWAUKEE COUNTY BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

Purpose

The Milwaukee County Board Code of Conduct ensures that all participants in county board and committee meetings—whether officials, staff, media, or members of the public—are treated with dignity, fairness, and courtesy, and that the conduct of meetings reflects the highest standards of public service.

The Code of Conduct also defines prohibited conduct for County Board Supervisors and establishes a fair and transparent process for receiving and resolving complaints. This Code of Conduct proposes proportionate sanctions with associated voting requirements in alignment with state law, County Board Rules, and existing ethics, harassment, and workplace policies.

Scope

This Code of Conduct applies to all Milwaukee County Supervisors when acting in official capacity in at County Board and committee meetings and official proceedings. It also governs any conduct in the offices of the County Board or in any setting reasonably considered an extension of the workplace, including but not limited to communications via telephone, voicemail, text message, video conferencing, social media, and other online platforms.

I. Respect and Courtesy

County Board Supervisors shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of County Board Supervisors; members of boards, commissions, or committees; Milwaukee County employees, interns, and other staff; and members of the public.

All individuals attending or participating in meetings are entitled to the highest level of respect and courtesy. Disrespectful, harassing, or insulting language or behavior is strictly prohibited.

II. Responsibilities of Chairpersons

The presiding chairperson of a Committee or other body of the County Board is responsible for maintaining order and decorum. They must protect all participants from harassment, personal attacks, or inappropriate questioning. The chairperson has the authority to intervene when conduct violates this Code.

III. Conduct of Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

In alignment with and support of this Code of conduct, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors must:

- **Maintain Professional Composure.** Avoid heated or emotional outbursts and conduct themselves in a manner that supports orderly proceedings.
- **Treat Others with Respect and Courtesy.** Use polite, respectful language and behavior toward all individuals.
- **Listen Actively and Respectfully.** Give attention to speakers, consider differing viewpoints, and engage in discussion in a respectful manner.
- **Allow Others to be Heard.** Permit others to speak without interruption and follow the direction regarding recognition and order.

- **Act Impartially.** Avoid bias, favoritism, or conduct that creates the appearance of unfair treatment.

In addition, members must refrain from **prohibited conduct**, including:

- **Offensive or Discourteous Remarks.** Language or comments that are disrespectful or insulting to participants and that distract from the dignity of the proceedings.
- **Verbal Chastisement or Accusations.** Scolding, berating, or making personal accusations directed at an individual's character or motives, rather than the matter before the body.
- **Conduct that Undermines Meeting Decorum.** Behavior that materially interferes with the orderly conduct of the meeting or compromises fairness, decorum, or the ability of participants to be heard.
- **Harassment, Bullying, or Intimidation.** Unwelcome verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct that a reasonable person would view as demeaning, intimidating, hostile, or abusive toward any participant, including slurs or name-calling; comments about a person's body or appearance; unwelcome personal attention or comments of a romantic or intimate nature; or conduct targeting a person based on personal characteristics (including sex, gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or similar status).
- **Retaliation.** Adverse treatment or threats because a person raised a concern or made a complaint.
- **Neglect of Duty.** Refuse or neglect, without just cause, to perform duties required by law. Nothing in this Code limits Wis. Stat § 59.15.

IV. **Fairness and Integrity**

In alignment with this Code, members must adhere strictly to principles of fair play. No participant should be placed at a disadvantage due to arbitrary actions or unjustified comments. All individuals should feel safe, heard, and respected.

V. **Receiving and Resolving Complaints**

a. **Informal Resolution and Self-Correction**

When concerns arise, individuals are encouraged to seek timely and collegial resolution. Informal resolution and self-correction should be pursued whenever possible; formal action may be taken when other approaches are unsuccessful or inappropriate.

b. **Complaint Reporting (Referral to Chairperson of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors)**

Any Milwaukee County Board Supervisor may submit to the Chairperson of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors a resolution alleging a violation(s) of the Code which may then be referred to a Select Committee for consideration.

- Any such resolution must be submitted to the **Chairperson of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors** no later than 90 days after the occurrence of any alleged violation of this Code. The Code may not be enforced against any Milwaukee County Board Supervisor with respect to any alleged violation of this Code if the resolution concerning the allegation(s) is not timely submitted.
- No resolution described in this Section V.b. of this Code may be submitted during the period beginning 60 days before a general or spring election against a Supervisor who has filed a declaration of candidacy to have his or her name appear on the ballot at that election.

c. **Referral to Committee**

Upon receipt, the **Chairperson of the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors** may refer the complaint to an appropriate Select Committee for review.

d. Committee Review and Recommendation

The Select Committee will review the complaint, provide the Supervisor who is the subject of the complaint notice and an opportunity to respond, and review relevant information. The Committee will issue a written recommendation to the full County Board regarding disposition, which may include (1) no action; (2) information corrective action; (3) referral to another applicable process; and/or (4) if applicable, a recommendation that the Board proceed under § Wis Stat 59.15.

e. Board Action.

If the Select Committee recommends action under § Wis Stat 59.15 (Neglect of Duty), the recommendation shall be presented to the full County Board for consideration and a vote. Under Wis. Stat. § 59.15, the Board may assess against any of its members a forfeiture of not less than \$50 nor more than \$200. Any Board action under this section shall be by simple majority vote.

VI. Implementation

As an expression of the standards of conduct for County Supervisors as expected by the county, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors Code of Conduct is intended to be self-enforcing. It becomes most effective when County Board Supervisors are most familiar with it and embrace its provisions. Adherence to these guidelines will help to maintain a respectful, inclusive, and dignified environment for all who engage in the public process.

Each County Board Supervisor shall receive a copy of this Code upon taking office and shall acknowledge receipt of the Code. A Supervisor's failure to sign and acknowledge does not exempt the Supervisor from compliance with this Code. Any time the Code is amended, the updated version shall be distributed to all Supervisors.