

**City of Richmond Hill
Formal Code of Conduct Complaint #122024 Investigation Report of
Regional Council Member Joe Di Paola**

I. Summary

This report presents the findings of my investigation under City of Richmond Hill Council Code of Conduct for Local Boards (the “Code”) relating to the conduct of Regional Council Member Joe Di Paola (the “Respondent”) in connection with the complaint received on December 20, 2024 (the “Complaint”).

The Complaint alleged that the Respondent breached his obligations to a staff person by his conduct and by his failure to intervene in the alleged misconduct of his wife who worked in his office. The allegations engaged Rules 6 (Confidential Information), 7 (Council, Staff and Public Relations), 8 (Use of Municipal Property), 10 (Respect in the Workplace), 11 (Discrimination and Harassment), 13 (Employment of Council Member Relatives/Family Members), and 17 (Compliance) of the Code.

Importantly, the Respondent’s spouse is not subject to the Code of Conduct. I did not make any findings about her alleged conduct, so all of the allegations below should be understood to be allegations only. I have set the conduct out because the allegations highlight potential problems with the City’s policies and inform my recommendations.

After my investigation, I concluded that the Respondent did not breach the Code. However, I have exercised my discretion to report to Council because my investigation raised concerns about access to municipal offices and nepotism. I make several recommendations at the end of this report.

II. The Issues Raised in the Complaint

The Complaint raised several issues which I reformulated into three allegations:

1. an allegation that the Respondent’s spouse engaged in workplace harassment of a staff person contrary to Rules 10 and 11 of the Code (Respect in the Workplace) and (Discrimination and Harassment) for which the Respondent is responsible;
2. an allegation that the Respondent failed to intervene to stop the Respondent’s spouse’s controlling and rude behaviour against a staff person which allegedly had the effect of intimidating, undermining and disrespecting a staff person. Specifically, the complaint alleged that the Respondent’s spouse spoke to the staff person in an inappropriate manner; forbidding the staff person to speak or interact with any other staff or anyone in the workplace other than the Respondent’s spouse; cast aspersions on the staff person’s professional competence; and spread rumours that the staff person had been “speaking badly about the Respondent behind his back”. The Complaint alleges that the Respondent’s spouse repeatedly told staff that they were not doing a good job and were neglecting their duties, contrary to Rules 7.4 (d) and (e) of the Code (Council, Staff and Public Relations); and
3. an allegation that the Respondent did not adhere to the procedures and policies of the City with respect to confidential information, use of municipal property, employment of council member relatives/family members, and reprisal against an individual for

providing information to the Integrity Commissioner contrary to Rules 6, 8, 13 and 17.3 of the Code.

Some of the particulars alleged include:

- the Respondent and his wife arrived at the office together every Wednesday. The Respondent went into his office and did not engage with staff. The Respondent's spouse met with his staff to go over the schedules and other office matters.
- The Respondent granted undue power and influence to his wife within the office which fostered an unhealthy and unprofessional work environment. The Respondent's spouse is not an elected official and therefore, she should not have the authority to manage office operations or interfere in government matters.
- The Respondent's spouse directed staff to attend at the office during renovation and painting work, contrary to the Mayor's office advise that all staff members should work from home due to the smell of paint and the presence of construction workers.
- The Respondent's spouse became upset at the staff person who reported that she had sought advice about a CUPE strike from a City staff person. The Respondent's spouse allegedly told the staff person only to seek advice from the Respondent's spouse.
- The Respondent's spouse had access to a City computer and City phone and was given access to work emails and calendars which belonged to the City. The Complaint alleges that the Respondent's spouse required a staff person to blind copy her on every work email for the Respondent's office.
- The Respondent did not take any steps to intervene in his wife's intimidating behaviour and control of the office. He permitted his wife to supervise his administrative staff. The Respondent delegated the hiring of office staff, including interviews, to his spouse.
- The Respondent contacted his staff person less than 10 times in six months; instead, all communication went through the Respondent's spouse who referred to herself as "your boss" to staff members in the Respondent's office.
- After making an appointment with Human Resources to discuss the alleged harassment, the Respondent or Respondent's spouse search the staff person's phone and learned of the meeting.

III. Code Rules and Workplace Harassment Policy Engaged by the Allegations in the Complaint:

Pursuant to the Code and *Respect in the Workplace and Workplace Violence Policy*, I engaged a workplace investigator to review the allegations of harassment. I received the report and conducted an investigation in relation to the remaining Code breaches. Several of the allegations were dismissed on the basis of the investigator's credibility findings, as the investigator preferred the evidence of the respondent and other witnesses to that of the complainant.

I evaluated the alleged misconduct against each of the rules noted above. On the evidence, none of the allegations were made out.

I found as fact that:

1. The Respondent's spouse managed the Respondent's office, including managing his schedule in meetings with his staff, answering the phone, and responding to emails.
2. The Respondent's spouse entered municipal offices and the Councillors' Offices section using the Respondent's access card. She had access to City computers and

phones, but did not have access to closed meeting agendas. She was forwarded all council and committee agendas.

3. The Respondent did not tell the staff person that they could not interact or socialize with other employees at the City of Richmond Hill. The Respondent did advise the staff person not to speak to anyone in the workplace other than him and his office staff with respect to the work of his office. The Respondent's warnings were to remind the staff person that the matters discussed in the office were confidential and therefore not to be discussed outside of the office. This is an appropriate exercise of the Respondent's authority and adherence to confidentiality requirements.
4. The Respondent never heard or saw any of the allegedly intimidating or harassing behaviour alleged against his wife. He denies that it occurred.
5. The Respondent's spouse sends and receives emails with office staff. She was blind copied on emails sent by staff to others.
6. The Respondent never directed his staff to contact his spouse. The Respondent has a policy that all resident concerns, questions, complaints, or inquiries are forwarded directly to him to protect their privacy. Further, the Respondent was not aware that his spouse was being copied on emails.
7. The Respondent did not contravene the Code of Conduct or fall short of his ethical obligations as a Member of Council.

As a result of this investigation, I note:

1. A spouse or family member should not be involved in the operations of the office of a municipal Member of Council, absent an employment relationship in accordance with a nepotism policy.
2. Spouses and family members should not be provided access to any City technology, email accounts, or other non-public information.
3. Confidential information is discussed and available in the Councillor office area. While it might be appropriate for a family member to be escorted by a Member into the space if they drop in, Councillor's spouses and family members should not be regularly attending Councillor offices.

IV. Recommendations to Council

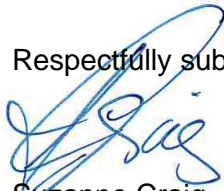
I make the following recommendations to Council:

1. That a policy be developed to ensure that only staff, volunteers, or consultants be provided use of access cards to enter municipal offices or attended internal staff events;
2. That there be a review of Council Office hiring practices that will include the principles of fairness and transparency and an update to the Nepotism Policy;

I may address any further recommendations, including Code amendments, in my next Annual Report of this Office.

Respectfully submitted,

July 7, 2025



Suzanne Craig
Integrity Commissioner