

## Code of Ethics for the Culture & Heritage Museums

As approved by the Culture and Heritage Commission - February 23, 2015

Revised - April 27, 2015

The Culture & Heritage Museums (CHM) is a family of museums in York County, SC, which includes Historic Brattonsville, the McCelvey Center, the Museum of York County and the Main Street Children's Museum. The Culture & Heritage Museums work together to create a comprehensive system of linked cultural, historical and natural heritage attractions to serve the citizens of the county and the general public.

**Guiding Principles:** CHM's Code of Ethics is guided by its organizational mission, vision, and values. By implementing these principles, our primary goal is to instill and maintain public trust and to ensure that we serve their needs above our own.

**Mission:** To communicate and preserve the natural and cultural histories of the Carolina Piedmont, inspiring a lifetime of learning.

**Vision:** To create a community that greatly values natural, historic, and cultural resources.

### Values:

1. **Authenticity:** We ensure that the knowledge that we share is accurate and supported through credible documentation or eyewitness accounts.
2. **Professionalism:** We adhere to best practices of the museum field in the care of resources under our stewardship.
3. **Meaningful visitor experiences:** We strive to create memorable experiences enabling those we serve to walk away from our museums not only with new information but with inspiration that they will carry with them throughout their lives.
4. **Respect for those we represent:** As a cultural museum we tell the story of people from various backgrounds and life experiences both past and present. We have an obligation to tell their stories in a fair and balanced manner that fosters greater understanding of their unique perspectives.
5. **Respect for our natural world:** As a natural history museum we have a responsibility to show respect for the natural world and to lead by example.
6. **Transparency:** We ensure our organizational meetings, documents, and records beyond those that pertain to our legal requirements or breach the trust of our donors are available to the public.
7. **Stewardship:** We recognize that all of our assets are held on behalf of the public good and that it is our responsibility to ensure that they are used wisely.

8. **Donor Rights:** We believe all donors should be valued and informed. Promises should be delivered and expectations of confidentiality should be met to the fullest extent of the law.

**Ethical Duties:** The following set of ethical guidelines is tailored to the museum field in general and to the CHM specifically. Please take the time to review this document. Upon completion of this process you will be asked to give your signature attesting to the fact that you have read, understand, and subscribe to this ethics policy and will incorporate its principles into all aspects of your professional life with the CHM.

**Governance:** The Culture and Heritage Commission comprises seven Commissioners who are appointed by the York County Council and who volunteer their time, expertise and energy to guide this organization. The Commission carries out its governance responsibilities through an Executive Director, hired to manage the operations of CHM and its professional staff. The Commission holds legal and fiduciary responsibility for the protection and enrichment of CHM's collections and related documentation and is the authority to approve acquisitions and deaccessions for CHM. As appointees of elected officials, the Commissioners are required to comply with all state laws applicable to appointed officials.

**Conflict of Interest:** In accordance with County policy, employees are required by state law to remove themselves from possible conflict of interest actions or decisions (YC Policy p. 18). It is the policy of York County that outside employment may not conflict or adversely affect an employee's work with the County. An employee currently engaged in or considering outside employment must report such activity or interest in writing to their department head and may not continue or begin such employment without the department head's approval (YC Policy p. 18). Commissioners are required to disclose any potential conflict of interest to the Commission as a whole. If the Commission determines a conflict exists, that commissioner may not participate in action or discussion of matters directly related to the conflict.

**Gifts and Gratuities:** The acceptance of money, gifts, favors or other items of value by an employee from any citizen, personnel or firm engaged either directly or indirectly in business with the county/museum is strictly forbidden (YC Policy p. 17).

**Use of CHM/County Property:** Staff members are prohibited from using any collections, resources, property, or materials of the CHM or York County for any use other than that of official business (YC Policy, Rules of Conduct, p. 12).

**Collections:** The Culture & Heritage Museums collects and preserves objects and archival materials that are pertinent for communicating the natural and cultural histories of York County and the Carolina Piedmont so that it may serve the citizens of the county and the public.

The CHM Collections Management Policy establishes the professional and ethical practices that guide how the organization acquires, preserves, uses, deaccessions, and manages the Museums' collections. When acquiring new items for the permanent, library or education and living history collections, CHM adheres to this policy and legal regulations regarding the protection of natural and cultural properties as recommended by AAM and the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections.

Acquisitions considered for the permanent collections must be relevant to the Museums' mission, be of stable physical quality, be free of any unethical history of ownership, and must not pose a hazard to the staff, the public or the rest of the collection. Additionally, the Museums must be capable of professionally caring for the objects, be able to ensure legal transfer of title of all acquisitions to CHM, and where applicable be able to acquire full copyright for appropriate items.

It is the intent of the CHM that objects in the permanent collections be retained as long as they are known to be authentic, relevant to the mission and programs of CHM, and are not broken, damaged, or deteriorated beyond repair, and as long as they can be properly and safely stored, preserved, and used. However, should these circumstances change; an item may be recommended for deaccession after deliberate and scrupulous examination of the object's condition, history, and application to the mission.

Commissioners and staff of the CHM, museum volunteers, and their immediate families are restricted from acquiring any deaccessioned object through trade, transfer or sale. If deaccessioned objects are sold, the income will be placed in a special account to be used for the purchase of objects for the collections, or for the direct care of the collections.

Representatives of CHM and the Commission will not appraise or estimate the value of objects for donors, institutions or members of the public. Furthermore, CHM staff and the Commission will not provide public statements about the monetary value of any object in the permanent collection.

No CHM staff member, Commission member or volunteer may directly compete with the institution in any personal collecting activity. Additionally, none of the above mentioned individuals may use his/her museum affiliation to promote personal gain through the buying and selling of objects similar to or related to objects collected by CHM for profit.

**Museum Management Practices:** The Culture & Heritage Commission and Museums will follow professional standards, ethics, York County policies and procedures, and applicable laws in the management of CHM resources, which include but are not limited to fundraising,

commercial enterprises, the creation of scholarly material, professional relationships and personnel practices. York County is an Equal Opportunity Employer; all employment policies and practices are carried out without regard to race, sex, religion, color, political affiliation, national origin, age or physical disability (YC Policy, p. 7). Each museum employee has been hired by the CHM due to his/her ability to carry out duties deemed necessary for the fulfillment of the organization's mission. They are chosen over other candidates because they possess a set of professional as well as personal traits that set them apart.

CHM staff and Commissioners will perform their duties professionally with coworkers, management, volunteers, Commission members and visitors. In addition, while outside of the museum environment, all agents of CHM are held accountable for the ways they represent, whether officially or not, the organization and the County within the larger community.

Commissioners, staff and volunteers involved in the soliciting of funds, gifts-in-kind or other contributions on behalf of CHM must do so with honesty as to the need for such donations and in turn once received only use them for the donor's intended purpose(s). Gifts should be solicited without the promise of opportunities or advantages not offered to all donors by previously defined guidelines. Commissioners, staff and volunteers should hold confidential and leave intact all lists, records, and documents compiled and/or acquired in connection with their fundraising efforts.

CHM gift shops, facility rentals, publishing and all other commercial ventures should be in keeping with the institution's mission. They should be relevant to the collections and to the basic educational purposes of CHM while not compromising the quality of either. In arranging for the manufacture and sale of replicas, reproductions or other commercial products adapted from a collection piece, all aspects of the venture must be carried out in a manner that will not discredit either the integrity of the organization or the intrinsic value of the original object. Great care must be taken to permanently identify such items for what they are. Staff must ensure their accuracy and high quality of manufacture and that they comply with all relevant legislation. Finally, these products should represent a good value for the consumer's money.

Staff is encouraged to write and publish both for the institution and on their own. Any and all materials or items, developed, written, designed, drawn, painted, constructed or installed by staff while carrying out their responsibilities as employees of CHM are considered to belong to the institution with CHM retaining all legal rights. Furthermore, CHM is entitled to receive any and all fees, royalties or honoraria earned in conjunction with any and all said property.

Employees may not duplicate materials developed at CHM by them or any other staff member, volunteer, contractor, or consultant for the purpose of personal benefit through plagiarism or

resale. County policy prohibits the unauthorized or improper use or disclosure of county records (YC Policy, p. 12).

**Agreement & Disclosure Form**

I have carefully reviewed the CHM Ethics Policy and do hereby agree to adhere to its requirements. Nothing in this document is intended to release me from any additional obligations required under York County Human Resource policies.

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**Print Name**

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**Signature**

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**Date**