

Order of Complaint Proceedings

1. Identification of Parties (Commission v. Respondent and the Complainant).
2. Evidence of Notice given to Parties and Complainant.
3. Opening Statement by the Commission or Commission's Counsel.
4. Respondent is asked by the Commission Chairman how do you plead: not guilty or guilty of the alleged Ethics Ordinance violation? Or nolo contendere?
 - If the plea is not guilty, the process moves to step 5.
 - If the plea is guilty or nolo contendere, the Respondent may make a statement and the process moves to step 13.
 - At any point in the process prior to the Ethics Commission making its final ruling in step 14, the Respondent may change their plea.
5. Opening statement by Respondent, once sworn in, or by Respondent's Counsel.
6. Respondent's preliminary Motion for Dismissal for Failure to Meet Burden of Evidence and any other preliminary motions will be presented to and decided by the Chairman of the Ethics Commission. Motions shall be filed fifteen (15) days before the scheduled hearing, except for a motion to dismiss or its equivalent, after the presentation by Commission Counsel.
7. Presentation by the Commission or Commission's Counsel, and any testimony by Complainant or other witnesses against the Respondent.
8. Cross examination of anyone testifying against the Respondent.
9. Presentation by Respondent and Respondent's witnesses, once sworn in.
10. Cross examination of the Respondent and any of the Respondent's witnesses who provide testimony.
11. Closing Statement by Respondent.
12. Closing statement by Commission or Commission's Counsel.
13. Deliberation by Commission in Executive Session.
14. Decision by the Commission in open session with voting in open session. The Ethics Commission may also make comments in conjunction with announcing of their decision:
 - **Basis for decision.** The decision of the Commission shall be based on evidence presented during the complaint hearing proceedings and the provisions of the Laurel Ethics Ordinance. The final decision shall be in writing and signed by the Chairman.

- **Final decision.** A final decision by the Commission that no violation of the Ethics Ordinance occurred shall remain confidential and shall not be disclosed, other than to the Complainant and the Respondent, unless the Hearing was held in open session. A fully-redacted version shall be placed on the Ethics Commission Laurel web page, www.cityoflaurel.org/1458/Laurel-Ethics-Commission for informational purposes.
- **Published decision.** A final decision by the Commission that a violation of the Ethics Ordinance did occur shall be made available for disclosure to the public whether or not the hearing was closed or open.
 - A final decision by the Commission that a violation did not occur in a hearing in which the Respondent requested be public shall be made available for disclosure to the public.
 - A final decision by the Commission that a violation did not occur in which the hearing was closed shall be available to the public with all identifying names and information redacted.
- **Plea bargains.** While the Ethics Commission is under no obligation to accept plea bargains, it is willing to consider them at any point prior to making a final decision if it believes one is appropriate, fair, and would achieve the cause of justice in a given case.