

**New York Upstate Chapter of the American Planning Association
Annual Conference – October 2, 2009**

Serving Several Masters: Sticky Points in the AICP Code of Ethics



**Judith M. Green, Ph.D., AICP, Principal
GreenWoods Associates**

**David W. Woods, Ph.D., AICP, Principal
GreenWoods Associates
Region 1 Director, APA Board**

**Ethical Principles in Planning (May 1992) and
the AICP Code of Ethics (June 2005) agree that
all planners –**

**professional planners, elected or appointed
officials, and other citizens participating in
planning processes –**

**must serve a hierarchy of interests or
“masters”...**

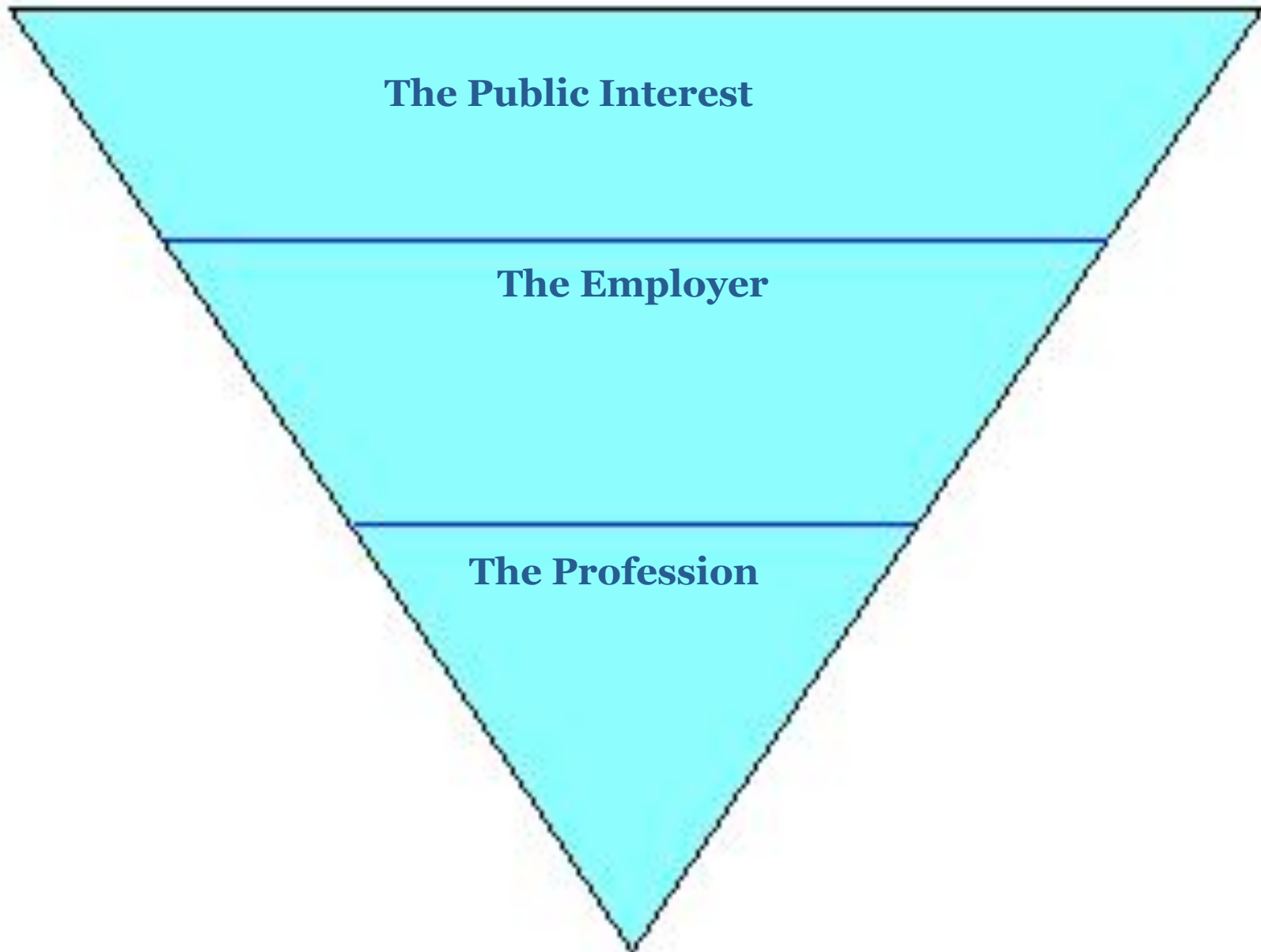
www.planning.org/aicp/ethics

(1) The Public Interest

(2) The Employer

**(3) The Planning Profession,
including Our Colleagues**

Ethical Principles in Planning and AICP Code of Ethics



However, in real world planning practice,

- What these interests are, and**
- How they can be reconciled**

is often difficult to figure out. This is why we need ...

An Ethical Algorithm for Serving Several Masters

**Imagine the five fingers of your
hand, starting with your thumb,
the root of strength...**

**Remember you're there *as a planner*,
whether you're there as**

- 1. A professional planner**
- 2. An elected official or appointed
planning official, or**
- 3. A citizen participant in planning
processes**

**which aim to build better, more
inclusive communities.**

**Move to your index finger for
the first rule:**

- 1. Always preserve and advance
The Public Interest**

a. Follow the *law*

**(unless it violates or ignores
b, c, d, or e below)**

b. Respect *human rights*

(including citizens' right to participate in planning for their future in meaningful ways, and on the basis of full, clear, and accurate information).

**c. Respect the beauty,
integrity and stability of
the *natural* natural and
built *environment*.**

**d. Plan for the future needs
of present and future
*generations.***

**e. Plan for a higher quality of
community living for all,**

**Especially those whose *social
equity interests* have not
been met.**

**Move to your middle finger
for the second rule:**

**Preserve and advance the
*Employer's Interest.***

a. Fulfill the *purposes* of the whole organization ...

diligently, creatively, and competently.

b. Fulfill your *supervisor's directives* at the highest level of professional quality possible in the context,

Unless doing so violates the Public Interest (above) or c or d (below).

c. Fulfill your *role* in the organization diligently, creatively, and competently.

d. Treat *all other members* of the organization, its suppliers, consultants, related organizations, and the public professionally and with respect.

**Move to your ring finger
for the third rule:
Preserve and advance
the interests of the Planning
Profession and Our
Colleagues.**

**a. Always act in ways that
reflect credit to the
profession**

- knowledgeability, proficiency, competence
- thoughtfulness, reasonableness, balance
- independence, integrity, confidentiality
- transparency, responsibility (word/obligations)
- honesty, fairness, inclusiveness
- timeliness, efficiency, thriftiness

b. Actively contribute to educating others about the profession.

c. Strive continuously to improve your knowledge and skills in the profession.

d. Strive to assist your colleagues, to plan for the future of the profession, to increase the diversity of its membership, and assist disadvantaged groups and communities.

e. Seek always to contribute to the elevation of community life at local, national, and international levels.

**Move to your little finger
for the fifth rule:**

**Try to reconcile the interests
if possible; if not, act to serve
the higher interest while
seeking advice or mediation
toward reconciliation.**

Case #1

The Great Lawn Experience

Case #2

**Can I Get a
*Life?***

Case #3

**Advancing the
*What?***