Legislators can go hunting and golfing with lobbyists, but only if the legislators pay for the privilege, the Board of Ethics for Elected Officials decided Friday.

The board spent hours interpreting in great detail state laws regulating leisure activities involving legislators and people who try to influence legislation.

At one point, the board had to make a distinction between dancing and duck hunting.

Board members eventually voted to ask the Legislature to amend the state ethics code to make it more clear.

Until then, the board ruled, legislators invited to hunting trips hosted by lobbyists are in violation of the ethics law unless they pay for their own transportation, plus a reasonable hunting fee and a lodging fee if they stay overnight at a hunting camp.

Legislators playing golf with lobbyists also must pay green fees at private country clubs, unless the fees are small, such as $2 or $4, the board said.

The state ethics code generally prohibits government officials from taking gifts from people who have dealings with the government — including people who seek to pass or defeat legislation.

The ethics board recently ruled that legislators can’t go on hunting trips paid for by organizations, such as oil companies, that employ lobbyists. Lobbyists and legislators have been asking the board to clarify that opinion.

The ethics code specifically exempts food and drink from the gift prohibition, which means lobbyists can take legislators to dinner.

Also exempted is incidental entertainment related to the food and drink, such as a floor show at a night club.

Hunting is a form of entertainment in Louisiana and should be allowed under the exceptions to the code, Carmack Blackmon, a lobbyist for railroads, told the ethics board.

“What’s the difference between dancing and duck hunting?” asked board member Robert Roland.

But the board eventually decided that