

# COMMITTEE PROTOCOL

## *Definition and Purposes*

Advisory committees provide recommendations and advice to City staff and Council. Committee members may contribute to the development of policies, programs and initiatives that enhance the municipality's quality of life.

These appointments, which are concurrent with the Council term, allow local citizens from various backgrounds to participate in local government. The City can benefit greatly from citizen volunteer's expertise enthusiasm and civic pride.

Some advisory committees may also be involved in the organization and promotion of special events or activities.

The goals, objectives and purpose of the advisory committee will be contained in one or more of the following: the advisory committee's terms of reference, the by-law that established the committee, a Council report recommending the formation of the committee or a resolution of Council.

## *Authority*

The nature of advisory committee recommendations to Council is purely advisory. The committee has no authority, per se. Council may approve, amend, refer or propose other resolutions, as Council deems appropriate.

As a result, committee members should not take it personally if Council disregards one of their recommendations. Council members have to weigh various competing interests.

Advisory committees shall not reconsider, recommend or advise on a matter that has been decided by Council, unless directed by Council.

## *Responsibilities & Expectations of Advisory Committee Members*

Advisory Committee Members are expected to:

- Familiarize one's self with the mandate and/or terms of reference of the advisory committee
- Understand the committee's advisory relationship to Council
- Strive to attend all scheduled meetings
- Prepare for meetings by reading agendas and any background information supplied
- Actively participate in the discussion and decision making process
- Undertake any work assigned, including special projects and research, in between meetings
- Be open-minded and allow for a variety of opinions to be heard

- Respect the individual worth and dignity of other advisory committee members, and maintain a high degree of professionalism
- Ask questions, and seek clarification through the staff, the Council liaison or chair
- Respect the role and responsibility of the Chair
- Respect that actions taken and recommendations shall reflect the majority view of the advisory committee
- Respect the decisions and finality of Council
- Clearly identify any items of pecuniary interest before they are discussed, and refrain from discussion and voting on the same
- Have fun!

### ***Responsibilities & Expectations of the Chair***

All of the responsibilities and expectations of committee members apply to the Chair. Additional responsibilities and expectations include:

- Facilitate the meeting by identifying the order of proceedings and speakers
- Ensure active participation by all advisory committee members
- Be open-minded and encourage a variety of opinions to be heard
- Maintain decorum and ensure fairness and accountability
- Respect the individual worth and dignity of other advisory committee members, and maintain a high degree of professionalism
- Generally, refrain from the discussion until all committee members and Council liaison, if not the Chair, have had an opportunity to speak on a matter
- The Chair has no authority to make decisions on his or her own, he or she can only run a meeting in a fair and efficient manner so that the will of the majority prevails after the minority has had a fair chance to present its point of view
- Assist staff liaison when possible or when requested

### ***Responsibilities & Expectations of the Council Liaison***

Some expectations and responsibilities that would be unique to Council members on an Advisory Committee are:

- Ensure that advisory committee members are fairly and appropriately engaged
- Ensure the staff liaison is not unfairly taking on tasks outside the general parameters of their position
- Liaise between Council and the advisory committee, providing information and clarification
- Ensure advisory committee members are aware of Council issues that may affect the goals and objectives of an advisory committee, including past actions of Council
- When necessary and appropriate, explain the rationale behind the Advisory Committee's recommendation when brought forward to Council
- Assist staff liaison, especially with regard to reports to Council

### ***Responsibilities & Expectations of the Staff Liaison***

Each Advisory Committee will have one or more staff members.

Staff members will be assisting Advisory Committees as part of their work duties. If the staff member feels that the activities of the Advisory Committee are going beyond the parameters of their position, they are to discuss the matter with their superior.

Responsibilities and expectations unique to the staff liaison:

- Provide an administrative, secretarial or policy advice role to the Advisory Committee
- Remain impartial to all committee members
- Do not participate in voting; the staff liaison is not an Advisory Committee member
- Be mindful of any recommendations, proposed by the committee, that contradict with the municipality's by-laws or policies. Attempt to reconcile any conflicts. If reconciliation is not possible, point out the conflicts in the report.

### ***Reporting***

All reports to Council will be prepared by the staff liaison and/or Department Director. The reports will reflect the recommendations of the advisory committee mindful of the policies, practices and by-laws of the municipality.

Advisory committee member(s) shall rely exclusively on appointed staff support to communicate and dispense with recommendations and actions taken by advisory committees, and shall not intervene in the administrative practices.

### ***Attendance***

Generally, advisory committees meet once a month. Nonetheless, subcommittee or working groups formed to carry out the activities of the committee may necessitate a more frequent time commitment.

If an advisory committee member is unable to attend a meeting, they should inform the staff liaison.

If an advisory committee member feels they cannot commit the requisite time to the committee, they should resign to allow others who may be interested in participating in the committee.

If an advisory committee member is absent for three consecutive, regularly scheduled meetings without explanation, the committee member will be deemed to have resigned from the committee.

### ***Behaviour***

Behavioural expectations are listed in the responsibilities section. In addition, the following guidelines should be noted by advisory committee members:

Some advisory committees are afforded a profile in the community. As a result, members may be engaged in activities that put them in direct contact with citizens and various organizations. Advisory committee members shall reflect a professional, courteous manner when interacting with the public.

Advisory committee members are to follow the Corporate Values Charter approved by Council.

The Council liaison and advisory committee chair play an important role in ensuring that a functional relationship is developed, and in ensuring the integrity of committee members is not impinged.

Conflict is often a constructive part of the group decision-making process. When conflict becomes ongoing, inappropriate, unconstructive, or offensive, there may be a need to intervene with an appropriate dispute resolution mechanism.

### ***Communications***

Communications emanating from an advisory committee should not be contradictory to the policies and by-laws of the municipality or its Council.

Any communication of a policy nature shall be recommended to Council for their ratification.

Letters of thank you or recognition or correspondences related to the advisory committee's mandate do not have to be vetted through Council.

If a staff liaison is uncomfortable with a proposed communication from the advisory committee they should direct it to their department head for guidance.

Unless approved by the committee or Council, an advisory committee member should not speak on behalf of the committee.

In a public forum or publication, clearly identify whether you are speaking in your capacity as an advisory committee member, or as an independent citizen, where appropriate.