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Town of Concord APP #10

Town Board, Committee, and Task Force Appointment Policy

The Select Board and Town Manager have jointly adopted this policy concerning the appointment of members to Town boards, committees, and task forces. Please refer to this policy when considering or suggesting an individual for appointment to a Town board, committee, or task force.

Distribution: All Department Heads
All Committee, Board and Task Force Chairs
Town Clerk

I. General

This policy has been jointly adopted by the Select Board and Town Manager, and is intended to cover all committees, boards, commissions and task forces (each, a "Committee") appointed by the Town Manager and Select Board (each, an "Appointing Authority"). This policy does not apply to Town employees.

II. Powers and Duties

Effective local government requires that all Committees respect the duties and responsibilities of other Committees and coordinate their activities to the greatest extent possible. It is in the overall best interest of the Town that each Committee carries out its responsibilities in a consistent and professional manner that is in harmony with the general policies promulgated by the Select Board.

The powers and duties of some Committees appointed by the Select Board or Town Manager are governed by State statute. These include: the Board of Appeals, Planning Board, Historic District Commission, Board of Health, Natural Resources Commission, and others. Once appointed by the Select Board or Town Manager, these Committees operate with a high degree of autonomy. However, it is in the best interests of the Town that these Committees be guided by the general policies promulgated by the Select Board to the extent possible.

Other Committees appointed by the Select Board or Town Manager serve as, among other things, advisors to the Select Board or Town Manager in the performance of their respective duties to the public. These Committees have the powers and duties delegated to them in their specific charges. Committees may be called upon to represent the Town in dealing with other local, regional, or State agencies to the extent requested by their Appointing Authority. When doing so, they shall take positions on all issues consistent with the views of the Select Board and Town Manager, and they shall keep their Appointing Authority fully informed concerning their activities.

III. Officers of Committees, Boards, and Task Forces

Each Committee shall annually elect from among its members a Chair and a Clerk. Certain Committees may also find it desirable to elect a Vice-Chair who may act in the absence of the Chair. In the case of new Committees, or Committees that have become inactive, the Appointing Authority may appoint a chair pro-tem to serve until the Committee itself elects a Chair for the balance of the current year.

Except in unusual circumstances, the chairmanship and the clerkship should rotate yearly amongst the Committee membership.

IV. Open Meeting Law and Minutes

All Committees shall operate in accordance with the Open Meeting Law (MGL Ch. 39, sect. 23a-c) and shall keep minutes of their proceedings. Each Committee shall establish its own procedures for approval and submission of minutes to the Town House on a timely basis. Committees are strongly urged to prepare, review and approve minutes as expeditiously as possible in order to maximize the public's access to information concerning Committee activity. In most instances, Committee minutes should be reviewed and approved within six weeks of the original meeting date. All Committees shall submit electronically a copy of approved minutes to the Town Clerk and to the Select Board immediately upon approval.

Committees are reminded that "draft" copies of the Committee's minutes are considered a public record and must be made available to the public upon request, even when the Committee has not yet had the opportunity to review and adopt the minutes.

Upon the dissolution of any Committee, either by action of the Appointing Authority, or pursuant to an expiration date provided in the Committee's charge, all records, documents, correspondence and files concerning the Committee's work shall be promptly turned over to the Town Clerk for appropriate filing and archival storage.

V. Participation in Town Government

Effective Town government requires active and informed citizen participation. The work of every Committee is inter-dependent with that of others. To foster informed decision making in the Town, the Select Board and Town Manager believe it appropriate that every Committee have as full representation of its membership as possible at the following regular governmental functions:

- Town government Coordination Meetings (September & December)
- Finance Committee budget hearings
- Planning Board hearings on Town Meeting warrant articles
- Select Board's hearings on Town Meeting warrant articles
- Town Meeting

The objective is not to enforce uniformity or adherence to a majority view, but to assure understanding of all issues relating to the work of the Committee on which an individual serves and an understanding of Town government in general. Broad participation is essential to maintain an open Town Meeting and to avoid domination by those having only a limited range of knowledge or special interests.

VI. Conflict of Interest

All Committee members are subject to the requirements of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 268A, Conduct of Public Employees. The statute covers:

- (a) Gifts or receipt of compensation or gratuities from anyone other than the Town
- (b) Offers or promises to influence official acts
- (c) Financial interest in contracts or other particular matters
- (d) Acting as agent or attorney before a Town Committee
- (e) Unfair advantage in relation to a particular matter

If a prospective Committee member has any question concerning a potential conflict of interest under MGL ch. 268A, the member shall raise the question in advance of appointment. Those members currently serving should discuss questions of conflict with the Committee chair and the Appointing Authority as soon as possible. The State Ethics Commission is a useful resource for information concerning the application of the law, and Committee members are expected to follow guidance provided by the State Ethics Commission. Subject to review by the State Ethics Commission, the Appointing Authority will make the final determination concerning conflict of interest, with the assistance of Town Counsel as appropriate.

In addition, all Committee members must avoid the appearance of conflict of interest in all matters coming before the Committee. Committee members shall seek guidance from the State Ethics Commission as appropriate, and file with their Committee chair and the Appointing Authority written notice of facts potentially creating the appearance of a conflict of interest as required.

VII. Appointment Policy and Procedures

(a) General

It is the policy of the Select Board and Town Manager to seek the best qualified persons to serve on each Committee. The Select Board and Town Manager will endeavor to develop a pool of persons interested in serving on each such Committee from at least the following sources:

1. Green cards on file
2. Personal knowledge
3. Recommendations from Town organizations or individuals
4. Suggestions from the Committee having a vacancy
5. Suggestion by prospective appointee(s)
6. Research of skills available in Town
7. Individual responses to publicity regarding vacancies (new green cards)

It is the policy of the Select Board and Town Manager to enlarge the general pool of applicants through active solicitation of Town organizations and through publicity in the press and on community access television. The timing and extent of specific active solicitations shall be determined by the Appointing Authority based on its judgment as to appropriateness and need.

In accordance with the vote on Article 47 of the 1978 Annual Town Meeting, the Select Board and Town Manager shall make a special effort to seek out roughly equal numbers of women and men as candidates for appointments over which they have authority, and will make appointments in accordance with the Massachusetts Equal Rights Amendment which states, in part, that "Equality under the law shall not be denied or abridged because of sex, race, color, creed, sexual orientation or national origin."

Term of Office

8. Unless otherwise prescribed by statute, Town Meeting vote, or specific Committee charge, three years shall be the standard term of office for Committee members.
9. Except as provided in section VII(c) below, those appointed to a three-year term as a full member of a Committee shall be limited to two (2) full consecutive terms.
10. Except as provided in section VII(c) below, those appointed to a full-member Committee term of five (5) years or longer shall be limited to one (1) full term.
11. A partial term to fill a vacancy shall not be considered to be a full term.
12. Before reappointment to a second term, the individual contribution of the member's value to the Committee and his or her attendance record shall be reviewed by the Committee chair. Attendance of less than 75% of all Committee meetings shall prejudice reappointment.
13. All terms, unless prescribed by statute, shall terminate at the end of the month following Town Meeting, or May 31st, whichever is earlier.
14. The terms of office on Committees shall be set on a staggered basis in the interest of fostering continuity of knowledge and experience on all Committees. The Appointing Authority shall determine the year in which a given term expires at the time of appointment.
Exception: *Ad hoc* committees appointed for a specific responsibility, at which time the charge to the Committee should include a specific time frame for submission of the Committee's final report and dissolution of the Committee.
15. With the consent of the Committee chair, a Committee member may take a leave of absence from Committee meetings and responsibilities not to exceed 90 days. For an absence longer than 90 days, the Committee member should resign and otherwise face removal under section VII(l) below.
16. Each Committee member shall hold office until his or her successor has been appointed and qualifies, unless his or her office shall become vacant by reason of resignation or removal.
17. In the event of a declared emergency and if the Moderator reschedules Town Meeting after May 31, all appointed members of committee whose terms would otherwise expire, shall remain in office until the close of the rescheduled Town Meeting.

(b) Appointments for Additional Terms

Members who have served a three-year term on the Records & Archives Committee may be re-appointed to additional terms indefinitely. For other Committees, the Appointing Authority may re-appoint a Committee member to serve one or more terms on the Committee beyond what is permitted under section VII(b) above where one or more of the following obtains:

1. Through service on the Committee, the member has developed extensive and valuable background knowledge and experience concerning specific matters before the Committee that are expected to be ongoing Committee matters in the future and which will be difficult adequately to pass on to new members.
2. A Committee member has skills and expertise, (such as an uncommon advanced degree in a field directly relevant to the Committee's charge) that make the member's continued service on the Committee of special value to the Town.
3. The departure of the member from the Committee will result in an absence of important institutional knowledge or know-how regarding the ongoing activities of the Committee that will not be furnished by other Committee members, such as where all members of the Committee would be new appointees if the member in question is not reappointed.

It is intended that re-appointments under this section VII(c) shall be rare. In each such case, the appointment shall specifically reference this section of this Appointment Policy.

(c) Dual Committee Appointments

In general, individuals shall be limited to service on only one Committee at a time, especially in the case of a statutory or regulatory Committee. Exceptions shall be made for instances in which, by law or specific Committee charge, a Committee member serves as a representative on another Committee (e.g. the Board of Health representative on the Council on Aging), or serves on a joint Committee formed from other Committees.

(d) Committee Transfers

In general, a member of one Committee shall only be considered for appointment to another Committee upon completion of the current Committee term of office.

(e) Eligibility for Appointment

All residents of the Town of Concord aged 18 and over are eligible for appointment, except the following:

1. Town employees whose service on a given Committee, in the judgment of the Appointing Authority, would create the appearance of a conflict of interest. Example: an employee of the Public Works Department should not be appointed to the Public Works Commission, but may, however, be appointed to the Council on Aging, Recreation Commission, or other Committee where appointment would not create an appearance of conflict.
2. The Town Manager, Concord Public School and CCRHS Administrators, and Town department heads (these individuals exert a significant influence over public policy by virtue of their positions, but may be eligible for ad hoc Committees where such representation is required by the charge). Additionally, municipal officials may serve on a committee where their office is specified as a member by the committee charge.
3. Elected Municipal Officials (Select Board, School Committee members, Town Moderator, Housing Authority Commissioners), except that elected officials may serve on temporary, ad hoc Committees.
4. Relatives, spouses, or business associates of existing Committee members whose appointment, in the judgment of the Appointing Authority, would create the appearance of a concentration of power or viewpoint or a conflict of interest.

(f) Criteria for Selection

Actual appointments from the pool of applicants shall be made by the Select Board and Town Manager on the basis of:

1. the level of applicant's interest in serving and interest in the work of the Committee;
2. the need for diversity on the Committee, taking into account the educational and professional background of the applicant, as well as the need for diversity among all committee members in terms of neighborhood representation, gender, age, and other demographic characteristics.
3. special skills needed by a particular Committee.

(g) Residency

In most instances, Committee members should be residents of the Town of Concord. There may be occasional exceptions when an individual's unique skill or experience supports the appointment of a non-resident and would be beneficial to the Committee's work; however, this should be relatively rare. Non-residents shall not be eligible for appointment to any Committee responsible for exercising statutory or regulatory authority.

In the event a Committee member becomes a resident of another community, the member or the Committee chair shall promptly notify the Appointing Authority. The Appointing Authority may, upon the request of the Committee chair, permit the non-resident member to continue to serve until the subsequent May 31, except in the case of statutory and regulatory Committees.

(h) Role of Committee in Appointments

Each Committee is expected to:

1. Encourage individuals to complete green cards
2. State the qualifications they are looking for in appointments
3. Make suggestions to the Appointing Authority on potential members

Committees may invite prospective members to attend meetings to familiarize themselves with the work of the Committee. Committees shall not make any representation to candidates concerning the likelihood of appointment nor provide their suggestions on candidates to the Appointing Authority with any rank order, nor take any vote with respect to candidates.

(i) Selection Procedures

1. The individual member and the Committee chair shall notify the Appointing Authority in writing as soon as a vacancy occurs.
2. A notice will be prepared for release to the press and for public posting pursuant to the 1996 Town Meeting vote under Article #12.
3. No action will be taken on a vacancy for at least two weeks after the announcement of the vacancy.
4. For Select Board appointments, nominations shall be made at one Board meeting, and formal action will not be taken until a subsequent Board meeting.
5. For Town Manager appointments that are approved by the Select Board, the request for appointment shall be made at one Board meeting, and action on the request shall be taken not later than the next Board meeting.
6. Except in unusual circumstances, the Appointing Authority shall endeavor to make appointments within two months of the announcement of a vacancy.

(j) Orientation Procedure

Upon appointment, all Committee members shall present themselves at the Town Clerk’s office in order to take the oath of office. The Town will provide the new Committee member with an informational packet referred to as the “Committee Handbook” which shall include: a copy of the Committee charge or relevant administrative code, and copies of the Open Meeting, Public Records, and Conflict of Interest laws.

It shall be the responsibility of the Committee chair to provide for the orientation of new members to familiarize them with the work of the Committee, current projects, and Town government operations in general as they may impact the Committee’s work.

(k) Removal from Committees

As provided in the Town Charter, the Select Board may remove, after such hearing as the Select Board deem advisable, any Committee members appointed by the Board. Further, the Town Manager may remove any Committee member appointed by the Town Manager for cause, with or without a hearing. “Cause” shall include, for example, the repeated failure to attend Committee meetings, the commission of an ethical violation (as found by the State Ethics Commission) or a violation of the Open Meeting Law, as found by the Office of the Attorney General, if the Town Manager believes such action to be necessary to preserve public confidence in Town government.

VIII. Conflicts with Law

In case of a conflict between any provision of this Appointment Policy and the laws of The Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the Town Charter, Massachusetts law or the Town Charter, as the case may be, shall take precedence.