

Town of Orford Officials

Code of Conduct

The Town of Orford desires to operate in a manner that demonstrates a high level of public service, and to avoid circumstances that may create the appearance of impropriety or otherwise undermine this stated objective. Accordingly, members of the Selectboard, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Conservation Commission, Cemetery Commission, and other Town Boards, Commissions, or Committees (hereinafter "Officials") should conduct the business of the Town of Orford in accordance with this Code of Conduct.

Public Service is a Public Trust.

The following guidelines are presented for Officials to consider when facilitating the business of the Town:

Ethics

This Code of Conduct expresses standards for the ethical conduct expected of Officials, who themselves have primary responsibility to assure that ethical standards are met so the public can have full confidence in the integrity of their government. The chairs of boards, committees and commissions have an additional responsibility to intervene when actions or conduct that appears to be in violation of the Code of Conduct are brought to their attention.

Integrity

Officials should demonstrate the characteristics of honesty, integrity, and positive leadership as a role model in their interactions with the public.

Civility

Officials should treat other people with respect and attentiveness. Officials should refrain from interrupting other speakers, making personal comments, or any other comments not germane to Town business, or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings.

Alternate Viewpoints

Officials should be fair and open-minded about issues and allow opportunities for the expression of viewpoints or opinions by others.

Common Courtesy

Officials should make meetings congenial, collegial, and collaborative. They should show common courtesy and be respectful of differences of opinion. Personal conduct of Officials should avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Officials should refrain from threatening conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other officials, staff, employees, or the public.

Preparation

Officials should be prepared for meetings by reviewing any materials in advance of the meeting.

Participation

Officials should actively participate in deliberations.

Attendance

Officials should attend meetings to the greatest extent possible, otherwise they should notify the Chair in advance to request that an absence be excused.

Attention

Officials should attend to the remarks of others during a meeting, including commentary received from members of the public, staff, and other Town Officials.

Process

Officials should perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order that have been established by their respective board, commission, or committee and govern the deliberation of public policy issues, meaningful involvement of the public, and the ability of Town employees to implement policy decisions authorized by the Selectboard.

Representation

Officials should represent the official policies or positions of the Town to the best of their ability when authorized and designated as delegates for this purpose. If presenting individual opinions and positions, Officials should explicitly state they do not represent the Town of Orford nor allow an inference that they do.

Confidentiality

Officials should maintain the confidentiality of sensitive, proprietary, or other legally protected information, including, but not limited to, the advice of legal counsel or protected personnel information. Officials should neither disclose confidential information without proper authorization, nor use such information to advance personal, financial, or other private interests. The unauthorized or unpermitted use or disclosure of such information can undermine the interests of the Town and may result in liability for the Town.

Misuse of information

Officials should not use or disclose information obtained in an official capacity that results in any type of personal profit or pecuniary gain not otherwise available to members of the public.

Conflict of interest

Officials should assure their independence and impartiality on behalf of the common good. Officials should not participate in any government decisions in which they have a significant financial interest or where they have an organizational responsibility or personal relationship that may have even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

Undue Influence

Officials should not seek to exert any undue influence or interference in the exercise of the official duties of other Town Officials or employees. In the event Officials have legitimate personal interests in the outcome of a government function and act as a private citizen in pursuit of that objective, then they should thereafter disqualify themselves as an Official in any such matters.

Gifts

Officials should not collect any fees, salaries, favors, or other payments in exchange for work performed within the scope of official duties, except as provided by Town ordinance or State law. This provision should not be construed to prohibit Officials from accepting any bona fide incidental gift less than \$25 value, community award, or recognition.

Endorsements

Officials have an individual right to endorse candidates for elected offices. However, it is inappropriate to mention endorsements during public meetings or other official Town functions.

Adopted by the Orford Selectboard on 05/08/2024
Amended by the Orford Selectboard on 05/22/2024