



MUNICIPAL ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Definition and Purposes

Advisory Committees provide recommendations and advice to Town staff and Council. Committee members may contribute to the development of policies, programs, and initiatives that enhance the Town's quality of life. Advisory Committee appointments enable local citizens from various backgrounds to participate in municipal government. The Town 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: a by-law that established the Committee, or a resolution of Council approving the formation of the committee. Committee member appointments are to be approved by Council for the duration of the term of Council unless otherwise noted in the Committee's terms of reference.

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 the Committee's recommendations. Council members have to weigh various competing interests beyond the scope of the Committee's mandate when making Council decisions. Advisory Committees shall not reconsider, recommend, or advise on a matter that has been decided by Council, unless directed by Council.

It is important to note that each Advisory Committee has a specific function. Council appoints engaged individuals for the purpose of specific input. Council are elected officials and as such are aware of the "big" picture within which decisions must be made. As such committee agendas do not require an Open Forum agenda item, unless it is specific to a committee's specific responsibilities as outlined on existing plans and agendas.

Responsibilities and Expectations of Advisory Committee Members

Advisory Committee members are expected to:

- Familiarize themselves 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
- Operate under the Procedural By-law of Council, as well as other Town operating policies and procedures
- 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 staff; and maintain a high degree of professionalism

- Ask questions, and seek clarification through the staff or Chair
- Respect the role of and responsibility of the Chair
- Respect that actions taken and recommendations made 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 same
- Refrain from criticizing individual members of staff in a way that casts aspersions on their professional competency and credibility;

Responsibilities and Expectations of the Chair

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

Chairs and Vice-Chairs

The Advisory Committee Chair is expected to:

- Preside over all advisory committee meetings and be responsible for the overall administration of the affairs of the advisory committee and ruling on any points of order;
- Prepare agendas for meetings with staff assistance;
- Facilitate the meeting and follow the Policy for advisory committees;
- Participate as an active and voting member, encouraging active participation by all advisory committee members;
- Call on the Vice-Chair to fill his/her place as Chair in order to take part in debate, until he/she resumes the Chair.
- Chairs are permitted to provide brief comments during discussion;
- Undertake any necessary work, including special projects and research, between meetings;
- Be the point of contact with Council and any media relations relating to the committee;
- Recognize workload limitations of the advisory committee; and,
- The Chair has no authority to make decisions on his/her own, (s)he 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 support person when possible or when requested
- When speaking publicly as Chair of the Committee, represent the views of the Committee not personal views
- Refrain from criticizing individual members of staff in a way that casts aspersions on their professional competency and credibility;

Responsibilities and Expectations of the Staff Support Person

Where applicable, Town staff will be assigned to a Committee to prepare reports on behalf of the Committee. 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 staff's position with the Committee, the staff member should discuss the matter with his/her superior.

Staff has three principle functions in regard to advisory committees: secretariat role, policy advice role and supporting staff role. Where staff has a role, they shall follow the explicit direction of their relevant supervisor in undertaking any variation to the following:

- 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 Town's By-laws or policies and procedures as well as Territorial, Federal, regulatory bodies. Attempt to reconcile any conflicts. If reconciliation is not possible, point out the conflicts in the report.
- Support staff will attend meetings of the advisory committee, as necessary, relevant to their area of expertise to provide information and/or advice. The role of staff is to act as a resource to the advisory committee on a project by project basis and not to do the work of the advisory committee unless assigned to do so by their supervisor.

Process:

1. Council: Initiatives, approved plans, existing bylaws/policies
2. Committee for discussion and recommendation to Council
3. Council discussion and decision and direction to Administration or back to Committee for further discussion