



LITTLE ELM GOVERNANCE POLICY

FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Refer to Section 2.01 in Form of Government and Powers in the Little Elm Code of Ordinances.

PURPOSE

The Little Elm Town Council, including Council Members and the Mayor, is the governing body for the Town of Little Elm. Therefore, it must bear the initial responsibility for the integrity of governance. The Council is responsible for its own development (both as a body and as individuals), its own discipline and its own performance. By adopting this policy, the Council acknowledges its responsibility to each other, to the professional Staff, and to the public.

GOVERNANCE GUIDELINES

The Town Council will govern the Town in a manner associated with a commitment to the preservation of the values and integrity of representative local government and democracy, and a dedication to the promotion of efficient and effective governing. The following statements will serve as a guide and acknowledge the commitment being made in this service to the community.

The Town Council shall:

- be responsive to the needs of the residents and the Little Elm Community by providing pro-active visionary and strategic leadership and focusing on the future rather than the past;
- recognize its responsibility to the future generations by developing goals that address the interrelatedness of the social, cultural, and natural characteristics of the community;
- be fiscally responsible with the taxpayer's dollars;
- communicate and serve with respect, dignity and courtesy in relations with Staff, all Council Members, members of the boards, commissions, committees, and the public;
- endeavor to keep the community informed on municipal affairs and encourage communication between residents and the Town Council;
- strive to develop strong working relationships among Little Elm, Denton County, Little Elm ISD, Frisco ISD, Denton ISD, Little Elm Chamber of Commerce, and other community and civic organizations;
- be committed to improve the quality of life for the individual and the community; and
- be dedicated to the faithful stewardship of the public trust and seek to improve the quality and image of public service.

GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

The office of elected official is one of trust and service to the residents of Little Elm. This position creates a special responsibility for the Little Elm Council Members, and the following principles shall govern the conduct of each Council Member. A Council Member shall:

- be loyal to the interests of the residents of Little Elm, superseding conflicting loyalty to advocacy or interest groups, membership on other boards, employment with other organizations, and personal interests as an individual resident of the Town;

- be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships and conduct themselves, both inside and outside the Town's service, so as to give no occasion for the distrust of their integrity, impartiality or of their devotion to the best interests of the Town and the public trust, to merit the respect and confidence of the residents of Little Elm;
- refrain from any activity or action that may hinder the ability to be independent, objective, and impartial on any matter coming before the Council, such as accepting gifts or special favors;
- not condone any unethical or illegal activity, such as using confidential information for personal gain or misusing public funds or time;
- recognize that public and political policy decisions, based on the approved Strategic Plan, are ultimately the responsibility of the Town Council;
- comply with the Town's Ethics Ordinance (Chapter 2 Article VI of the Little Elm Code of Ordinances) and other applicable rules and state laws governing the conduct of elected officials; and
- conduct business in open meetings for transparency and direct accountability to the residents of Little Elm.



TOWN COUNCIL

MAYOR: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Mayor presides at Council meetings and formally exercises a legislative role equal to that of his or her colleagues. In conjunction with legislative roles, the Mayor may be involved in the preparation of the Council agenda. The Mayor is a member of the Town Council with a vote equal to other members. As part of his or her role, the Mayor shall perform the following duties:

- Preside over the Town Council and serve as the Chair at meetings
- Work to minimize conflict between Council Members and seek to accommodate common ground and consensus among Members when possible
- Represent the Town in meetings with other governmental entities, businesses, community groups, developers, and other entities but realize that the Town is not obligated to any course of action without consideration from the full Council
- Ensure that all members of the Council have the opportunity to be heard during discussion of issues or agenda items
- Issue proclamations to provide groups or individuals special recognition

COUNCIL MEMBER: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The main responsibility of the Town Council is to make policy. By definition, a policy is a course of action for a community. The Town Council serves as the legislative body and adopts policies that determine the broad functions of the Town of Little Elm. The Council has the power to enact ordinances and policies, consistent with state law, usually through the enactment of ordinances and resolutions. In the process of policy making the Council shall:

- Focus on the Vision, Strategic Goals, and Long Term Objectives identified in the Council Strategic Plan
- Analyze community needs, program alternatives, and available resources and arrive at meetings well-informed and prepared
- Make timely and courageous decisions
- Make decisions based on community goals and interest, and not based on personal or political ambitions
- Provide the Town Manager clear direction and expectations to achieve Town goals and objectives
- Give the Town Manager adequate authority to take administrative actions and not interfere with personnel decisions or management functions of the Town
- Hold the Town Manager responsible for the administration of Council policies
- Participate in meetings

MAYOR PRO TEM: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND SELECTION

Within 30 days of the General Election, the Town Council shall elect one of its Members as Mayor Pro Tem, who shall perform the duties of Mayor in the case of the absence or inability of the Mayor to perform the duties of the Mayor's office, and who shall, during that time, be vested with all the powers belonging to the Mayor. The term shall be for a period of one year and approved by resolution. The Mayor Pro Tem will be selected using the same process as the Council Liaison appointments.

COUNCIL LIAISON: ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND SELECTION

Within 30 days of the General Election, the Council shall select its liaisons to boards, commissions, or committees. Liaisons shall serve a term of one year. Prior to each selection process, each Council Member shall submit a questionnaire expressing their desired appointments, qualifications, and availability. The Mayor will put forth a proposal of appointments to the Council using information received from the questionnaire. The Council will receive the proposal and the results from the questionnaire prior to the meeting where appointments are considered. No more than two Council Members including the Council Liaison shall serve on each board, commission, and/or committee at one time. Council Liaisons should review the agendas of their board, commission, or committee, understand its projects and activities, and provide reports to the Town Council as necessary. The Council Liaison shall:

- Serve as the primary contact and two-way communications channel between Council and the board, commission, or committee
- Help resolve questions the board, commission, or committee may have about the role of Council, the Council's goals and objectives, municipal government, and the board, commission, or committee
- Establish formal or informal contact with the chairperson of the board, commission, or committee and effectively communicate the role of the liaison
- Provide procedural direction and relay Council's position or previous action to the board, commission, or committee, and communicate to the board, commission, or committee that the liaison's role is not to direct the board, commission, or committee in its activities or work
- Serve as Council contact rather than as an advocate for or ex-officio member of the board, commission, or committee
- Identify and help resolve any problems that may exist with respect to the functioning of the board, commission, or committee
- Facilitate training of new board, commission, or committee members by providing suggestions and relevant information to the Town staff members responsible for providing such training
- Attend board, commission, and/or committee meetings and report back on performance of board members to the Town Council

ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

A Council Member or the Mayor shall forfeit his or her office if the official lacks at any time during the official's term of office any qualification for the office prescribed by the Charter or by State law, or if the official violates any express prohibition of this section or any other provision of the Charter, or if the official fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular Town Council meetings without being excused by the Town Council. The Town Council shall be the final judge in matters involving forfeiture of office by a Council Member or the Mayor. (Town Charter, Section 3.05)

TRAINING AND MEMBERSHIPS

The Town Manager's Office shall coordinate and facilitate the orientation of new Council Members and continuing education for the Mayor and Council Members. Each Council Member should make their best attempt to attend one seminar per year. First-time office holders are encouraged to attend trainings specifically related to newly elected officials.

Funds are budgeted on an annual basis for the Mayor and Council Members to attend the annual Texas Municipal League conference and for new Council Members to attend the Newly Elected Officials training. Town staff will register the Mayor and/or Council Members that are interested in attending these events.

The Town will cover the following expenses, if applicable:

- Registration
- Lodging
- Airfare
- Mileage Reimbursement
- Per Diem for Meals
- Rideshare Reimbursement

The Town will not cover ticketed events for social or recreational activities at a training or conference. A complete list of non-allowable expenses is included in the Town's Personnel Policy Manual, section 2.16 – Travel Policy.

If interest is expressed in an additional training or conference and there are funds available, the request must be brought forward to the Council for approval. The Mayor and/or Council Member shall email Town staff to place the item on an agenda for discussion and consideration.

Town-wide and individual memberships will be brought forward to Town Council. The Mayor and/or Council Member shall email Town staff to place the item on an agenda for discussion and consideration.

REQUEST PROCESS FOR THE COVE AT THE LAKEFRONT™

If the Mayor and/or Council Members desire to request passes and/or rentals for The Cove at the Lakefront™ for non-profit organizations or donations, they shall contact the Town Manager's Office. The Mayor and each Council Member are able to request one (1) package per fiscal year that includes 5 passes and 1 weekday cabana rental. Complimentary passes are not intended for personal use.

TICKETS FOR TOWN EVENTS

From time to time, it may be necessary to provide the Council with complimentary tickets to Town events so that the members can perform their official duties, volunteer, or interact with stakeholders. The use of complimentary tickets shall be outlined in the Town's Special Events policy. All requests should be coordinated through the Town Manager's Office.

USE OF TOWN FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

The use of Town facilities and amenities by Council Members shall be limited to official Town-related duties. However, from time to time, may request use of Town facilities for community purposes. All requests for use of Town facilities and amenities shall be coordinated through the Town Manager's Office.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERACTION BETWEEN MAYOR AND COUNCIL

The Mayor and Town Council members must work as a team and maintain positive and effective relationships with each other in order to provide effective governance to the Little Elm community. It is the duty of the members to promote dialogue; frank, honest, and open communication; consensus; and a good governing environment in which Council Members, including the Mayor, as well as Town staff members can better fulfill their roles as public servants. The Mayor and Council shall treat one another with respect both in Council meetings and in the community. Refrain from undermining your constituents in community forums or discussions with residents, seek to keep one another informed, and avoid hidden agendas. In order to promote a team-oriented environment of professional conduct, the Council shall:

- Refrain from yelling, name calling, and personal attacks
- Act within legal and ethical guidelines
- Avoid grandstanding or promoting a personal agenda
- Be brief and concise
- Consider an issue, debate it, vote on it, and move on without letting issues carry over
- Look for common ground before seeking out disagreements
- Agree to disagree, when necessary
- Treat everyone with respect and elude resentment

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ROLES IN THE COMMUNITY

The Mayor and Town Council Members serve as a resource to citizens, as well as representatives of citizen preferences. Each stakeholder should feel they are treated with respect, that their voice is heard, and that the Town has handled the interaction with efficiency. If the Town or Council is unable to meet a stakeholder's needs, the citizen or business representative should leave better educated and with an understanding of the barriers the Town faces. In order to facilitate this, Council Members should:

- Treat citizens and stakeholders with respect
- Act within the roles defined above and in the Town Charter and remain accountable to citizens
- Keep open communication with citizens, and listen and understand concerns before responding
- Be accessible to citizens and the Town of Little Elm community overall
- Serve as an advocate for the Town and the decisions made by the Council
- Become familiar with the community and its needs
- Develop strong working relationships with partners, such as citizens or organizations who serve on Boards or Commissions, publicly support and defend the will of Council, rather than one's individual preferences

DECISION-MAKING GUIDELINES

Each decision must be made by considering what is best for the municipality as well as the public interest and shall incorporate, to every extent, the overall fundamental approach to democratic governance. Including specialists in various fields and soliciting the opinion of citizen committees may be necessary for reaching a consensus, particularly when introducing new policies or making significant policy change. It is of the responsibility of the Council, as representatives, to convey the preferences of citizens but ultimately to make a decision on what is best for the Town. Any special interest or special interest group impartial to public concerns must not take precedence on any agenda. Decision-making should take place in accordance with:

- The adopted Strategic Plan
- Utilizing an unbiased approach
- Developing well thought out means to achieve the good of the public
- A focus on the issue at hand rather than personalities
- Comprehensive understanding of all sides of the issue before issuing a judgment
- Council members should always ask, "Is this consistent with Council's adopted Strategic Plan?"

GUIDELINES FOR COUNCIL INTERACTION WITH ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Employees should feel as though they are valuable and important to executing the will of the people. Council Members should remain professional and never exceed the authority and relationship guidelines outlined in the Town Charter. The Town Manager should be aware of all requests to town employees, as these employees do not report to Council Members directly.

If a Council Member questions a decision, he or she shall immediately take that concern or disagreement to the Town Manager in a confidential and diplomatic format. Likewise, the Town Manager shall agree to the same commitment. Respect for each other shall remain constant.

- Council Members must not give orders to department heads or to other town employees. If the Council needs operational information, the Town Manager will provide appropriate information in a timely fashion, either directly or through other Town staff
- Action items requested by Council Members of Town employees shall be channeled through the Town Manager's office. A Council Member may make an informational request of a Town employee directly; however the Town Manager should be aware of all communication and copied on all emails
- Council Members should not harass or make unreasonable inquiries of Town employees
- The Town Manager will intervene if such activities are taking place
- Requests for meetings with Town staff shall be coordinated through the Town Manager
- Members of the Town Council do not have the authority to terminate or discipline Town employees other than those who they are responsible for under the Town Charter. Termination and discipline decisions are the sole responsibility of the Town Manager

BEHAVIORAL GUIDELINES AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The Mayor and members of the Town Council shall always remember they are representatives of the Town of Little Elm at all times and in all circumstances, and, as public officials, their actions are a direct reflection of the Town. Elected officials shall conduct themselves in a professional manner and not engage in any behavior that will paint the Town in a negative light. The Mayor and members of the Town Council are expected to:

- Conduct themselves with dignity
- Refrain from any behavior that may cause embarrassment to the Town
- Refrain from any activity that may give the perception of impropriety or unethical behavior
- Refrain from social media activities that are profane, untruthful, or unnecessarily argumentative
- Refrain from posting or reposting (forwarding) information on social media before facts are verified or an issue has been researched
- Keep it G rated, if there is any question, the answer is probably NO

ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Representatives of the Town of Little Elm have a strong ethical responsibility. The Mayor and Council shall be aware of Little Elm's Ethics Ordinance and ensure that they maintain compliance. Officials should also refrain from activities that may be perceived as unethical in nature.

All members of the Town Council, Boards, Commissions, and Corporations shall be familiar with the requirements of the Town's Ethics Ordinance. The Code of Ethics is located on the Town's webpage (Little Elm Code of Ordinances, Article VI. Code of Ethics), or a copy can be requested through the Town Manager's Office.

Below are some ethical dilemmas to avoid:

- Using the position as an elected official to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself, herself, or others
- Directly or indirectly, giving or receiving any compensation, gift, gratuity, or reward from any sources, except the employing city, for a matter related to the official's services
- Accepting employment or engaging in business that the employer might reasonably expect would require the elected official to disclose confidential information acquired due to his or her position as an elected official
- Disclosing confidential information gained due to position as an elected official, or use of such information for personal gain

AGENDA RULES AND MEETING PROTOCOL

The Town Council Agenda is the official working guide from which the Council conducts its regular and special meetings. The Agenda, which is prepared by the Town staff and in consultation with the Mayor includes items that require Council action and that deal with policy issues that require Council review and discussion.

Items are usually placed on the agenda at the request of the Town staff. Council Members can work with the Town Manager to have an item placed on the agenda. Below are general guidelines & protocols for meetings and inquiries:

AGENDA ITEM INQUIRIES

Contact:	• Town Manager's Office
Best Method of Communication:	• Email and/or Phone
Basic Guidelines/Considerations:	• Questions regarding specific agenda items should be provided to the Town Manager prior to the meeting so that appropriate time is provided for any research • The Town Manager may consult with the Town Attorney or other Town staff and will provide feedback as quickly as possible

REQUEST FOR A NEW AGENDA ITEM

Contact:	• Town Manager's Office
Best Method of Communication:	• Email and/or Phone
Basic Guidelines/Considerations:	• Contact the Town Manager or present the request at a Council workshop • The Town Manager may consult with the Mayor regarding the request • Requests for agenda items shall occur no later than noon on the Wednesday preceding the Council meeting.

OPEN MEETINGS ACT

Basic Guidelines/Considerations:

- The Open Meetings Act generally applies when a quorum of a governmental body is present and discusses public business
- By State Law, the Town Council Agenda must be posted 72 hours in advance of the meeting
- A governmental body must post notice of an open meeting when it receives a briefing from staff unless a specific statutory exception allows an executive session
- The Town Manager will consult with the Town Attorney if direction is needed

Training:

- Elected and appointed public officials are required by State Law to receive training in Texas open government laws. Online training can be obtained by visiting the Texas Attorney General's Website:
<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/faq/og-open-government-training-information>

Reference:

- Texas Government Code § 551.001 (4)(A)

PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

Basic Guidelines/Considerations:

- Roberts Rules of Order shall be consulted regarding parliamentary procedure
- Town Secretary, Town Attorney, and Town Manager can be consulted for questions regarding parliamentary procedure

Reference:

- Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised, Latest Edition

GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBER COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

The following protocols can help guide elected officials regarding communications with constituents and staff. In some cases, some basic considerations will help guide the Council Member on the best course of action. The information in the following section is general in nature. If there are any questions or if clarification is needed please consult the Town Manager for additional information.

BASIC INFORMATION REQUEST (Information Easily Accessible)**Contact:**

- Town Manager's Office

Best Method of Communication:

- Email and/or Phone

Basic Guidelines/Considerations:

- Give clear and concise expectations
- Provide an outline for the information desired
- Provide a timeline for the request

INFORMATION REQUEST REQUIRING RESEARCH

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|----------------------------------|---|
| Contact: | • Town Manager's Office |
| Best Method of Communication: | • Email and/or Phone |
| Basic Guidelines/Considerations: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same steps as the "Basic Information Request" • Future Council Agenda Item for direction/action for Town Manager |

COUNCIL POLICY INITIATIVE

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|----------------------------------|--|
| Contact: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Manager's Office • Mayor |
| Best Method of Communication: | • Email and/or Phone |
| Basic Guidelines/Considerations: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Mayor and Town Manager's Office concerning the policy initiative for consideration • Provide as much detail as possible |

PROCLAMATION REQUEST

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| Contact: | • Town Manager's Office |
| Process: | • Submit online form at least one month in advance of the date the proclamation is needed. Mayor has final approval. |

COUNCIL COMMENDATION

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| Contact: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Manager's Office • Mayor |
| Best Method of Communication: | • Email |
| Basic Guidelines/Considerations: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the Mayor and Town Manager's Office concerning the recognition for consideration. • Provide as much detail as possible. |

COMMUNICATION: COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

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| Communication from Administration: | • Communication from Town staff and administration goes to Mayor and all Council Members through the Town Manager's Office |
| Communication to Administration: | • Communications from Mayor & Council to staff administration goes through the Town Manager and not directly to members of the staff |

STAFF CONTACT

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- | | |
|---------------------|---|
| Employee Initiated: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Send communication to Town Manager• Refer to section regarding communications with staff |
| Council Initiated: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beware of legal violation (State Law) |

COMMUNICATION: EMAIL

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| General: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If responding, do not copy other Council Members• If directed to the Mayor & Council, the Mayor will respond "On behalf of: Mayor & Council"• Each individual has a choice:<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Whether to respond or not-Method of the response |
| Consideration: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Written communication, including emails, can be requested via the Texas Open Records Act• Any deliberation or discussion should take place in a compliant meeting and not through email communication |
| Reference: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Texas Government Code § 552 |



BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

STAFF AND COUNCIL RELATIONS WITH ADVISORY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

Staff support and assistance may be provided to advisory boards, commissions, and committees. Advisory bodies, however, do not have supervisory authority over Town employees. While Staff may work closely with advisory bodies, Staff members remain responsible to their immediate supervisors and, ultimately, the Town Manager. The members of the commissions, boards, or committees are responsible for the functions of the advisory body. The chairperson is responsible for committee compliance with the municipal code and/or bylaws. Staff members are to assist the advisory boards to ensure appropriate compliance with the Charter, ordinances, state and local laws, and regulations.

Staff support includes: preparation of an agenda; preparation of reports providing a brief background of the issues, a list of alternatives, recommendations, and appropriate backup materials, if necessary; and preparation and maintenance of permanent minutes of advisory body meetings. Advisory body members should have sufficient information to reach decisions based upon a clear explanation of the issues. It is important to note that Town Staff seeks to not influence boards, commissions, and committees in their decision making process. Staff should provide information on options considered along with a summary of pros and cons of each option. Staff should provide any prior direction by Town Council on a particular issue to any board, commission, or committee considering the issue.

The role of the Town's boards, commissions, and committees is to perform the specific functions established in state statutes, Town ordinances, resolutions, or minute orders as applicable and to advise the Town Council about the topics assigned.

If a Council Member attends a meeting of a board, commission, or committee, the member shall not take part in the meeting nor address the board in any manner, whether by questions or statements. A Council Member shall not attempt to influence the decisions of boards, commissions, and committees, either directly or indirectly, nor express an opinion to a board, commission, or committee about its actions unless at a Town Council meeting. This policy provision does not apply to a Council Member who is participating as a duly appointed member of a board, commission, or committee.

All instructions to board, commissions, and committees by the Town Council shall be in writing or made on the record at a Town Council meeting.

CURRENT BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

The Planning & Zoning Commission is the primary advisory board to the Town Council on development issues. These land use matters include rezoning requests, ordinance revisions, approving plats, comprehensive planning, tree preservation, and other issues regarding new growth and existing development in the Town and extraterritorial jurisdiction (ETJ).

The Board of Adjustment (BOA) consists of five members and is a quasi-judicial board. It is not a legislative body; thus, it has no authority to amend ordinances, create new laws, nor grant use variances. The board conducts hearings and makes determinations on requests for variances from and special exceptions to the Town of Little Elm Zoning Ordinance, as specified in the ordinance. Historically, the board has made rulings on substandard buildings and amortization cases, although recent state law changes may require revisions to procedure and venue. The board also has the authority to hear and decide appeals where it is alleged that there is an error in an order, requirement, decision, or determination made by any administrative official of the town in the enforcement of the Zoning Ordinance.

The Little Elm Animal Shelter Advisory Committee make recommendations to animal services regarding policies and procedures of the animal shelter operations, making recommendations to town council on revisions to chapter 18 (Animals) of the Little Elm Code of Ordinances, making recommendations to town council on revisions to applicable fees, and general discussion of animal related issues within the town.

TYPE A/ TYPE B CORPORATIONS

Type A/ Type B Corporations exist in the Town of Little Elm to further growth and development in the community. The board members of the corporations are appointed by Town Council and, while they serve in an autonomous fashion, are expected to uphold the goals and objectivities identified by the Council and the adopted Strategic Plan.

If either corporation utilizes Town staff for administrative purposes, Staff members remain responsible to their immediate supervisors and, ultimately, the Town Manager. If either corporation hires its own staff, those staff members are responsible to the board of directors.

The Little Elm Economic Development Corporation (EDC, 4A) is charged with attracting new commercial business, new tourism opportunities and new jobs to Little Elm.

The Little Elm Community Development Corporation (CDC, 4B) is tasked with the promotion and development of new or expanded business enterprises, parks, and other community projects.

COUNCIL APPOINTED COMMITTEES

From time to time, Council will appoint advisory committees and/or task forces on specific topics to offer citizens an extraordinary opportunity to participate in the Town's governmental affairs and influence public policy in many areas.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Board, Commission, and Committee Members shall:

- Focus on the Vision, Strategic Goals, and Long Term Objectives identified in the Council Strategic Plan
- Analyze community needs, program alternatives, and available resources and arrive at meetings well-informed and prepared
- Make timely and courageous decisions that are based on community goals and interest, and not based on personal or political ambitions
- Participate in meetings