



TOWN OF WHITEFIELD
CODE OF ETHICS
FOR ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

PREAMBLE

The proper operation of the democratic government requires that all members of all elected and appointed boards and committees maintain a standard of ethical conduct that will inspire public confidence in the integrity of the Town's government. This Code of Ethics is established to ensure that the Citizens and businesses of Whitefield have fair, impartial, ethical, and accountable local government that is responsive to the needs of the people and each other. To that end, all elected and appointed officials shall:

- Comply with both the letter and spirit of laws and policies affecting the Town Government;
- Be independent, impartial, and fair in judgment and action;
- Work for the public good and not personal gain;
- Conduct public deliberations and processes openly, unless legally confidential and;
- Conduct discussions and debate in an atmosphere of respect and civility.

This Code of Ethics applies to all members of all elected and appointed boards and committees (hereinafter referred to as "Members").

1. Actions in the Public Interest

Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their primary concern; Members will work for the common good of the Citizens of Whitefield and not for any private interest or personal gain. Members shall provide fair and equal treatment of all persons, claims, and transactions that come before them.

2. Conduct of Members

The professional and personal conduct of Members must be above reproach and must avoid any appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, from making personal charges or disparaging remarks, or from verbal attacks upon the character or motives of fellow Members, Town Staff, or the Citizens.

3. Respect for the Process

Each Member shall be committed to respect the democratic process that encourages meaningful involvement of the public and that governs the deliberation of public policy issues. Members should strive to thoughtfully consider the opinions and recommendations of other Members, Town Staff and, Citizens appearing before them and shall remain respectful in all interactions with these individuals.

4. Conduct of Public Meetings

Members shall prepare themselves for open discussion of public issues, shall listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions at the meeting, and shall focus on the business at hand. Members shall refrain from unnecessarily interrupting other speakers, from making personal comments not germane to the business of the body, and from otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings. The Chair shall use his or her best efforts to ensure that the public who attend such meetings adhere to the same standards of conduct in this Code of Ethics as outlined for Members.

5. Decisions Based on Merit

Members shall base their decisions on the merits and substance of the matter at hand. No member shall make promises in advance as to how they will vote on a matter, which shall properly come before the governing body as a whole.

6. Communication

To preserve public confidence in the fairness of town proceedings, deliberations, and decisions, Members should ensure that the public and interested parties have the opportunity to know, and respond to, all information the Members consider in making their decisions. Each Member should also ensure that fellow Members have the opportunity to know and consider all of the available information.

If a Member receives unsolicited communications about an item or issue, outside of a meeting, the Member has the duty to reveal the communications during the board or committee's consideration of the proposal. This ensures that the communicated information will become part of the record and that other Members and interested parties will have an opportunity to consider and refute the information. Town Staff shall ensure that any communications between Members and themselves that constitute an ex parte communication are revealed to the entire board at the next available public meeting for which that item is discussed.

7. Conflict of Interest

Members shall avoid any situation that may give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Members shall disclose any personal relationship to the board or committee on which that member sits in any instance where there could be the appearance of a conflict of interest. Where circumstances give rise to an actual or perceived conflict of interest, the Member shall not participate in the deliberation of that matter unless the Member has appropriately disclosed the situation and there has been a determination by the board or committee that the Member's participation is appropriate. Additionally, any Member who believes that any fellow Member has an actual or appearance of a conflict with any agenda item before their collective body, shall disclose that interest.

A member who is determined to have a conflict of interest with respect to any agenda item or if he/she is biased against an applicant or project such that he/she could not make an impartial decision shall abstain from discussion and voting on the matter. If the Member does not recuse him/her self, the board may decide to recuse the member by majority vote.

8. Gifts and Favors

Members shall not take advantage of services or opportunities for personal gain, by virtue of their public offices that are not available to the public in general. Members shall refrain from accepting or presenting gifts, favors, or promises of future benefits that might compromise independence of judgment or action, or that might give the appearance of such compromise.

9. Confidential Information

No Member shall, without proper legal authorization, discuss or disclose confidential information concerning the property, personnel, government or affairs of the Town, nor shall any member use such information to advance the private or financial interests of himself or herself or members of his or her immediate family. Members shall not discuss the privileged knowledge, executive sessions, or confidential business of the board or committee with unauthorized parties, either orally or in writing. For purposes of this subsection, "confidential information" shall mean any information, oral or written, which comes to the attention of or is available to such Member due to his or her position with the Town and is not a matter of public record. Information received and discussed during any executive session shall be considered within the constraints of this section and shall not be disclosed to any party unless permitted by affirmative vote of a majority of such board.

10. Use of Public Resources

Members shall not use public resources not available to the general public for private gain or for personal purposes such as Town Staff time, equipment, supplies or facilities.

11. Advocacy

Members shall represent the official policies and positions of the Town, board or committee when designated as delegates for this purpose to the best of their ability. When presenting personal opinions and positions Members shall explicitly state that these opinions and positions do not represent their body or the Town of Whitefield, and they shall not allow any inference that they do.

12. Policy Role of Members

Members shall respect and adhere to the Town Meeting – Select Board – Town Clerk Structure of Town government. The Select Board shall determine the policies of the Town, with advice, information, and analysis provided by Town Staff, by the Town's boards, committees, and commissions, and by the Citizens.

Members shall therefore not interfere with the administrative or operational functions of the Town or with the professional duties of Town Staff, nor shall they impair the ability of Town Staff to implement the policy decisions of the Boards.

13. Independence of Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Members shall refrain from using their positions to unduly influence the deliberations or outcomes of any board, committee, or commission proceeding.

14. Positive Workplace Environment

Members shall support a positive and constructive workplace environment for Town employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the Town. Members shall recognize their special role when dealing with Town employees and shall in no way create the perception of inappropriate direction of staff.

15. Compliance and Enforcement

This expression of the standards of conduct expected of Members is intended to be self-enforcing. It is most effective when Members are thoroughly familiar with it and embrace its provisions.

The Town of Whitefield Code of Ethics expresses standards of conduct expected of Members. Members themselves have the primary responsibility for ensuring that ethical standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government.

All Members have the responsibility for intervening when actions of fellow Members appear to be in violation of this Code of Ethics. When a Member violation is apparent as prescribed in this Code of Ethics the actions taken may range from a letter of reprimand by the Select Board, to a censure, to a request for resignation from the elected position. All penalties shall require a majority vote of the Select Board before being imposed upon the Member determined to be in violation.

A violation of this Code of Ethics shall not be considered a basis for challenging the validity of a board or committee decision but may be used as a basis for reconsideration of the decision.

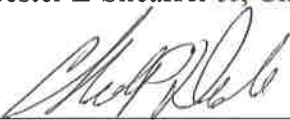
16. Separability

If any section, subsection, sentence clause or phrase of this Code is for any reason held to be invalid or unconstitutional, such validity or unconstitutionality shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this Code of Ethics.

Policy Approved at Select Board Meeting: August 16, 2022



Lester E Sheaffer Jr, Chair




Charlene P Donahue, Vice-Chair



Bill C McKeen



Keith D Sanborn



Seth A Bolduc



MEMBER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT

TOWN OF WHITEFIELD

CODE OF ETHICS

FOR ELECTED AND APPOINTED OFFICIALS

As a Member of the _____,

I acknowledge that I have received a copy, have read, and understand the Town of Whitefield Code of Ethics.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Position