

Canterbury Code of Conduct

Purpose

This Code of Conduct applies to all Town Officials including elected and appointed Officials, and members/alternates of elected and appointed Boards, Committees, Commissions, and groups of Trustees. This Code of Conduct describes how Canterbury Officials treat each other and work together for the common good of the community. Conducting the Town's business in an atmosphere of respect and civility is the underlying theme of this code. Town Officials are responsible for holding themselves and each other accountable for displaying actions and behaviors that consistently model the ideals expressed in this Code.

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to:

- Establish standards of conduct which Town Officials are expected to follow.
- Educate current and prospective Town Officials about ethical and responsible conduct.

This Code will also be made available to anyone seeking to run for office, or anyone who desires to be appointed to one of Canterbury's Municipal Boards, Committees, Commissions or other positions. It will be included along with a description of the responsibilities of that position/Board and its members.

This code will be enforced as NH law allows.

Values of the Town

The Town of Canterbury values honesty, transparency, accountability, respect, and civility in the behavior of all its Officials.

In order to promote and sustain a culture of respect, all Officials should

- Read this Code of Conduct.
- Become familiar with its content.
- Acknowledge this Code as one of the duties they accept when taking the oath for their office.

All Town Officials should:

1. **Behave respectfully.** Treat everyone equally and fairly, with dignity, respect, professionalism, and civility. Do not engage in or condone bullying behavior, harassment, rudeness, or discrimination. Refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, or verbal attacks on Board/Committee members, staff, and members of the public. Show no tolerance for intimidating behavior.

2. **Act in the best interests of the Town.** At all times Town Officials represent the entire community and cannot show favoritism.
3. **Show integrity.** Maintain the highest standards of personal integrity in performing public duties. Do not abuse official positions for improper reasons or personal gain. Avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
4. **Listen attentively** to what other Officials and members of the public are saying. Don't interrupt. Don't assume you already know what someone is going to say.
5. **Respect differences.** Honest differences of opinion between Board members and those who come before the Board are to be expected. Do not discourage someone from offering a differing opinion. Do not attack a person's motives or integrity for having a different opinion.
6. **Maintain communication.** Read and reply to emails and calls in a timely manner. Contact fellow Board Members and Town Staff (as appropriate) prior to a meeting with any questions or issues, so a committee is not blindsided in public.
7. **Maintain confidentiality.** If you learn confidential or sensitive information in the course of your duties, do not distribute this information by any manner. Respect the privileged communication that exists in Executive Session.
8. **Conduct business publicly.** Be aware of what legally constitutes a "public meeting" and follow rules regarding online, email, digital, and text communication between Board or Committee Members according to RSA 91:A. Understand the legal requirements for entering into Executive Session.
9. **Do not overstep.** Understand the parameters of your position and what authority you have. Do not make decisions over matters that you do not have jurisdiction. Cooperation and collaboration are always welcome, but it is important to only act upon matters that fall within the scope of the position.
10. **Follow procedure.** Adhere to the local ordinances/regulations, and applicable state/federal laws. Do not disregard process because you feel it is inconvenient.
11. **Professional development.** Become educated in the rules and regulations of the position you occupy and the Board/Commission you are part of. This includes taking any training offered by the Town, NHMA, or other sources. Know the bylaws, mission statement, and job description that applies to the position.
12. **Active participation.** Attend meetings, arrive on time, participate in discussion, be prepared for meetings, do your homework, and stay current on Board/Committee

communications. Let your Chair/Secretary know if you can't attend a meeting. If you can't attend at least 80% of the meetings, you should think about stepping down.

13. **Time Commitment.** Be aware that all Town positions – even if volunteer – require attendance at regularly scheduled meetings, additional meetings as needed, site visits, training, etc. Officials will also need to spend time reading documents, doing research, responding to members of the public, and any other tasks needed to complete the duties of the position.
14. **Show your hat.** When communicating with residents or other board members, make it clear “which hat you are wearing”. Are you saying something in your official capacity or as a private resident of the town?

All Town Officials that are part of a team should:

1. **Only make decisions as a team.** Recognize that you alone cannot bind the Board/Committee/Commission/etc. outside of legal public meetings. (i.e. no false promises such as “I’ll be sure that you get...”)
2. **Wait for all the information.** Do not make statements, promises, or decisions about how you intend to vote before a meeting, or even during a meeting, until all discussion has concluded and all evidence has been presented.
3. **Disclose prior knowledge.** If someone reveals information to you outside of a meeting that is relevant to the hearing/discussion, you will disclose that so the entire Board has the same information.
4. **Recuse yourself** if there is a direct personal or financial interest in the outcome of a vote that differs from the interest of other citizens or where you would otherwise be disqualified as a juror (RSA 500-A:12).
5. **Vote whenever possible.** Do not abstain to avoid making a difficult decision. Realize that as a Town Official the public has the right to know how you voted on Town matters. Votes by secret ballot are only allowed at Town Meeting (RSA 40:4-a), NOT at other public meetings (RSA 91-A:2, II).

All Board Chairs have the responsibility to:

1. Know the mission, bylaws, and legal responsibilities of the group. Ensure those rules, procedures, and laws are followed.
2. Keep track of when members’ terms expire.

3. Keep track of members and alternates participation.
4. Be a sounding board for complaints to or about the group.
5. Keep order during meetings so that all participants are civil and the meeting is run effectively.
6. Ensure that their board completes tasks required by law (e.g. minutes and postings, grant reporting, policy updates, document retention).
7. Communicate with the Selectboard and Chairs of other Boards/Committees about major projects, changes, and anything else that could affect other groups.