



City of Somerville

Code of Conduct for Board, Commission and Committee Members

The City of Somerville places a high priority on encouraging all residents to participate in our government's decision-making and planning processes. One valuable way for residents to do this is by becoming a member of Somerville's boards, commissions and committees. These bodies are tasked with a wide variety of duties and services. The city strives to ensure that residents from all demographic sectors are participating on our boards, commissions and committees, along with ensuring these are safe spaces where members can all contribute equally. Members are important agents of the city, and thus must uphold high standards of conduct and professionalism. In order to achieve this, all members must comply with the following Code of Conduct when serving on any board, commission or committee:

1. Members will strive to appreciate differences in approach and point of view and treat residents, city employees, partner organizations and other board, commission or committee members with courtesy, respect and professionalism.
2. Members must administer board positions with integrity, honesty, truthfulness and adherence to the absolute obligation to safeguard the public trust. Members are also expected to maintain professional working relationships with other members, City staff and members of the public.
3. Attendance and participation are an important part of appointment to a board, commission or committee. While it is understood that members have other obligations, the expectation is that members will make every effort to attend and participate in meetings, and whenever possible communicate any hardships to attendance.
4. In some instances, members may find that various laws may apply to boards, commissions and committees and to member participation, such as the Open Meeting Law and the Public Records Law. Members are expected to comply with the applicable laws, and may seek guidance from city staff, the City Clerk's office or the City Solicitor's office. Members are expected to have a basic understanding of these laws and how they apply to their membership.
5. The committee chair will be tasked with ensuring that all members have the opportunity to provide input and encourage the exchange of fair and balanced knowledge and perspectives.
6. Members cannot unilaterally act on behalf of a board, commission or committee without authorization from that board, commission or committee.
7. Members should commit to studying and analyzing the problems and issues that come before them, listen to requests/questions, ask for clarification if necessary, and provide complete, knowledgeable, accurate, precise information regarding inquiries.
8. The committee chair will be tasked with ensuring that members are adhering to the code of conduct.

9. The conduct of public officials and employees—paid or unpaid—is governed by state conflict of interest law, the purpose of which is to prevent conflicts between private interests and public duties. Violations of the law may carry civil or criminal penalties. Members should comply with the law and disclose any personal or business interest which may result in actual or perceived conflicts of interest. Many aspects of the law are complicated, and members can seek guidance from the State Ethics Commission or the City Solicitor’s Office.
10. Disorderly conduct, including rude or intimidating behavior, utilizing obscene, abusive, threatening or intimidating language or actions will not be tolerated. In addition to any other remedies or enforcement options available under the law, each board/committee/commission may vote to censure the member and the appointing authority may decline to reappoint an individual who violates any provision of this Code of Conduct. The Staff Liaison of each board/committee/commission may recommend action through the appointing authority against the appointed individual that is deemed lawful including but not limited to requesting that the individual attend training, receive counseling and/or coaching, and/or removal from assigned duties and responsibilities including special assignments for the board or committee.
11. In the event a member violates this Code of Conduct, the following action steps may be taken:
 - a. Any violation may be cause for dismissal, educational and/or corrective action.
 - b. After an initial incident, a meeting may be called with the member and relevant city staff to clarify why the behavior violated the code of conduct and determine appropriate measures as listed above.
 - c. Further incidents may result in dismissal from serving on that board/commission/committee and may be considered in evaluating applications for serving on any City board/commission/committee in the future.
12. As agents of the City of Somerville, members are expected not to discriminate against, or harass, anyone with regard to race, sex, color, religion, national origin, citizenship status, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, disability, military, veteran status or any other protected status or classification under federal, state or local law:

Failure to abide by the above Code of Conduct may result in termination of an appointment.

Print Name: _____ Board/Commission/Committee: _____

Signature: _____ Appointed as: _____

Date: _____ Term Ending: _____