



Town of Winthrop
Committee Roles, Responsibilities, & Processes

Adopted December 4, 2023

Committee Roles, Responsibilities, & Processes

Definitions & Roles

- **Committee Member:** A member of the community appointed to serve as a volunteer on one of Winthrop's boards or advisory committees. Committee members are tasked with fulfilling a committee charge approved by the Town Council (typically to advise the Council on a specific topic) or with carrying out a statutory responsibility (such as with the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals). Committee members swear to uphold the law along with the ethics and values exhibited in the Town of Winthrop Code of Ethics.
- **Committee Chair:** A committee member selected by his/her fellow members at the first meeting each year to facilitate and run committee meetings. Otherwise, chairs yield no more authority than any other committee member.
- **Town Council Liaison:** An appointed representative of and by the Town Council to provide committee updates to the Council and to share Council feedback to the appointed committee.
- **Staff liaison:** A Town employee who serves as a facilitator for the committee and helps ensure tasks are addressed in a timely manner. The liaison may be a director (as is the case with the Town Planner, who serves as the liaison for the Planning Board), a staff member or the Town Manager. The liaison communicates with internal and external stakeholders to provide supplementary information to the committee and plays a lead role in developing Town documents, including background memos and draft policies.
- **Community:** Residents and stakeholders in the Town of Winthrop. Committees should proactively seek to engage the community to offer input and feedback that can be considered and, when appropriate, incorporated into the development and implementation of Town ordinances, policies, plans and procedures. The citizens sit atop the Town of Winthrop's organizational chart.

Responsibilities

Town Council approves each committee's charge, i.e. its purpose and mission. The Council also appoints members to serve staggered three-year terms that begin Jan. 1, unless otherwise defined in state statute, the Town's charter, or local ordinance. The Town Council reserves the right to remove committee members for any reason it sees fit. The Council may also task a committee to study and offer a recommendation regarding a specific issue.

Committee members commit to attending meetings and to actively engaging in the business of the committee. More than three absences for a body that meets monthly or six for a body that meets twice monthly may be grounds for dismissal. Committee members are expected to adhere to their committee's charge and conduct themselves in a way that reflects well on Winthrop's municipal government and makes citizens feel heard and appreciated.

Committees will consist of a minimum of seven members and no more than 10, unless membership is otherwise governed by state statute, the Town's charter, or local ordinance. Committees will also establish goals and collaborate with Town staff to establish and uphold timelines to accomplish their tasks in furtherance of their goals.

The **Staff Liaison** performs much of the legwork (such as research) for a committee and offers recommendations when appropriate. Liaisons will share the committee agenda with the Committee Chair at least one week in advance of a meeting, during which they may discuss matters such as expectations for accomplishing goals, engaging external stakeholders, collecting and providing input and feedback, reviewing and revising goals and procedures, etc. Committees and/or their chairs may also request a meeting with the Town Manager to discuss these matters on an as-needed basis.

The **Town Council Liaison** will attend committee meetings and provide regular updates to the Town Council on the status of committee discussions and, when appropriate, a summary of findings or recommendation development. These updates may guide Town Council decisions on current related matters.

Process

With the exception of the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, which have statutory authority to make decisions, and the Library Board of Trustees, which is governed by a charter, all other Town committees are advisory in nature. That is, they make recommendations to staff and to the Town Council for their consideration.

Town Committees are public bodies that **MUST** conduct their business in public. To do otherwise would unfairly disenfranchise citizens and violate state law. Committees **WILL** adhere to Maine's Freedom of Access Act (FOAA), a state statute that ensures openness in the conducting of public business so citizens can rightfully participate in their community's governance. To that end, agendas must be posted on the Town's website at least 72 hours in advance of a meeting and must specifically detail topics to be discussed during the meeting. Topics not on the agenda may not be discussed during meetings. Meeting notices may also be posted on the Town's social media platforms and in The Community Advertiser, Winthrop's weekly newspaper. Committees will establish and adhere to a meeting schedule, unless meeting space or committee member availability dictates otherwise. Committee meetings that involve the participation of a Town Council liaison and/or the Town Manager will not be scheduled in conflict with a Town Council meeting. With the exception of the Library Board of Trustees, meetings will be conducted at the Town Office's All-Purpose Room. All meetings must be open to the public and any person must be permitted to attend. Additionally, written minutes of each public meeting must be produced that, at a minimum, includes the time, date and place of the meeting, the members of the body who are present, and all motions and votes taken (including individual members' votes if a roll call vote is taken). Minutes must be submitted to the Town Clerk and posted on

the Town's website immediately after their approval at the committee's subsequent meeting.

Town committees may not meet in executive session unless they have previously consulted with the Town's attorney through the Town Manager and an executive session is included on the agenda, which cites the section of Title 1, §405 that permits closed session deliberations.

Committee members shall not engage in discussions about committee or Town matters outside the parameters of a public meeting. Neither are committee members to engage in independent investigations of the matters before them without the expressed consent of a majority of the committee.

Email accounts associated with a committee must use an @winthropmaine.org address provided by the Town, or emails will be channeled through the Staff Liaison. This ensures the Town can readily access emails should it receive an open records request under the FOAA. Committee members may not deliberate via email.

As noted, proactively engaging with the community is vital to a committee's work. A committee may steer a recommendation to the Town Council, but it should go only where the community tells it to. Thus, when reasonable and appropriate, community feedback should be considered and incorporated into recommendations to the Town Council. Committees should coordinate with their staff liaison to determine how best to communicate and receive input from external stakeholders.

Ultimately, committees report to the Town Council that appoints them. But committees work most closely with their staff liaison. Issues between liaisons and committees are best addressed between those two parties. If that becomes untenable, the committee chair should consult with the Town Manager or Town Council chair. Should there be turnover of a staff liaison, the committee should accept that a new liaison may have a different approach/style/priorities than his/her predecessor. Again, those differences are best allayed between the committee and liaison. The transition to a new liaison can best be navigated by the committee discussing with the new staffer the 5 W's and 1 H: who (key players), what (committee mission and current issues), why (committee charge), when and where (meetings), and how (how the committee prefers to conduct its business). That said, each party should be open to consider a new/different way of doing things.