



CITY OF PORTSMOUTH CITY COUNCIL POLICY No. 2025- 31

VOLUNTEER TRAINING AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND ETHICS POLICY

1. PURPOSE

As part of its commitment to open government and citizen engagement, the City of Portsmouth has established boards, commissions, and committees to provide expert and/or community advice to the City Council and City Staff on a variety of topics, issues, and initiatives. The City of Portsmouth provides essential services upon which individuals and businesses rely daily. The successful delivery of those services requires the best efforts of both elected and appointed City Officials and volunteer board, commission, and committee members. Consequently, your reliability, your ability to interact respectfully and successfully with each other, the public and staff, and your attention to your assigned duties are critically important. This Policy provides a standard of conduct framework for the completion of these assigned duties and respectful interactions. Failure to meet these standards is cause for concern, discipline, and possible removal, in addition to any penalties that may be applicable pursuant to State and Federal law.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all elected and appointed officials, including volunteer members of the boards, commissions, committees, Blue Ribbon committees, advisory committees, and any task force established by the City.

3. POLICY

To meet the high standard of performance and conduct the City expects, this Policy provides both general and specific guidance to help you succeed and to promote consistency in expectations. Generally, elected and appointed officials and volunteers of the City are expected to maintain common standards of honesty and decency expected of its staff as set forth in the City's Standards of Conduct and Code of Ethics Policy, which forms the basis for this Policy.

To provide additional guidance, the following specific areas of conduct are called out for attention below. In addition, the City has adopted detailed, specific policies concerning some areas of conduct and those more specific policies will govern.

A. **Absenteeism, Tardiness and Attendance:** Any expected absence or lateness should be reported to the Chair of the group meeting as soon as possible. Elected and appointed City Officials and volunteer board, commission, and committee members are also subject to the attendance requirements and appointment, tenure and removal provisions of Chapter 1, Article III, Section 1.302 of the City ordinances.

B. **Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure:** As part of your duties, you may learn confidential information which may include personnel and individual protected health information, privileged and confidential legal opinions, security related strategies, and confidential financial information. You have an obligation to keep such information secure and to follow any policies that may be in place to protect that information from disclosure. New Hampshire's Right-to-Know Law, RSA 91-A, governs the procedures for conducting non-public sessions of public bodies and the confidential nature of those sessions. This is discussed in more detail in the Volunteer Training Manual and will be reviewed during the mandatory volunteer Orientation and Training.

C. **Courtesy, Respect and Professional Conduct:** Generally, elected and appointed officials and volunteers of the City are expected to behave courteously and professionally and to maintain common standards of honesty and decency.

D. **Honesty:** Elected officials and volunteers are expected to be truthful and to maintain public records accurately and in accordance with the law. You may not promise special favors to anyone or receive special consideration from anyone in exchange for an official act.

E. **Drug Free:** City property is a drug-free zone and alcohol-free location by Ordinance. Bringing, possessing, or using alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs or being under the influence of or testing positive for these substances on City property or while acting in an official capacity may result in discipline, removal or criminal charges.

F. **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment:** See separate Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy on this topic. This policy applies to all elected and appointed City Officials and volunteers by adoption of this Policy.

G. **Safety:** All elected and appointed officials and volunteers are encouraged to help to maintain a healthy and safe work environment. Any unsafe condition or any accident can be reported to the Chair of their committee or to the City Manager's Office.

H. **Telephone, Facsimile, Computer, E-Mail, and Copier Usage:** See separate Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy on this topic. This policy applies to all elected and appointed City officials and volunteers by adoption of this Policy.

I. **Theft, Destruction or Unauthorized Use of City Property.** Elected and appointed officials and volunteers shall be permitted to use and remove City property with permission of the Chair of their Committee or the City Manager. The City

reserves the right to search and inspect City property. Misappropriation or misuse of City property may subject elected and appointed officials and volunteers to discipline, removal or penalties applicable through State or Federal law.

J. Conflict of Interest: Chapter 1, Article VIII, Sections 1.801 through 1.807 of the City of Portsmouth Ordinances sets forth a Code of Ethics applicable to all City employees and City officials, elected and appointed. That Code of Ethics defines and prohibits conflicts of interest. Conflicts of interest jeopardize the confidence the public has in government and are to be avoided.

K. Volunteer Orientation and Training: The City will coordinate and provide Orientation and Training for all Board members prior to their first meeting. Board member participation in this Orientation and Training is mandatory and a prerequisite to participating in any Board meetings. The Orientation and Training will include the distribution and review of the City's Board, Commission & Committee Handbook for Volunteers ("Volunteer Handbook"), and information regarding the following topics:

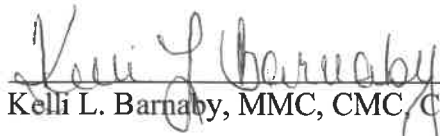
- i. A general overview of the City's governance structure;
- ii. Information regarding the Board's purpose and function, including the role of the Board and its relationship with the public, other Boards, City Staff and the City Council;
- iii. Meeting Rules and Procedures, which will including but not limited to:
 1. Attendance
 2. Quorum
 3. Role of Chair
 4. Role of City Council Liaison
 5. Role of Staff Liaison
 6. Meeting Rules and Procedures, including compliance with Roberts Rules and Confidentiality
 7. Review of applicable City ordinances and other City policies (Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment, Acceptable Use for Electronic Media, Social Media, and any other policy approved and required by the City Council) and compliance with New Hampshire's Access to Governmental Records and Meeting Law, RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know law)
 8. Discussion of consequences of Board Member's failure to comply with Board Rules and Procedures, City ordinances, City policies and State and Federal laws
- iv. Mandatory Board member participation in Orientation and Training to provide guidelines on good government practices, and acknowledgement of review and receipt of Volunteer Handbook and City policies.

- v. Specialized training may be provided to Board Chairs, as needed
- vi. Specialized training will be provided to Land Use Boards on quasi-judicial procedures and relevant state law.

The City acknowledges citizen participation as an important ingredient to delivering top-quality public services and further acknowledges the dedication and commitment of each Board member and value their contributions to City government.

This policy shall take effect upon the passage by the City Council.

Adopted by the Portsmouth City Council on January 6, 2025.



Kelli L. Barnaby, MMC, CMC, CNHMC City Clerk