
TITLE: Council Committees Policy
SECTION: Executive Operations
POLICY NO: 10350-32

APPROVAL DATE: April 22, 2024

CAO Signature: 

1. This policy is entitled the *Council Committees Policy*.
2. This policy is made pursuant to section 24 of the MGA, which empowers Council to establish committees, and section 23(1)(c) of the MGA, which empowers Council to make policies providing for committees and conferring powers and duties upon them.
3. Where the terms of this Policy are inconsistent with the Terms of Reference for a committee, another Council policy or bylaw, or statute or agreement, the provisions of the Terms of Reference, other policy or bylaw, or statute or agreement shall prevail over the terms of this Policy.

Definitions

4. In this Policy:

- (a) "CAO" means the Chief Administrative Officer for the Town;
- (b) "MGA" means the *Municipal Government Act* (Nova Scotia);
- (c) "Special Committee" means a short-term committee established by Council to inquire into or deal with a specific issue;
- (d) "Standing Committee" means a committee of indefinite duration established by Council;
- (e) "Statutory Committee" means a board, commission, or committee established pursuant to a specific enabling statute or agreement.
- (f) "Town" means Town of Amherst.

Membership

5. Membership of committees:

- (a) will be inclusive and diverse, and broadly reflective of the community.
- (b) will also reflect desired experience, knowledge, expertise, and geographic representation in the community.

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6. Qualifications

In order to be eligible for membership of a committee, an individual must be a member of Council, or a citizen appointed by Council who resides in the Town of Amherst (unless otherwise indicated in Terms of Reference for the Committee) and not be in arrears in payment of any property taxes to the Town.

7. Appointments of Council Members of Committees

- (a) Council members will be appointed to Committees annually in October unless the terms of the appointment are for more than one year.
- (b) Any member of Council not appointed to a committee may attend committee meetings as an observer but is not entitled to participate in committee discussions or to vote.
- (c) The CAO is a non-voting member of every Standing and Special Committee, but is not obligated to attend meetings and is not counted in determining if a quorum is present.

8. Appointments of Citizen Members to Committees

- (a) As and when required, the opportunities to serve as committee members will be widely advertised in a local paper and on Town of Amherst social media so that interested citizens can apply.
- (b) Council will meet in closed session to review the applications and consider the applicants for committees.
- (c) Following the closed session meeting, Council will appoint citizen members to committees at their next regular Council meeting.
- (d) In considering appointments of citizens to committees Council will consider the following:
 - i) Lived and professional experience and background of the applicants in a field related to the work of the committee;
 - ii) Applicants' education in a field related to the work of the committee;

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- iii) Experience of the applicants in serving on committees and boards;
 - iv) Ensuring that committee membership is inclusive and diverse and representative of the community;
 - v) Recommendations made by the applicable committee, if applicable;
 - vi) The Terms of Reference for each individual committee will specify the number of members to be appointed to the committee, and the term of the appointments.
- (e) Committee members will be volunteers, with no financial incentives.
- (f) Committee stability and membership continuity will be taken into consideration when considering re-appointments for a consecutive term.

9. Attendance of Members at Meetings

Any member who is absent from three consecutive committee meetings without leave of absence by resolution from the committee will cease to be a member of the committee, and the CAO shall advise Council of the vacancy.

10. Removal of Member from Committee

At the request of the committee or on its own initiative, Council may remove or request the resignation of any of its committee appointees, whether a citizen member or Council member, for malfeasance or any other good and sufficient cause.

11. Resignation of Member

- (a) Any citizen member of a committee wishing to resign from the committee is requested to provide the resignation in writing to the committee Chair with a copy to the CAO, who will inform Council of the vacancy.
- (b) A Council member of a committee may ask to leave a committee prior to the expiration of their term, and Council may grant such request if the Mayor believes it would not unduly impact the work of the committee.

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12. Staff Support

Staff will be appointed to committees by the CAO. The staff is not a member of the committee and therefore is not entitled to vote. The responsibilities of the staff include:

- (i) Providing information and professional advice;
- (ii) Supporting the Chair in developing agendas, arranging meetings, and promoting effective committee functioning;
- (iii) Ensuring the preparation of draft minutes; and approval of such at the next meeting;
- (iv) Preparing presentations for the committee;
- (v) Providing an orientation to the work of the committee when required;
- (vi) Any other projects or tasks approved by the CAO.

13. Meeting Schedules

Committee meeting schedules will be established by the Terms of Reference of the Committee.

14. Quorum

- (a) A majority of the members constitutes a quorum, provided that at least one Council member is in attendance.
- (b) In the event of no quorum after 20 minutes past the scheduled start time, or if quorum is lost during a meeting, the committee's official business will cease, the names of those present will be recorded, members will be permitted to leave, and staff will excuse themselves from the meeting.

15. Chair and Vice-Chair

- (a) Each committee will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair as per the Terms of Reference or enabling statute, bylaw or policy.
- (b) The role of the Chair is to carry out the following duties:

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- (i) Set the agenda, which will include the territorial acknowledgement;
- (ii) Ensure the committee follows the agenda;
- (iii) Prevent new issues from side-tracking the agenda;
- (iv) Limit additions to the agenda;
- (v) Establish and maintain order and decorum;
- (vi) Respect members' views and be open-minded;
- (vii) Ensure all members have the opportunity to participate by encouraging those who hold back and preventing others from dominating the discussion;
- (viii) Seek agreement and build consensus;
- (ix) Close debate and guide the group to resolution in a timely manner;
- (x) Assist members to word motions clearly and succinctly;
- (xi) Participate in discussion but focus on presiding over the meeting.

(c) The role of the Vice-Chair is to chair meetings as required in the absence of the Chair.

16. Agendas

The Chair, in consultation with staff, sets the committee agendas, which are prepared and distributed to committee members by 4:30 p.m. at least two business days prior to the meeting.

17. Rules of Procedure

Committees shall follow the meeting procedures set out in the Town of Amherst Proceedings of Council Policy #10350-25.

18. New Committees

In considering the formation of a new committee, Council will request staff to prepare a report to Council that includes a Terms of Reference for consideration by Council prior to establishing the committee.

19. Meetings Open to Public

- (a) All meetings of committees are open to the public and no person shall be excluded except in cases of improper conduct, or where the committee is considering an item where, in accordance with section 22 of the MGA, the committee is permitted or required to meet in *closed session*.

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- (b) Statutory Committee meetings will be recorded and livestreamed. Should technical difficulties arise, and livestream not be enabled or if livestreaming is not possible, the meeting will continue as scheduled. If a recording of the meeting is available it will be posted to the Town of Amherst website the day following the meeting.

- (c) Special Committee and Standing Committee meetings will be recorded and livestreamed as required when decisions or motions to recommend items to Council are included on the agenda. Should technical difficulties arise, and livestream not be enabled or if livestreaming is not possible, the meeting will continue as scheduled. If a recording of the meeting is available it will be posted to the Town of Amherst website the day following the meeting.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Title/Role	Responsibilities
Mayor/Council/Committee Members	Adhere to this policy, as well as the Proceedings of Council Policy.
Municipal Clerk	Review the policy as necessary to ensure content is relevant and accurate.

For Administrative Use Only:

VERSION LOG

Amendment Description	Policy Owner	Approved By	Approval Date
New Policy	Clerk, LeBlanc	Council	April 24, 2023
Change “in camera” to “closed session”	Clerk, LeBlanc	Council	April 22, 2024

Minutes Reference Date: April 22, 2024 April 24, 2023