



# COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

TOWN OF SUNDERLAND

Adopted: 3/7/2016  
Revised:

# **TOWN OF SUNDERLAND COMMITTEE HANDBOOK**

## **PREFACE**

This handbook provides a brief description of elected and appointed officials' duties, which may well be known to many, but are less familiar to others. Many citizens have served the Town of Sunderland in its near 300 years of history. Their contributions of time and consideration of the many issues and problems confronting the Town are greatly appreciated. Through service to the community you will have a unique opportunity to get to know the workings of the Town from an insider's viewpoint. It can be a rewarding and informative experience.

The Selectmen, in carrying out their duties as prescribed by law and by the votes of Town Meeting, expend considerable time and effort to make logical appointments to the various committees of the Town by appointing qualified and interested Sunderland residents who are broadly representative of the Town. During your appointment you will be working with many new people who, like yourself, have volunteered to address specific problems and to bring back to the Selectmen or perhaps Town Meeting your recommendation for a course of action or solution that is best for the Town. State statutes outline the powers and duties of many Boards. The Bylaws adopted by Town Meeting, and the policies and charges to committees adopted by the Board of Selectmen further define the work of others.

It is important that you remember the best interests of the Town, present or future, be considered. It is equally important to remember that you represent the entire Town, and not only one segment. Single approach solutions to problems may be the best option for your committee, but may not be in the best interest of the town in the broader sense. All plausible solutions need to be explored with many factors in mind. Your decision may have impact on other programs or plans.

The Annual Town Report and General Bylaws are excellent sources of information regarding the duties and responsibilities of individual boards and committees. These items are available at the Town Clerk's office. In addition, Town staff is a valuable resource and willing to be of assistance.

The Board of Selectmen wishes to thank you for giving of your time and effort in the improvement of our community. We hope you find this handbook informative and useful.

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## **I. CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS**

The conduct of an elected official, members of Municipal Boards, Committee, and Commissions, as well as employees is regulated by the provisions of Chapter 268A of the Massachusetts General Laws, and enforced by the Massachusetts Ethics Commission. The statute assigns personal responsibility to regular and special municipal employees (including elected and appointed volunteers) in four general areas, as follows:

- A. Community Responsibility
- B. Responsibility to Municipal Administration
- C. Relationship to other Board Members
- D. Prohibited Conduct

### **A. Community Responsibility**

An elected official, any individual appointee or member of any Board, Committee or Commission in his/her relations with the community shall:

1. Realize that his/her basic function is to make policy not administer it, unless otherwise empowered by state and/or local law.
2. Realize that he/she is one of a team and should abide by and carry out, all board decisions once they are made.
3. Be well informed concerning the duties of a board member on both local and state levels.
4. Remember that he/she represents the entire community at all times.
5. Accept the appointment as a means of unselfish service, and not for the purpose of political benefit from his/her board activities.
6. In making all decisions relative to individual appointments, he or she shall avoid political patronage by judging all candidates on merit, experience and qualifications only.
7. Avoid voting on any manner in which the individual member has a conflict of interest, as defined under the Massachusetts Conflict of Interest Law, G.L. Chapter 268A.

### **B. Responsibility to Municipal Administration**

An elected official, a member of any Board, Committee or Commission, in his/her relations with administrative officers of the Town shall:

1. Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies that will direct and support the administration for the benefit of the people in the community.

2. Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside the administration.
3. Direct all questions or concerns to Board of Selectmen. However, an initial contact with the Town Administrator will expedite any necessary action and will deal most directly with an issue, which needs to be clarified, changed or corrected. Please remember, however, that the Board of Selectmen do not have control over issues dealing with elected officials or committees/individuals appointed by the Moderator.

### **C. Relationship to Other Board, Commission or Committee Members**

An elected official, a member of any Board, Commission or Committee, in his/her relations with fellow board members, shall:

1. Recognize that action at an official legal meeting is binding and that he/she alone cannot bind the Board outside of such meeting.
2. Not make statements of promises of how he/she will vote on matters that come before the Board until he/she has an opportunity to hear the pros and cons of the issue during a board meeting.
3. Uphold the intent of Executive Session and respect the privileged communication that exists in Executive Session.
4. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.
5. Treat with respect the rights of all members of the board, despite differences of opinion.

### **D. Prohibited Conduct**

An elected official, a member of any Board, Committee or Commission, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 268A, shall:

1. Not accept gifts or consideration or engage in any business or professional activity, which might appear to impair his/her independence of judgement in the exercise of his/her official duties.
2. Not improperly disclose confidential information acquired by him/her in the course of his/her official duties, and not use such information to further his/her personal interests.
3. Not use or attempt to use his/her official position to secure unwarranted privileges or exemptions for himself/herself or others.
4. Not by his/her conduct give reasonable basis for the impression that any person can improperly influence him/her or unduly enjoy his/her favor in the performance of his/her

official duties, or that he/she is unduly affected by the kinship, rank, position or influence of any party or person.

5. Not pursue a course of conduct, which will raise suspicion among the public that he/she has a direct financial interest, or an immediate family member has a direct financial interest.

*If you have a question concerning potential conflict, you should contact the Town Administrator. You may also find the State Ethics Commission's website helpful, at <http://www.mass.gov/ethics>.*

## **II. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. Appointments**

All appointments made by the Board of Selectmen or other elected boards are made by majority vote in a regular open meeting. All appointments must be registered voters in the Town unless otherwise exempted. Initial appointments by the Board of Selectmen are made from a list of volunteers who have either submitted a letter of interest or filled out a Town Committee Volunteer Application (see the sample application in the Appendix), indicating their areas of interest or expertise, kept on file in the Selectmen's Office. Citizens are encouraged to attend meetings of their committee of interest to learn about the committee and its role in the community. Written notification of an appointment is made by the Board of Selectmen. Acknowledgement of acceptance of the appointment should be made. When you receive notification of an appointment you must contact the Town Clerk to be sworn in. This must be done before taking a seat on the committee and before voting on committee matters.

### **B. Duration of Appointments**

Depending upon the need, vacancy, state law and/or Town Meeting vote, appointment length varies. Some appointments are made for the duration of a project, some yearly, but the most common term for standing committees is are terms of three years.

### **C. Reappointment**

Reappointment is based on evaluation by the appointing authority of the citizen's contribution to the committee, the desirability of widespread involvement and the changing needs of the committee and the Town. It is a policy of the Board of Selectmen, wherever possible to limit one-year term appointments to 5 consecutive terms, and 3-year appointments to two consecutive terms. A committee member is under no obligation to accept reappointment, nor is the appointing authority obligated to offer reappointment.

### **D. Duties of Boards, Committees, Commissions**

Many Committees such as the Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Council on Aging, Board of Assessors and Board of Health have duties and responsibilities established by state law. Other Committees have charges prepared by the Board of Selectmen who appoint prospective members to the Committee.

Upon appointment or election to one of these Committees, the Committee Chairman will give you a copy of the applicable law.

#### **E. Committee Leadership**

Unless otherwise specified, the Chairman and other officers (usually Vice Chairman and Clerk) of every board, committee or commission are chosen by the voting members of the committee. The name of the chairman should be made known to the office of the Selectmen to enhance communication with the group. If appointments are made by another elected board other than the Selectmen, the members' names must also be given to the Selectmen's Office so that all members will be acknowledged in the Annual Town Report.

#### **F. Adoption of Rules and Regulations**

State law permits some committees, such as the Board of Health, Conservation Commission, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals, to adopt rules and regulations, and the procedures set forth in state law should be observed when adopting such rules and regulations. Other Committees' Rules and Regulations (including fees) must be adopted by the Board of Selectmen, except for other elected boards who are empowered by law. As a general principle, the board or committee should advertise and hold a public hearing relative to the proposed rules and regulations prior to adoption. We recommend that any such rules and regulations be advertised two (2) weeks (14 days) prior to the meeting on the proposed changes in a local newspaper. Please check with the Board of Selectmen's Office for further clarification.

#### **G. Resignations/Appointed & Elected Filling of Vacancies**

A committee member who is no longer able to serve, or moves out of Town, should resign promptly so that the vacancy may be filled as soon as possible. Repeated non-attendance at meetings, or other failure to discharge the duties of office, is grounds for removal from appointed office. Resignations must be submitted in writing to the Committee Chairman and the Board of Selectmen. Formal notification ensures that vacancies are filled promptly. Elected officials must notify the Town Clerk in writing of their resignation. If a vacancy/resignation occurs on an elected Board, the Town Clerk will notify the remaining committee members within one month of the vacancy and give the Board of Selectmen written notice of the vacancy, in accordance with G.L. c. 41, §11. The remaining committee members may recommend individuals who have demonstrated an interest in the work of the committee for consideration as a replacement member. They will be considered along with others who have expressed an interest and have filled a Town Committee Volunteer Application. The statute requires that the Board of Selectmen, together with the remaining elected members of the committee, convene a joint meeting within one week of the written notice of vacancy, and by majority roll call vote, appoint a registered voter of the Town to fill the vacancy. In the absence of a written notice of vacancy provided by the Committee to the Board of Selectmen, the Selectmen may fill the vacancy within the time frame provided under G.L. c. 41 §11.





**TOWN OF SUNDERLAND  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
POLICY FOR  
REMOTE PARTICIPATION AT MEETINGS\***

## **I. APPLICABILITY**

The Board of Selectmen, on December 21, 2015 voted to authorize the adoption of 940 CMR 29.10 so that remote participation is permitted in the Town. The Board of Selectmen may revoke its adoption of 940 CMR 29.10 by simple majority vote at any time. This policy and 940 CMR 29.10 shall apply to all Town boards, committees, commissions, sub-committees and working groups ("Town boards") regardless of whether such Town Boards are appointed or elected. Where either the Remote Participation Policy or 940 CMR 29.10 is more stringent, the more stringent Policy shall control.

## **II. PURPOSE STATEMENT**

The Office of the Attorney General amended the Open Meeting Law regulations at 940 CMR 29.00 to allow members of public bodies, in limited circumstances, to participate remotely in meetings. While members of Town boards and committees should make every effort to attend meetings in person, the new regulations seek to promote greater participation in government meetings by allowing members to participate remotely when certain specific circumstances prevent them from being physically present. **IT IS INTENDED THAT THIS POLICY SHALL BE USED ONLY ON RARE OCCASIONS WHERE NECESSARY FOR THE CONDUCT OF BUSINESS BY BOARDS AND COMMITTEES.**

The intent of this policy is to establish clear guidelines on the practice of remote participation by Town Boards under the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c.30A, 18-25.

## **III. POLICY**

The Board of Selectmen by adopting this policy authorizes individuals serving on its appointed and elected Boards, Committees, Commissions and Work Groups that are subject to the Open Meeting Law to participate remotely at meetings for the following permissible reasons:

- a. Personal illness;
- b. Personal disability;
- c. Emergency;
- d. Military service; or,
- e. Geographic distance.

Individual board/committee/commission/work group members may participate remotely up to nine (9) times fiscal year in executive session.

#### **IV. PROCEDURE**

1. Any member of a public body who wishes to participate remotely shall, as soon as reasonably possible prior to a meeting, notify the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person chairing the meeting, of his or her desire to do so and the reason for and facts supporting his/her request.
2. At the start of the meeting, the chair shall announce the name of any member who will be participating remotely and the reason under 940 CMR 29.10 for his/her remote participation. This information shall also be recorded in the meeting minutes.
3. If the person chairing the meeting approves the request for remote participation, he or she shall make any necessary arrangements with appropriate Town personnel to ensure that the required equipment is available and, to the greatest extent practical, provide access to all meeting materials. **THE TOWN DOES NOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY OF REQUIRED EQUIPMENT AT ANY PARTICULAR TIME OR LOCATION.**
4. A member participating remotely for an executive session shall state at the start of the session that no other person is present and/or able to hear the discussion at the remote location, unless presence of that person is approved by a simple majority of the public body.
5. All votes taken during any meeting in which a member participates remotely shall be by roll call vote.
6. A quorum of the public body, including the individual chairing the meeting shall be physically present at the meeting location. Members who participate remotely shall not be deemed to be absent.
7. The acceptable means of remote participation is: conference, telephone, internet, or satellite-enabled audio or video conferencing; or, any other technology that is available that enables the remote participant and all persons present to be clearly audible to one another. The chair or in the chair's absence, the person authorized to chair the meeting shall make this determination.
8. If video technology is used, the remote participant shall be clearly visible to all persons present at the meeting location.
9. The Town shall not be responsible for the reimbursement of any out-of-pocket costs associated with the remote participation of Board members.
10. Members participating remotely are cautioned that the same obligations of consideration apply as in any physical meeting. Remote participants should direct all their attention to the meeting, and should make their decisions based upon the same information as is available to all the other participants in the meeting. The remote participant shall also state at the beginning of any meeting that no other person is in proximity who could exert undue influence on the participant, in either executive or public session, and shall inform the chair if that situation changes.

The Board of Selectmen may revoke Remote Participation at any time under 940 CMR 29.10(3).

#### **V. VIOLATIONS**

Violations of the Open Meeting Law are reportable through the Open Meeting Law division of the Attorney General's office. If the Attorney General determines, after an investigation, that 940 CMR 29.10 has been violated, the Attorney General may resolve the investigation by ordering the public body to temporarily or permanently discontinue its use of remote participation.

**\*Pursuant to MGL c. 30A, s. 20(d); 940 CMR 29.00 attached below**

Section 20. (a) Except as provided in section 21, all meetings of a public body shall be open to the public.

(b) Except in an emergency, in addition to any notice otherwise required by law, a public body shall post notice of every meeting at least 48 hours prior to the meeting, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. In an emergency, a public body shall post notice as soon as reasonably possible prior to the meeting. Notice shall be printed in a legible, easily understandable format and shall contain the date, time and place of the meeting and a listing of topics that the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting.

(c) For meetings of a local public body, notice shall be filed with the municipal clerk and posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in or on the municipal building in which the clerk's office is located.

For meetings of a regional or district public body, notice shall be filed and posted in each city or town within the region or district in the manner prescribed for local public bodies. For meetings of a regional school district, the secretary of the regional school district committee shall be considered to be its clerk and shall file notice with the clerk of each city or town within the district and shall post the notice in the manner prescribed for local public bodies. For meetings of a county public body, notice shall be filed in the office of the county commissioners and a copy of the notice shall be publicly posted in a manner conspicuously visible to the public at all hours in the places as the county commissioners shall designate for the purpose.

For meetings of a state public body, notice shall be filed with the attorney general by posting on a website under the procedures established for this purpose and a duplicate copy of the notice shall be filed with the regulations division in the state secretary's office.

The attorney general may prescribe or approve alternative methods of notice where the attorney general determines the alternative methods will afford more effective notice to the public.

(d) The attorney general may, by regulation or letter ruling, authorize remote participation by members of a public body not present at the meeting location; provided, however, that the absent members and all persons present at the meeting location are clearly audible to each other; and provided further, that a quorum of the body, including the chair, are present at the meeting location. The authorized members may vote and shall not be deemed absent for the purposes of section 23D of chapter 39.

*[ Subsection (e) effective until July 1, 2015. For text effective July 1, 2015, see below.]*

(e) A local commission on disability may by majority vote of the commissioners at a regular meeting permit remote participation applicable to a specific meeting or generally to all of the commission's meetings; provided, however, that the commission shall comply with all other requirements of law and regulation.

*[ Subsection (e) as amended by 2015, 46, Sec. 52 effective July 1, 2015. See 2015, 46, Sec. 216. For text effective until July 1, 2015, see above.]*

(e) A local commission on disability may by majority vote of the commissioners at a regular meeting authorize remote participation applicable to a specific meeting or generally to all of the commission's meetings. If a local commission on disability is authorized to utilize remote participation, a physical quorum of that commission's members shall not be required to be present at the meeting location; provided, however, that the chair or, in the chair's absence, the person authorized to chair the meeting, shall be physically present at the meeting location. The commission shall comply with all other requirements of law.

(f) After notifying the chair of the public body, any person may make a video or audio recording of an open session of a meeting of a public body, or may transmit the meeting through any medium, subject to reasonable requirements of the chair as to the number, placement and operation of equipment used so as not to interfere with the conduct of the meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair shall inform other attendees of any recordings.

(g) No person shall address a meeting of a public body without permission of the chair, and all persons shall, at the request of the chair, be silent. No person shall disrupt the proceedings of a meeting of a public body. If, after clear warning from the chair, a person continues to disrupt the proceedings, the chair may order the person to withdraw from the meeting and if the person does not withdraw, the chair may authorize a constable or other officer to remove the person from the meeting.

(h) Within 2 weeks of qualification for office, all persons serving on a public body shall certify, on a form prescribed by the attorney general, the receipt of a copy of the open meeting law, regulations promulgated under section 25 and a copy of the educational materials prepared by the attorney general explaining the open meeting law and its application under section 19. Unless otherwise directed or approved by the attorney general, the appointing authority, city or town clerk or the executive director or other appropriate administrator of a state or regional body, or their designees, shall obtain certification from each person upon entering service and shall retain it subject to the applicable records retention schedule where the body maintains its official records. The certification shall be evidence that the member of a public body has read and understands the requirements of the open meeting law and the consequences of violating it.

## **940 CMR 29.00: Open Meetings**

### **Open Meetings**

29.01 Purpose, Scope and Other General Provisions

29.02 Definitions

29.03 Notice Posting Requirements

29.04 Certification

29.05 Complaints

29.06 Investigation

29.07 Resolution

29.08 Advisory Opinions

29.09 Other Enforcement Actions

29.10 Remote Participation

### **29.10: Remote Participation**

(1) Preamble. Remote participation may be permitted subject to the following procedures and restrictions. However, the Attorney General strongly encourages members of public bodies to physically attend meetings whenever possible. By promulgating these regulations, the Attorney General hopes to promote greater participation in government. Members of public bodies have a responsibility to ensure that remote participation in meetings is not used in a way that would defeat the purposes of the Open Meeting Law, namely promoting transparency with regard to deliberations and decisions on which public policy is based.

(2) Adoption of Remote Participation. Remote participation in meetings of public bodies is not permitted unless the practice has been adopted as follows:

(a) Local Public Bodies. The Chief Executive Officer, as defined in M.G.L. c. 4, sec. 7, must authorize or, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of these regulations, with that authorization or vote applying to all subsequent meetings of all local public bodies in that municipality.

### **III. MEETINGS**

#### **A. Open Meeting Law**

Please refer to the Open Meeting Law packet provided to every elected and appointed official by the Town Clerk. Questions regarding the Open Meeting Law may be directed to the Town Clerk.

#### **B. Record Keeping**

1. Public Records Law: The Massachusetts Public Records Law (G.L. c. 4, §7, cl 26; G.L. c. 66, §10) provides right of access to public records, broadly defined to include documentary materials made or received by any town official or employee, except eleven specific exemptions such as personnel and medical files, proposals and bids, and appraisals of property. All minutes, informational data, memoranda and circulating materials of any Town board or committee are usually public information. However, some documents are not public (i.e. Assessors and Veterans Department). The committee should consult the Board of Selectmen's office if questions arise concerning the public records status of documents.

The Secretary of State, Supervisor of Records, is empowered to determine the public records status of documents. Further information on the Public Records Law can be found at the Supervisor of Records' website, [www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/preidx.htm](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/preidx.htm)

#### **C. Public Hearings**

Those serving on the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, or the Board of Health occasionally will be required to hold a public hearing in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws. Hearings are held for the purpose of gathering information from which to draw a conclusion and reach a decision.

Written notices, the initiation of the hearing, and the written conclusions of a hearing may have strict legal time limitations that vary with the nature of the hearing and the Board. Several procedures are common to all hearings. The chairman or other designated person should run the hearing, and state the guidelines and time allowance, if restricted, before any testimony is given. All questions should be directed to the chair who, in turn, may ask for a response from the floor. An important aspect of the hearing is that a decision must be based on facts and cannot be arbitrary. Emotions or information not presented or explored in the hearing should not be considered.

#### **D. Recordings**

Any member of the public also has a right to make an audio or video recording of an open session of a public meeting. A member of the public who wishes to record a meeting must first notify the chair and must comply with reasonable requirements regarding audio or video equipment established by the chair so as not to interfere with the meeting. The chair is required to inform other attendees of such recording at the beginning of the meeting.

#### **E. Executive Session**

Deliberations and votes held in private sessions, commonly called Executive Sessions, are allowed under strict circumstances as outlined in the Open Meeting Law. Executive Sessions may only be held after convening in an open public session. Please refer to the Open Meeting Law packet provided to every elected and appointed board, committee/commission member by the Town Clerk. Questions regarding the Open Meeting Law may be directed to the Town Clerk.

### **IV. FINANCIAL MATTERS AND YOUR COMMITTEE**

In general, an individual committee does not have a budget unless one is authorized by Town Meeting or at the time of its formation. If a committee anticipates a need to expend funds, it can request a budget for the next fiscal year through the Board of Selectmen, or if funds are needed during the fiscal year the Board of Selectmen should also be contacted. Unless a committee has funds specifically appropriated to it, the committee should not spend or commit to the spending of any funds without first obtaining guidance from the Board of Selectmen or Town Accountant.

#### **A. Budget**

If your board of committee already has an established budget, on or about January 1, you will receive a budget package from the Board of Selectmen. The budget package will include directions for filing; a time frame on which the budget forms must be filled, and other pertinent information. Your committee's annual operating budget form should be filled out and returned to the Board of Selectmen as instructed in the budget package. Your board or committee will be asked to meet with the Finance Committee and Board of Selectmen to discuss your budget request before the warrant for the Annual Town Meeting is published. These meetings usually take place during the months of January and February. The financial nature, include any articles involving or affecting expenditures, appropriations, debt, budgets, estimates, purchases or sales of property.

#### **B. Submission and Payment of Bills**



All requests for payments of bills must be given to the Town Accountant and all appropriate receipts must be attached. There are strict laws for collecting, accounting and expending public money. Any questions regarding expenditures should be directed to the Town Accountant or Town Administrator.

### **C. Turning in Receipts**

If your board or committee charges a fee for any of your services or programs, that money must be kept in a secure place and the turned over to the Town Treasurer with a duplicate accounting of the receipts given to the Town Accountant. To eliminate security problems and facilitate a positive cash flow, plan to turn in whatever money you have on a weekly basis or sooner if the amount exceeds \$100.00.

### **D. Purchases/Public Bidding Requirements**

All purchasing must be done in compliance with Massachusetts Public Procurement Law (G.L. c. 30B). Committee expenditures will usually not be large enough to require formal bidding; however the following are general guidelines:

Purchases for amounts less than \$10,000 do not require formal bids. Good sound business practices should be followed.

Purchase for amounts between \$10,000 and \$35,000 require three price quotes and the lowest responsive price quote accepted. The quotes can either be telephone or written quotes.

Purchases estimated to cost in excess of \$35,000 requires formal bidding procedures.

The provisions of G.L. Chapter 30B apply to the acquisition and disposal of real property and other procurement laws apply to public works contracts and public construction contracts (G.L. c. 30, 39M).

The Board of Selectmen's office should be contacted for assistance and guidance for all purchasing and bidding.

### **E. Fundraising**

1. Background Information. The provisions of G.L. c. 44 §53A and the written policy adopted by the Board of Selectmen, enable a committee to raise and disburse funds according to specific procedures.
2. Procedures. In general, all funds received by the committee go into the Town's General Fund, and may not be spent without further appropriation by Town

Meeting, unless approved by the Board of Selectmen for deposit into a special revenue account. Funds held in special revenue accounts may be dispersed without appropriation for special projects pursuant to the purpose for which the funds were originally received. The Board of Selectmen should be contacted by the committee for guidelines prior to commencing a special project.

## **V. Access to Town Counsel**

Elected Officials, Department Heads, Committee Chairmen and/or designees shall have access to Town Counsel only after the request is approved by the Board of Selectmen.

When you feel it is necessary to contact Town Counsel to discuss a matter affecting your department or matters before your board, we ask that you first contact the Town Administrator or any one selectmen to (a) discuss briefly what matter is; (b) to consider if there are other alternatives (some of them free, such as the Department of Revenue and Massachusetts Municipal Association) to calling Town Counsel and (c) to obtain permission from the selectmen to make the call.

This is not meant to be a burdensome process, but is implemented to hold down skyrocketing legal costs and to keep the selectmen aware of legal matters affecting the Town.

After you have contacted Town Counsel, please use the accompanying form to briefly let the selectmen know what the matter is and what you learned. If these issues are sensitive, they may not be discussed in open session.