

# **Handbook for Elected and Appointed Officials and Volunteers**

## **Town of Coventry, CT**



Dear Coventry Commission, Committee, or Board Member:

On behalf of the Town Council, we sincerely thank you for your interest in serving on one of the Town's many boards, commissions, or committees. It is your willingness to work on behalf of others, without any expectation of tangible gain that contributes greatly to the caring, cohesive community that we are. It makes an enormous difference in the quality of life of your fellow townspeople. We applaud you!!

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a handy reference guide to topics of importance for members of boards, commissions, and committees. It arose out of the goals and priorities your Council established for itself at the beginning of their term in November, 2009 and continues to the present day. If there is a topic that you believe should be included, please let us know. This handbook will evolve over time and we would appreciate your input.

Again, thank you for your interest in getting involved, and we encourage you to share this handbook with friends and neighbors who might also be interested in volunteering. We look forward to your successful participation.

Sincerely,

Coventry Town Council  
April 7, 2025

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# HOW TO VOLUNTEER FOR A BOARD OR COMMISSION

## **How Vacancies are Determined**

Each Board or Commission is charged with certain tasks and a structure which determines the duration of the group, the number of members, and the length of terms. This “charge” is adopted by the Town Council. The Town Clerk’s Office keeps a record of vacancies on each Board and Commission and provides the Town Council with a monthly list of vacancies. A list of vacancies is published on the Town website at [www.coventry-ct.gov](http://www.coventry-ct.gov) under the Boards & Commissions section. Critical vacancies are also advertised on Coventry’s Public Access TV station, the Town website, and the Town Manager’s Facebook Page.

## **Statement of Interest Form**

If you are interested in serving on a Board or Commission you will need to complete a Statement of Interest form. Forms are available on the website, [www.coventryct.gov](http://www.coventryct.gov), under the Boards & Commissions section and at the Town Hall. Completed forms may be submitted in person to the Town Clerk’s Office, or by completing the online form.

## **Council Approval Process**

The Council Steering Committee reviews a list of vacancies and Statement of Interest forms at their monthly meeting and makes recommendations for appointment by the full Council at their next regularly-scheduled meeting.

## **Appointments to Major Land Use Commissions**

It is Town Council policy to interview candidates for major land use boards such as the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Inland Wetlands Agency, and the Economic Development Commission. If you apply to serve on one of these Boards, the Steering Committee will ask to meet with you to discuss your goals and vision for land use in Coventry.

## **Political Appointments**

The Town Charter sets forth a ratio of political appointments to ensure equal representation on each Committee. A summary can be found under Section 2.2 in “Relevant Excerpts from the Town Charter” in this manual. A complete copy of the Charter language may be viewed at [www.coventry-ct.gov](http://www.coventry-ct.gov). Click on the government tab for “Charter and Ordinances.”

# **VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Volunteers should become familiar with the rules and procedures pertaining to their particular board, commission, or committee. In addition, all volunteers shall observe the following general code of conduct:

1. Acting professionally and in the best interest of the Town of Coventry at all times.
2. Avoiding both actual and potential conflicts of interest between private self-interest and the interest of the public, as referenced in the Town Ethics Ordinance.
3. Treating people with respect – even when they disagree.
4. Avoiding discourteous or abusive language or conduct towards others while representing the Town of Coventry.
5. Refraining from unauthorized disclosure of confidential and proprietary information, including to the media.
6. Ensuring there is no falsification of documents or records, including applications.
7. No misusing Town equipment or taking it off the premises without prior permission. Personal use of telephones, equipment, and supplies is to be avoided.
8. No violating the Town of Coventry's drug/alcohol, smoking, non-disclosure, harassment, or safety policies.
9. Bringing firearms or weapons onto Town property is prohibited.
10. Maintaining a record of excellent attendance. Arriving on time and ready to work. Notifying the Chair in advance of any unavoidable absence, as referenced in the Town of Coventry Board Attendance Policy (located in the Appendix)
11. Completing all mandated training for members of the board, commission or committee, if any, within 120 days of appointment and maintaining compliance with training requirements as may be required.

Volunteers who do not adhere to this code of conduct are subject to penalties.

# **Town Ethics Ordinance**

## **Chapter 2 ADMINISTRATION (TOWN OF COVENTRY CODE OF ORDINANCES)**

### **ARTICLE V. - ETHICS ORDINANCE**

#### **Sec. 2-276 Statement of Purpose:**

Public Office is a public trust. The trust of the public is essential for government to function effectively. Public policy developed by government officials affects every citizen of the municipality, and it must be based on honest and fair deliberations and decisions. This process must be free from threats, favoritism, undue influence, and all forms of impropriety so that the confidence of the public is not eroded. By enacting this Ordinance, this municipality seeks to avoid any loss of trust and to maintain and increase the confidence of our citizens in the integrity and fairness of their government.

- 1) Declaration of Policy: There is hereby enacted a policy of ethics for elected and appointed officials of the Town of Coventry. The purpose of this Ordinance is to establish suitable ethical standards of conduct for all such officials by prohibiting acts or actions incompatible with the best interests of the Town of Coventry.
- 2) Definition: This Ordinance shall be applicable to all officials of the Town of Coventry. The term "official" when used throughout this Ordinance shall mean with respect to the government of the Town of Coventry, CT, any holder of public office, elected or appointed, paid or unpaid, and any member of any board, commission, or committee. It shall not mean any employee of the Town who is covered by any other policy.

#### **Sec. 2-277 Conflicts of Interest.**

- a) No public official shall engage in or participate in any business or transaction, including outside employment with a private business, or have an interest, direct or indirect, which is incompatible with the public discharge of their official responsibilities in the public interest or which would tend to impair their independent judgment or action in the performance of their official responsibilities.
- b) No public official may accept any gratuity, gift, favor, or promise thereof regardless of amount, nor any promise of future position, from any person, when it is the intent of the official and the person offering the same, to influence the official in the exercise of their judgment on behalf of the Town.
- c) No public official shall accept or solicit anything of value exceeding \$25.00, whether in the form of a gift or the promise of a gift, from any person, firm or corporation which to his knowledge is involved in business dealings with the Town. For purposes of this section, a gift shall not include certificates of appreciation, plaques and ceremonial gifts and/or awards.
- d)
  - 1) A public official shall refrain from voting upon or otherwise participating in any matter on behalf of the municipality if the business with which they, or an immediate family member, are associated, has a financial or personal interest

in the transaction or contract, including, but not limited to, the sale of real estate, material, supplies, or services to the municipality.

- 2) If such participation is within the scope of the public official's official responsibility, they shall be required to provide written disclosure, which sets forth in detail the nature and extent of such interest, to the Town Council, and if serving on a board or commission, the Chair of said board or commission.
- 3) Notwithstanding the prohibition in subsection d (1), a public official may vote or otherwise participate in a matter if it involves a determination of general policy and the interest is shared with a substantial segment of the population of the Town.

e)

- 1) Except for a public official who receives no compensation for their service to the municipality, other than per diem payments and reimbursement of expenses, no public official shall appear on behalf of private interests before any board, agency, or committee of the municipality.
  - 2) Except for a public official who receives no compensation for their service to the municipality, other than per diem payments and reimbursement of expenses, no public official shall represent private interests against the interest of the municipality in any litigation to which the municipality is a party.
- f) Nothing contained in this Ordinance shall prohibit or restrict a public official from appearing before any board or commission of the municipality on their own behalf, or from being a party in any action, proceeding, or litigation brought by or against the public employee or public official to which the municipality is a party.
  - g) No public official shall disclose confidential information concerning municipal affairs, nor shall they use the information for the financial interests of themselves or others.
  - h) No public official shall request, use, or permit the use of municipality-owned vehicles, equipment, facilities, materials, or property for personal convenience or profit, except when such are available to the public generally, or are provided as municipal policy for the use of such public official in the conduct of official business.
  - i) No public official, or a business with which they are associated, or any member of their immediate family shall enter into a contract with the municipality unless it is awarded in accordance with the town's purchasing policy.

#### Sec. 2-278 Complaint.

Whenever a complaint of a violation of this Ordinance is received, in writing and signed by the complainant, the Town Manager shall designate an individual to conduct an investigation and report their findings to the Town Manager upon completion of the investigation. If there is reason to believe that a violation of this Ordinance has occurred, the Town Manager shall refer the matter to the Town Council who shall initiate the procedure set forth in Section 10-4 of the Town Charter.

#### Section 2-279 Penalties.

Violation of any provision of this Ordinance shall constitute grounds for, and may be punished by: public censure and reprimand; Removal as detailed in Section 10-4 of the

Town Charter; and/or any other remedy as provided by law including restitution of any pecuniary benefit received because of the violation committed.

**Sec. 2-280 Distribution of Ordinance.**

The Town Clerk shall cause a copy of this Ordinance to be distributed to every public official within 60 days after enactment of this Ordinance. Each public official shall be furnished a copy before entering the duties of their office or employment. A signed receipt for all copies shall be returned to the Town Clerk and retained on file.

Adopted by Council: July 1, 1996

Revised: September 7, 1999

Revised: April 2022

Adopted by Council: June 6, 2022

Adopted by Council, Ordinance #265: March 3, 2025

# Excerpts - Town of Coventry Charter

## Chapter II. Elections

**Section 2-1 General** (a) Nomination and election of federal and state officers, including registrars of voters, and of such elective municipal officers, boards, and commissions as are provided for in this Charter shall be conducted, and the registrars of voters shall prepare lists of electors qualified to vote therefor, in the manner prescribed in the constitution and general laws of the State of Connecticut, except as hereinafter provided.

(b) A meeting of the electors of the Town of Coventry for the election of municipal officers shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November in odd-numbered years. The terms of all municipal officers shall commence on the first Wednesday following their election and they shall hold office until their successors have been chosen and qualified. Except as otherwise provided in this Charter, all elective town officers, boards, and commissions shall have the powers and duties prescribed by law.

### **Section 2-1A. Election of council.**

At the meeting of the electors of the Town of Coventry for the election of municipal officers, there shall be elected seven (7) members of the town council. Each party shall nominate a maximum of five (5) candidates to run for the council, [and] the seven (7) receiving the highest votes shall be elected. No person shall vote for more than five (5).

### **Section 2-2 Minority Representation Except as Provided in Section 2-1A.**

Minority representation on any elective or appointed board, commission, committee, or similar body of the town shall be determined in accordance with the following provisions: When the total membership of the board is odd, not more than the bare majority shall be members of the same political party; and when the total membership of the board is even, not more than one-half (1/2) shall be members of the same political party.

### **Section 2-6 Eligibility**

No person shall be eligible for election to any town office, or appointment to any town board, commission, committee, or similar body who is not at the time of their election, or appointment, a resident elector of said town; and any person ceasing to be a resident elector of said town shall thereupon cease to hold such elective or appointive office in town.

## **Chapter III. The Town Council**

### **Section 3-1 The Council**

There shall be a town council consisting of seven (7) members, hereinafter referred to as "the council," the members of which shall serve without compensation except for the reimbursement of actual expenses incurred in the performance of official duties. No member of the council shall hold any office of profit under the government of the Town of Coventry, nor shall they, during the term of office for which they are elected be appointed to any office under the government of said town.

### **Section 3-4 General Powers and Duties**

The town council shall have the powers and duties which, on the effective date of this Charter [November 4, 1969,] were conferred by law upon officers, boards, and commissions of said town existing immediately prior to such date, except as otherwise specifically provided in this Charter. The legislative power of the towns shall be vested exclusively in the council except as otherwise specified in this Charter. Said council shall have the power to enact, amend, or repeal ordinances not inconsistent with this Charter or the General Statutes of the state; to create or abolish, by ordinance, boards, commissions, departments, and offices; and the council may contract for services and the use of facilities of the United States or any federal agency, the State of Connecticut, or any political subdivision to incorporate any nationally recognized code, rules, or regulations that have been printed in body form, or any code officially adopted by any administrative agency of the state, or portion thereof, by reference thereto in such ordinance; provided, upon adoption of any such ordinance wherein any such code, rules, or regulations, or portions thereof, have been incorporated by reference, there shall be maintained two copies of such code, rules, or regulations in the office of the town clerk for examination by the public. Said council may by resolution, regulate the internal operation of boards, commissions, and offices which it fills by appointment. Said council may fix the charges, if any, to be made for services rendered by the town, or for the execution of powers vested in the town, as provided in Chapter I of this Charter.

## **Chapter IV. Other Elective Offices**

### **Section 4-1 Zoning Board of Appeals.**

There shall be five (5) members of the zoning board of appeals and three (3) alternate members of the zoning board of appeals, whose term of office shall be for two (2) years.

### **Section 4-2 Board of Tax Review**

There shall be five (5) members of the board of tax review, whose term of office shall be as provided by General Statutes.

**Section 4-3 Board of Education**

The board of education shall consist of seven (7) members, whose term of office shall be for two (2) years. The board of education shall be responsible for the conduct of the educational system of the town.

**Section 4-4 Registrars of Voters**

There shall be a registrar of voters for each political party in each voting district who shall be elected in accordance with the General Statutes. No elector shall vote for more than one (1) registrar. The registrars of voters shall have all the powers and perform such other duties as may be imposed upon them by ordinances not inconsistent with General Statutes.

**Chapter V. Appointed Offices**

**Section 5-1 General**

The council shall, by majority vote of the board (pursuant to Section 3-3), appoint personnel to boards, commissions, and offices as may be established under the provisions of this Charter or by the General Statutes. The town manager, with approval of the council, shall appoint the following offices: town clerk, tax collector, assessor, director of civil defense, building official, canine control officer, tree warden, chief of police, fire marshals, treasurer, assistant treasurer, human services administrator, and representative to the Windham Regional Planning Agency.

**Section 5-2 Terms of Office**

All such appointees shall take office on the day they are appointed and qualified, shall serve such terms as are herein specified, and until their respective successors have been appointed and qualified. All incumbent appointees or previously elected officers shall complete their present terms of office.

**Chapter X**

**Section 10-3 Financial Interest Prohibited**

No holder of elective or appointive office shall derive, by reason of holding such office any direct financial benefit as the result of any contract with the town or board of education, or any sale to the town or said board of education of any materials, supplies, or services.

**Section 10-4 Removals**

(a) Except as otherwise provided in this Charter, any appointive officer or appointive member of a board or commission may be removed for just cause by the authority which appointed them, provided they shall first be given notice in writing of their removal. Said officer or board or commission member shall, upon written request to the appointing authority within ten (10) days from the date of receipt of

their removal notice, be immediately given notice in writing of the specific grounds of removal. Thereafter, if requested (either in the request for specific grounds or in a subsequent request submitted to the appointing authority within five (5) days from receipt of such specific grounds) said officer, or board, or commission member shall be given written notice from the appointing authority setting forth the time and place of an opportunity to be heard in their own defense, personally and/or by counsel, at a public hearing before the appointing authority, to be held not less than five (5) nor more than twenty (20) days after receipt of such request for hearing. With the exception of the initial notice of removal, the council shall act for, and in the place of, the town manager as to each and every request, notice, and hearing provided for hereunder.

(b) No employee of the board of education, below the rank of superintendent or supervising agent, who holds a regular certificate of qualification issued by the state board of education shall be removed except in accordance with the General Statutes of Connecticut as the same may be amended.

## **Robert's Rules of Order (Summary Version):**

Robert's Rules of Order is a system of parliamentary procedure first published in 1876 by Henry Robert, an American army general. They provide common rules and procedures, and order, in debate among full membership of a board or commission and are generally standard in the United States. Robert's Rules of Order strives to allow the whole membership of a commission the same understanding on conducting business. It allows the fundamental right of deliberating and asking questions before actions are taken. There are some basic rules for conducting meetings and making motions, but they can be modified slightly.

### **Below is a summary of some of the basics of Robert's Rules of Order that you may encounter at a Board or Committee meeting:**

1. What is Parliamentary Procedure?
2. Why is Parliamentary Procedure Important?
3. Example of the Order of Business
4. Motions
5. Types of Motions
6. How are Motions Presented?
7. Voting on a Motion

### **What Is Parliamentary Procedure?**

It is a set of rules for conduct at meetings, that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion.

### **Why is Parliamentary Procedure Important?**

Because it's a time tested method of conducting business at meetings and public gatherings. It can be adapted to fit the needs of any organization. Today, Robert's Rules of Order (newly revised) is the basic handbook of operation for most clubs, organizations, and other groups. So it's important that everyone know these basic rules!

Organizations using parliamentary procedure usually follow a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

1. Call to order.
2. Roll call of members present.
3. Reading of minutes of last meeting.
4. Officers reports.
5. Committee reports.
6. Special orders --- Important business previously designated for consideration at this meeting.
7. Unfinished business.
8. New business.
9. Announcements.
10. Adjournment.

The method used by members to express themselves is in the form of moving motions. A motion is a proposal that the entire membership take action or a stand on an issue. Individual members can:

1. Call to order.
2. Second motions.
3. Debate motions.
4. Vote on motions.

### **There are four Basic Types of Motions:**

1. **Main Motions:** The purpose of a main motion is to introduce items to the membership for their consideration. They cannot be made when any other motion is on the floor, and yield to privileged, subsidiary, and incidental motions.
2. **Subsidiary Motions:** Their purpose is to change or affect how a main motion is handled, and is voted on before a main motion.
3. **Privileged Motions:** Their purpose is to bring up items that are urgent about special or important matters. They are unrelated to pending business and relate to the welfare of the group.

4. Incidental Motions: Their purpose is to provide a means of questioning procedure concerning other motions and must be considered before the other motion.

### **How are Motions Presented?**

1. Obtaining the floor
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Rise and address the Chair by saying, "Mr./Ms. Chair, or Mr./Ms. President."
  - c. Wait until the Chair recognizes you.
2. Make Your Motion
  - a. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
  - b. Always state a motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we ..." rather than, "I move that we do not ...".
  - c. Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
3. Wait for Someone to Second Your Motion
4. Another member will second your motion or the Chair will call for a second.
5. If there is no second to your motion, it is lost.
6. The Chair States Your Motion
  - a. The Chair will say, "it has been moved and seconded that we ..." Thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
  - b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to a vote.
  - c. Once your motion is presented to the membership by the Chair it becomes "assembly property", and cannot be changed by you without the consent of the members.
7. Expanding on Your Motion
  - a. The time for you to speak in favor of your motion is at this point in time, rather than at the time you present it.
  - b. The mover is always allowed to speak first.
  - c. All comments and debate must be directed to the Chair.
  - d. Keep to the time limit for speaking that has been established.
  - e. The mover may speak again only after other speakers are finished, unless called upon by the Chair.
8. Putting the Question to the Membership
  - a. The Chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
  - c. On a motion to move, the previous question may be adapted.

### **Voting on a Motion:**

The method of vote on any motion depends on the situation and the by-laws of policy of your organization. There are five methods used to vote by most organizations, they are:

1. By Voice -- The Chair asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for an exact count.
2. By Roll Call -- Each member answers "yes" or "no" as their names are called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.
3. By General Consent -- When a motion is not likely to be opposed, the Chair says, "if there is no objection ..." The membership shows agreement by their silence, however if one member says, "I object," the item must be put to a vote.
4. By Division -- This is a slight verification of a voice vote. It does not require a count unless the Chair so desires. Members raise their hands or stand.
5. By Ballot -- Members write their vote on a slip of paper; this method is used when secrecy is desired.

There are two other motions that are commonly used that relate to voting.

1. Motion to Table -- This is the most misapplied motion! If it is used in an attempt to "kill" or avoid dealing with a measure, it is out of order! Its proper use is when there's a need to bring another motion to the table – i.e. if a commissioner has to leave but wants to vote on a more important motion, you can table the one being debated;
2. Motion to Postpone Indefinitely – This is a subsidiary motion to kill a main motion. It avoids a direct vote on the question on the floor and can be used to test the strength of a motion that a faction opposes. It was designed as a courtesy motion, to prevent a direct vote on a question that might be embarrassing to the group. Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. But, it will only work if you use it properly.
  - Allow motions that are in order.
  - Have members obtain the floor properly.
  - Speak clearly and concisely.
  - Obey the rules of debate.

# **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CT FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT**

## **What is the CT FOIA?**

The CT FOIA, codified in Title I, Chapter 14 of CT General Statutes a state law that establishes the public's right to obtain information from federal government agencies. "Any person" can file a FOIA request, including U.S. citizens, foreign nationals, organizations, associations, and universities.

"Any person" has the right to obtain records and attend meetings of all public agencies – with certain limited exceptions. This applies to

- State and local government agencies, departments, institutions, boards, commissions, authorities, and their committees.
- Executive, administrative, or legislative offices, the judicial branch, and the Division of Criminal Justice with respect to their administrative functions.
- Certain other entities based on the following criteria: (1) whether the entity performs a governmental function; (2) the level of government funding; (3) the extent of government involvement or regulation; and (4) whether the entity was created by the government.

## **Public Meetings**

Meetings, including hearings and other proceedings, must be open to the public – except in limited situations. A public meeting is any hearing or other proceeding of a public agency, or gathering of, or communication by or to a quorum of a multi-member agency, to discuss or act on any matter over which it has authority.

The following are not public meetings: meetings of certain personnel search committees; collective bargaining strategy and negotiating sessions; caucuses; chance or social gatherings not intended to relate to official business; administrative or staff meetings of a single-member agency (e.g., mayor); and communications limited to notice of agency meetings or their agendas.

No registration or other requirements may be imposed on a member of the public seeking attendance at a public meeting. The public, as well as the news media, may photograph, record, or broadcast meetings, subject to prior reasonable rules regarding non-interference with the conduct of the meeting.

Only three kinds of meetings are recognized under FOI: Regular, Special, and Emergency. A town or city agency must file each year a schedule of its regular meetings with the clerk of the town or city. A special meeting may be called up to 24 hours (excluding weekends, holidays, and days on which the office of the municipal clerk is closed) before the time set for the meeting. A special meeting is called by filing a notice stating the time, place, and business to be transacted. An emergency

meeting may be held without complying with the preceding notice requirements. However, the agency must file its minutes, including the reason for the emergency, within 72 hours (excluding weekends and holidays) of the meeting with the municipal clerk.

An agency is required to send a notice of its meetings, where practicable, at least 1 week prior to the meeting date, to any person who has made a written request. The agency may establish a reasonable charge for this service.

Each agency must make available its agenda for each regular meeting at least 24 hours before the meeting to which it refers. New business not on the agenda may be considered and acted on only on a 2/3 vote of the members of the agency.

The minutes of each agency meeting must be made available to the public, within 7 days of the session to which they refer, in the municipal clerk's office for local agencies. In the case of special meetings, the 7 day period excludes weekends and holidays. The minutes must contain the record of each member's vote on any issue before the agency.

The votes of each member on any issue must be put in writing and made available to the public within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays, of the meeting at which the votes were taken.

The minutes of a meeting at which an executive session occurs must indicate all persons who were in attendance at the closed session, except for job applicants who were interviewed.

### **Executive Sessions**

An agency may close certain portions of its meeting by a vote of 2/3 of the members present and voting. This vote must be conducted at a public session.

Meetings to discuss the following matters may be closed: specific employees (unless the employee concerned requests that the discussions be open to the public); strategy and negotiations regarding pending claims and litigation; security matters; real estate acquisition (if openness might increase price); or any matter that would result in the disclosure of a public record exempted from the disclosure requirements for public records.

Any business or discussion in a closed session must be limited to the above areas. The agency may invite persons to present testimony or opinion in the executive session, but their attendance must be limited to only the time necessary for that testimony or opinion.

## **Public Records**

Most records or files of State and local agencies, including minutes of all their meetings, must be available to the public for inspection or copying. This includes information or data which is typed, handwritten, tape recorded, printed, photographed, or computer-stored. It also includes most inter-agency and intra-agency memoranda or letters.

The public may inspect public records during regular office hours, but copies, print-outs, or transcripts should be requested in writing. There is a fee for copy(s) of a public record.

The public is entitled to prompt access to inspect or copy public records. If an agency fails to respond to a request within four business days, such failure can be treated as a denial of the request.

Some records are specifically exempted from disclosure by Federal Law or State Statute and may not be available to the public. There are fifteen such exemptions including: personnel, medical, and some law enforcement files; juvenile; some witness and victim identification records; pending litigation files; and real estate documents.

Visit the website at [www.state.ct.us/FOI](http://www.state.ct.us/FOI)

## **8 Characteristics of an Effective Presiding Officer (Chair):**

1. Be on time and start on time:
2. Be organized: create an agenda and stick to it – make sure you have a quorum – without a quorum can only move to recess or adjourn;
3. Be prepared: have by-laws, standing rules, Roberts Rules, list of committee members;
4. Be in control of the floor: try to allow everyone who wishes to speak the opportunity, but keep it on point and concise;
5. Be impartial: although a presiding officer has the right to debate, that right should be used sparingly.
6. Be composed;
7. Be precise: restate motion, be clear in voice vote, if necessary use hand vote (make sure everyone knows what is being debated / voted on);
8. Be focused: do not allow irrelevant discussion and if necessary request a member to “confine their remarks to the motion on the floor.”
  - Any speaker can be stopped whose speech becomes irrelevant – it is a judgment call – always avoid / stop personal attacks.
  - Personal remarks in a debate are always out of order – debate must be directed at motions and not motives, principles, not personalities.
  - Speaking time – no person may speak more than two times on any one motion on any one day with each speech less than 10 minutes – with a larger group you can limit it even further, 2-5 minutes, and offer additional time at the end, if available.
  - All comments should be directed to the Chair.

## **8 Characteristics of an Effective Small Group**

1. **Clear purpose** - The vision, mission, goal, or task of the team has been defined and is now accepted by everyone. This is an action plan.
2. **Informality** - The climate tends to be informal, comfortable, and relaxed. There are no obvious tensions or signs of boredom.
3. **Participation** - There is much discussion and everyone is encouraged to participate.
4. **Listening** - The members use effective listening techniques such as questioning, paraphrasing, and summarizing to get out ideas.
5. **Civilized disagreement** - If there is disagreement, the team must be comfortable with this and show no signs of avoiding, smoothing over, or suppressing conflict.
6. **Consensus decisions** - For important decisions, the goal is substantial, but not necessarily unanimous, agreement through open discussion of everyone's ideas, avoidance of formal voting or easy compromises.
7. **Open communication** - Team members feel free to express their feelings on the tasks as well as on the group's operation. There are few hidden agendas. Communication takes place outside of meetings.
8. **Clear roles and work assignments** - There are clear expectations about the roles played by each team member. When action is taken, clear assignments are made, accepted, and carried out. Work is fairly distributed among team members.

# **APPENDIX**

## **TOWN OF COVENTRY BOARD ATTENDANCE POLICY**

A member appointed to any board, committee, or commission has an obligation to the Town and its residents to take seriously their responsibilities as a part of the governance of the Town as assigned to their respective committee. To that end, the following rules are in place:

1. Any appointed member of a Board, Commission, or Committee within the Town of Coventry who either fails to attend three (3) consecutive regular meetings without notifying their respective committee's chair or fails to attend at least two-thirds (2/3) of meetings within a twelve (12) month period shall be considered to have excessively poor attendance. As such, due to their poor attendance as reported to Town Council and recorded with the office of the town clerk, they will be notified of the intent to remove them from their appointed position. They may request to have scheduled a public hearing before the Town Council to be heard in their own defense in accordance with procedures of section 10-4 "Removals" of the Town of Coventry Charter. Town Council shall make the final decision of removals.
2. The chair of each board, commission, or committee shall submit a report of the attendance of their members to the Town Council annually as well as promptly notify the Town Council in writing in the event of a vacancy on their board, commission or committee."

## **LIST AND DESCRIPTIONS OF BOARDS, COMMITTEES & COMMISSIONS**

### **Ad-Hoc Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee:**

An Ad-Hoc Sub-Committee of the Conservation Commission. The purpose of the Sub-Committee shall be to study, develop, coordinate, and implement programs and activities related to undertaking and/or coordinating volunteers in providing stewardship to open space and conservation easements owned by the Town of Coventry. Five (5) members, all of whom shall be resident electors of the Town of Coventry, to be appointed by the Coventry Town Council.

### **Ad-Hoc Coventry Lake Advisory & Monitoring Committee:**

This Committee shall only be advisory in nature, and report to, and work with, the Conservation Commission on issues such as, education of best land management practices, monitoring lake quality and viability, monitoring invasive species, and serving as a sounding board for lake use issues. The Committee shall have 5-7 members, for 3 year terms.

**Ad-Hoc Farmers' Market Operating Committee:**

The purpose of the Committee shall be to study, develop, coordinate, and implement programs and activities related to undertaking and/or coordinating volunteers in providing a Farmers' Market overseen by the Town of Coventry. Further, the Committee will plan, arrange, supervise, coordinate, and implement such activities of the Committee and volunteers including preparing specific policies and procedures, requiring liability coverage, establishing procedures for compliance with CT Dept. of Agriculture regulations for a Farmers' Market, and cooperating with plans adopted by the Economic Development Commission. The Committee shall also coordinate educational and marketing training sessions, and material for the members and the community.

**Ad-Hoc Water Supply Study Committee:**

The Committee shall work with Connecticut Water Co. developing concepts and cost estimates for water system improvements that will enhance economic development and fire protection. The Committee will be 5 members made up from a representative of Board of Education, Planning & Zoning Commission, Economic Development Commission, Coventry Housing Authority, and Town Council.

**Board of Assessment Appeals:**

This board is charged with conducting appeals hearings for those wishing to appeal assessments on grand list property. Members are elected to 4 year terms.

**Board of Education:**

The Board of Education shall consist of seven members, elected, whose term of office shall be for two years. The Board of Education shall be responsible for the conduct of the educational system of the town.

**Building Code Board of Appeals:**

This board reviews appeals submitted by persons who wish to appeal decisions made by the Building Official. This board consists of five members who are appointed by the Town Council to serve staggered 5 year terms.

**Cable Television Advisory Committee**

A regional citizen advisory that provides feedback to Spectrum Cable and provides guidance to local Community Access activities. This board consists of 3 members each serving 3 year terms. Two members are Town Council appointed; one is appointed by the Board of Education.

**Cemetery Commission:**

The Cemetery Commission shall control, manage, and direct the acquisition, appointment, use, and disposition of all town-owned cemetery properties and the appurtenances, including land, plantings, buildings, and equipment related thereto, and maintain these said properties and appurtenances. The Commission consists of 5 members each serving staggered 3 year terms.

**Conservation Commission:**

The Commission shall conduct research into the utilization, and possible utilization, of land areas of the municipality and may coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes, and may advertise, prepare, and distribute books, maps, charts, plans, and pamphlets as necessary for its purposes. It shall keep an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshland, swamps, and other wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas, and may, from time to time, recommend to the Planning Commission, plans and programs for the development and use of such areas which may include the acquisition of conservation easements. It may acquire land in the name of the municipality for any of its purposes as set out in this section. The commission consists of 7 members.

**CoventryVision Committee:**

The purpose of the CoventryVision Committee shall be to develop procedures and coordinate programs and activities related to events and local issues for broadcast on the community access channel provided by Spectrum Communications. The activities shall be positive and informative in tone and free from political undertones. All programs must comply with applicable regulations of Spectrum Communications, as may be amended from time to time, and in accordance with community standards. The 5 members are Town Council appointed for staggered 3 year terms.

**CT Water Company Advisory Council**

A feedback committee formed by CT Water Company.

**Economic Development Commission:**

The Economic Development Commission was created for the purpose of the promotion and development of the business and industrial resources of the Town of Coventry. The 9 members serve 5 year terms all expiring on February 1st of various years.

**Energy Conservation/Alternative Energy Advisory Committee:**

To Study and identify viable and feasible energy conservation projects to reduce energy consumption and/or expenses in town and school facilities; to explore and evaluate renewable energy projects to supplement or replace conventional energy to benefit town and school facilities; to explore grant and private sector opportunities, and to prepare a report to the Town Council of findings and recommendations for funding and implementations. The 5 members serve a term of 3 years each.

**Flood & Erosion Control Board:**

The Coventry Municipal Flood and Erosion Control Board shall have all the powers and duties conferred upon it pursuant to Sections 25-84 to 25-94 of the Connecticut

General Statutes, or otherwise imposed by law on Flood and Erosion Control Boards. The Town Council shall appoint seven members, for a term of 2 years each. The Town Council shall have the authority to appoint its members as members of the Board, each who shall serve as long as a member of the Town Council.

**Health District - Eastern Highlands:**

A regional health district created under State Statutes to serve the health and sanitation needs of the community. There are 2 members from Coventry serving 3 year terms.

**Housing Authority:**

This authority exists for the purpose of ensuring that inhabited dwellings are deemed safe and sanitary. The five members serve staggered five year terms.

**HUD Housing & Rehab/ Fair Housing Commission:**

The purpose of the commission is to oversee the Housing Rehab Program to ensure that policy is meeting program objectives. Five members comprise the board.

**Human Rights Commission:**

The purpose of this commission is to enforce all State and Federal laws that prohibit discrimination and promote enforcement and understanding of those laws; shall assist the Human Rights Officer in developing, approving, and implementing outreach programs; shall refer complaints of discrimination to the Human Rights Officer for action; shall inform the Human Rights Officer of any changes in human rights obligations or the laws they become aware of; shall enforce and implement the "Equal Opportunity Ordinance" and the "Equal Opportunity Plan" as adopted by the Coventry Town Council. All members are Town Council appointed to serve 2 year terms.

**Inland Wetlands Agency:**

The purpose of this agency is to enforce the existing Coventry regulations adopted by its predecessor agency in conformity with the regulations promulgated by the Commissioner of Environmental Protection pursuant to 22a-39 of the CT General Statutes, as are necessary to protect the wetlands and water courses within the territorial limits of the Town of Coventry, and shall have all powers granted by Chapter 440 of the Connecticut General Statutes to amend, modify, enforce, and promulgate new regulations as said agency deems necessary to protect the wetlands and water courses within the Town of Coventry. The agency consists of 5 full members and 2 alternates serving staggered 3 year terms.

**Local Emergency Coordinating Committee (LECC):**

The Committee works to plan, refine, and implement emergency operating procedures for the Town. Representatives from the Town Council, Coventry Public

Schools, Finance, Fire Department, Human Services, Public Works, Police Department, Emergency Management Director, and the Town Manager make up this Committee.

**Parks and Recreation Commission:**

This commission is charged with the development and supervision of recreational programs and the maintenance of recreational facilities and advancement of cultural and art activities within the Town of Coventry. Seven Commission members serve 2 year staggered terms. In 2006, upon disbanding of the Arts Commission, a Parks and Recreation Commission Alternates board was formed consisting of 3 members serving 2 year terms. One alternate's term expires in odd years, 2 in even years.

**Pension and Retirement Committee:**

Appointed by the Town Council, this committee is charged with the administration of the Pension Plan for Town officers, employees, and their beneficiaries. The 5 member's terms run for 3 years.

**Planning and Zoning Commission:**

The Planning and Zoning Commission is responsible for protecting and promoting the public's health, safety, welfare, and environment through the regulation of land use activities. The Planning and Zoning Commission is assisted by the Land Use Office and is staffed by the Director of Planning and Development. There are 5 full members and 3 alternates all of whom serve 3 year terms.

**Town Council**

Provides governance to the Town of Coventry and establishes an annual recommended budget for vote by the townspeople. Appoints members to various Boards and Commissions. Sets policies for the Town. Supervises the Town Manager and directs priorities for Town staff. A seven member volunteer board elected to two-year terms.

**Veterans Memorial & Events Commission:**

The purpose of this commission is to review and assess all existing memorials for veterans and recommend action for their repair and maintenance to the Town Council; make recommendations to the Town Council with regard to memorials that would honor all of Coventry's veterans for the Korean and Vietnam War; take such action as authorized by the Town Council to enact recommendations of the Commission. Organize and collaborate with other town agencies and outside groups to assist and facilitate events to recognize veterans, including, but not limited to, Memorial Day services and luncheons, recreational events with veteran themes, and Veterans Day events. This commission consists of 7 members serving 2 year terms and meets monthly.

**Water Pollution Control Authority:**

The Town of Coventry Water Pollution Control Authority (WPCA) was created March 17, 1980 pursuant to Section 7-246 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Town Council appoints 5 members to two-year terms. The WPCA is responsible for the effective management of the community sewerage system and seeks environmentally sound and economically efficient ways to continue its sewer avoidance policy.

**Windham Regional Transit District**

A regional transit authority which provides Dial-A-Ride and limited, fixed-route service in the Windham region.

**Youth Services Advisory Board & Council for the Prevention of Student Drug and Alcohol Abuse:**

The Coventry Youth Services Advisory Board and the Coventry Council for the Prevention of Student Drug and Alcohol Abuse meets on the second Thursday of each month (September-June) at 6 pm in the Town Hall Boardroom. The Board discusses and makes program recommendations for drug and alcohol prevention, educational activities, and positive youth development programs. Members are Town Council appointed and are comprised of student, faculty, police, and community representatives.

**Zoning Board of Appeals:**

Elected officials who hear appeals of actions of the Zoning Enforcement Officer and decide on variance of the Town's Zoning Regulations. The board consists of 5 full members and 3 alternates elected for 2 year terms.

**Boards and Commissions Meeting Dates**

**This schedule is subject to change. For the most current schedule please visit the Town of Coventry’s website, [www.coventry-ct.gov](http://www.coventry-ct.gov) and click on the tab for “Boards and Commissions.” Copies of this schedule are also available at the Town Manager’s Office at the Town Hall.**

Assessment Appeals	March & September as Needed
Board Of Education	2 <sup>nd</sup> & Last Thursdays
Conservation Commission	2 <sup>nd</sup> & 4 <sup>th</sup> Wednesdays
Cemetery Commission	2 <sup>nd</sup> Wednesday
CoventryVision	1 <sup>st</sup> Monday
Eastern Highlands Health District	3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday
Economic Development Commission	4 <sup>th</sup> Thursday, No November, 1 <sup>st</sup> Thursday December
Energy Conservation/Alt. Energy	1 <sup>st</sup> Wednesday
Finance Committee	2 <sup>nd</sup> Monday
Housing Authority	2 <sup>nd</sup> Tuesday

Housing Rehab/Fair Housing  
Human Rights  
Inland Wetlands Agency  
Parks & Recreation  
Pension Committee  
Planning & Zoning  
LECC  
Steering Committee  
Town Council  
Veterans Memorial & Events  
WPCA  
Youth Services  
Zoning Board of Appeals

Quarterly  
As Needed  
4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday except November, December  
1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday  
As Needed  
2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Mondays  
1<sup>st</sup> Thursday  
4<sup>th</sup> Monday  
1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays except holidays.  
Every Other Month 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday  
1<sup>st</sup> Thursday  
2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday from September - June  
3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday

*"Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation's compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain love for one another."*

*-Erma Bombeck*