



Town of Digby

Administrative Policy #2016-004

Council/Staff Protocol Policy

Purpose:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the roles and working relationship of council and staff.

Scope:

This policy applies to all members of council and all Town of Digby staff.

Objectives:

This protocol has been developed in order to clarify roles and expectations and to support highly effective working relationships. It is intended to be reviewed at the beginning of each term of a new Council.

This Council/Staff Protocol augments the existing Oath of Office sworn by each Council member, the Respectful Workplace Policy, and other related Town policies and procedures

Policy Statement:

Roles

Role clarification and sensitivity are fundamental to the success of our working relationship and there are some shared aspects of Council/staff protocol. Both Council and staff are expected to enhance public education about the political process by providing context and process information about decision making. Policy making and implementation move along a continuum, with different roles at different times. Both Council and staff are required to have a solid understanding of the following:

Roles of Council and Staff:

- demonstrate commitment to communication and consultation among ourselves and with the general public;
- show leadership, relying on our knowledge and judgment, and respond based upon our areas of expertise;

- maintain confidentiality. Confidential issues will be dealt with in camera at Committee and Council meetings.

Council Role:

- to govern and provide political direction;
- to ensure that management systems work properly, establishing vision, goals, determining needs and outcomes to be achieved, and empowering effective staff performance;
- to determine corporate policy and make decisions about issues following consultation with staff and community residents;
- to respond to constituent concerns, to keep staff informed, to be open to discussion, and to ask when clarification is needed.
- Elected representatives do not have an administrative managerial role in the day to day business of the organization.

Staff Role:

- to provide timely reports to Council outlining factors that will assist in their decision making process, research policy issues as required, provide sufficient information based upon analysis and best professional expertise and judgment. Timely information ensures that Council members are provided information early enough to allow for review and consultation. Timeliness also ensures that deadlines and commitments requiring adjustment are communicated proactively, rather than after the fact.
- to implement Council's decisions;
- to manage and identify the means for achieving corporate goals and outcomes;
- to provide appropriate follow-up to Council inquiries, to keep members of Council up to date and informed, to be open to discussion, and to ask when clarification is needed.
- staff do not have a political role

Highly Effective Working Relationships

Given that staff and the elected representatives are all individuals with different personalities and styles, there must be some flexibility within the guidelines for working relationships. In all cases, we commit to the following requirements of a highly effective working relationship together:

Respect

A formal relationship exists between staff and members of Council. This will ensure that all members of staff and Council are treated equitably without favouritism. A chain of command exists to deal with issues of significance. Council members are encouraged to discuss clarification of reports and related information directly with the author of the report. Issues, additions, changes and/or challenges to the content of any report are to be addressed through senior staff at the Director or Chief Administrative Officer level in order to ensure an appropriate Department response. Senior staff may suggest direct consultation with other staff members and/or continue open communication through the senior staff channel. All staff should feel comfortable responding appropriately to straightforward Council requests, advising their

supervisors of the inquiry. Any response to a request for information from a member of Council between Committee and Council meetings on a subject, will be answered in writing and circulated to all Council members.

Consultation and Community Responsiveness

We share a commitment to communication and consultation among ourselves and with the general public. We believe in community involvement in decision making and accept our shared responsibility to ensure effective community responsiveness.

Expectations

The expectations outlined here are intended to enhance trust in our staff/council relationships.

No surprises

Open lines of communication are essential.

It is expected that Council members will:

- request staff input prior to making important policy decisions and convey feedback to staff;
- discuss issues with staff and advise staff of questions prior to committee meetings whenever possible;
- request advice from the CAO about the appropriate wording of motions, amendments, and formal staff directions.
- consult with staff prior to making commitments to constituents.

It is expected that staff will:

- ensure that Council is apprised of any issues that may impact upon their decision making process;
- present a departmental or corporate perspective, in writing, at Council or in person at Committee. In answer to questions, where a department position may not be available, staff may clarify if they are comfortable that, “Although I cannot speak for the Department, my professional opinion.....”
- notify Council of changes to legislation and any unintended or unexpected impacts of policy decisions through written reports and/or presentations in a timely fashion;
- through senior staff at the Director, and Chief Administrative Officer level, convey feedback to Council members who may not be aware of existing policy or other workload demands and related issues.

Time is valuable

Priorities and timelines must be respected. All must make good use of time, understanding the other’s demands, being well prepared for meetings, and communicating if there are changes to the timelines. When asked to complete a task, clarify the timeline: “Is this needed today?”, “Could I get it for you next week?”..... Staff will spend time on larger assignments only as

directed by Council. Larger assignments include community wide issues, complex or contentious issues.

Resources

The Chief Administrative Officer is available to answer questions of protocol. Council should request information and any protocol questions directly to the Chief Administrative Officer.

Protocol

Forms of address

Delegations will be addressed formally as “Mr., Mrs., or Ms.” at Committee and Council meetings and all will be addressed by first initial and last name or last name only in minutes.

At any public function, including social events to which members of the public are invited, the terms “elected representatives”, “Councillors” or “Mayor” (rather than “politicians”) and formal address are expected. Introduce “Mayor ...last name” or “Councillor...last name” to members of the public. Sensitive or difficult situations may also suggest formal address. In an informal situation where members of the public are not present or during a work group meeting that has established a relationship among the members, Council and staff may wish to communicate on a first name basis.

All written correspondence requires formal titles (“Councillor... Mayor...”). By telephone, ask for Councillor.... or Mayor.... Providing your office phone number on written material and e-mail will assist Council in contacting you.

A reminder that while a close working relationship of staff and elected representatives is important, Councillors and the Mayor are elected symbols of democracy and fill public office. There is a line between the staff role and the elected representative role and the distinction is important to keep in mind at all times.

Office Environment

Both staff and the Mayor maintain offices within Town Hall and drop in visits are discouraged. Appointments are required to ensure that both parties are able to meet, prepared, and able to give their undivided attention to the content of the meeting.

Invitations

Invitations for Town officials to attend functions should be provided at least three (3) weeks in advance of the Mayor’s or Councillor’s requested attendance. Ideally, contact should be made with the Executive Assistant in the planning stages to ensure that the desired representatives will be available. In planning Town organized events, staff is encouraged to avoid days containing Standing Committees or Council Meetings. Staff is encouraged to include a cover letter to Council members when sending an informal or plain flyer-type invitation for a Town organized event. Request an R.S.V.P. and confirmation of receipt of your invitation and the Councillor’s attendance will be clarified.

Social Events

Various social events take place which Town employees and members of Council jointly attend. Staff social events are not formal Town social events. Staff are to ensure that all members of Council or none are invited to social functions, whether Town sponsored, staff, or other in nature.

When the general public attends a social function, both Town staff and Council members are representatives of the Town. The openness of these events helps build rapport and fosters a team/partnership feeling when handled appropriately. In any social venue, all are encouraged to enjoy themselves, keeping in mind their “professional hats”.

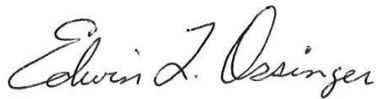
Clerk's Annotation For Official Policy Book

Date of Notice: February 16, 2016

Date of adoption: March 7, 2016

Policy effective date: March 7, 2016

I certify that this **Council/Staff Protocol Policy** was adopted by Council as indicated above.



March 7, 2016

Clerk

Date