



# ADVISORY BOARD HANDBOOK



## OFFICE OF THE TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

13400 GRIFFIN ROAD • SOUTHWEST RANCHES, FLORIDA 33330

PHONE: 954.434.0008 • FAX: 954.434-1490 •

[WWW.SOUTHWESTRANCHES.ORG](http://WWW.SOUTHWESTRANCHES.ORG)

Congratulations on your appointment to a Town Advisory Board!

The Town Council is pleased that you are willing to serve in this important advisory capacity. We have confidence in your ability to study all sides of the issues and make recommendations based on your insight and experience as a concerned member of the community. You are about to begin a challenging and rewarding experience and I want to thank you in advance for all the time, thought and effort you undoubtedly will devote to this appointment.

The Town's staff provides a thorough analysis of problems so that decisions can be made based on the best information available. The Town Council and its Advisory Boards are concerned about the Town and want to have a hand at shaping its future.

Membership on an Advisory Board is a satisfying and challenging experience, as well as a responsibility. Advisory Board members are responsible for regularly attending all meetings, understanding their functions, and consistently working and voting in a manner that will contribute to the betterment of the community as a whole.

As a Board member, you are part of a team. It is your job to assist the Town Council and staff in carrying out their obligations to the residents of the Town of Southwest Ranches. Advisory Board members serve as a vital link in providing citizen input on decisions. Thank you for taking on this responsibility.

You are probably eager to get to work immediately. This handbook has been prepared to make your new assignment easier. It presents information about operating departments and lets you know about your role, the role of staff and the role of other Advisory Boards. Please take a moment to visit the Town's webpage at <http://www.southwestranches.org> and visit the Advisory Boards link on the left hand side. Once there, please click on the link to view the "Government in the Sunshine" presentation and sign the acknowledgment form provided by our staff. I hope that your service on this Board is an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

Sincerely,

Andrew D. Berns  
Town Administrator

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Welcome to public service!

While you will find that your role requires time, effort and some long meetings, it also provides an opportunity for genuine public service. You will be able to help shape the future of the Town of Southwest Ranches and to make decisions affecting every citizen's satisfaction with the Town. The Town needs your personal resources and enthusiasm in order to maintain the qualities of the Town which are enjoyed by its residents.

As will be seen, a large share of community effort is accomplished by volunteers like you, who serve as advisors to the Town in the formulation of policy. The performance of public service brings with it the feeling of contribution and you will most likely develop a close relationship with other volunteers, all working towards a common goal of providing for the community, its citizens and its future.

As an Advisory Board member, you are essential to the Town's commitment to developing policies and services which reflect the needs and values of the community. In carrying out your responsibilities, you will work closely with your fellow Board members, the Town Council and staff – all of whom play a critical role in the Town's organization.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide you with information on the Town and its government and to introduce you to your role as an Advisory Board member and discusses the specific role, operating procedures and the responsibilities of Advisory Board members.

We think you will enjoy your role as an Advisory Board member and that at the end of your term, you will find you have played an important part in shaping the Town of Southwest Ranches' future.

## II. HISTORY

In the fall of 1996 a proposed bill was introduced to the Broward County Legislative Delegation requesting to annex all the unincorporated area between Griffin Road to the north, Sheridan Street to the South, Flamingo Road to the east and SR 27 to the west, which is now known today as Southwest Ranches.

Hundreds of citizens from the Southwest Ranches area, called for the right to form their own city. As a result of this grassroots effort, the State Legislature passed a bill in the 1997 session calling for a vote of the citizens of Southwest Ranches in March of 2000.

On July 3, 1999, many of the Southwest Ranches Homeowners Associations sponsored a parade and picnic to declare the area's independence. Many local, state and federal representatives spoke at the event which was a huge success!

The Town's name came about through a local contest. The contest was to come up with a name for the newly formed city. The response was great and 122 different names were submitted. A vote was held on October 12, 1999 to select one of the top five names, and the Town of Southwest Ranches won. Many of the Southwest Ranches Homeowners Association members voted to move forward and request a local bill to allow incorporation in 2000 instead of 2001, and the bill was approved by the Legislature.

On March 14, 2000, residents voted overwhelmingly to form a new Town rather than be annexed. The next step for a new city would be the creation of its CHARTER. The CHARTER was to be drawn up and an election forming the city held in 2001. However, leaders realized that if a CHARTER could be drawn up sooner, it could possibly be approved as early as 2000. A CHARTER committee was formed to draw up a city CHARTER. The committee met almost weekly during July, 1999, August, 1999, and formulated a new CHARTER. On June 6, 2000, the CHARTER was approved by the residents and the city became one of thirty-three municipalities.

Council Members were elected on July 25, 2000, and the Town was officially in business.

Southwest Ranches was incorporated in 2000 and Mecca Fink served as its first mayor. According to the 2010 United States Census, the Town's population was 7,345, although recent estimates have the Town's population just under 8,000.

### **III. TOWN GOVERNMENT**

The Town of Southwest Ranches operates under a Council/Administrator form of government. It provides the municipal government with both public direction from the Town Council and professional administration through the Town Administrator and their staff.

A primary reason for the existence of municipal government is to provide services to the taxpayer that the taxpayers cannot provide for themselves, such as police and fire protection and water and sewer service. The services of municipal government can be readily observed in action, but the typical citizen is generally unaware of their scope. It is to this task of providing service that the Town of Southwest Ranches addresses itself.

#### **A. TOWN COUNCIL**

As a municipality, certain powers are placed in the hands of the elected Town Council. This authority comes directly from the Florida State Statutes and the Town's Charter. Council can declare certain acts illegal; it can tax and set costs for services rendered; it can condemn property for essential public needs; and it can regulate and determine how property can be used.

The Town Council acts as the governing body of the town, with all the regulatory and corporate powers of a municipal corporation and consists of five (5) members who are elected for four-year terms. The four Councilmembers (4) represent four geographic districts but are elected by residents at-large. The Mayor represents the entire Town and is also at-large.

The Town Council is the policy-making body of the Town and is held ultimately responsible for implementation of all programs and services provided by the Town. Council approves all ordinances and resolutions and any contract over \$10,000. Council reviews proposals for community needs, initiates actions for new programs and determines the ability to provide financing. Council also approves and modifies the budget as prepared by the Town Administrator.

#### **B. ADVISORY BOARDS**

Advisory Boards (hereinafter referred to as Boards) are standing bodies established and appointed by the Town Council to provide citizen input. The responsibilities of the members include:

1. Providing recommendations to Town Council and staff regarding special program areas.
2. Holding public hearings to solicit community input on current issues.
3. Identifying issues which the Board believes should be addressed by the Town Council or staff.

4. The Town Council benefits by using Advisory Boards in their decision-making process by relying on these bodies to:
  - a. Focus attention on specific issues.
  - b. Encourage broad citizen participation through public hearings.
  - c. Weigh community values in making recommendations to Council.

**C. STAFF**

The Town's staff, under the direction of the Town Administrator, is responsible for carrying out the policy of the Town Council and implementing programs and services. As the Town's chief executive officer, the Town Administrator is responsible for the day-to-day administrative affairs of the Town, including assigning staff liaisons to assist the various Advisory Boards in carrying out their responsibilities. These liaisons, by virtue of their technical training and experience, are competent to provide such assistance. Advisory Boards work closely with the staff liaisons; however, they do not have the authority to supervise or direct the work of staff.



#### **IV. ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION**

A general explanation of the responsibilities of the appointed officers and departments is provided below.

##### **A. TOWN ADMINISTRATOR**

The Town Administrator is appointed by the Town Council and serves for an indefinite period. S/He serves at the pleasure of the Town Council and is a non-elected, salaried position. The Town Administrator is the administrative head of the Town government and is responsible for the efficient administration of all the affairs of the Town, which are under his/her control. The Town Administrator's responsibilities include: supervision and coordination of administrative activities, powers granted to him/her in the Town's Charter and the laws of the State of Florida concerning the appointment and removal of employees, annual submission of an operating budget and a capital improvements program, appointing and discharging authority of all officers and employees of the Town, chief advisor to the Town Council and is generally responsible for the affairs of the Town. The Town Administrator also has the responsibility of predicting future program needs and services and determining the financial and social impacts of these decisions.

##### **B. TOWN ATTORNEY**

The Town Attorney is appointed by the Town Council and serves for an indefinite period. As chief legal advisor and counselor, s/he provides day-to-day information to Town staff on legal matters and acts as the Town's representative in legal actions. The Town Attorney provides the following legal services: providing legal opinions, prosecuting violations of the Town Code, acquiring or condemning property at the Town Council's direction, and reviewing and/or drafting ordinances, resolutions, franchises and contracts. The Town Attorney is directly responsible to the Town Council, but acts in concert with the Town Administrator and his/her services are available for all aspects of Town business.

##### **C. TOWN FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR**

The Town Financial Administrator is responsible for the Town's accounting, budgeting, and financial management. The Department's major functions and activities are:

1. Financial Reporting - Financial information is provided to requesting agencies, including financial reports for management, auditors, state and federal agencies, including preparation of the annual financial report.
2. Debt Financing - Debt financing is arranged for the Town and Town debt is paid when due in accordance with debt obligations.
3. Investment Management - Investments are managed in accordance with the Town's investment policy with an emphasis on safeguarding principal while monitoring daily liquidity needs and then trying to maximize earnings.

4. Budget Documentation - Coordinate and direct all Town departments in order to prepare the annual budget documents for the Town Administrator and Town Council as well as preparing budget revisions, amendments and budget monitoring reports during the fiscal year.
5. Procurement - Review all Town expenditures for compliance with Town purchasing policy.
6. Accounts Payable - Pay all Town related bills according to established Town procedures and controls.
7. Payroll - Preparation of the Town payroll for all Town employees including state and federal payroll reports as required. Process payroll related deduction and benefit payments.
8. General Accounting - Prepare internal account reconciliations and journal entries for all Town accounts as appropriate. Properly record all cash receipts into the appropriate Town accounts and manage the collection of the Town's accounts receivables. Account for the fixed assets and other closely controlled assets of the Town.

#### **D. TOWN CLERK'S DEPARTMENT**

The Town Clerk is appointed by the Town Administrator subject to confirmation by the Town Council. The Town Clerk's Department is dedicated to providing an array of quality services to the public, Town Council and Town Administrator. The Town Clerk is responsible for preparing the Town Council agenda and keeping of minutes of Town Council meetings, Advisory Board meetings, ordinances, resolutions and all public hearings. The Town Clerk's Department monitors the terms of boards and Council members.

The Town Clerk is the Town's Qualifying Officer for elections and conducts all elections under the guidelines of Florida State Statutes and the Broward County Supervisor of Elections Office.

The Town Clerk is also responsible for maintaining records of Town activities and providing information to the public. The office also maintains contracts, deeds and other legal documents of the Town, places legal advertisements and posts all official notices. Additionally, the office deals with citizen issues/complaints.

#### **E. BUILDING**

The Town of Southwest Ranches contracts with CAP Building Services, Inc. for the provision of Building Department services.

#### **F. CODE ENFORCEMENT**

The Town of Southwest Ranches contracts with J.A. Medina, LLC. for the provision of code enforcement services. The department also verifies lien information on code violations.

## **G. FIRE/RESCUE**

The Town of Southwest Ranches contracts with the Town of Davie for the provision of fire/rescue services. The Town of Davie provides support through five (5) fire station facilities. Each of the five (5) facilities has one advanced life support medical transport unit (Rescue) assigned to each station along with the appropriate fire suppression (Engine or Ladder) unit. To enhance the department's Emergency Medical Services, all of the department's fire suppression units are staffed with cross trained Firefighter/Paramedics and provide fire protection and medical care when necessary.

The Department is presently comprised of the following divisions:

1. Fire Rescue Administration is responsible for overseeing day-to-day functions of the department, managing the budget, logistics and support services, facilities maintenance, fleet operations, employee labor relations and personnel training.
2. Fire Rescue Operations is responsible for suppressing fires, hazardous materials response, freeway incident management, dive-rescue, emergency and non-emergency medical rescue assistance via 911.
3. The Fire Prevention Bureau is responsible for conducting all fire inspection activities, including annual inspections, building inspections through the enforcement of the Florida Fire Prevention Code, applicable Nation Fire Protection Association Codes, Town of Southwest Ranches Ordinances as well as public education, fire plans review, site plan review and the investigation of suspicious fires.
4. The Department provides dive rescue services with fully qualified and certified Dive Rescue Technicians in its Fire Operations Division. It also provides Fire Rescue coverage for special events with the Orange Blossom Festival, Miami Dolphins, School Board of Broward County, Southwest Ranches Rodeo, and other community wide events.
5. The Department participates in many community service programs including free blood pressure testing at fire-stations, Fire Safety Education, CPR/AED Certification, Town of Southwest Ranches Boys and Girls Club, the Annual Muscular Dystrophy Drive, Thanksgiving Food Drive, and Child Car Seat Safety Check.

In addition, the Town of Southwest Ranches maintains its own volunteer fire department comprised of 35 members who may also be called out to the scene of an emergency.

## **H. PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE**

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Department provides a variety of recreation amenities, programs and services through well-planned, efficient management of 192 acres of park and open space properties.

The Department is responsible for coordinating events and activities for its Southwest Ranches residents. The Department also manages an array of passive recreation facilities at all Town parks.

## **I. PLANNING AND ZONING**

Planning and Zoning services are provided by Mellgren and Associates. Mellgren and Associates is responsible for serving the community through preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and application of the Code of Ordinances. Activities include review of site plans, rezonings, variances, special permits, and land use plan amendments, long-range plans for the physical character of the Town and current development applications. Mellgren and Associates also handles numerous special projects assigned by the Town Council/Town Administrator relative to development activities. In addition they provide zoning information to developers, attorneys, customers and the public in general. Lastly, they also issue Certificates of Conformity, Zoning Letters for residential and/or commercial, Alcoholic Beverage Licenses, and Vested Rights/Letters of Determination.

Zoning permitting services are provided by Code Services Inc. (CSI). CSI coordinates and supports other agencies in the zoning review associated with permits, licensing, and landscaping. CSI is also responsible for the issuance of Certificates of Use for businesses, home occupations, and seasonal sales in compliance with applicable Florida Statutes and Town ordinances.

## **J. POLICE**

The Town of Southwest Ranches contracts with the Town of Davie for the provision of police services. The Davie Police Department is responsible for the preservation of life and property within Southwest Ranches. The agency provides a broad spectrum of law enforcement services throughout the community with a goal of improving the overall quality of life for residents, business owners, and visitors. The Davie Police Department consists of the following bureaus:

1. The Administration Bureau is comprised of Internal Affairs, Finance, Records, Dispatch, Accreditation, Quartermaster, Training, School Resource Officers, Hiring, Grant Management, and Personnel. Crime Watch and the SALT/TRIAD programs are also part of the administrative bureau.
2. The Operations Bureau is comprised of Patrol Operations, Code Enforcement, Campus Police, K-9 units, Special Response Team, Hostage Negotiators, Underwater Recovery Unit, and the Traffic Unit.
3. The Investigations Bureau conducts all major crime investigations, including Homicide, Robbery, Burglary, Narcotics, Sex Crimes, Economic Crimes, and Crime Analysis.

## **K. PUBLIC WORKS, ENGINEERING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Public Works and Engineering provides a broad based, multi-disciplinary professional and technical staff responsible for review, permitting and inspection of all public and private infrastructure improvements within the community including site development, paving, grading, drainage, water distribution, retention walls, lighting, traffic, excavation and fill. Staff assists the regulated community with interpretations of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) of the Town's Code of Ordinances.

Public Works and Engineering provides staff liaison to the Drainage and Infrastructure Advisory Board (DIAB) and supports other departments and boards with engineering services and interacts, integrates and coordinates applicable activities including environmental compliance with other departments. Staff also interacts and coordinates with other governmental agencies such as Broward County, Florida Department of Transportation, South Broward Drainage District, Central Broward Water Control District and South Florida Water Management District.

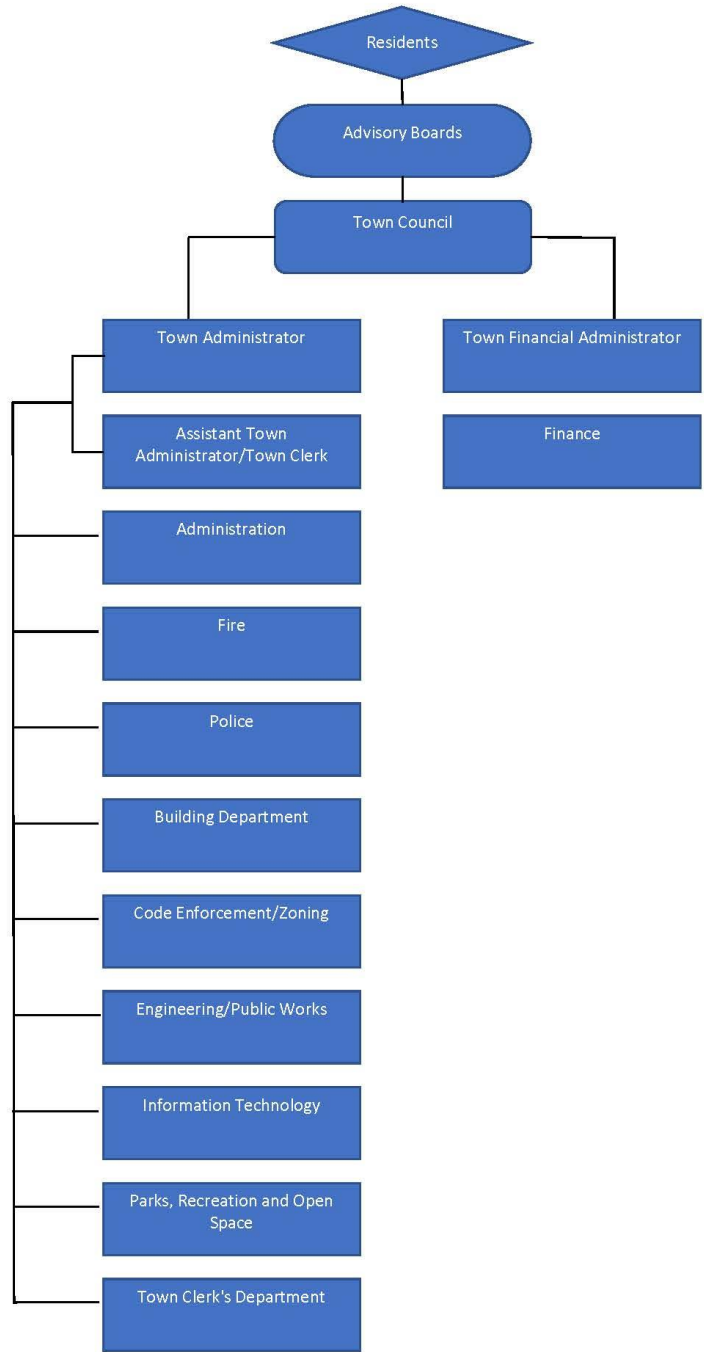
Public Works and Engineering responds to inquiries from the general public and homeowners associations regarding civil engineering and traffic matters, street lighting, signage, and drainage and investigates complaints and offers remedies, as applicable. In addition, staff also responds to the development community regarding interpretation and implementation of engineering standards, participation in the operation and analysis of engineering studies and designs.

Community Services identifies grant sources and develops grant applications for other departments including Public Works and Engineering, Fire Rescue, Police, and Parks, Recreation and Open Space. Staff manages approved grants and the implementation of programs funded by multiple sources to ensure compliance with federal, state, county and corporate grant requirements.

Community Services provides a staff liaison to the Comprehensive Plan Advisory Board (CPAB). Staff provides input to related boards and departments concerning the development of policies and procedures in the Town's Comprehensive Plan which addresses various elements including Future Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Recreation and Open Space, Conservation, Utilities, Public School Facilities, Intergovernmental Coordination, and Capital Improvements.

Community Services assists Public Works and Engineering in the prioritization of capital infrastructure improvements needs and maintenance of public works facilities including buildings, streets, drainage, traffic signs and guardrails. Staff monitors the operations of firms contracted to perform engineering, surveying, planning, building inspections and other capital project services.

**L. DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATIONAL CHART**



**M. DEPARTMENTAL TELEPHONE DIRECTORY**

Administration ..... (954) 434-0008  
Andrew D. Berns, Town Administrator.....(954) 434-0008  
Danielle Caban, Administrative Aide ..... (954) 343-7474  
Sandra Luongo, General Services Manager..... (954) 343-7476  
Susan Kutz, Administrative Specialist..... (954) 343-7460

Building (CAP Government Services)..... (954) 888-9882  
Jack Fisher, Building Official ..... (954) 888-9882

Code Enforcement (Code Services, Inc.)  
Robert Solera, Director ..... (954) 343-7440  
Julio Medina, Code Officer..... (954) 343-7458  
Manfred Velette ..... (954) 343-7457  
Yanni Marin, Administrative Coordinator..... (954) 343-7459

Finance  
Martin Sherwood, Financial Administrator ..... (954) 343-7473  
Richard Strum, Controller ..... (954) 343-7442  
Mara Semper, Procurement and Budget Manager ..... (954) 343-7477  
Venessa Redman, Accounting Clerk..... (954) 343-7467

Fire/Rescue ..... (954) 797-1213  
Julie Downey, Chief

Southwest Ranches Volunteer Fire Rescue  
Lee Bennett, Chief.....(954) 868-2057

Parks, Recreation & Open Space  
December Lauretano-Haines, Coordinator..... (954) 343-7452  
Melinda Stringer..... (954) 343-7452

Planning and Zoning (The Mellgren Planning Group)  
Jeff Katims, ..... (954) 475-3070

Police ..... (954) 693-8200  
Keith Dunn, Chief  
CSA Tom Squarini (SWR Issues)..... (954) 693-8352  
Detective Paul Williams (SWR Issues) ..... (954) 693-8293

Public Works/Engineering/Community Services ..... (954) 434-0008  
Rod Ley, Town Engineer..... (954) 343-7444  
Emily Aceti, Community Services Coordinator ..... (954) 343-7453  
Philip Chorath, Engineer I ..... (954) 343-7441

Town Clerk’s Department..... (954) 434-0008  
Russell Muñiz, Assistant Town Administrator/Town Clerk.....(954) 343-7450  
Ivette Solera, Deputy Town Clerk ..... (954) 343-7451

## **V. ORGANIZATION AND ROLES OF BOARDS/ ORGANIZATION FOR POLICY MAKING**

In keeping with the Town's philosophy of citizen involvement, the Town Council appoints citizens to Advisory Boards to assist in formulating Town policy. The strength and the success of the Town is, to a large degree, reflective of the quality of service performed by these volunteers

### **A. COUNCIL AND BOARDS**

It is likely that at one time or another, the Town Council will not take the advice of a Board and Board members may say, "If they won't take our advice, why ask for it?" Don't get discouraged or take it personally. Your input is most significant and will be weighed carefully with other information that Council receives. The Town Council is not rejecting the quality of your work or your basic ideas, but oftentimes, Council may have additional information not available to the Board or the need to balance a Board's recommendation against other Town priorities.

Finding a comfortable relationship with Council should be handled on an individual basis, but the following are some suggestions to remember that may be a good guide as you begin to find your way around in the political environment:

1. Board members are appointed by the Town Council.
2. Each Board member has an obligation to "vote his/her conscience" and will have to resolve conflicts s/he may have between a personal viewpoint and what is perceived as "in the public's best interest."
3. Contact with Council should always be open and never used to circumvent staff.
4. A Board member should not willingly or openly embarrass Council or staff.
5. A Board should assist Council in developing public trust in the Advisory Board system.
6. Should a controversy arise within a Board, counsel and guidance are available from staff. However, it would be improper for an individual Board member to attempt to influence or persuade Council to assume a posture which may be in opposition to the Board's position as a whole.
7. A Board member should communicate often with the Council Member that appointed them to discuss issues coming before the board. Open communication will help lessen instances in which the Board member's position conflicts with the vision and goals of the appointing councilmember.



## **B. STAFFING**

Each Advisory Board shall designate a Board Secretary who shall be responsible for transcribing minutes. Boards are provided with a staff liaison that researches and investigates questions or concerns raised by the Board.

More than likely, the Staff Liaison will be responsible for letting the Boards know what is happening in the organization, what issues need Board direction, and will probably suggest alternatives that the Board can consider. Staff Liaison suggestions may not be accepted all the time, but it is important that a good relationship exist between the Board and the Staff Liaison so that a reasonable solution can be derived. The following are some ways to avoid misunderstandings and to keep the channels of communication open:

1. Contact shall be with the Staff Liaison assigned to the Board rather than to another staff member. When an individual Board member wants to make contact with a higher-level supervisor (i.e. the Town Administrator), the Board member should notify the assigned Staff Liaison of this contact.
2. Contact with staff members should clearly be in the framework of the Board assignment.
3. Board members should not ask for individual reports, favors, or special considerations.
4. Citizen complaints heard by Board members should be referred directly to the Staff Liaison assigned to the Board.
5. Board members should realize that the assigned Staff Liaison reports directly to a supervisor and may not be able to carry out every recommendation that the Board may have.
6. If a Board desires information or a report which will require an excessive amount of staff time, the Board should request permission from the Town Administrator to pursue the project. Following this procedure will prevent staff from being diverted from priority projects.

At the same time, the Staff Liaison has the following responsibilities:

1. Staff's main role is to keep the Board informed. Staff does this by making sure that other employees and all Board members know the purpose and goals of the organization. The staff liaison is also responsible for suggesting methods whereby the Board can accomplish these goals.
2. Staff should initiate suggestions so that the Board has an idea how to seek information or resolution of a problem.

3. Staff is responsible for promoting team spirit so that all Board members can participate in a manner which will maximize their satisfaction in the organization. Recognizing Board member contributions and encouraging involvement are two ways to let everyone know that their ideas are welcome.
4. Staff should take initiative to inform Board members about activities, projects and work that is taking place elsewhere that may affect the work or progress of the Board.
5. Staff will attempt to present a balanced report on controversial issues, so that all aspects can be readily identified.

## **C. ADVISORY BOARDS**

### ***Fire Advisory Board***

The purpose of the Fire Advisory Board is to advise the Town Council on matters relating to the Town's Fire and EMS services.

The Fire Advisory Board consists of seven (7) members who serve a one year term. The board generally meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 7:00 PM at Town Hall, when directed by the Town Council to meet.

### ***Comprehensive Plan Board***

This Board provides input into the development of the Comprehensive Plan and makes recommendations to the Town Council. The Comprehensive Plan addresses Future Land Use, Housing, Transportation, Recreation and Open Space, Conservation, Utilities, Public School Facilities, Intergovernmental Coordination, and Capital Improvements.

The Comprehensive Plan Board consists of five (5) members. The Board generally meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month at 7:00PM at Town Hall.

### ***Drainage and Infrastructure Advisory Board***

This Board provides input to the Town Council concerning the development of policies and procedures concerning filling, excavating, and clearing of lands, reviewing and prioritizing drainage and infrastructure needs, and developing a comprehensive tertiary drainage plan.

The Drainage and Infrastructure Advisory Board consists of seven (7) members. The Board generally meets the 1st Wednesday of every month at 7:00PM at Town Hall.

### ***Recreation, Forestry, and Natural Resources Board***

Originally established as the "Friends of Parks Advisory Board," in December 2003, The Town's Recreation, Forestry and Natural Resources Advisory Board (RFNRAB) is one of the Town's longest continuously-running Advisory Boards. The RFNRAB provides input into plans, acquisition funding, design, regulation of parks, input into multipurpose trails, matters of forestry and natural resources, including tree canopy and recreational spaces.

The Recreation, Forestry, and Natural Resources Board consists of ten (10) members. The Board generally meets the 2nd Tuesday of every month at 7:00PM at Town Hall or at various public locations.

***Rural Public Arts and Design Board***

This Board is the Town's oldest Advisory Board. It was originally established to facilitate receiving Design Arts Funding through the County for Rural Identification Design. The Board oversees creating a sense of place and branding for the Town.

The Rural Public Arts and Design Board consists of seven (7) members. The Board generally meets the 3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:00PM at Town Hall.

***Schools and Education Advisory Board***

The Schools and Education Advisory Board follows the meetings of the Broward County School Board and the happenings in the local schools to provide input to the Council concerning matters effecting the education of its residents.

The Schools and Education Advisory Board consists of five (5) members. The Board generally meets the 2nd Monday of every month at 7:00 PM at Town Hall.

**D. ROLE OF ADVISORY BOARDS**

Advisory Boards find themselves peculiarly situated in the governmental organization. They are found somewhere between Council, staff and the public. They are appointed, not elected, and they may not represent an identifiable constituency. In some cases, they have considerable authority and their recommendations can be easily implemented by staff, while in other areas their function as advisors to Council must be strictly respected. Furthermore, Board members are sometimes asked to participate in a volunteer capacity for a departmental program, while at other times they may be asked to "let staff do it." It is understandable that people are sometimes confused.

A Board's role is to advise Council about policies and programs. In the course of business, the Board:

1. Should define a situation;
2. Establish a plan to investigate, research and gather data;
3. Analyze the results of the investigation that staff has prepared;
4. Develop some conclusion based on the results; and
5. Develop a recommendation or set of alternatives to present to Council.

An important role of an Advisory Board is to provide opportunities for increased citizen participation in the development of Town policies and operating procedures. The

following information may answer some of your questions about proper etiquette in the Board forum.

## **VI. RESPONSIBILITIES OF BOARD MEMBERS**

Being selected as a member of a Town Advisory Board is an honor and provides an opportunity for genuine public service. Although the duties of each Advisory Board varies, there are certain responsibilities that are common to all Board members. The following is a summary of the important responsibilities of Board members:

### **A. THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD**

One of the first responsibilities of a new Board member is to understand the Board's scope of responsibility and operating procedures. This information may be obtained by referring to the Town resolution that established the Board and this handbook.

The Staff Liaison, responsible for the programs within each Board's scope of interest is available to assist new members in becoming familiar with their roles and duties and will provide information about Town policies and other helpful data.

### **B. REPRESENT THE ENTIRE BOARD**

**Individual members should refrain from representing their views or recommendations as those of the Board unless the Board has officially voted to approve the recommendation. Board members making recommendations or expressing views not approved by the majority of the Board should indicate that they are representing only themselves as individuals. Board members should not make statements to the press unless arranged through the Town's Public Information Officer.**

### **C. REPRESENT THE ENTIRE TOWN**

Although Board members may be selected, in part, because they represent clearly defined groups, each Board member should represent the entire public interest of the Town and not just his/her respective group or interest. **The question, "What is best for the entire community?" takes precedence over "What is best for me or my interest group?"**

### **D. OPEN COMMUNICATION**

As an influential member of the community, a Board member is in the unique position of serving as a liaison between the Town and the public in helping to reconcile contradictory viewpoints and building a consensus around common goals and objectives. A Board member must serve as a link between the community, staff and Town, by presenting Town programs and recommendations and also providing a channel for citizen expression. A primary role of the Board is to determine the attitudes of the citizens concerning Town programs.

## **E. MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Board members, in connection with their role, often spend many hours researching a particular problem. Board members should be familiar with portions of the Town's Code and Comprehensive Plan applicable to their areas of responsibility and should thoroughly review staff reports, plans, and material submitted in advance of meetings.

## **F. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TOWN COUNCIL, OTHER TOWN BOARDS, AND TOWN STAFF**

Relations with the Town Council and staff are basic for the successful operation of any Board. The Board is not a substitute for regularly constituted government. The responsibility for allocating scarce public resources rests with the community's elected representatives - the Town Council - and cannot be designated to an outside group, however capable and interested it might be.

Boards should review Town policies related to programs under their scope of interest and make recommendations for changes. However, Boards must adhere to the policies approved by the Town Council and the Town's Code.

**The Town's staff works for the Town Administrator - staff does not work for Board members. Therefore, it is not appropriate for Board members to direct staff, or become involved in the administrative or operational concerns of Town departments. While staff can provide routine information on on-going projects, a formal request to the Town Administrator must be made for staff involvement in major projects.**

**If Board members have questions or are concerned with the services provided to the Board, the appropriate department director should be contacted immediately to review the matter.**

**The Staff Liaison is required by the Town Administrator to make professional recommendations which may, or may not, agree with those of the Board. The Staff Liaison is also required to fairly present the Board's recommendations and explain them, but will not defend them if in disagreement. When appropriate, the Board's chair or delegated representative should be present at the Town Council meeting to report on the Board's recommendations.**

## **G. RELATIONSHIP WITH OTHER BOARD MEMBERS**

On many occasions, the success or failure of a Board is largely dependent on the degree of cooperation among the individual members of the Board. To help build a consensus around common goals and objectives, Board members will often have to reconcile contradictory viewpoints. Each Board member should do his/her part to ensure that meetings proceed in an orderly and constructive manner. The chair is primarily responsible for seeing that consideration of items on the agenda move along without

delay, but with reasonable time allocated to each item. Each Board member can assist the chair by adequately preparing any presentations s/he makes to the Board.

## **H. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION**

No restriction is placed on a Board member's participation in political activities at any levels of government, whether local, state, or federal. If Board members use the title of their appointed office when participating in these activities, they must make it clear that they are not representing or speaking for the Board, but rather using the title for identification.

## **VII. MEETINGS AND HOW TO CONTROL THEM**

Advisory Boards operate by meeting and discussing issues. The key is to make sure that meetings are not unnecessarily scheduled and discussions not unduly long-winded. Everyone has something valuable to contribute, but knowing when and how to control discussions can make the difference between a sidetracked dialogue or an insightful observation. Public meetings are the place where most Board members spend the majority of their working time and where their public reputations are made. All too often, the impressions the public gets are negative because the Boards commit one or more of the four (4) cardinal sins of running a public meeting. They are:

### **A. NOT CONTROLLING THE MEETING**

If a number of people want to speak, speaking time should be limited so that all may be heard. A helpful method is requesting a show of hands of those who wish to speak on a particular subject, then making a time allocation and holding to it (three minutes (3) is an acceptable amount of time to be given to all speakers). It is not necessary to permit second and third opportunities to speak. However, a statement concerning this should be made at the onset.

### **B. APPEARING TO SEEM UNFAIR**

Board members should never bring up the pros and cons of an agenda item before all testimony and evidence have been presented. The discussion should then stay on the facts presented, not on the presenters.

### **C. FAILURE TO BRING ISSUES TO A VOTE**

Many Boards get so bogged down in petty details, endless searches for new data and procedural distractions that matters brought before the Board never seem to get resolved. Some Boards have taken so long to make a decision that by the time a decision reaches the next level of government, conditions have changed the affected proposal and, therefore, the recommendations are obsolete.

### **D. WASTING PEOPLE'S TIME**

If at all possible, do not ever make people who have come at the appointed time wait hours to be heard or, worse yet, make them come back again because there was not enough time. Stick to the schedule listed on the agenda. Since the Board usually has the time to make decisions after the public hearing, don't fear holding the Board's discussion until the end of the meeting or even the next meeting. If needed, an extra meeting can be scheduled to clear any backlog of items that need to be considered. This is far better than trying to make everyone stay up until the wee hours of the morning to watch the Board heroically fight off sleep as it tries to finish an overlong list of agenda items.



An additional word of advice - avoid the appearance of impropriety. Currently, there appears to be less trust in government than ever before. Board members who have business or financial interests, or who have relatives or close friends which would stand to profit from a decision obviously should not participate in the decision-making and need to abstain from voting. (For information on voting conflicts, see Section VIII - Conflict of Interest Laws).

## **VIII. CONFLICT OF INTEREST LAWS**

### **A. DISCLOSURE/FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

When a new Councilmember is elected, or a new Board member for certain Boards is appointed, the Town Clerk's Office provides a financial disclosure form (Form 1) which must be filed with the Broward County Supervisor of Elections Office within 30 days from the date of election or appointment. The determination of which Boards are required to file the disclosure statements is made by the State of Florida Commission on Ethics.

The Town Council and certain Board members are also required to file an annual financial disclosure statement. These forms are mailed each year by the State of Florida Commission on Ethics and must be filed by July 1st.

The Town Council and certain Board members are also required to file a final statement of financial interests (Form 1F) within 60 days after leaving office. These forms are provided by the Town Clerk's Office.

### **B. GENERAL PROHIBITIONS**

Although there are several statutes and common law rules governing conflict of interest, only two are likely to apply to Board members.

1. Common law generally prohibits public officers, including Board members, from engaging in activities in which their private interests conflict with their public duty.
2. Part III of Chapter 112 of the Florida Statutes known as the Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees provides that no local official, including a Board member, shall make, participate in making, or in any way attempt to use his/her official position to influence a government decision in which s/he knows, or has reason to know s/he has a financial interest. The act requires that Board members disclose certain financial interests through the filing of disclosure statements, and abstain from participating in any matter before their Board which will have a material effect on their financial interest.

Board members are not prohibited from representing public interest groups before Council or other Boards, however if they are being compensated, lobbying forms need to be completed and filed with the Town Clerk's Office. Under such circumstances, however, a Board member should state for the record that s/he is appearing before the Board or Council in his/her private capacity only, not as a Board member or as a representative of his/her Board. Board members are urged to take all steps possible to avoid even the appearance of impropriety in any presentation made to other Boards or to Council.

There may be times when Board members are legally required to participate in a decision to be made, even though they would normally be required to abstain. A tie vote is not an

adequate reason for required legal participation. If the Board member's participation is legally required, s/he should state for the record why s/he must help make the decision, and disclose and describe the conflict of interest. During the decision-making process, the Board member should not make any attempt to influence the other officials and should participate only to the extent legally required.

The laws and regulations regarding conflicts of interest are rapidly changing. If a Board member has any questions about the possibility of a conflict of interest, s/he is urged to contact the Board liaison who will obtain clarification from the Town Attorney.

*Note: As of the Revision Date (01/15/15) of this handbook, no current Town Advisory Boards require members to file a Form 1 financial Disclosure form.*

### **C. VOTING ABSTENTION POLICY**

A person holding an appointive municipal office must abstain from voting on any measure which benefits their special gain. S/He is also prohibited from knowingly voting on a measure which benefits to the special gain of a principal by whom s/he is retained. A person holding an appointive municipal office may otherwise participate in a matter in which s/he has a conflict of interest, but must disclose the nature of the conflict before making any attempt to influence the decision by oral or written communication. Once a Board member abstains from voting, s/he will be provided with a voting conflict form which is required to be completed and returned to the Board clerk within 15 days after a vote occurs. Once completed, the form will be attached to the minutes of the meeting.

A Board member may not abstain from voting on a set of minutes. A new member, or a current member who was absent from a meeting, may not abstain from voting because they were not present at the meeting and did not know what occurred. The member has several options in these cases:

- request a copy of the recording (if available); or
- visit the department to listen to the recording (if available); or
- speak to the staff liaison or Board secretary; or
- vote no

## **IX. FINAL WORDS OF WISDOM**

If you have read this far, you may assume that you are now fully prepared to handle every situation that might come up. We wish that were true. This handbook is only meant to be a guide and to give a hint of what the Town is all about.

Feel free to ask questions. There is much to find out before you may feel confident that you are approaching an issue in the proper manner.

**X. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING**

A. Guide to the Sunshine Amendment and Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees