

# PLANNING BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

## **PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND**

The members of the Planning Board adopt this Code of Conduct as a statement of our commitment to maintaining respectful discourse with fellow elected members, those who work for the Town, those who volunteer their time and services on behalf of the Town, and members of the public. By adopting this code, Board members are setting expectations for the behavior of Planning Board members at every meeting, forum, or other official interaction, in which we strive to treat every person fairly and respectfully regardless of any differences of opinion or personal feelings.

This code is based on similar codes adopted by boards in Wellesley and many other communities and recommended by MIIA.

## **APPLICABILITY**

This policy and all its sections shall apply to individuals elected or appointed to the Board and covers all their actions and communications relating to any Town or Planning Board matter, including but not limited to those relating to the actions of members and staff of any other Town of Wellesley Board or Committee, or the public, including spoken and written communications, and all electronic communications including social media.

## **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Board members commit to acting honestly, conscientiously, reasonably, and in good faith at all times in all matters related to their responsibilities, the interests of the Town, and the welfare of its residents. Following the tradition of cooperation in Wellesley's town government, Board members strive to maintain a tone of collegiality and professionalism while acknowledging that there may sometimes be good faith disagreements concerning the best interests of the Town.

Board members commit to refraining from communicating or acting in a disrespectful, abusive, and/or threatening manner toward members of the community, Town staff, and other elected or appointed officials. In addition to complying with the state Ethics Laws and Regulations, all Board members will fully comply with all Town Personnel Policies including the Town's [Discrimination Harassment and Retaliation Policy](#).

Board members commit to follow the guidelines for conduct outlined below.

### **A. Conduct generally and in relation to the community**

- Recognize that that Board members are one of a team and should respect, abide by, and carry out, all Board decisions once they are made, while also recognizing that Board members may respectfully state opinions that are different than the majority of the Board on matters before the Board.
- Never purport to represent the opinion of the Board except when specifically authorized by a recorded vote to do so.
- Avoid the appearance of representing the Board in matters pertaining to the Town and the Board without prior discussion and authorization by the Board.

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- Be well informed concerning the duties of a Board member on both local and state levels, and on municipal issues in Wellesley.
- Remember that Board members represent the Board and the entire community at all times.
- Accept the role of a member as a means of unselfish service not to benefit personally or politically from Board activities.
- Demonstrate respect for the public that you serve.
- Safeguard confidential information.
- Conduct yourself so as to maintain public confidence in our local government.
- Conduct official business in such a manner that you cannot be improperly influenced in the performance of your official duties.
- Unless specifically exempted, conduct the business of the public in a manner that promotes open and transparent government.
- Comply as fully as possible with all Town policies.
- Comply as fully as possible with all applicable laws, including, without limitation, the following:
  - [The Open Meeting Law](#)
  - Procurement Laws
  - [The Ethics/Conflict of Interest Statute \(G.L. c.268A\)](#)

### **B. Conduct in relation to fellow Board members**

- Recognize the action at official legal meetings is binding and that Board members alone cannot bind the Board outside of such meetings.
- Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed.
- Refrain from committing to vote in a particular way on any matter that will come before the Board until the issue has been discussed during a Board meeting.
- Respect and abide by decisions made by a majority vote of the Board and do not seek to override the decision except by requesting the Board to revisit, rescind, or set aside the decision.
- Uphold the confidentiality of executive session and respect the privileged communication that exists in executive session.
- Act in a civil and professional manner at all Board meetings.
- Treat with respect the rights of all members of the Board despite differences of opinion.
- Concentrate all dialogue on the issue and refrain from personal comments or criticism, acknowledging that personal attacks have no place in our public discourse.
- Cooperate with the Chair of the Board in the conduct of all meetings. If a Board member differs from the Chair in the conduct of the meeting, the Board member commits to respectfully object and request that the Chair re-consider the Chair's position on the matter. The Chair commits to respectfully consider and act objectively and fairly in response, including explaining why the Chair has chosen to proceed in a given manner.

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- Refrain from personal comments about a fellow Board member in public speech, in writing, or in electronic communications including social media.
- Observe the Town Meeting guideline that “the good faith of no one should be questioned.” ([appendix c - Town of Wellesley](#))

### **Conduct in relation to Town staff and administration**

- Endeavor to establish sound, clearly defined policies and goals that will direct and support the administration for the benefit of the staff and the community.
- Recognize that the Town staff are responsible for day-to-day administration and execution of Town business.
- Accord the Town staff full responsibility for discharging the Board’s decisions and only pursue further action if explicitly assigned by the Board or the Chair.
- Refrain from giving orders or directions to staff members as an individual Board member.
- Treat all staff as professionals, with clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experiences, and dignity of the individual.
- Never publicly criticize an individual employee. Concerns about staff performance should only be made in a private communication to the Chair. (Feedback on performance may be offered as part of a public performance review according to the process prescribed by Town Counsel.)
- Speak in a civil manner and refrain from harassing or bullying Town staff verbally, in writing, or in electronic communications including social media.
- Respect regular business days/hours when communicating with staff and/or making requests for a response or action.
- Express any concerns regarding the performance or actions of a staff person reporting to another Town board or committee solely to the chair of the board or committee to which the staff person reports, and not to the staff person directly. It is the Planning Board’s expectation that other Town boards and committees will communicate any concerns regarding Planning Board staff to the Chair of the Planning Board, and not to the staff person directly.

### **C. Enforcement of the Code of Conduct**

- During a meeting, a member who acts in an inappropriate manner or is unruly, or disorderly, may be ruled out of order by the Chair. The Chair may choose to call a brief recess.
- Any Board member violating the Code of Conduct may be removed from assignments by the Chair.
- In addition to any other remedies or enforcement options available under the law, the Board may vote to censure any elected member who violates any provision of the Code of Conduct.

## PLANNING BOARD CODE OF CONDUCT

### **APPROVED BY**

Planning Board Member: Thomas Taylor, Chair

Thomas M Taylor

Planning Board Member: ~~Patricia Mallett, Vice-Chair~~ *Marc Charney, Secretary*

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*Patricia Mallett, Vice-Chair*

Planning Board Member: ~~Marc Charney, Secretary~~

Patricia Mallett

Planning Board Member: James Roberti

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Planning Board Member: Kathleen Woodward

Kathleen Woodward

**Original Date:** Adopted December 16, 2024

**Revisions:**