

# City of Hampton Boards, Commissions, and Committees

**COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE**

# October 2020

## **Message from the Hampton City Council:**

Thank you for your interest in serving on a board, commission, or committee and welcome to Team Hampton! We are Hampton, a vibrant waterfront community celebrating and embracing more than 400 years of history and innovation to create an even more dynamic future. Every day we strive to improve our citizens' lives and we are grateful for your assistance in making that happen.

In your capacity as an appointee, it is important to remember you have a duty to act in the best interest of the people of Hampton. Transparency and accountability are important, so we have adopted by resolution this Commitment to Excellence for boards, commissions, and committees to formally recognize certain principles and standards that every member should follow to ensure that Hampton continues to thrive for future generations.

This Commitment to Excellence includes a Code of Ethics, Scope of Duties, Standards of Conduct, and Best Practices for Communicating with the Media and Citizens. These documents are designed to establish the standards expected to be followed as our appointee. Many of these items are requirements pursuant to the Virginia Conflict of Interests Act and the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, for which you will also receive in-person and/or virtual training from a member of City staff. Please note that in the event that provisions in this Commitment to Excellence are not adhered to – for example, posting racially insensitive statements on social media or accepting gifts in your official capacity for personal gain – the Council reserves the right to end your appointment.

We appreciate that you have chosen to devote your time by making a difference in our City. We cannot serve the people of Hampton to the best of our ability without your continual collaboration and support. Thank you for choosing Hampton!

Sincerely,

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Donnie R. Tuck  
Mayor

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James A. Gray  
Vice Mayor

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Chris L. Bowman  
Councilmember

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Eleanor Weston Brown  
Councilmember

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Steven L. Brown  
Councilmember

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Billy Hobbs  
Councilmember

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Chris O. Snead  
Councilmember

## **Message from the City Manager, Clerk of Council, and City Attorney**

We are Hampton, a vibrant waterfront community celebrating and embracing 400 years of innovation to create an even more dynamic future. This is our Council's vision statement for our great City – it is a statement that they, and we as staff, honor every day through our collective efforts. As a board, commission, or committee member, you, too, play a critical role in the realization of that even more dynamic future. Thank you for agreeing to be a major player in our work!

This Commitment to Excellence outlines the operational norms that help guide us in this work. These norms – some of which are legal in nature, such as the mandatory Conflict of Interest and Freedom of Information Act requirements, and some of which are Hampton-centric – ensure that we all know what is expected of us during our service. While training will be provided to all newly appointed members as they are selected to serve, we expect each member to periodically review and remain knowledgeable of these norms. We thus ask that you take time to review this Commitment to Excellence as you embark on or continue your service to our community. By signing your declaration of commitment, you agree to adhere to our communal standards each year of your service.

We are so glad to have you join Team Hampton! If any of us – or our staff – can help to enrich your volunteer service, please do not hesitate to contact us!

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Mary B. Bunting  
City Manager

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Katherine K. Glass  
Clerk of Council

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Cheran Cordell Ivery  
City Attorney

**CITY OF HAMPTON BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES COMMITMENT TO EXCELLENCE**

**CODE OF ETHICS**

Recognizing that individuals who are appointed by City Council are viewed by the community as influencers, they should display the highest levels of moral and ethical conduct, and any person serving on a City of Hampton board, commission, or committee shall comply with the following Code of Ethics:

1. Uphold the laws and regulations of the Commonwealth of Virginia and the City of Hampton, including the Code of Virginia, the Hampton City Code, and the Charter of the City of Hampton, and never intentionally violate them.
2. Give a full measure of service and effort to the position of trust for which guardianship has been granted, giving best thought and sincere effort in the performance of your duties.
3. Avoid adopting policies, engaging in activities, or supporting programs that discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, color, religion or creed, sex, national origin, age, or any other protected characteristic.
4. Comply with all provisions of the State and Local Conflict of Interests Act and Ethics in Public Procurement Act, including, but not limited to, those sections that regulate the solicitation and acceptance of money, gifts, or other things of value for services completed during the performance of your official duties.
5. Attend all Virginia Conflict of Interests Act, Freedom of Information Act, and Ethics in Public Procurement Act training sessions if required by your appointment.
6. Seek out legal counsel in the City Attorney's Office if you have any question about a potential conflict of interest.
7. Ensure the integrity of actions performed by boards, commissions, or committees by avoiding the disbursement of unfair privileges or special favors to anyone. You should never receive, for family members or yourself, favors or benefits or gifts under circumstances that might be interpreted by a reasonable person as influencing the performance of your governmental duties.

## **SCOPE OF DUTIES**

1. Make no promises binding upon the duties of any office.
2. Do not use information learned confidentially during the performance of governmental duties to make a private profit for your family, employees, close family relations, yourself, or any business where you have a personal fiscal interest.
3. Report to the Hampton City Attorney's Office any misconduct, neglect of duty, or corruption when discovered.
4. Comply with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, including, but not limited to:
  - Not discussing public business outside of an open meeting in a group of three or more members of your body.
  - Complying with the principle that the public's business should be conducted openly by following and observing the spirit and letter of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, using closed sessions only to deal with matters properly exempted under the law.
  - Maintaining confidentiality of all matters discussed during closed session and personnel matters.
  - Using City of Hampton email for official City business purposes in serving the interests of the City, and to correspond with our citizens in the course of normal operations.
5. When presenting individual positions and opinions, you shall purposefully state that you are not representing the City of Hampton or your body, nor will you convey an inference that you do. You shall also not use the media or social media to criticize, question the integrity, or vilify the personal beliefs of citizens, City employees, or colleagues.
6. When responding to the media, you must make a clear distinction between personal belief or opinion and a decision made by your body.
7. Be an active listener, carefully considering all points of view and opinions.
8. If appropriate, work in partnership with other political subdivisions, organizations, and governmental agencies to further the interest of the City of Hampton.

## **STANDARDS OF CONDUCT**

Recognizing that individuals holding public office are under continuous observation by interested City residents and the media, and recognizing that maintaining the dignity and integrity of public office is vital for maintaining high levels of public confidence in governmental institutions, every member of a board, commission, or committee shall adhere to the following Standards of Conduct:

1. Avoid the use of intimidating, abusive, or threatening gestures or language directed at citizens, colleagues, or City employees during the performance of public duties and public meetings.
2. Stay current on all tax obligations.
3. Adhere to the following Social Media Policy:  
Members who use social media shall not do the following:
  - Post any materials of a sexually graphic nature;
  - Promote violence or suppression;
  - Post any materials that encourage or show illegal activity;
  - Use any speech containing obscene or sexually explicit language, images, acts, statements, or other forms of speech that ridicule, malign, disparage, or otherwise express bias against any race, any religion or any other protected class; and,
  - Use speech that could reasonably be considered as reckless.
4. Attend all scheduled meetings of your board, commission, or committee, resigning whenever personal circumstances preclude regular attendance. Refer to the bylaws of your particular board, commission, or committee for specific attendance requirements.
5. Make a diligent effort to be well prepared for every meeting.
6. Avoid criticism or personal attacks on City employees or colleagues that are unrelated to the public business before your board, commission, or committee. Maintain an attitude of consideration and courtesy toward all City employees and colleagues during every deliberation and discussion.
7. Refrain from the use of personal devices during meetings.
8. Dress Code: During board, commission, and committee meetings, all members should dress appropriately for the business environment.

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA AND CITIZENS**

1. When responding to questions from citizens or the media, you should:
  - Remind the listener that you do not speak for the entire board, commission, or committee;
  - Clarify your position on a specific item; and,
  - Not comment on closed session matters unless and until the item is discussed in an open session meeting.
2. Every member shall acknowledge that personnel matters must remain confidential and the board, commission, or committee has an obligation to protect individual privacy.
3. Members will concentrate on issues and avoid making public comments about City employees, individuals, fellow board, commission, or committee members, media representatives, or community residents. The City Manager should be the primary contact for City matters. When requested to give an interview, the member asked should contact the City Manager's Office and she will, in turn, contact the Mayor and City Council to inform them of the subject matter of the interview. In addition, the staff liaison to that particular board, commission, or committee shall update the other members regarding the circumstances and substance of the interview as soon as practicable. This procedure does not prevent any member from responding to questions from the media.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

As a member of a City of Hampton board, commission, or committee, I agree to uphold and affirm the City of Hampton Boards, Commissions, and Committees Commitment to Excellence as articulated in the Code of Ethics, Scope of Duties, Standards of Conduct, and Best Practices for Communication with the Media and Citizens. In furtherance of that pledge, I will:

- Appreciate the individual contributions, perspectives, and talents of individual members;
- Help create an environment of civility and respect where individual members, the public, and City employees are free to work to their full potential and express their ideas;
- Conduct my public and private affairs with integrity, fairness, honesty, and respect for others;
- Respect the privacy and dignity of organizations and individuals;
- Focus on achieving meaningful solutions for the public benefit and strive to uphold the common good;
- Avoid and discourage actions that are harmful or divisive to the best interest of the City of Hampton; and,
- Treat everyone that I meet the same way that I wish to be treated.

I affirm that I have read and comprehend the City of Hampton Boards, Commissions, and Committees Commitment to Excellence. Failure to adhere to the policies articulated in this document may result in removal from the board, commission, or committee by the City Council.

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Signature

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Printed Name

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Date

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Board/Commission/Committee