



Office of the Town Manager
Frank Cassidy

Warrenton Town Council
Carter Nevill, Mayor
Roy Francis, Ward 1
William Semple, Ward 2 Vice Mayor
Larry Kovalik, Ward 3
Michele O'Halloran, Ward 4 Eric
Gagnon, Ward 5
Paul Mooney, At Large
David McGuire, At Large

STAFF REPORT

Council Meeting Date:	May 13 th , 2025.
Agenda Title:	Code of Conduct Committee Update
Requested Action:	Consider Recommendations of the Code of Conduct Committee
Department / Agency Lead:	Town Council
Staff Lead:	Councilwoman Michele O'Halloran

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Councilwoman Michele O'Halloran has requested the work of the Ethics Committee be reestablished and requested appointment to the Committee to continue the work started in 2024.

The Code of Conduct Committee was established at the March 12, 2024, Town Council Work Session. This newly formed Special Committee was responsible for reviewing and updating the Code of Ethics for the Town Council and all boards and commissions beneath them. Staff have been instructed by the Town Manager to assist in this endeavor.

The Code of Conduct committee has reviewed the Codes of Conduct, Codes of Ethics, and their implementation across multiple jurisdictions around the Town of Warrenton. They have also incorporated references to the Virginia State Code for applicable laws and regulations.

The Code of Conduct committee had come forward with the following recommendations:

- 1) Review the proposed code of conduct and provide feedback no later than one week before the next Council meeting.
- 2) Consider the addition and updating of Citizen rules of conduct to better shape the processes of Citizen's time and public comment to align with the council's rules of decorum.
- 3) Consider with this change a request to the Town Manager to begin a rewrite of the Town Council Handbook to update the code of conduct sections and incorporate best practices, policies, and standard operating procedures to ensure the effective, knowledgeable, and ethical guidance of the Town's operations. Items to consider for the Town Manager for inclusion should be discussed at the next Town Council Meeting.

No action was taken on the proposed drafts with the Council deciding to wait until the newly seated Council had the opportunity to weigh in on the proposals.

BACKGROUND

The Code of Conduct Committee was established at the March 12, 2024, Town Council Work Session. This newly formed Special Committee will be responsible for reviewing and updating the Code of Ethics. For the Town Council and all boards and commissions beneath them. Staff have been instructed by the Town

Manager to assist in this endeavor. Consider the points of direction for them to follow. This report will lay out suggested items for the committee to focus on.

Goals of the committee:

1. Review other communities Code of Conduct.
2. Review the Virginia State Code for applicable laws and regulations.
3. Establish a new code of conduct for review and action by the Council.
4. Take into consideration the recommendations from Ms. Jane Dittmar from the Virginia institute of Government.
5. Present the information for review and action by the Council no later than the August regularly Scheduled Town Council Meeting.

As there are Two Members of the Committee, no chairperson is necessary.

As a reminder, minutes of the meeting of the committee should be taken and meetings are open to the public under FOIA. The Town Clerk can assist with this process.

The Virginia Institute of Government, with Jane Dittmar as the attending facilitator, provided a work session on code of conduct and Ethics. This work session reviewed and discussed roles, opportunities, strengths, and recommendations to move forward. The report is attached. As the top recommendation, Ms. Dittmar recommended focusing on updating and reworking the Code of Conduct for Council Members. It was determined that by working on this first, moving forward with the strategic planning initiative will be more successful.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider the request of Councilwoman O'Halloran to reestablish the Ethics Committee and her appointment to it.

Service Level/Collaborative Impact

The Code of Conduct will impact all departments, Boards, Commissions, and Committees of the Town of Warrenton.

Policy Direction/Warrenton Plan 2040

The Town Council is the guiding force behind all actions of Warrenton Plan 2040. This Code of Conduct will help guide this Council and future Councils with the

Fiscal Impact

There is a minor fiscal impact with additional staff time for this committee.

Legal Impact

The Town Attorney will be available to review the proposed Code of Conduct and discuss items with the Committee members.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2020 Ethics Statement