



Office of the Town Manager

Christopher E. Martino

STAFF REPORT

Warrenton Town Council

Carter Nevill, Mayor

Heather Sutphin, Ward 1

William Semple, Ward 2

Brett Hamby, Ward 3

James Hartman, Ward 4 Vice Mayor

Jay Heroux, Ward 5

Paul Mooney, At Large

David McGuire, At Large

Council Meeting Date:	February 14, 2023
Agenda Title:	Town Council Committees
Requested Action:	Information Report, no action required at this time
Department / Agency Lead:	Town Manager
Staff Lead:	Christopher E. Martino, Interim Town Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town Council has created several committees over time which are detailed in Attachment 1. The committees have typically consisted of three Councilmembers, while certain committees have also included citizen members. The appropriate town staff were identified to support the various committees.

The Charter and Code focus on the authority of the council, the mayor, and the manager. The Charter and Code do not establish any committees. They allow only for special committees. Section 2-38 of the Town Code provides in its entirety: "The Mayor shall have authority, when he (she) deems it necessary, to appoint special committees of council. Such appointments shall be subject to the approval of the town council."

During the Town Council work session on January 10, 2023, Town Council directed staff to provide an analysis of reinstating Town Council committees. Attachment 1 is a listing of the Town Council committees that have existed in the past.

The staff recommendation to the Town Council is to continue to act as if a *committee of the whole*.

BACKGROUND

The Town Council has created several committees over time. These Committees (see attachment 1) were scheduled to meet on a bi-monthly basis with the support staff for each committee responsible for advertising each committee meeting, creating the agenda, preparing the agenda item documents and materials, and keeping the committee meeting minutes. Committee meetings were held at 18 Court St. in the Town Council room and were open to the public. The Chair of each committee would provide an update to the Town Council at the next regular Town Council legislating meeting.

The purpose of these committees was to review items before they were brought to the Town Council. The committee would give its recommendation on the item when brought forth at a Town Council meeting.

The following committees have not met since early in 2020, to include the Health, Parks and Recreation Committee, the Public Safety and Transportation Committee, the Finance Committee, and the Public Works and Utilities Committee.

The Septic Remediation Committee is currently inactive pending an answer on grant's submitted to the State.

The Ad Hoc Special Events Committee is disbanded as the special events ordinance was passed in 2022.

The Town and County Liaison Committee is an interjurisdictional committee that includes representation from Fauquier County, and the Towns of Warrenton, Remington, and Marshall.

CURRENT SITUATION

The Town Council has acted as if a committee of the whole over the past three years and in particular over the past six months. Per Robert Rules of Order, a committee of the whole is a device that enables the full Council to give detailed consideration to a matter under conditions like those of a committee, thereby allowing a more open exchange of views without the urgency of a final vote.

This description mirrors how the Town Council has been operating within existing resource constraints, as items are brought forward for discussion and debate during Town Council work sessions, and prior to the Town Council taking action at a regular Town Council Legislative meeting.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff's recommendation to the Town Council is to continue to act as if a *committee of the whole* and to have items brought forward for Town Council consideration during Town Council work sessions prior to the Town Council taking action. The items and issues being brought forward by staff should continue to align with the Plan Warrenton 2040 goals and the Town Council's strategic biennial goals.

Service Level/Policy Impact

The recommended action will continue the current level of support for the Town's Plan Warrenton 2040 Goals and Town Council's Strategic Biennial Goals within existing resource constraints.

Fiscal Impact

The recommended action does not present any additional fiscal implications.

Legal Impact

The recommended action does not present any legal impact. The Planning Commission is the only board that is required by Virginia State Code.

The Town Charter and Code do not establish any committees. They allow only for special committees created by the Mayor subject to approval of the Town Council.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

Option 2: Reinstate the committees that have been inactive since early 2020 and add the additional staff resources necessary to properly support these committees.

Options 3: If the Town Council resolves to reinstate committees, and additional resources are provided to support the committees, then staff would recommend the committees be aligned with the Plan Warrenton 2040 goals and the Town Council's biennial goals. That is,

- Community Facilities Committee, to include the Open Space, Parks & Environment goals
 - Transportation & Circulation Committee
 - Economic & Fiscal Resilience Committee, to include the Historic Resource goals
 - Land Use & Character District Committee, to include the Housing goals.
- (The Planning Commission could possibly serve as this committee)

Service Level/Policy Impact

The creation of committees along with the additional staff resources to properly support the committees could improve the level of service to the Council and community.

The staffing needed to reinstate committees would be additional to the Town Clerk's Office, Community Development, Information Technology, Public Works and Utilities, and Economic Development.

If Council were to reinstate committees, staff also recommends the following:

- Hold committee meetings during the regular workday.
- Adopt a charter for each committee consistent with Town Council biennial goals.
- Initiate committee meetings at the start of the new fiscal year, July 2023.

Fiscal Impact

The fiscal impact includes the cost of additional staff, audio/visual services if Council would like these meetings to be recorded and live streamed, advertising, and potentially legal services if legal counsel is required or needed at committee meetings. Depending on the number of committees created and the staff resources required, the fiscal impact could be as high as \$564,627. For example, the advertising costs alone for four committees, meeting bi-monthly, is estimated at \$17,826. Cost estimates are included in attachment 2.

Legal Impact

All committees of the Town of Warrenton are subject to the provisions of the Virginia Open Meetings Law (VA Code 2.2-3707), and the Virginia Conflict of Interests Act (VA Code 2.2-3100).

ATTACHMENTS

1. List of boards, committees, and commissions
2. Cost estimates for committee support services