

Ethical Standards for Planning Board, Zoning Board, and Conservation Commission Members*

1. The primary obligation of Board and Commission members is to serve the public interest and to conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in the Board or Commission on which they serve and the conduct of its business.
2. Members shall not directly or indirectly solicit, accept, or receive any gift (whether in money, services, loans, travel, entertainment, hospitality, or in some other form), under circumstances in which it could be reasonably inferred that the gift was intended to influence them in the performance of their duties or was intended as a reward for any recommendation or decision on their part.
3. To avoid conflict of interest or the appearance of impropriety, any member who may receive some private benefit from a public decision must not participate in that decision. The private benefit may be direct or indirect, create a material personal gain, or provide an advantage to relations, friends, groups or associations to which the member belongs. A member with a conflict of interest must make that interest public, abstain from voting on the matter, and usually leave the table or podium area when members deliberate and vote on a matter. Further, the member may not discuss the matter privately with any other member voting on the matter or otherwise communicate directly or indirectly with members regarding the matter in question so as to attempt to influence the vote on said question.
4. A member shall not disclose or use confidential information obtained in the course of his/her duties to further a personal interest.
5. All members share a responsibility to enforce adherence to the standards of conduct herein. If a member believes that one or more members may, either by intention or inadvertence, be in violation of these standards, she/he shall call that fact to the attention of the Chairman who shall in turn call it to the attention of the member in question. In the event of a dispute as to whether a member should or should not participate, the question shall be posed to the Board or Commission, as to whether the member in question should or should not participate. Such vote shall be advisory and non-binding and not be requested by other than members.
6. All discussions between members and applicants or their agents regarding matters to be decided by the Board or Commission shall take place at public meetings as part of the public record.

7. Per RSA 673:14, no member shall participate in deciding or shall sit upon the hearing of any question which the Board or Commission is to decide in a judicial capacity if that member has a direct personal or pecuniary interest in the outcome which differs from the interest of other citizens, or if that member would be disqualified for any cause to act as a juror upon the trial of the same matter in any action at law. Juror standards, listed in RSA 500-A:12, specify a person may not be a juror if she/he expects to gain or lose upon disposition of a case, is related to either party, has advised or assisted either party, has given an opinion or formed an opinion, is employed by either party, or does not appear to be indifferent.
8. When the Board or Commission meets to consider an application, members shall disclose if a site-visit was conducted.
9. The practice of an applicant directly calling a member to invite that member to visit a property without prior notice to the full Board or Commission and their agent shall be discouraged as an inappropriate course of conduct.
10. Members who have legal or other problems that may reflect poorly on the Board or Commission should step down at least temporarily until their problems are resolved.

*Adapted from Rules of Procedure for Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, and Conservation Commission