

Corporate Policy

Council, Boards, Committees

Council-Staff Relations Policy

Approved by Council on: April 19, 1999

Report Number: L-12-99

Effective: April 19, 1999

Reviewed on: February 25, 2019

Amended: February 25, 2019

Next Review: February 2022

Note:

The purpose of this policy is to outline the roles and working relationship of council and staff.

Policy Statement:

The City of Burlington will promote a respectful, tolerant and harassment-free relationship and workplace between Members of Council and the officers and employees of the corporation, guided by the Code of Good Governance for Members of Council, the Employee Code of Conduct, the Respect in the Workplace Policy and the Procedure By-law.

Scope:

This policy applies to all Members of Council and officers and employees of the corporation.

Principles:

1. Roles

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Role clarification and sensitivity are fundamental to the success of a working relationship and there are some shared aspects of Council-Staff Relations Policy. Both Council and staff are expected to enhance public education about the political process by providing context and process information about decision making. Both Council and City staff are required to have a solid understanding of the following:

Roles of Council and Staff:

- demonstrate commitment to communication and consultation among ourselves and with the general public;
- show leadership, relying on our knowledge and judgment, and respond based upon our areas of expertise;
- maintain confidentiality. Confidential issues will be dealt with in camera at Committee and Council meetings.

Council Role:

- to govern and provide political direction;
- to ensure that management systems work properly, establishing vision, goals, determining needs and outcomes to be achieved, and empowering effective staff performance;
- to determine corporate policy and make decisions about issues following consultation with City staff and community residents;
- to respond to constituent concerns, to keep City staff informed, to be open to discussion, and to ask when clarification is needed.

Elected representatives do not have an administrative managerial role in the day to day business of the organization.

City Staff Role:

- to provide timely reports to Council outlining factors that will assist in their decision-making process, research policy issues as required, provide enough information based upon analysis and best professional expertise and judgment. Timely information ensures that Council members are provided information early enough to allow for review and consultation. Timeliness also ensures that deadlines and commitments requiring adjustment are communicated proactively, rather than after the fact.
- to implement Council's decisions;

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- to manage and identify the means for achieving corporate goals and outcomes;
- to provide appropriate follow-up to Council inquiries, to keep members of Council up to date and informed, to be open to discussion, and to ask when clarification is needed.

City staff do not have a political role.

2. Highly Effective Working Relationships

We commit to the following requirements of a highly effective working relationship together:

Respect

A formal relationship exists between City staff and members of Council. This will ensure that all members of staff and Council are treated equitably without favouritism. A chain of command exists to deal with issues of significance. Council members are encouraged to discuss clarification of reports and related information directly with the author of the report. Issues, additions, changes and/or challenges to the content of any report are to be addressed through the Director to ensure an appropriate Department response. Senior staff may suggest direct consultation with other staff members and/or continue open communication through the senior staff channel. All staff should feel comfortable responding appropriately to straightforward Council requests, advising their supervisors of the inquiry. Any response to a request for information from a member of Council between Committee and Council meetings on a subject, will be answered in writing and circulated to all Council members.

Consultation and Community Responsiveness

We share a commitment to communication and consultation among ourselves and with the public. We believe in community involvement in decision making and accept our shared responsibility to ensure effective community responsiveness.

Staff is encouraged to provide information memos and reports for inclusion in the Council Information Package distributed weekly, on Friday, to Council members.

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3. Expectations

No surprises

Open lines of communication are essential.

It is expected that Council members will:

- request new work and request staff input prior to making important policy decisions and convey feedback to staff;
- discuss issues with staff and advise staff of questions prior to committee meetings whenever possible;
- request advice from the City Clerk about the appropriate wording of motions, amendments, and formal staff directions in accordance with the Procedural By-law;
- consult with staff prior to making commitments to constituents.

It is expected that staff will:

- ensure that Council is apprised of any issues that may impact upon their decision-making process;
- present a corporate and community perspective,
- notify Council of changes to legislation and any unintended or unexpected impacts of policy decisions through written reports and/or presentations in a timely fashion;
- through senior staff at the Manager, Director, and City Manager level, convey feedback to Council members who may not be aware of existing policy or other workload demands and related issues.

4. Monitoring/Contraventions

The City Clerk shall be responsible for receiving complaints and/or concerns related to this policy. Upon receipt of a complaint and/or concern, the City Clerk shall notify:

- a) In the case of officers and employees of the corporation, the City Manager, Director responsible for the employee and the Director of Human Resources or
- b) In the case of Council, the Integrity Commissioner.

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Where there is a discrepancy between the Council-Staff Relations Policy and the Code of Good Governance for Members of Council and Local Boards or the Employee Code of Conduct, the language of the applicable Code of Conduct prevails.

References:

This policy is made pursuant to s. 270(1) (2.1) of the Municipal Act.
Code of Good Governance
Employee Code of Conduct
Respect in the Workplace Policy
Procedure By-law

Roles:

Accountable:

City Clerk

Responsible:

City Clerk and Director of Human Resources