



TOWN OF PALMER LAKE CODE OF ETHICS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

The Three Rs of Palmer Lake Government Leadership: Roles, Responsibilities, and Respect

State law and Title 2 of the Palmer Lake Municipal Code define the legal powers and duties of the Board of Trustees, Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, and appointed Town officers. This Code of Ethics adds clear standards for how elected officials should carry out those duties. It is intended to support lawful, respectful, and effective Town government.

This Code complements the Town of Palmer Lake Board of Trustees Governance Handbook, the Town's financial and purchasing policies, personnel policies, and applicable Colorado ethics laws. If this Code conflicts with the Colorado Constitution, state law, the Palmer Lake Municipal Code, or another controlling legal requirement, the controlling law governs.

This Code is intended to be adopted as a standing policy of the Board of Trustees. It remains in effect until the Board formally amends or repeals it. Each elected official is responsible for knowing and following this Code.

PURPOSE AND CORE PRINCIPLES

Public office is a public trust. Trustees may disagree strongly about policy, priorities, growth, spending, land use, or other Town matters. Those disagreements are part of representative government. They do not excuse disrespect, misuse of office, interference with Town administration, or conduct that damages public confidence.

The central standard of this Code is respect: respect for the law, the public, fellow Trustees, Town employees, appointed boards and commissions, and the institutions of Town government. Respect does not require agreement. It requires professionalism, fairness, and self-control, especially when issues are difficult or personal.

Every elected official should apply three basic questions before acting:

- Is this within my role as an elected official?
- Am I acting for the Town and the public rather than for a personal interest?
- Am I treating others and the Town organization with the respect expected of public office?

OVERVIEW OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees is the legislative body of the Town. The Board acts as a body through motions, resolutions, ordinances, budget actions, appointments, and other lawful decisions made at public meetings. An individual Trustee does not have the authority of the Board and may not bind the Town or direct Town operations unless the Board or law has given that Trustee specific authority.



Trustees should focus on policy, long-term priorities, financial stewardship, major contracts, community outcomes, and oversight of the Town Administrator. Day-to-day administration belongs to the Town Administrator and the Town organization.

Mayor

The Mayor presides over meetings of the Board of Trustees and is the head of Town government for ceremonial purposes. Under Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.04.020, the Mayor has the same voting power as a Trustee. The Mayor executes and authenticates instruments when required and performs duties assigned by law, ordinance, or the Board.

The Mayor helps the Board work as an effective governing body. The Mayor should maintain order, encourage fair participation, keep discussion focused, and protect the right of each Trustee to be heard. Except where law provides otherwise, the Mayor does not independently direct Town staff or exercise administrative authority.

Mayor Pro Tem

At the first meeting in January following each biennial regular election, the Mayor, with approval of the Board, chooses a Trustee to serve as Mayor Pro Tem. The Mayor Pro Tem performs the Mayor's duties when the Mayor is absent, unable to act, or otherwise unavailable as provided by law and Town Code.

All Trustees

All Trustees, including the Mayor and Mayor Pro Tem when acting as members of the Board, are expected to:

- Prepare for meetings and become familiar with agenda materials before discussion or action.
- Participate fully while remaining respectful, focused, and professional.
- Ask questions needed to make informed decisions without turning questions into personal attacks or staff direction.
- Represent the Town honestly and distinguish personal views from official Board positions.
- Protect confidential information and privileged legal communications.
- Use Town resources only for lawful Town purposes.
- Follow the established chain of command and respect the role of the Town Administrator.
- Avoid conduct that creates a conflict of interest or a reasonable appearance that public office is being used for private gain.
- Support lawful Board decisions after the vote, while remaining free to explain a dissenting vote or advocate a future policy change.
- Maintain conduct that supports public confidence in the Town.



POLICIES AND PROTOCOLS RELATED TO CONDUCT

Ceremonial Events

Town staff will coordinate requests for an official Town representative at ceremonial events. The Mayor normally serves as the Town representative. If the Mayor is unavailable, the Mayor Pro Tem or another Trustee may represent the Town as appropriate. A Trustee who attends in a personal capacity should not imply that the Trustee is speaking for the full Board unless authorized to do so.

Official Correspondence

Official Town correspondence should be coordinated through the Town Administrator or Town Clerk. A Trustee may respond personally to a constituent, but should not promise Town action, direct staff work, or state that a personal position is the official position of the Board. Town letterhead and official Town communication systems should be used only for authorized Town purposes.

Correspondence received by one Trustee that concerns Town business may be shared with the rest of the Board and appropriate staff. Elected officials should assume that communications about Town business may become public records.

Political and Campaign Activity

Trustees retain the rights of private citizens to support or oppose candidates and ballot issues. Political activity must be kept separate from official Town business. Trustees shall not use Town meetings, Town staff, Town equipment, Town email accounts, Town funds, or other Town resources for campaign purposes except as allowed by law.

Trustees shall not pressure Town employees, contractors, appointees, or applicants for political support, contributions, endorsements, campaign work, or public statements.

Intergovernmental Relations

The Town benefits from constructive relationships with neighboring communities, El Paso County, special districts, regional agencies, the State of Colorado, and other public bodies. Trustees who represent the Town in intergovernmental settings should understand the Board's adopted position and avoid making commitments beyond their authority.

Board Meeting Process

Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.04.050 provides that the Board generally follows Robert's Rules of Order. Parliamentary rules support a clear record, fair debate, and orderly action. They should be used to help the Board decide issues, not as a weapon to silence or embarrass another member.



The Mayor is the presiding officer. Trustees should respect rulings of the chair, subject to any lawful appeal to the Board. Members should speak through the chair, remain on the agenda topic, avoid interruption, and allow other members a fair chance to participate.

Public Hearings and Quasi-Judicial Matters

Public hearings require fairness, patience, and a clear record. The Mayor should explain the hearing process, manage speaker time fairly, and maintain order. Trustees should listen without showing hostility or favoritism and should ask questions to clarify facts or the record.

During a hearing, Trustees should avoid arguing with speakers or announcing a final decision before the record is closed. In quasi-judicial matters, Trustees must be especially careful about ex parte contacts, bias, prejudgment, and communications outside the hearing record. Questions about a pending quasi-judicial matter should be directed to the Town Attorney before the Trustee acts.

Travel and Reimbursement

Official travel and reimbursement shall follow Town policy and the adopted budget. Trustees should seek reasonable costs and use public funds with the same care they would expect from Town employees. The Town should not pay personal expenses for spouses, family members, or other guests.

A Trustee should not accept vendor-paid travel, lodging, entertainment, or other benefits that could influence, or appear to influence, the Trustee's official judgment. Questions about gifts or travel offered by a third party should be reviewed under applicable ethics law and, when needed, by the Town Attorney.

Electronic Communications and Public Records

Email, text messages, social media messages, voicemail, and other electronic communications about Town business may be subject to Colorado public records and open meetings laws. The device or account used does not necessarily change the public nature of the communication.

Trustees should not use electronic messages, group texts, social media, intermediaries, or a series of one-to-one communications to deliberate with other Trustees outside a properly noticed public meeting when doing so could violate open meetings law. Trustees should not use disappearing-message features or private accounts to avoid Town recordkeeping duties.



TRUSTEE CONDUCT WITH ONE ANOTHER

In Public Meetings

Trustees may challenge facts, assumptions, recommendations, and policy positions. Strong debate is appropriate. Personal attacks are not. Trustees shall not use threatening, abusive, discriminatory, demeaning, or knowingly false statements about another member. Shouting, intimidation, or physical conduct that could reasonably be viewed as threatening is not acceptable.

Trustees should criticize ideas rather than motives or character. If a member believes another Trustee has violated meeting rules or this Code, the member should use the proper point of order or other established process rather than respond with a personal attack.

Trustees should be punctual, prepared, and respectful of meeting time. Comments should relate to the matter under consideration. Repetition should be limited once a position has been stated and understood.

Outside Public Meetings

The same basic standards apply in private conversations, email, text messages, social media, and informal community settings. Elected officials are often viewed as representatives of the Town even when no formal meeting is taking place. A comment made in a hallway, restaurant, parking lot, or online may quickly become public.

Trustees should not spread rumors, disclose confidential information, threaten retaliation, or use private conversations to pressure another Trustee into taking action outside the public process.

BOARD CONDUCT WITH TOWN STAFF

Effective Town government depends on a clear working relationship between the elected Board, which sets policy, and Town staff, which administers and implements that policy. The Town Administrator and the Town Clerk are both the primary conduit between the Board and Town staff.

Treat Staff as Professionals

Trustees shall treat Town employees with courtesy and respect. Clear questions and honest disagreement are appropriate. Humiliation, threats, personal attacks, harassment, retaliation, or attempts to intimidate an employee are not.

Use the Town Administrator as the Conduit

Requests for staff work, research, follow-up, changes in priorities, or operational action shall generally be directed through the Town Administrator unless Town Code, Ordinance, or appropriate and customary procedure is to advance the matter to the Town Clerk as part of their statutory duties. Routine questions may be answered by a department head when



appropriate, but the Administrator should be informed when the request could require staff time, change priorities, or create a new commitment.

An individual Trustee shall not assign work to an employee, change an employee's priorities, direct a department, approve leave, evaluate staff performance, discipline an employee, or countermand an administrative decision. Communication is appropriate; supervision is not.

Do Not Disrupt Staff Work

Trustees should respect employees' work time. Staff should not be pulled away from meetings, public service, field work, or other assigned duties to satisfy an individual Trustee's request unless the Administrator determines that the request should take priority.

Employee Performance and Complaints

A Trustee shall not publicly criticize an individual employee's performance. Concerns about an employee should be provided privately to the Town Administrator. Concerns about the Town Administrator should be raised with the Mayor, Mayor Pro Tem, or Board as appropriate.

The Board should not become an alternative personnel system for routine employee grievances or management disagreements. Personnel matters should follow Town policy and the established chain of command. Trustees are not privy to employment matters of staff including but not limited to compensation, vacation and/or holiday status, health matters, discipline, termination, or related matters.

Administrative Decisions

Trustees shall not attempt to influence staff decisions on hiring, discipline, purchasing, contract administration, consultant selection, inspections, permits, licenses, code enforcement, development review, or similar administrative matters except through lawful Board policy or action.

This rule does not prevent a Trustee from asking a policy question, requesting information through the Administrator, or raising a concern that should be considered by the full Board.

Political Activity and Staff

Trustees shall not ask or pressure Town employees to support a candidate, donate money, display campaign materials, attend political events, or use their position as employees to support a political cause. Employees retain their rights as private citizens, subject to applicable law and Town personnel policies.



BOARD CONDUCT WITH THE PUBLIC

In Public Meetings

Members of the public should be treated fairly, even when they are angry, critical, mistaken, or strongly opposed to a Board position. The Board may enforce reasonable rules of order, speaking time, relevance, and decorum, but those rules should be applied consistently.

Trustees should listen actively and avoid facial expressions, side conversations, sarcasm, or gestures that could reasonably be viewed as ridicule. Questions should seek information or clarification. A Trustee should not use questioning as a way to belittle or debate a speaker.

No person should be favored or disfavored because of support for, or opposition to, a Trustee or Town policy. The Board should focus on conduct, evidence, and applicable law rather than personalities.

Outside Public Meetings

Trustees may explain Town policy and their own views to residents. They should not promise that the Board will take a certain action or that Town staff will provide a specific result. A Trustee may refer a service request or concern to the Town Administrator without promising the outcome.

Trustees should remember that residents may reasonably view their words as carrying official weight. When speaking personally, a Trustee should make that distinction clear when the context could otherwise create confusion.

BOARD CONDUCT WITH OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES

When appearing before another public agency or organization, a Trustee should clearly state whether the Trustee is presenting the official position of the Town or a personal view. A Trustee representing an adopted Town position should accurately present that position even if the Trustee personally voted against it.

Official Town letterhead and official Town correspondence should be used only when the Trustee is authorized to represent the Town. Copies of official correspondence should be provided to the Town Clerk for retention as appropriate.

A Trustee who serves another public or nonprofit organization should disclose that role when it is relevant to Town action and should follow applicable conflict-of-interest law.

TOWN BOARD CONDUCT WITH BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Palmer Lake's boards and commissions provide important public service, specialized review, and community input. The Planning Commission and Parks and Trails Commission



perform the roles assigned to them by law and Town Code. Their members serve the Town and the community, not individual Trustees.

Trustees shall respect the independence of appointed boards and commissions within their assigned duties. A Trustee shall not direct an appointed member, threaten removal because of a vote or recommendation, or pressure a member to reach a preferred result.

Attendance and Participation

Trustees may attend open meetings of boards and commissions. Unless serving in an authorized role, a Trustee should avoid dominating discussion or creating the impression that the full Board has already decided the matter. When expressing a personal view, the Trustee should state that it is a personal view unless the Board has adopted an official position.

A Trustee should not participate in or attempt to influence a board or commission's quasi-judicial hearing when the matter may later come before the Board of Trustees. The Trustee should avoid ex parte communications and consult the Town Attorney when the proper role is uncertain.

Contact With Appointed Members

Trustees should not lobby individual board or commission members on behalf of a resident, business, developer, applicant, or personal interest. Questions about a recommendation or process should be directed to the Town Administrator or appropriate staff.

Appointments and Removal

Appointments should be based on qualifications, commitment, judgment, and the ability to perform the assigned public role. An appointment should not be used as a political reward. Reappointment or removal should follow Town Code, applicable law, and fair process rather than personal disagreement with a particular vote.

TRUSTEE CONDUCT WITH THE MEDIA AND PUBLIC STATEMENTS

The Mayor normally speaks for the official position of the Board unless the Board designates another representative. The Town Administrator may speak for the Town on administrative and operational matters within the Administrator's authority.

Individual Trustees may speak with the media and the public. They should clearly distinguish between an adopted Town position and a personal view. A Trustee should not disclose confidential information, privileged legal advice, protected personnel information, or information that the Town is legally required to keep confidential.

Trustees should assume that statements to reporters are on the record. Humor, sarcasm, speculation, and incomplete information can be misunderstood or quoted without context.



When facts are uncertain, it is appropriate to refer the question to the Town Administrator, Town Attorney, or other authorized source.

ETHICS, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST, AND USE OF OFFICE

Trustees shall comply with applicable Colorado ethics laws, including Article 18 of Title 24, Colorado Revised Statutes, Article XXIX of the Colorado Constitution when applicable, and any additional Town ethics requirements. The purpose of these rules is to protect the public trust and prevent public office from being used for improper private benefit.

Conflicts of Interest

A Trustee who has a potential personal, financial, business, or other conflict in a matter before the Town should disclose the issue as required by law and seek guidance from the Town Attorney before participating. When the law requires disqualification, the Trustee shall not vote, deliberate, or attempt to influence the decision except as the law may specifically allow.

When in doubt, early disclosure is the better practice. Disclosure does not always require recusal, but hiding a potential conflict can damage both the decision and public confidence.

Gifts and Benefits

Trustees shall not accept gifts, favors, travel, entertainment, discounts, employment opportunities, or other benefits when acceptance is prohibited by law or could reasonably be understood as an attempt to influence official action. Questions should be reviewed before accepting the benefit, not after.

Use of Town Resources and Position

A Trustee shall not use Town property, staff time, confidential information, contracts, purchasing authority, influence, or the prestige of office for improper personal, family, business, political, or financial gain. A Trustee shall not seek special treatment from Town staff for the Trustee, relatives, friends, clients, businesses, or political supporters.

Confidential and Privileged Information

Trustees may receive information that is confidential by law, protected by attorney-client privilege, discussed in a lawful executive session, or restricted by personnel, litigation, public safety, or privacy requirements. Such information shall not be disclosed or used for personal or political advantage.

Questions about whether information may be released should be directed to the Town Attorney or Town Administrator before disclosure.



RELATIONSHIP WITH THE TOWN ATTORNEY

The Town Attorney represents the Town as the municipal organization and advises the Board in its official capacity. An individual Trustee does not become a separate client merely by speaking with the Town Attorney about Town business.

Trustees may ask reasonable legal questions related to their official duties. Individual Trustees shall not independently direct substantial legal research, initiate litigation, order an investigation, retain outside counsel, direct settlement, or incur material legal expense on behalf of the Town unless authorized by the Board or otherwise permitted by law.

Direct communication with the Town Attorney may be appropriate when the Town Administrator is personally involved in the matter, when a Trustee needs advice about the Trustee's own official legal duties, or when professional ethics require independent communication. The Town Attorney determines questions of privilege, conflicts, and professional responsibility.

SANCTIONS AND ENFORCEMENT

The purpose of enforcement is to protect the integrity of Town government, correct conduct when possible, and provide a fair process when a serious violation is alleged. Not every disagreement or mistake requires formal discipline.

Informal Correction

Minor conduct concerns should usually be addressed early and directly. The Mayor may counsel a Trustee about meeting conduct or a possible violation. If the concern involves the Mayor, the Mayor Pro Tem or another appropriate Board member may raise the issue. Informal correction does not limit the Board's ability to address repeated or serious conduct.

Formal Review

A serious, repeated, or disputed allegation may be referred to the full Board. Before imposing a formal sanction, the affected Trustee should receive reasonable notice of the alleged conduct and a fair opportunity to respond.

When facts require investigation, the Board should use an appropriate and impartial process. Depending on the issue, the Board may seek advice from the Town Attorney or authorize review by independent counsel, an investigator, auditor, or other qualified professional. The Town Administrator may assist with administrative fact gathering when appropriate and when doing so does not create a conflict.

Available Actions

Subject to applicable law, the Board may take actions that include counseling, additional training, a formal reprimand, public censure, removal from a liaison or committee



assignment, referral to the appropriate enforcement authority, or other lawful action. Removal from elected office may occur only when authorized by law and through the required legal process.

A formal sanction should state the conduct at issue, the provision violated, the process used, and the action taken. Sanctions should be proportionate and should not be used to punish a Trustee merely for holding a minority policy view or casting an unpopular vote.

PRINCIPLES OF PROPER CONDUCT

Proper conduct includes:

- Keeping commitments and being dependable.
- Preparing before meetings and studying the issues.
- Listening before responding.
- Speaking truthfully and correcting material mistakes.
- Showing patience and self-control under pressure.
- Treating disagreement as part of public service rather than as a personal attack.
- Protecting confidential information.
- Following the chain of command.
- Avoiding retaliation, favoritism, and misuse of office.
- Accepting responsibility for one's words and actions.
- Supporting fair process even when the outcome is not preferred.
- Remembering that the public interest comes before personal advantage.

Improper conduct includes:

- Threats, intimidation, harassment, or personal attacks.
- Knowingly false or misleading statements.
- Spreading rumors as fact.
- Using confidential information for political or personal advantage.
- Directing Town employees outside established authority.
- Pressuring appointed officials, contractors, applicants, or staff for a preferred result.
- Retaliating against a person for lawful criticism, testimony, reporting, or disagreement.
- Using Town resources or public office for improper private or political benefit.

CHECKLIST FOR MONITORING CONDUCT

Before acting, speaking, sending a message, or making a request as an elected official, consider these questions:



1. Is the action within my authority as an individual Trustee, or does it require Board action?
2. Am I respecting the role of the Town Administrator and the chain of command?
3. Would I be comfortable if this communication became public tomorrow?
4. Have I separated verified facts from assumptions, rumors, or personal conclusions?
5. Do I have a conflict of interest or other personal interest that should be disclosed?
6. Am I treating the other person with the same fairness I would expect if our roles were reversed?
7. Could my action reasonably be viewed as a threat, retaliation, favoritism, or misuse of office?
8. Am I protecting confidential, privileged, personnel, or legally restricted information?
9. Am I asking a question or stating a policy concern, or am I improperly directing an administrative result?
10. Does this action support trust in the Town's processes even if people disagree with the outcome?

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Censure. A formal public statement by the Board expressing disapproval of an elected official's conduct. Censure does not, by itself, remove a person from elected office.

Civility. Courtesy and self-control in dealing with others, including during disagreement.

Conflict of Interest. A situation in which a personal, financial, business, family, or other interest may affect, or appear to affect, an official decision.

Decorum. Conduct that is orderly, respectful, and appropriate to a public meeting.

Ex Parte Communication. A communication about a pending quasi-judicial matter that occurs outside the formal hearing process and without all interested parties having the same opportunity to participate.

Point of Order. A request that the presiding officer rule on whether meeting rules or procedures are being followed.



Public Trust. The duty to use public office and authority for lawful public purposes rather than improper personal gain.

Quasi-Judicial Matter. A proceeding in which the Board or another Town body applies existing legal standards to specific facts, property, or parties and must provide a fair decision-making process.

Recusal. Not participating in discussion, influence, or voting on a matter when disqualification is required by law.

Respect. Professional regard for the rights, role, dignity, and lawful responsibilities of others.

Retaliation. Adverse action or threatened adverse action taken because a person exercised a lawful right, raised a concern, gave testimony, reported misconduct, or disagreed with an official.

Standing Policy. A policy adopted by the Board that remains in effect until the Board formally changes or repeals it.

LEGAL AND POLICY REFERENCES

This Code should be read together with the following authorities and Town policies, as amended from time to time:

- Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.04.010 — Board of Trustees; legislative authority.
- Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.04.020 — Mayor; presiding role, voting power, and duties.
- Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.04.030 — Mayor Pro Tem.
- Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.04.050 — Board meetings and Robert's Rules of Order.
- Palmer Lake Municipal Code § 2.08.060 — Town Administrator as chief administrative officer.
- Palmer Lake Municipal Code and Land Use Code provisions governing appointed boards and commissions.
- C.R.S. § 31-4-301 et seq. — organizational structure and officers of statutory towns.
- C.R.S. § 24-18-101 et seq. — standards of conduct and ethics for public and local government officials and employees.
- Article XXIX of the Colorado Constitution — Ethics in Government, when applicable.
- C.R.S. § 24-6-401 et seq. — Colorado Open Meetings Law.
- C.R.S. § 24-72-200.1 et seq. — Colorado Open Records Act.
- Town of Palmer Lake Board of Trustees Governance Handbook.
- Town of Palmer Lake financial, purchasing, personnel, records, and other adopted policies.



Trustees should seek guidance from the Town Attorney when a question involves a conflict of interest, quasi-judicial proceeding, executive-session information, attorney-client privilege, open meetings, public records, or another legal requirement.

IT ALL COMES DOWN TO RESPECT

Respect for one another. Respect for different views. Respect for lawful process. Respect for the community we serve.