

TOWN OF NORRIDGEWOCK
ETHICS ORDINANCE

Adopted _____, 2026

Table of Contents

Section 1. Title and Purpose.....	1
Section 2. Applicability.....	1
Section 3. Definitions	1
Section 4. Standards of Conduct.....	1
Section 5. Conflicts of Interest	2
Section 6. Administrative Suspension.....	4
Section 7. Removal for Ethics Violation.....	4
Section 8. Public Reporting of Potential Conflicts of Interest	4
Section 10. Severability	5
Section 11. Effective Date.....	5

Section 1. Title and Purpose

This Ordinance shall be known and may be cited as the *Town of Norridgewock Ethics Ordinance*.

The purpose of this Ordinance is to promote public confidence in Town government by establishing clear and consistent ethical standards for all who serve the Town of Norridgewock. These standards are intended to ensure that all officials and employees act with integrity, impartiality, and in the best interests of the Town, free from improper influence or conflicts of interest.

This Ordinance provides guidance on ethical behavior, establishes procedures for disclosure and review of conflicts, and sets forth remedies for violations, including administrative suspension and removal from office when warranted.

Section 2. Applicability

This Ordinance applies to:

- All elected and appointed municipal officials,
- All members of boards, committees, and commissions, and
- All Town employees, including full-time, part-time, seasonal, and call firefighters

Exemption for Collective Bargaining Agreements. This Ordinance shall not apply to employees who are covered under a current collective bargaining agreement that contains an ethics provision. If a collective bargaining agreement does not contain an ethics or conduct provision, the affected employees shall be governed by this Ordinance.

Nothing in this section shall be construed to limit or supersede any rights or procedures established under applicable Maine labor laws or valid collective bargaining agreements.

Section 3. Definitions

Administrative Suspension. A temporary removal from duties, responsibilities, and participation in the activities of a board or committee pending resolution of a conflict, litigation, or ethical concern.

Conflict of Interest. While Maine statute contains more specific definitions of a conflict of interest, for the purposes of this Ordinance, a conflict of interest is defined as a situation in which an official's judgment or actions in their official capacity could be influenced, or appear to be influenced, by a personal, family, financial, or other private interest.

Section 4. Standards of Conduct

A. Public Trust.

Officials and employees shall place the interests of the Town above personal or private interests and shall conduct themselves in a manner that preserves public confidence in local government.

B. Gifts and Favors

No official or employee shall solicit, accept, or receive any gift, favor, service, or promise of value that could reasonably be perceived to influence their judgment or official actions. Minor tokens of appreciation (e.g., food or refreshments at community events under \$100 in value) shall not constitute a violation.

C. Use of Town Property or Resources

Officials and employees shall not use Town property, equipment, or resources for personal or private gain or for political purposes.

D. Confidential Information

Officials and employees shall not disclose confidential information acquired through their position, nor use such information for personal or financial advantage.

E. Use of the Town's Name, Letterhead, Logo, or Seal

The Town's name, letterhead, logo, or seal may be used in correspondence or materials only when conducting official business of the Town of Norridgewock within the scope of an official's or employee's regular duties.

The Town's name, letterhead, logo, or seal shall not be used to endorse or oppose any political candidate, business, commercial product, or service.

Nothing in this section shall prohibit an official or employee, acting solely in their personal capacity, from expressing support or opposition for a political candidate, business, product, or service, provided that such communication does not imply official endorsement by the Town or any of its boards or committees.

Section 5. Conflicts of Interest

A. Disclosure

When a potential conflict of interest arises, the official or employee shall immediately disclose the nature of the conflict to the chair of the board or committee, if pertaining to the potential conflict of a board or committee member, or to the Town Manager or Select Board, if pertaining to the potential conflict of an employee or elected or other appointed official. The disclosure shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting or filed with the Town Clerk if not meeting-related.

B. Determination

If the conflict is not self-evident or is contested, the board, committee, or supervisor shall decide on whether a conflict exists. A majority vote or managerial determination shall govern, and the outcome shall be documented.

C. Inability to Form a Quorum

If the number of members disqualified due to conflict prevents a quorum, the matter shall be referred to the Select Board. The Select Board may temporarily appoint disinterested alternates or authorize another municipal body to act in place of the conflicted board member(s).

D. Allegation of Conflict by Another Member

If a member of a board or committee believes that another member has a conflict of interest that has not been properly disclosed or addressed, the concerned member shall formally raise the issue on the record during the meeting in which the potential conflict arises.

1. **Initial Review.** Upon such a claim, the chair of the board or committee shall immediately allow discussion limited to the question of whether a conflict exists. The member alleged to have the conflict shall have the opportunity to respond.
2. **Determination.** Following discussion, the remaining disinterested members shall vote on whether a conflict of interest exists, based on the facts presented. The outcome of the vote shall be recorded in the meeting minutes.
3. **Effect of Determination.**
 - a. If a conflict is found, the member shall immediately abstain from further participation, discussion, and voting on the matter.
 - b. If the member fails to voluntarily abstain after such determination, the chair shall declare the member disqualified from participation in that matter, and the member's vote shall not be counted.
4. **Referral for Ethics Review.** If a member is alleged to have knowingly violated this Ordinance by failing to disclose a conflict or by participating in a matter from which they should have abstained, the issue shall be referred to the Select Board for review under Section 6 (Administrative Suspension). The Select Board may, after notice and hearing, determine whether disciplinary or corrective action is warranted, up to and including suspension or removal.
5. **Allegations Involving the Select Board.** If the allegation of conflict involves one or more members of the Select Board, and the remaining disinterested members cannot form a quorum to make a determination, the matter shall be referred to the Board of Appeals for impartial review and recommendation. The Board of Appeals shall follow the same standards of disclosure, deliberation, and determination as outlined in this section. Its written findings and recommendations shall be transmitted to the Town Clerk and made a matter of public record. The decision of the Board of Appeals shall be final unless otherwise provided by law.

Section 6. Administrative Suspension

A. Suspension for Ethical Concern

An official or employee may be administratively suspended pending Select Board review of an ethics complaint or violation, following a majority vote of the Select Board after notice and an opportunity to be heard.

B. Effect of Suspension

An administratively suspended official or employee shall not participate in meetings, perform duties, or act on behalf of the Town during the period of suspension.

Section 7. Removal for Ethics Violation

A. Removal for Cause

An official may be removed from office, or an employee may be disciplined up to and including termination, for unethical conduct, abuse of authority, violation of this Ordinance, or violation of State statute after notice, hearing, and majority vote of the Select Board. A member of the Select Board may not be removed from office pursuant to this Section.

B. Appeal

Any official or employee subject to suspension, removal, or discipline may appeal the decision to the Superior Court within 30 days of the date of decision.

Section 8. Public Reporting of Potential Conflicts of Interest

A. Right to Report

Any resident, taxpayer, or individual with standing in a matter before the Town of Norridgewock may submit a written allegation of a potential violation of this Ordinance involving a member of any Town official or employee.

B. Submission of a Complaint

1. Allegations shall be made in writing, signed by the complainant, and filed with the Town Manager or Town Clerk.
2. The complaint must include:
 - a. The name of the official or employee alleged to have a conflict;
 - b. A description of the facts or circumstances giving rise to the alleged conflict;
 - c. Identification of any specific meeting, matter, or decision affected; and
 - d. Supporting documentation, if available
3. Anonymous complaints shall not be acted upon.

C. Preliminary Review

Upon receipt, the Town Manager (or designee) shall review the complaint for completeness and relevance under this Ordinance. If complaint is incomplete or outside the scope of this Ordinance, the complainant shall be notified, and no further action shall be taken.

In the event the complaint is against the Town Manager, the Chair of the Select Board (or designee) shall complete the review.

D. Referral for Determination

If valid, the Town Manager shall forward the complaint to the chair of the affected board or committee, and to the Select Board for review under Section 5.

E. Notice and Response

The official or employee named in the complaint shall be provided a copy of the written allegation and shall have an opportunity to provide a written response or appear at a public meeting where the matter is considered.

F. Disposition

After review, the reviewing body may:

1. Determine that no conflict exists;
2. Determine that a conflict exists and require disclosure, abstention, or corrective action; or
3. Refer the matter for disciplinary review under Sections 6 or 7.

G. Records and Transparency

The Town Clerk shall maintain these records in accordance with State retention policies and may provide them upon request only to the extent they are not treated as confidential under the Freedom of Access Act.

H. Protection from Retaliation

No Town official, employee, or volunteer shall retaliate against any individual who, in good faith, submits a complaint under this Ordinance. Retaliation shall be considered an ethical violation subject to enforcement under this Ordinance.

Section 9. Severability

If any provision of this Ordinance is held invalid, the remainder shall not be affected and shall remain in full force and effect.

Section 10. Effective Date

This Ordinance shall take effect immediately upon adoption by Town Meeting.