



**Town of Weston
Board of Selectmen**

Policy No. _____

**POLICY ON REPRESENTATIVE/LIAISON MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERS
FOR APPOINTED BOARDS, COMMITTEES, AND COMMISSIONS**

Date Approved: May 23, 2018

Harvey Boshart, Chair
Board of Selectmen

Associate Members

Consistent with its desire to encourage resident participation in the work of town government on boards, committees, and commissions (hereafter referred to collectively as boards), this policy of the Board of Selectmen provides for the appointment of associate members to boards it appoints, where this is helpful and desirable for the boards in connection with particular projects and tasks. The Selectmen recognize that boards may benefit from access to specific expertise, especially in connection with particular projects and tasks, and a workload that is shared by more town volunteers. At the same time, associate members may enjoy heightened civic engagement and greater recognition of their volunteer efforts.

Per custom, associate members may be selected, recruited, and initially approved by the members of the board with which they would be associated, since these board members are typically in the best initial position to match the board's needs with the interests and skills of potential volunteers. In addition, associate members must be approved by the Board of Selectmen, after being proposed and recommended by the relevant board. Such proposals and recommendations should specify (i) the particular project or task that the associated member would be involved with, (ii) the extent to which volunteers for such roles were solicited publicly (or if not, the reasons why that was not considered necessary or desirable), and (iii) the expected duration of the associate membership and related project or task.

Associate member terms shall expire annually, on June 30 of each year, but may be renewed by the Board of Selectmen each year, if and as may be requested by the relevant board through its chair, taking into account the duration of the related project or task.

Associate members are not counted toward the determination of a quorum and may not move, second, or vote upon matters before the board. However, at the discretion of a board's chair, associate members may sit with regular members of the board, participate in board discussions of their related projects and tasks at meetings, and work outside of meetings in a manner approved by the chair.

At the same time, it is important to distinguish between members and associate members. State law, town by-laws, and best practices require board member accountability and constrain board member actions, participation, and membership. Accordingly, for board matters not related to their particular projects or tasks, associate members generally should not be participating in board discussions and deliberations like full members (even where that might otherwise be accompanied by express acknowledgment of their associate status and lack of a formal vote); instead, in such matters not related to their particular projects or tasks, associate members should generally conduct themselves in the same manner as other members of the public who may be attending (*e.g.*, directing their questions and comments to the chair when public input is solicited on a matter, rather than to the applicant or other attendees). This distinction and expectation are especially important where a board is acting in any authorizing or adjudicatory role, recognizing that the substantive perceptions of applicants and the public are especially important where a board is fulfilling this type of role and may not be adequately addressed by mere acknowledgements of associate or non-voting member status.

The use of associate members may not be used to circumvent the provisions of the Open Meeting Law (OML). If any questions arise on compliance with the OML, a board should contact the Town Manager's office for clarification. Associate members are distinct from Alternate Members whose appointment, responsibilities, and authority are governed by state regulations. Moreover, this policy regarding associate members is not applicable to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Where a board desires to have someone participate and contribute like an associate member but without being limited as such to a particular project or task, the board through its chair should discuss the matter with the Board of Selectmen, including whether a revision to the board's charge and membership would be a preferable approach. In some cases, where a board seeks liaison with another town board, an associate member might be sufficient, or the board and Board of Selectmen could consider adding a formal liaison member position, discussed below.

Representative/Liaison Members

In many cases, a board's charge and membership include one or more positions designated as representatives or liaisons of other boards (including but not limited to the Board of Selectmen). This policy of the Board of Selectmen seeks to clarify the following with respect to such representative or liaison members (in each case subject to the specific charge or other provisions for a given board):

1. A representative/liaison member shall generally be designated by the relevant other board, through its chair. A representative/liaison member will typically be a member of the other board but may instead be an associate member of the other board or a non-member who is willing to fill the representative/liaison role on behalf of the other board. If a representative/liaison member is a member or associate member of the other board but later ceases to serve in that capacity, the other board may appoint a new representative/liaison member to serve in that person's place or allow that person to continue serving as the other board's representative/liaison, and such person shall continue serving as the representative/liaison member unless and until the other board (or its chair) does specify a replacement.
2. Representative/liaison members of a board are generally expected to represent the views of their respective other boards, rather than just their own individual views, and to be effective liaisons between their respective boards, serving as a conduit for two-way communication between the relevant boards. A representative/liaison member's votes on a board should generally reflect the position of the relevant other board (as reasonably discerned by the representative/liaison member if the other board does not take a formal vote on such position), whether or not the representative/liaison member agrees with the other board's position. However, the foregoing is in no way intended to limit a representative/liaison member's ability to advocate for or against any position in his or her capacity as an individual resident.