

Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, & Anti-Racism Committee (IDEA)

Suggested Framework for Recruiting New Board & Committee Members

Background: The IDEA Committee is focused on embedding equity work into all aspects of town government. One strategy is to make the process for recruiting new board and committee members as transparent and equitable as possible by adopting a consistent set of procedures for advertising, appointing, and on-boarding new members. IDEA believes that assembling and supporting a diverse volunteer team will foster town government that is effective and responsive to resident needs.

This process is supported by the Select Board and the Town Administrator's office.

There are several components of the volunteer recruitment process:

1. Drafting a notice
2. Publicizing the notice
3. Interviewing candidates
4. Providing support for new volunteers

Suggested Notice Template: (see page 3 for a written example)

- **Value Statement:** The town recently began using a welcoming values statement in all of its staff job openings notices, and we recommend that a version of that statement be used for all volunteer recruiting notices. The following is a suggested statement:
 - *"The Town of Lincoln is an organization that believes that board and committee diversity strengthens performance, integrity, trust, and partnerships with our staff, community, and guests. The _____ Board/Committee is seeking..."*
- **Description of the Board/Committee:** Boards are encouraged to write a description of the group's mission and charge, and the types of experiences and skills that help the board perform its work.
 - This same description should be used consistently for each notice.
 - The description should be easily found at the top of the board's web page.
 - Avoid acronyms and jargon!
- **Outline of Expectations:**
 - Are specialized skills required? Prior board experience needed? Be explicit.
 - What skills may be required at this time? Be specific about what might help the board.
 - How often does the board meet? At what time and for how long?
 - Are members expected to take on a liaison role?
 - How much work is there outside of the meetings?
 - Outline of the interview process: Who is the interviewing board? Will all candidates be interviewed together or in separate time slots?
 - Application and appointment timeline
- **Why Volunteer:**
 - Why will this be important to you? What is the reward?
 - Include a specific statement about what the volunteer can expect to get out of the experience.
- **Timing of Notice:** Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the notice should be published so that residents have about 3 weeks to respond.

Publicizing the Notice: It is important to use as many vehicles for publication as possible. We suggest:

- Existing Communication Channels:
 - Select Board, Council on Aging & Human Services, Parks & Recreation, Lincoln Library, Lincoln Public Schools (Lincoln & Hanscom), and Parent Teacher Organization newsletters
 - Direct outreach to residents
 - Tabling at community events

- News Flash on the town's home page, a notice on the board's web page, and on the town's volunteer page (<http://lincolntown.org/542/Volunteers-Needed>).
- LincolnTalk
- Lincoln Squirrel
- Resources to be Developed:
 - Push notifications from Town website
 - Approved Town social media sites (need to develop a list of such sites)
 - Other neighborhood lists (need to develop a distribution list available to town's Administrative Assistant)

Interviewing Candidates

- Boards/committees should use a consistent process for interviewing candidates. Multi-member boards that conduct interviews must do so in open session of a posted meeting.
- Best practices include:
 - Introducing the board members to the candidates.
 - Using the same set of questions for each candidate – before the meeting, give candidates a sense of the types of questions asked.
 - Be clear up front whether follow-up questions will be allowed.
 - Give them an opportunity to ask a question or two of the board.
 - There is no public comment allowed during the interview process. The board must deliberate and decide in open session. It can be during the same meeting or at a subsequent meeting.
 - Make sure candidates know when/how they will hear about the final selection.
- How are Board/Committee Members Chosen? Some boards and committees are elected, and some are appointed by the Select Board, which leads to different scenarios about who is doing the interviewing/appointing. Here are a few situations.
 1. *An elected board (e.g. Planning Board or School Committee) has an opening out of the election cycle:* The remaining members of the board and the Select Board meet to interview and appoint a candidate who will serve until the next election. *Note: The exception to this is the Select Board, for which a special election must be held.*
 2. *An elected board (e.g. Select Board or Planning Board) is appointing a subcommittee:* The board posts the notice, interviews, and appoints the members.
 3. *A board appointed by the Select Board or the Town Moderator (e.g. the Conservation Commission, Finance Committee, or Housing Commission) has an opening:* The board posts the notice and invites interested candidates to attend one or more meetings to understand the work of the board. However, it is the parent board (Planning, Select, Town Moderator, etc.) that interviews the candidates and makes the appointment.
 4. Encourage applicants to attend the board meetings of the group in which they are interested.

Providing Support for New Volunteers – *this is a topic that requires further discussion with all boards and committees*

- New volunteers are expected to complete Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest Law training.
- The town has put together a “Boards & Committees 101” web page to provide materials that are relevant to all boards and committees: <https://lincolntown.org/1541/BOARDCOMMITTEE-RESOURCES>
 - It is recommended that each board put together a list of resources that provides information and training specific to their work. For example, the Mass. Municipal Association and KPLaw have many online resources and webinar recordings that help volunteers navigate policy and legal issues.
- Pair a new member with someone who previously served on the board – this avoids Open Meeting Law issues.
- Be explicit about how the role of the Chair assigned.
- Have a plan for cultivating leadership and succession planning.
- IDEA plans to work on a set of guiding principles for boards to use as they implement or draft new policy, and as they interact and communicate with the public.

- Some towns have suggested term limits for appointed positions. This could be a future topic of conversation.
- Consider whether to recommend that the Select Board require, and budget for, foundational equity training for town volunteers.

Here is an example of a volunteer recruitment notice recently published by the Housing Commission. The text in blue indicates where the additional pieces mentioned above might go:

Volunteers Needed – Housing Commission

The Town of Lincoln is an organization that believes that board and committee diversity strengthens performance, integrity, trust, and partnerships with our staff, community, and guests. The Select Board is seeking interested volunteers to serve a five-year term as an appointed member on the Lincoln Housing Commission starting in June 2024.

The [Lincoln Housing Commission](#) is a welcoming and inclusive group that works to fulfill the town’s mission and ensure that a range of diverse housing options are available in town to meet the current and future needs of Lincoln’s residents. We fulfill this mission by: developing and promoting policies, programs, and regulations that preserve and/or increase housing that addresses such needs; maintaining Lincoln’s inventory of housing affordable for low- and moderate-income households in compliance with state policy; and supporting town, regional, and state housing goals. The Housing Commission also administers Lincoln’s town-owned rental housing units.

The Commission seeks Lincoln residents who have demonstrated interest or engagement in issues concerning housing, affordable housing, property development and/or management, local policy, land use or related topics. Commission members meet once a month to discuss relevant issues and work independently and/or with town staff between meetings to conduct assigned tasks. All Commission members also serve in a liaison and/or representative capacity on one or more other town boards/committees. The time commitment for non-chair members is around 5 hours a month.

Letters of interest should be addressed to Select Board Chair Kim Bodnar and sent to [Peggy Elder](#), Administrative Assistant in the Select Board’s Office, along with a completed [volunteer application](#) by [date]. Applicants are also encouraged to attend a Housing Commission meeting, held on the first Thursday of the month. The Select Board will interview and appoint candidates at its [date] meeting (or outline Town Moderator appointment process). For more information, call the Select Board’s Office at (781) 259-2601.