

Statement of the Board's Intent:

Building a Stronger Future for Shorewood Hills

Introduction

The Village of Shorewood Hills Board of Trustees embarked on a crucial project to develop a comprehensive, strategic governance framework and to implement principles of modern municipal governance into the operating culture and procedures of Village government. This framework serves as a foundation for effective, ethical leadership and responsible decision-making as our community navigates future challenges and opportunities.

Why We're Doing This

Shorewood Hills is a thriving village with a rich history and vibrant community. However, we are not immune to the increasing complexity of modern local governance. We face growing pressure for efficient service delivery, responsible financial management, and strategic planning for long-term sustainability. The way we govern ourselves must adjust to keep pace with changing realities and needs.

Our Vision

Through this project, we aim to establish a set of clear principles and practices that will guide our work as Trustees, empower Village staff in carrying out critical administrative and operational functions and provide residents with clearly outlined roles and responsibilities of their government. A well-defined governance framework (together with the strategic planning effort that will follow this initiative) provides Village staff and residents alike with a clear and focused understanding of the Board's priorities and strategic direction. This will foster operational capacity and alignment across the jurisdiction. Moreover, the framework promotes collaboration, transparency and accountability, ensuring that the needs and priorities of our residents are met effectively and equitably. This in turn will lead to increased resident trust in government.

Addressing Needs and Challenges

Our goal is to address some of the key challenges identified within the Village, including:

- **Governance Issues:** A lack of a formal governance framework typically leads to inefficiencies and inconsistencies in decision-making, which undermines accountability, poses legal risks and weakens our body politic.
- **Current committee structure and procedures** aren't optimized to accurately reflect policy and administrative priorities or to ensure clear delineation between advisory and policy-making functions.
- **HR policies** must be updated to comply with employment statutes to protect the Village from risk while also supporting workforce management, recruitment and retention.

- **Community Engagement:** We are striving to create an inclusive environment where all residents feel empowered to meaningfully participate in the decision-making process.
- **Ensuring a Transparent and Inclusive Electoral Process:** By moving from a caucus to a primary voting system, we want to make it easier for all residents to participate in open and fair elections.
- **Aging Infrastructure:** Investing in critical infrastructure and capital improvement upgrades is essential to maintain the high quality of life residents expect.
- **Fiscal Prudence & Economic Viability:** We need to explore sustainable funding strategies to ensure the long-term financial health of the village.

Benefits of a Strong Governance Framework

By establishing a strong governance framework, the anticipated benefits include:

- **Enhanced Efficiency and Effectiveness:** Clear roles, responsibilities, and processes will streamline decision-making, empower staff (provide a clear line of sight between each employee's role and responsibilities and the strategic direction of the government) and improve resource allocation.
- **Increased Transparency and Accountability:** Objective rules, formalized communication channels and a commitment to transparency will foster trust with the community and build resident confidence in their government.
- **Improved Board Dynamics:** A shared understanding of roles and expectations will promote a more collaborative and productive Board environment.
- Greater focus on more deliberate, equitable and constructive **pathways for community participation**, including but not limited to participation in advisory committees.
- **Stronger Foundation for Future Boards:** This framework takes an important step towards fostering our government's adaptive capacity. It provides a valuable roadmap for future trustees, ensuring continuity and consistency in governance practices while also facilitating change management.

Community Input and Engagement

We believe in the importance of collaborative decision-making.

The recommendations for this framework were developed through an iterative process with our consultant team. The next step is to develop and adopt a communications plan that will include extensive and on-going community input through public forums, surveys and community dialogue. We encourage all residents to participate and share their ideas and concerns.

Together, we seek to implement and build on this framework and ensure that it serves as a North Star for responsible leadership so our village continues to be a vibrant and welcoming community for generations to come.