

# CONSUMER ADVOCATE HANDBOOK

## Program Description:

Consumer Advocates are South Shore Realtors®' members who serve as watchdogs in their municipality on emerging issues impacting real estate, homeowners, and private property rights. Those experienced in civic life and novices alike are both welcome, with training and support offered.

## Program Summary:

Your program liaison is Rachel Tristano and can be reached at:

[rtristano@southshorerealtors.com](mailto:rtristano@southshorerealtors.com)

You can access training materials, worksheets, and cheat sheets at the association website at <https://southshorerealtors.com/membership/advocacy/> to make integrating the program into your busy schedule as easy as possible.

You'll be asked to take certain information-gather steps, as outlined below. Once you get the details to your liaison, the South Shore Realtors® leadership will determine its position. They may decide to stay neutral, support, oppose, or suggest amendments to the proposal. Approximately 1 in 5 issues reported result in Association action, so don't be discouraged if they don't act on your reporting. It's incredibly important and helps the Association determine the "temperature" of the town's leadership.

Sometimes they'll handle the issue Administratively, but occasionally you may be asked to testify or contact decision-makers. The Association will provide you with everything you need to be successful.

## Responsibilities:

- Become familiar with your community and stay informed of municipal news.
  - 'Like' your community's Facebook page, sign up for their email newsletter, and create a google alert.
  - Follow your community newspaper
- Build relationships within municipal government.
  - Network at community events.
- When an issue arises impacting Realtors®/property rights/homeowners, alert your Program liaison.
  - Use the Issue Assessment worksheet to get issues-specifics, assess the impact, and determine its viability.
- When asked by your Program liaison, please take action\*, such as speaking to elected officials or testifying at a hearing. (Your liaison will provide you with "talking points" and training.)
  - Uses Association-provided talking points & Elevator Speech cheat sheet
  - Communicate outcome to liaison

They may ask you to speak up in support or opposition at some point down the road, but until then, we ask that you not speak on the issue as a representative of the Association. If you feel compelled to do so, please make sure your comments are as a private citizen.

#### Frequently Asked Questions:

*How should I report?*

Use the Issue Assessment Worksheet provided and email it to the Program Liaison:

*When should I report?*

Ideally, you'll use the Issue Assessment Worksheet to gather all the relevant information and notify your liaison ASAP. However, if you're having difficulty tracking down information or are short on time, contact the liaison with what information you do have. It's better they find out before the issue advances to the next stage in the decision-making process.

*What if I'm not sure about a question on the assessment?*

It is better to say "I don't know" than delay informing the Association or giving them bad information.

*I've never spoken at a hearing; I'm nervous.*

Bring a buddy to town meeting or hearings. Whether that's a partner, co-worker, or friend, it'll make the experience easier.

*Where can I get more information about how cities and towns operate?*

- Talk to the Chair of the Committee
- Learn [Robert's Rules of Order](#)
- Familiarize yourself with the state's [Open Meeting Law](#)

*Are there any Mentoring & Education Resources out there?*

- [League of Women Voters](#)
- [Toastmasters](#)
- [State Ethics training](#)

#### External Resources:

- Training Videos
- My Town Worksheet
- Issue Assessment Worksheet
- Elevator Speech Cheat Sheet