

# Stakeholder Role Play

## Common Core Standards

ELA  
 SL.5.1  
 SL.5.1a  
 SL.5.1b  
 SL.5.1d  
 SL.5.3  
 SL.5.4  
 RI.5.3  
 SL.6.1  
 SL.6.1a  
 SL.6.1b  
 SL.6.1c  
 SL.6.1d  
 SL.6.3  
 SL.6.4  
 SL.7.1  
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 SL.7.2  
 SL.7.4  
 SL.8.1  
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 SL.8.1c  
 SL.8.1d  
 SL.8.2  
 SL.8.4  
 RST.6-8.2  
 RST.6-8.8

## Vocabulary

- Natural Resource Management
- Stakeholder
- Policy

## Summary:

Students role play a town hall meeting in which the topic under consideration is a local development proposal. Students, in the roles of various stakeholders, discuss the merits and problems of the proposal, use cooperative decision making, and learn about different perspectives.

**Time:** Two 45 - 60 minute sessions

**Note:** It is possible to do this lesson in one session but this lesson is enhanced if the Town Hall Meeting occurs over two class periods. This allows students to research relevant issues that come up in the first meeting and make a more informed policy decision.

**Grade Level:** 5th - 8th

## Goals

- To give students an opportunity to practice discussion of an environmental issue
- To train students to think critically, and with sympathy, as they evaluate different points of view.

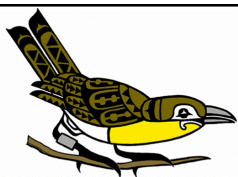
## Learner Objectives

Students will... .

- Participate in a decision-making exercise while critically thinking from the point of view of a particular stakeholder position
- Research the environmental issues at hand and present their findings
- Draft a new policy based on discussions during the "Town Hall meeting."

## Materials

- Copies of stakeholder role descriptions (one description per student)
- Name tags with stakeholder role / name (for each student)
- *Optional:* Props, costumes, etc., to help students get into their roles



# Stakeholder Role Play

## Background Information

**Natural resource management** refers to the management of natural resources such as water, soil, minerals, and plants and animals. Usually the management of these resources focuses on the quality of life for humans, and sometimes on intrinsic values of the environment itself. A **stakeholder** is a person, group, organization, or system which is or may be affected by a particular event or circumstance, specifically used in relation to policy making. A **policy** is a rule to guide decisions, usually in the form of a procedure or protocol as adopted by a board or senior governing body. In natural resource policy and planning, stakeholders are often a combination of citizens, private landowners, businesses, scientists, politicians, resource industries (i.e. agriculture, mining, tourism, forestry, fisheries, urban development), and land use planners.

## Getting Ready

- Prepare copies of role descriptions and Pineville Map for students.
  - Choose student roles before class begins and write their individual names
- Suggested classroom arrangement for Town Hall room set up:
- Town Planning Committee: Join desks together or use a long table at the front of the room, facing the rest of the class
  - Speaker's Platform: Position a podium or a designated desk at the front of the room, facing the rest of the class
  - Line up chairs (desks if necessary) in rows facing the Town Planning Committee and that allow easy access to the front of the room

*Teacher Tip:* As the Moderator, consider also how you will preside over the meeting, how the discussion will be organized, how the seating should be arranged, if rules should be set, where verbal and emotional boundaries should be drawn, etc.

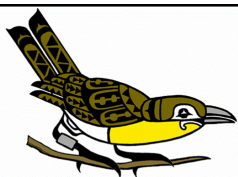
## Discuss!

- Tell students that they are now going to be involved in a Stakeholder Role Play where they need to work together to solve an issue using the format of a Town Hall Meeting.
- Discuss vocabulary words with students.
- Read the situation, current issue, and goals of the town meeting to the students (on the following page).

## Why role play?

- the pressure to resolve the conflict can motivate students
- the creative nature of the exercise is fun and can also motivate.
- to show the relevance of classroom lessons to daily life.
- to show the complexity in the world
- help students develop communication and critical thinking skills; both are needed in many real-world tasks.
- teacher may choose to emphasize other character building skills such as cooperation with others, patient listening, self-awareness, and respect for a diversity of perspectives.

*See "Further Resources" for more information.*



# Stakeholder Role Play

## Stakeholder Role Play: What will be the future of Heavenly Park?

### The Situation:

For many years, Heavenly Park has been a place for the people of Pineville to go for different uses. Families go there on Sundays for picnics, use the swingset, take relaxing walks, and spend time outside. There is even a small lake where people can use one of the shores for swimming. On the far side of the lake is a beautiful hillside with both grassy areas and areas that are forested. The hillside is fairly steep and it is not visited much by humans. There is one trail that runs through part of it, but for the most part the forest is mainly left as untouched habitat.

This ownership of this Park is unique because it was owned by private owners, a very wealthy family named the VonGoldenbucks. The VonGoldenbucks have been very generous and have been able to manage and run the park on their own money and with donations. After a terrible cruise ship accident, the VonGoldenbucks perished at sea and now their estate is for sale. The Pineville Park Association would like to purchase and maintain the park, but currently they cannot afford to do so. A development company, Pine Homes, is another likely candidate interested in purchasing the land.

### Current issue:

The Pineville Parks Association owns both parks and forest lands and its forests are managed by the Pineville Forest Managers. The forests are used sometimes for timber harvest for local building projects, such as the stage in the town square. The timber harvest is planned and conducted by the Forest Managers, but they must work with the Parks Association to do so.

The Pine Homes Development Company has put in a bid for the land with the plans of making a 40 house subdivision. Pine Homes Development. Co. will obviously benefit from this business opportunity, and the town is also excited because they could use the timber and make money to assist further development of the school district. Once word got around town about this potential deal, people of Pineville started getting really excited and also angry about the issue. Some Forest Managers were excited to get more potential timber from the park area, but people in the Parks department were getting complaints from angry town members who wanted to keep a park in their town for recreation.

### Goals of the Town Hall Meeting:

All the stakeholders of Pineville are coming together for a town hall meeting. Everyone will get a chance to share their opinions and knowledge about the issue before the town council. Together, everyone will discuss possible solutions that will meet the demands of all the groups involved in the issue.

When the meeting is over, we hope to have accomplished a few things:

- 1) a list of common town goals
- 2) a general plan outlining how to achieve proposed goals
- 3) who will be involved in various aspects of carrying out the proposed goals

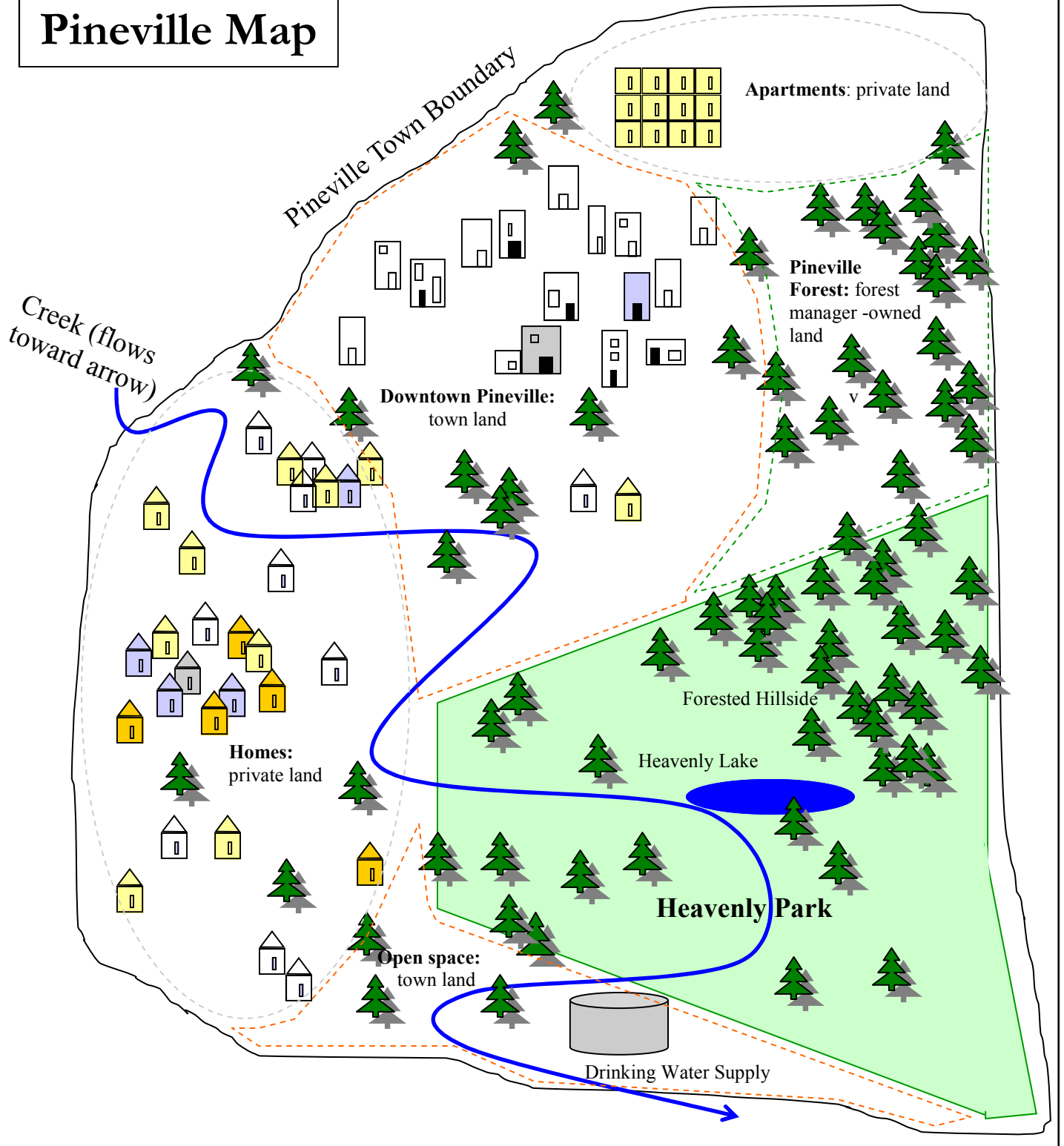
*Optional* for more in-depth planning and policy making:

- 4) a timeline to accomplish those goals
- 5) what is needed to accomplish these goals (possible funding sources, proposed budget permits, supplies, another meeting)
- 6) a monitoring system to make sure the plan is working in the long run



# Stakeholder Role Play

## Pineville Map





# Stakeholder Role Play

**Prepare:** Student Preparation Prior to day of Town Hall Meeting first session:

Have students read over their role and discuss it with a partner if they have one in their stakeholder group.

*Teacher tip: Pair students to encourage discussion of issues.*

All students should research issues broadly related to the situation. It is important that the Moderator and Town Planning Committee members have a strong underlying knowledge of water issues and policy before the first meeting begins.

The students who will be role-playing various stakeholders should also research and prepare their cases. Some of the stakeholder descriptions have some research prompt questions.

- student come up with a presentation of their group's goals, and a proposal to achieve those goals
- students come up with a critique (pros/cons) of their plan.

## Investigate

At the first Town Hall meeting, each stakeholder group will have five to ten minutes (depending on how many perspectives you choose and on the length of your class period) to introduce themselves and state their position and have a clear statement of what their goals are, relative to the issue at hand. They should have research or information that backs up their opinion.

Townhall procedure:

- 1) Introductions: each group introduces themselves
- 2) Stakeholder needs: each group discusses their needs
  - what they are trying to accomplish (goals)
  - what is their proposed plan
  - what are the advantages of the proposed plan
  - what are the disadvantages of the proposed plan
- 3) Summary of stakeholder needs
- 4) Brainstorm ideas for plans
  - Weigh pros/cons for each plan
- 5) Formulate one plan

## Overview of Stakeholder Roles

Conservation Scientists - these scientists, true to their profession, are trying to present only the facts that they know and believe decisions should be based on scientific findings. They cannot always be 100% sure

- Watershed specialist
- Endangered species specialist
- Soils specialist

### Pineville Forest Managers

- Forest Timber Manager (Pro-development)
- Head Forester (Semi-pro-development)

### Pineville Association (Undecided)

### Pine Homes Development Company

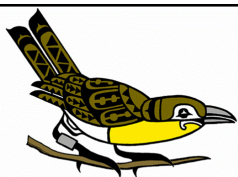
- Company director/owner (Pro-development)
- Chief architect (Pro-development but also feels "undecided")

### Community members

- Bird Watchers Association  
President: (Anti-development)
- Small business owner (Pro-development)

### Town Planning board

- Mediator (impartial)
- Committee Chair (impartial)
- Committee members (impartial)
- Secretary (impartial)



# Stakeholder Role Play

## Investigate continued

### Town Hall Meeting, Session 1:

On the day of the first Town Hall meeting, the Moderator will explain to the class how the meeting will be conducted. Ask for the Chair of the Board to re-state the issue at stake. Each panel member (or group) will have the opportunity to explain to the class why their perspective is valuable. Encourage students to keep notes that may be relevant to their perspective. This will help students gather information without interrupting the flow of the meeting. Either following each presentation or at the end of the first session, give the Board a specific length of time to ask questions.

At the end of the first session, the class should take about 10 minutes to step out of their roles and debrief with the teacher about what has worked/not worked thus far. If needed, students can develop other rules or communication strategy to help the second session be more successful.

### For homework, or as 'time out' between sessions:

Ask students who are stakeholders to brainstorm ways of solving the problem (from the perspective of their role) to discuss during the second session.

Ask students who are on the Board to come up with a few ideas for a management strategy.

### Town Hall Meeting, Session 2:

The Board should ask for input from the different stakeholder groups. The second session should focus on giving the Board time to finish developing a management strategy.

After hearing from the various stakeholders, the Board members will develop several possible solutions. They can discuss these ideas with the students representing different perspectives, in order to weigh the implications of various solutions.

*Teacher tip:* While the Board takes time to finish developing the management strategy, have the other students write a short reflection on their experience with the role play. Use this reflection later for a final wrap-up discussion (*see conclusions*).

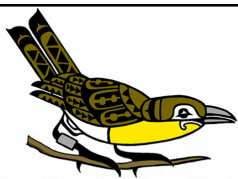
### Draft Policy

The day after the final session concludes, the Board will draft a final policy that addresses the issue and proposes a management strategy. The Board should consider including such details as timeline for the policy and management strategies to be enacted, what resources and people will be involved, any costs that are associated with the project, and how the effects of the policy will be maintained and monitored.

The Board Chair will make a final decision if the group cannot come to consensus and the Secretary will draft the policy.

Afterwards, preferably on the following day, the Board Chair will present the policy to the students who were role-playing the perspectives.





# Stakeholder Role Play

## Conclusion

1. Ask students to step out of their stakeholder role and give them a few minutes to think or write down some concluding thoughts about the meeting. Students should not only voice any concerns, but also explain what worked well during the Town Hall meeting.

Consider these questions:

1. What could have made the meeting flow better?
2. Who had the most difficult role?
3. Which stakeholder group had the least just or fair outcome?
4. Could a more just or fair policy have been written?

## Extensions

Explore local policy and management issues: Have students present “current issues” that they read about in their local newspaper. Ask them to identify and describe the positions of various stakeholders.

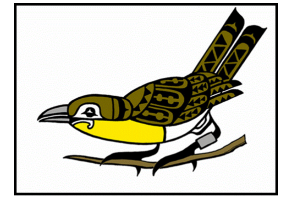
To further investigate local issues from a first-hand perspective, contact your local government, nature center, or resource management agency office (such as Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Nature Conservancy) to find more information about the local resource issues. Ask for any informational materials they may have (such as pamphlets, videos, brochures) and if students may set up interviews to find out more information about the issues. Once students have developed a background understanding of the subject, have them think of various local stakeholders that they could possibly interview. Have students conduct interviews over the phone or email to learn more about the issue. *Note:* for student safety, especially in the case of contentious town issues, ensure that their interview questions are appropriate.

## Further Resources

Schank, R. and Cleary, C. Engines for Education. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.: 1995.

Winn, W., “Instructional Design and Situated Learning: Paradox or Partnership.” Educational Technology 33, no. 3 (1993): 16-21.

# Role Description Cards



Cut out cards and distribute to students. Students may fold their cards and use them as name tags during the Town Hall Meeting

## Conservation Scientist

Watershed specialist (impartial)

You know that by cutting down trees, a number of things will happen to the water quality in town. 1) Without the shade of trees, the temperature of the water will increase. An increase in water temperature causes a decrease in oxygen that is in the water. And increase in water temperature also makes it difficult for Salmon to survive. 2) More toxins will run into the streams (refer to map) because there will be less plants to filter them out. 3) Soil erosion will also increase (talk with Conservation Scientist: Soil Specialist) and make the streams muddy, making it difficult for life to grow on the banks of the lake. There may be other effects as well (write down your ideas on another sheet)

## Conservation Scientist

Endangered species specialist (impartial)

You know that by cutting down trees you will be getting rid of a special habitat that is used by the Happy Pine Flycatcher. This bird is not endangered, but this forest is used during their breeding season and therefore very important. You also know that this bird is important to people because it eats the Annoyflies that have the potential to carry diseases when they suck the blood of dogs, causing Doggomalitis. There may be other effects on wildlife as well (write ideas on another sheet)

## Conservation Scientist

Soils specialist (impartial)

You know that when trees get cut down a number of things happen that are harmful to the health of the forest. 1) The immediate area will become hotter and the soil will dry up, making it difficult for insects, rodents, and wildflowers to survive, 2) without the roots of plants to hold the soil in, it will erode and wash downhill into the stream. This will be impossible to prevent because of the fact the forest is on a hillside, 3) The actual process of cutting down the trees will leak oil into the ground (from chainsaws and vehicles) There may be other effects as well\_\_can you think of any? (write ideas on another sheet)

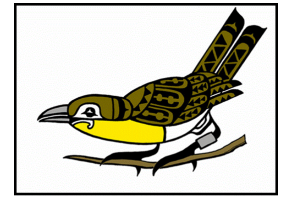
## Pineville Forester

Timber Manager (pro-development)

You have been a forester for 28 years and really know everything there is to know about the forests in your area. Not only are you a forester, but you also have a small milling service on the side so that you can help the town get access to locally-sourced timber. You believe that if the town can supply its own lumber it will contribute to the sustainability of the town. You know that Heavenly Park contains some of the largest diameter trees in the area that will fetch a great price if sold in a surrounding state where trees of this size do not grow. You are excited for the sale to go through with the Pine Homes Company because it will give you a good connection to the Company who often needs lumber. Can you think of other reasons for purchasing the land? (write ideas on another sheet)



# Role Description Cards



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## **Pineville Foresters**

Head Forester (pro-development/  
undecided)

You tend to want to harvest trees in a sustainable manner. You have friends that are Conservation scientists and tell you about how the trees provide habitat for various species. You know that you can sustainably harvest trees from a forest by removing only a few trees at a time, and then waiting another 5-10 years before clearing again. You think that it would be a poor decision to clear all the trees at once because it would be harmful to the watershed, and that people will start to think badly of the Forest Timber Managers

## **Pineville Parks Association**

You are in the middle of the issue - you are torn between the development of the park because it would provide your association with money that could go into building projects around the town and also prevent having to close other parks that don't have as much money. The Town is also telling you that it will use the money for the schools - you have kids in school that would benefit from this money. On the other hand, you don't want the town to think that it can start getting rid of other parks as well. Think about reasons why the park should remain, and also options to raise money for the park (write some examples on an additional sheet)

## **Pine Homes Development Company**

Company Director/Owner (pro-development)

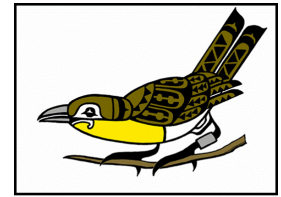
You are one of the executives of the Pine Homes Company and you are very excited to create homes for over 40 families. You believe that you can create the best quality homes and will be helping people be happy and safe. You don't understand why people are protesting your company's proposed business plan. If people tell you how to make the homes better you will listen to them, but no one has the right to tell you that you can't buy land and build homes.

## **Pine Homes Development Company**

Architect (pro-development)

You are one of the new architects at the Pine Homes Company and you have some ideas of how you can develop an area to house a lot of people, but not use that much space. You have just finished your degree to become an engineer and have some ideas of how to make sustainable housing that will be beneficial to human health, for preserving wild habitat, and using low amounts of water and energy: (write some examples on an additional sheet)

# Role Description Cards



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## **Community Member** President of Bird Watchers Association (anti-development)

You are a school teacher who works very hard and also are President of a club for people who like to watch birds. Heavenly Park has served as a prime bird watching spot for many years. You think that if people can get together and raise money to support the Parks Association, the town could save the park from development. Your ideas for fundraising include: (write ideas on another sheet)

## **Community Member** Small business owner (pro-development)

You own the Happy Hammer Hardware Store where people can buy supplies and tools to work on their homes and gardens.. Recently you have begun to worry about your business because local people have started to buy supplies from BigMart, in a town 40 miles away. BigMart is a nation-wide chain store that sells cheap supplies, but of lesser quality than the ones in your store.

The development of the park area for housing would greatly increase your business and you are supportive of the Pine Homes Company. How can you support the Pine Homes Company, and what is the best option for your business in the long run? (write ideas on another sheet)

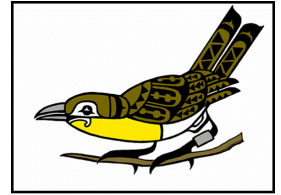
## **Town Planning Board** Moderator (impartial)

As Moderator, you ensure that everyone is adhering to the rules established in the beginning of the session and that the meeting continues at an efficient pace. Be careful not to impose on the students' autonomy, and encourage the Town Hall Committee Chair to take on the leadership role in facilitating the Meeting. You mainly must remain fair and want to make sure everyone's voice is heard.

## **Town Board** Committee Chair (impartial)

You are to lead the Board and help organize their discussions and assist the Moderator in keeping all participants within the boundaries of the rules established from the beginning. Listen carefully to all stakeholders and proposals for the future of Heavenly Park because you will work with the rest of the board to draft a final plan.

# Role Description Cards



Cut out cards and distribute to students. Students may fold their cards and use them as name tags during the Town Hall Meeting

## Town Board

Secretary (impartial)

Your job is to listen carefully to all stakeholders and their proposals for the future of Heavenly Park. You will take notes during the town meeting, because you will work with the rest of the board and draft a final plan based on an agreement among the Board members.

## Town Board

Board member (impartial)

You must make suggestions of what the various parties should discuss in order to make an informed decision. You will also approve and write a final plan of action for the town and all those involved in the issue. To prepare, you will think about what plans would be beneficial for the long term well-being of all the stakeholders. (write ideas down on a separate sheet of paper)

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