

**TOWN OF RHINEBECK**  
**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Adopted by Resolution 2016234 (October 24, 2016)

**On Becoming a Volunteer for the Town of Rhinebeck**

Thank you very much for considering giving time to your community as a member of one of the volunteer Committees that serve the interests of the people of Rhinebeck. That kind of generosity of spirit is a vital part of what makes Rhinebeck what it is.

Committees are established by the Town Board for the purpose of advising the Board on matters pertaining to the Town. There are some requirements for appointment by the Rhinebeck Town Board to any of the committees listed in this handbook. There is also an expectation of respect for the public and for fellow members of the committee and a willingness to do one's share of the work. No one expects a new appointee to be a complete expert in the subject area of a committee. However, personal initiative in getting up to speed is expected.

Before filing an application for appointment to fill a vacancy on one of the committees, you should get in touch with that committee's chairperson and learn as much as possible about the committee. Consider the frequency of meetings, and their time and place. If attending the regular meetings would be a hardship for you, you might consider another committee with a more convenient schedule. Reliable attendance at meetings is a must. Naturally, events in one's personal life may occasionally preclude attending a regularly scheduled meeting, and that is understandable.

In addition, members must maintain a high degree of honesty, integrity and open mindedness in the handling of all committee matters. While members serve as a part of a team, they must be able to think independently and be able to make a decision when called upon to do so.

If you are appointed to a committee you should immediately contact the chairperson of your respective committee.

Volunteerism is the heartbeat of a community. Its citizens could not maintain the character of our town without much selfless contribution of time and effort. We -- and the Town -- are grateful for your interest and involvement.

The Town of Rhinebeck

## **TOWN OF RHINEBECK COMMITTEES**

### **AGING COMMITTEE**

Established in 2006, the Town Committee on Aging identifies and considers the needs of older Rhinebeck residents and recommends improvements to programs and activities for seniors in and around Rhinebeck. All meetings are held at 1pm at Town Hall on the first Monday of each month, unless there is a holiday, in which case the meeting will be held on the second Monday. Contact the Chair for more information.

### **BUILDING, PLANNING, AND ZONING PROCESS REVIEW COMMITTEE**

Established in 2016, the Building, Planning, and Zoning Process Review Committee was formed to review the permitting and approval process in the Building, Planning and Zoning Departments and provide the Board with recommendations on how to make the process as user friendly and streamlined as possible for our residents.

### **CEMETERY COMMITTEE**

The Town Cemetery Committee advises and makes recommendations to the Town Board on all cemetery operational and maintenance matters. The Committee meets the first Thursday of every month at 1:00 pm in the Town Hall. The Town cemetery is also supported by the Friends of Rhinebeck Cemetery, Inc., a not-for-profit organization working to promote and optimize the history, design and ecology of the cemeteries under the Town of Rhinebeck's jurisdiction.

### **HISTORIC STRUCTURES COMMITTEE**

The Historic Structures Committee was formed to protect Rhinebeck's historic buildings.

### **OPEN SPACE AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE**

The Open Space and Affordable Housing Committee was established in 2006 to recommend strategies designed to: 1) promote the creation of housing that is affordable for Rhinebeck's moderate-income workers and senior citizens; and 2) preserve Rhinebeck's open space and natural resources. Regular meetings are held at 5:30pm in the Starr Library on the second Thursday of each month. From time to time there may be two meetings per month.

### **RECREATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The Recreation Advisory Committee was created by Local Law 4 of 2016 to advise and consult with the Town Board regarding all recreation programs, parks and recreation facilities of the Town located in the Town of Rhinebeck and/or the Village of Rhinebeck. The Town's Recreation Department programs include a summer camp, swim lessons, winter basketball, volleyball and zumba programs for adults and children; the annual Spring Egg Hunt; and concerts. The Rhinebeck Manta Rays swim team works with the Recreation Department to provide an exciting, competitive youth swim team program during summer months.

## **THOMAS THOMPSON-SALLY MAZZARELLA PARK COMMITTEE**

The Thomas Thompson-Sally Mazzarella Park Committee investigates and recommends to the Town Board recreational uses of the park lands, including all aspects of the land use and funding priorities required for the Town Board to approve and implement comprehensive plans to develop the Park.

## How to Volunteer

1. When a position on a committee becomes vacant, either through resignation or the expiration of a term of office, the Town of Rhinebeck will advertise the vacancy on the Town website.
2. Individuals interested in the vacancy should respond by filling out an application obtained from the Town Clerk.
3. After reviewing the applications, perspective candidates may be invited for an interview with the Town Board and the appropriate committee chairperson. Interviews are held in executive session.
4. Following candidate interviews, the Board will discuss the merits of the candidates and vote on which candidate will be selected to fill the vacancy. All votes are made in public.
5. You will be notified of your selection.
6. Where appropriate, the candidate may be asked to sign a form disclosing any business or affiliation the candidate or their spouse might have with the Town of Rhinebeck.
7. The selected candidate, upon appointment, should contact their committee chairperson regarding meeting dates and preparation that needs to be done prior to the next meeting.

## About Committee Appointments

If you have been appointed to fill an unexpired term, your appointment will end at that time of the original appointment. For instance, Mr. X was appointed to a three year term on the Recreation Committee to begin January 1, 2016 and to expire December 31, 2018. Mr. X resigns his position half way through his term. The Town Board accepts the resignation, posts the vacancy, and interviews candidates. In August 2017 the Town Board appoints Ms. Y to the remainder of Mr. X's term, which ends December 31, 2018.

All appointees, when their terms are nearing completion, may write to the Town Board indicating interest in reappointment. There are no automatic reappointments. The Town will post the vacancy, conduct interviews and then make a decision. If an incumbent wishes to be interviewed, he or she may request it. The chairperson of the affected Committee may be invited to participate in the interview, which will be conducted in private. The fact that the Town will interview candidates is no reflection on the incumbent who indicated an interest in reappointment. It is the policy of the Town to keep the process open and available to any who wish to participate.

## Your Obligations as a Committee Member

Becoming a member of a town committee requires that you take on certain obligations and responsibilities. When deciding whether or not to put your name forward as a volunteer, you should bear in mind the following:

**Attendance:** You are required to attend meetings. To that end, a number of committees have set a limit on the number of meetings a member can miss before he or she is asked to resign their appointment. Everyone understands that you are giving your time to the Town. However, without the effective input of all members, the committee structure simply does not operate effectively. If you have any concerns about attending meetings on a regular basis, you should not volunteer until you have the time free to fully commit to a committee. Please feel free to ask your perspective committee chairperson what the attendance requirements are for his/her committee. In addition, should you be appointed to a committee, you are expected to notify the committee chairperson twenty-four hours in advance if you cannot attend a regular scheduled meeting. If there is the

possibility of an extended absence, you should also notify the chair immediately and discuss the impact your absence might have on the committee.

Finally, with regard to attendance, it is important that committee members be on time for all meetings.

**Workload:** Committee members are not only expected to attend meetings on a regular basis, but are also expected to undertake whatever preparation might be required for a meeting. This may include planning and/or preparing for relevant events, and/or research on a particular issue. Whatever the preparation needed, committee members should arrive at meetings fully prepared for the meeting's agenda.

In addition, it is strongly recommended that you have an awareness of other committees in Rhinebeck. Since no one committee operates in isolation, it is important to understand the connection various town committees have and how your work intersects with the work of others.

**Conduct:** Committee members represent the Town of Rhinebeck. It is important, therefore, that members conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner. A member of a Committee who misses three consecutive meetings without just cause, fails to actively participate in the functions of the Committee, fails to fill his or her duties, or who exhibits disruptive behavior may be removed by the Town Board after a public or private hearing, the choice of which is decided by the Committee member in question. While it is understood that any meeting can get discordant at times, committee members who do not conduct themselves appropriately towards the public or fellow committee members run the risk of not being reappointed at the end of their term or being removed from their position upon review and agreement of the Town Board. In addition, the Town of Rhinebeck expects all committee members to conduct themselves in an ethical manner. Any committee member who might perceive a conflict of interest with a matter before their committee is expected to make the chairperson aware of the situation. Should you ever have any questions regarding a possible conflict of interest, it is important that you seek out the advice of the Ethics Committee. More information on the Ethics Committee can be found at the end of this document.

**Removal:** Committee members shall, at all times and during the course of public meetings or public hearings, conduct themselves in a civil manner and shall not shout at, berate or be rude to their fellow members or anyone else they are doing business with on behalf of the Town, whether in private or public. The Town Board may remove, after public hearing, for cause, any Committee member. Cause for removal shall include, but shall not be limited to: (a) failure to disclose a conflict of interest as required by the Town's Code of Ethics; (b) physical or mental impairment affecting the member's ability to perform his or her functions; (c) failure to comply with the applicable provisions of the Rhinebeck Code of Ethics; (d) failure to comply with any rules or regulations as may be prescribed for the conduct of Committee members by the respective Committees; (e) failure to comply with the provisions of this Handbook or any amendments thereto, including non-compliance with the meeting attendance requirements as established in this Handbook; and (f) such other and further cause as may be established at a hearing conducted in accordance with the procedure set forth herein.

### **How to Contact a Committee**

As noted previously, if you are interested in a specific committee, it is suggested that you contact the appropriate committee chairperson and learn as much as you can about the committee's work. If possible, it is also suggested that you attend a meeting of the committee to learn more about its mission

and operations. You can contact a specific committee by calling or e-mailing the chairperson. More information is available on the Town website or by calling Town Hall at 845-876-3409.

### **The Ethics Board**

The Ethics Board administers the Ethics Law of the Town of Rhinebeck. Conduct for officers, employees and representatives of the Town were established by Local Law 2 of 2010. Among other things, the Ethics Board is charged with investigating and adjudicating alleged violations of the ethics rules, making disciplinary recommendations to the Town Board, and issuing advisory opinions at the request of the Supervisor or Town Board members. A list including the Chair and members can be found on the Town website or by calling the Clerk's office at 845-876-3409.

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