



# TOWN OF WOODSTOCK VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK

## **On Becoming a Volunteer for the Town of Woodstock**

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

There are some requirements for appointment by the Woodstock Town Board to any of the committees listed in this handbook. A candidate must be a qualified elector of the Town of Woodstock. This means that the candidate must be at least 18 years of age, must present proof of residency, and must not maintain an address outside of the Town of Woodstock for voting purposes. There is also an expectation of respect for the public and for fellow members of the committee, a willingness to do one's share of the work, and an ample supply of common sense. 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.

Some of our volunteer boards serve in an advisory capacity; others may make determinations that are binding under Town Law. If you are appointed to the Planning Board, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Ethics Board, the Board of Assessment Review or the Commission for Civic Design, you will be required to take an oath of office and provide a financial disclosure statement (attached).

In addition, members must maintain a high degree of honesty, integrity and open mindedness in the handling of all committee matters. They should also possess skill in public presentation and have the ability to converse effectively on an interpersonal level with members of the community, fellow board members and town officials. 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.

Any town board member can tell you that making one appointment from among several qualified candidates is one of the hardest decisions to deal with. If you are appointed, congratulations, and good luck! If not, please do not feel discouraged or unwanted. Many appointees have been selected later after missing the first cut, and you may wish to be considered again.

On the following page you will find a list of our standing boards, the terms of the appointments, and a brief description of their duties. 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 Woodstock -- are grateful for your interest and involvement.

The Town of Woodstock

## **TOWN OF WOODSTOCK BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS**

### **COMMISSION FOR CIVIC DESIGN**

The Commission for Civic Design works to maintain and enhance the rural and historic character of the Town of Woodstock. The Commission administers the provisions of the Zoning Law of the Town of Woodstock as it relates to the Gateway Overlay District, construction or alterations in the Commercial District, and construction or alterations in the Scenic Overlay District. It also is responsible for the local Register of Historic Places. It is comprised of seven members, one of whom is the Town Historian. The Commission selects its own chairperson. The term is three years.

To be an effective member, applicants should have some background and knowledge in one or more of the following areas:

- Local History
- Design
- Building Construction
- Landscaping
- Architecture
- Engineering
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Individuals, in addition to a general concern for the Town of Woodstock, must also have the practical ability to read blueprints, time available for two meetings a month (held on alternate Mondays at 6:00PM) time available to review plans and conduct site visits, and the ability to work with others within a small group environment. Committee members should miss no more than four meetings per year.

It is recommended that applicants for a vacant seat on the Commission for Civic Design should request a copy of the Committee's Design Guidelines, and attend one or two meetings of the Committee in advance of submitting their application.

### **ETHICS BOARD**

The Ethics Board administers the Ethics Law of the Town of Woodstock. Among its duties is review of the annual financial disclosure statements provided by the officers of the Town. It hears and investigates complaints of possible unethical behavior, or the appearance of unethical behavior. The Ethics Board may also provide guidance before the fact as to the advisability of a particular action. It is comprised of five members who select its chairperson. The term is three years.

### **BOARD OF ASSESSMENT REVIEW**

The Board of Assessment Review meets once a year to decide on appeals regarding determinations of the Assessor with respect to the assessed valuations of real property in the Town of Woodstock. This meeting, which can stretch over a period of days, is commonly known as “grievance day.” Property owners may first challenge their assessment by appointment with the Assessor. If not satisfied, they may then “grieve” before the Board of Assessment Review. The members of the Board of Assessment Review compare the information provided by the Assessor with information provided by the aggrieved property owner. They then make a determination. If the Board of Assessment Review gives no satisfaction, the property owner first may take the Town to small claims court, and if still not satisfied, to Supreme Court. The Board of Assessment Review is comprised of five members. The committee members select the chairperson. The term is five years.

### **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

The Zoning Board of Appeals provides the first avenue of appeal regarding determinations made by the Building Inspector/Code Enforcement Officer. It is called upon to make interpretations of the Zoning Law, and to grant relief from some provisions of the Zoning Law so long as such relief is warranted by the application of very strict criteria. The Zoning Board of Appeals is comprised of five members. The Town Board selects its chairperson. The term is five years.

The ZBA meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. The meetings start at 7:00PM and usually last two to three hours. An additional two hours a week is usually required for site visits and for preparation for the meeting. Members must have the ability to work cooperatively and engage in constructive debate on matters before the Board.

### **PLANNING BOARD**

The Planning Board administers the Zoning Law and the Subdivision Regulations of the Town of Woodstock. Almost all issues and proposals relating to regulated land use falls under its purview. The planning Board also advises the Town Board on zoning issues, and can make recommendations

for revising and/or updating the zoning and subdivision regulations. It is comprised of seven members. The Town Board selects its chairperson. A full term is seven years.

The Planning Board can require 25-30 hours per month of each member's time. It meets on the first, third and fifth (when there is a fifth) Thursday of every month. Meetings start at 7:30PM and generally last at least four hours. Members can expect to spend at least two hours of preparation for each meeting to go over cases, including updates, examining previous minutes and studying other pertinent information. There are usually seminars, lectures or educational meetings at least once a month, which members should attend. In addition members make site visits to gather information on proposed projects.

Since the Planning Board administers the Zoning Law and the Subdivision Regulations of the Town of Woodstock, each individual member is expected to become familiar with these laws. Although the Planning Board has some discretionary powers, these laws are what guide the deliberations and decisions of the Planning Board. Planning Board members should refrain from publicly discussing issues that may come before the board in order to assure the public and the applicant a fair, unbiased hearing.

#### **WOODSTOCK ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION**

The Woodstock Environmental Commission advises the Town on environmental issues. Its interests can vary from forestry management proposals to energy conservation. It is often called upon to investigate and/or advise on particular or general areas of concern as they relate to the environment. It also helps identify grant opportunities for funding of environmental projects. The Environmental Commission is comprised of seven members. The Town Board selects its chairperson. The term is two years.

The Woodstock Environmental Commission meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of the month. Meetings begin at 7:00PM and usually last two to three hours. In addition, members participate in field trips, are available for seminars and other educational opportunities, and attend meeting of other boards when appropriate. The WEC works for the protection of the environment, including protection of air and water quality, wildlife, indigenous plants, unique biotic communities, geomorphic or other areas of ecological value and open space protection. Applicants are encouraged to read the WEC charter and its mission statement. Since the WEC is involved with a number of different issues, its members must be able to balance a number of issues and concerns at the same time. It is recommended applicants interested in serving on the WEC attend two or more meetings prior to applying for a vacancy.

#### **TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE**

The Telecommunications Committee advises the Town on matters relating to telecommunications and telecommunications infrastructure. It researches latest developments in telecommunications, studies the potential impacts and forwards the information to the Town. The Telecommunications Committee is comprised of five members, who select their chairperson. The term is three years.

### **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 Woodstock will advertise the vacancy in the town's official newspaper(s).
2. Individuals interested in the vacancy should respond to the advertisement by forwarding a letter of interest to the Town Supervisor's office.
3. After reviewing letters of interests, perspective candidates will 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. The Supervisor's office will notify you of your selection.
6. Where appropriate (appointment to those committees whose determinations are binding under Town Law), the selected candidate will be required to take an oath of office prior to assuming their seat on the committee. Also, 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 Woodstock.
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 Woodstock Environmental Commission to begin January 1, 2002 and to expire December 31, 2004. Mr. X resigns his position half way through his term. The Town Board accepts the resignation, advertises the vacancy, and interviews candidates. In August 2003 the Town Board appoints Ms. Y to the remainder of Mr. X's term, which ends December 31, 2004.

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 advertise 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 board or commission will 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. A lack of a quorum simply delays the process of town government. 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. Late committee members disrupt the process of the meeting and create a negative perception with citizens who might have business before your committee.

**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 could include reviewing cases that will be before you at the next meeting, a site visit, 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 Woodstock. 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. To this end, it is recommended that you attend the meetings of other committees as time and circumstances dictate.

**Conduct:** Committee members represent the Town of Woodstock. It is important, therefore, that members conduct themselves in a professional and courteous manner. While it is understood that Woodstock meetings can get “interesting” 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.

In addition, the Town of Woodstock expects all committee members to conduct themselves in an ethical manner. Any committee member who might perceive a conflict of interest with a case before their committee is expected to make the chairperson aware of the situation. It is possible, due to such a conflict, that the committee member may have to recuse themselves from the case. 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.

### **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 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 as noted below.

Commission for Civic Design:	845-679-2113 <a href="mailto:ccd@woodstockny.org">ccd@woodstockny.org</a>
Board of Assessment Review:	845-679-2113, Ext. 7 (Ask for Town Supervisor)
Environmental Commission :	845-679-2113 <a href="mailto:wec@woodstockny.org">wec@woodstockny.org</a>
Ethics Board:	845-679-2113, Ext. 7 (Ask for Town Supervisor)
Planning Board:	845-679-2113, Ext. 6 <a href="mailto:planning@woodstockny.org">planning@woodstockny.org</a>
Telecommunications Committee:	845-679-2113, Ext. 7 (Ask for Town Supervisor)
Zoning Board of Appeals	845-679-2113 <a href="mailto:zba@woodstockny.org">zba@woodstockny.org</a>
Town Web Site & Calendar: <a href="http://www.woodstockny.org">www.woodstockny.org</a>	

**TOWN OF WOODSTOCK, NY**  
Ph: 845-679-2113, Ext. 7 • Fax: 845-679-7915  
Colony of the Arts

**45 COMEAU DRIVE, WOODSTOCK NY 12498**  
[www.woodstockny.org](http://www.woodstockny.org) • [info@woodstockny.org](mailto:info@woodstockny.org)

**RESOLUTION 189-04 (12/14/04)**

**VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK**

Offered by Supervisor Wilber, seconded by Councilman McKenna:

**WHEREAS** the Town of Woodstock wishes to provide volunteers serving on various boards and commissions of the Town basic guidelines for fulfilling their roles, and

**WHEREAS** various volunteer boards and the Town Historian have contributed in an effort to construct a Volunteer Handbook for volunteers and prospective volunteers, therefore be it

**RESOLVED** to adopt the volunteer handbook with the understanding that it shall be revised and/or amended time to time, and be it further

**RESOLVED** to include the Volunteer Handbook on the Town website.

All voted 4-0: Supervisor Wilber - aye  
Councilman Knight - aye  
Councilman Wemp - aye  
Councilman McKenna - aye