



Town of Charlotte  
Handbook for Town Committees &  
Commissions

Adopted by the Charlotte Selectboard on February\_\_\_\_, 2025



## Committee Handbook Foreword

This handbook has been prepared by the Selectboard and Town Administrator to provide general information, and establish general rules of procedure, for all the Town's committees, commissions, public officers, and boards. The Selectboard recognizes that many residents have stepped up to volunteer their time to the Town since Charlotte was founded on June 24, 1762. Their contributions of time, and thoughtful consideration, on the many issues and challenges confronting the Town are very much appreciated. Through this service to the community you will have a unique opportunity to help shape the future of our Town. We hope it will be a rewarding and informative experience.

The Selectboard, in carrying out their duties as prescribed by State Law and by the votes of Town Meetings, expend a considerable amount of time and effort to make logical and sensible appointments to committees. You will be working with people who, like yourself, have volunteered to address specific problems and bring back to the Selectboard - or perhaps Town Meeting - recommendations for a course of action or a solution that they believe is best for the Town.

It is imperative that the good of the Town, its present and future, be of primary consideration in your deliberations. It is also important to remember that you represent the entire Town, not just one segment of the Town. A solution that makes sense from the perspective of your committee may not always be what is best for the Town. Therefore, all plausible solutions need to be explored while considering many factors such as the impact on other programs or plans. The ultimate cost in tax dollars is of the utmost importance to all Townspeople and our committees and commissions must be cognizant of that fact.

Your committee or commission should use the Town Administrator's Office to facilitate communications and answer any questions you believe pertinent to your assignment. The Selectboard wishes to thank you for your willingness to put forth your time and effort to improve our community.

This handbook provides a general description of procedures, and summarizes important state statutes, best practices and procedures from the Vermont League of Cities and Towns ("VLCT"), and Town policies that govern the conduct of committees and their members (i.e. Vermont's Open Meeting Law and the Town's Conflict of Interest Policy). Official full-text versions of these documents, and other governing by-laws, can be accessed online. References will be provided throughout this handbook, either through electronic links or by citation.

While this handbook has been published for use by the Town's committees, commissions, public officers, and boards appointed by the Selectboard, we hope this handbook is of use to the citizens of Charlotte at large.

Respectfully,

The Charlotte Selectboard

James Faulkner, Chair  
Frank Tenney, Vice Chair  
Lewis Mudge  
Kelly Devine  
Natalie Kanner

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**SECTION I**  
**REQUIREMENTS & RESPONSIBILITIES:**

A Statement of Commitment to the foregoing section and the attached Conflict of Interest Policy shall be signed by all elected and appointed members of the Town's boards, committees, and commissions.

**A. Community & Member Responsibility:**

1. A member of any Committee shall:
  - a. Realize that the member's basic function is to make policy and provide advice on making policy, and not to administer policy unless expressly provided for by law;
  - b. Realize that the member is one of a team and should abide by, and assist in carrying out, all decisions of the Committee once a decision is made by the board, commission, or committee;
  - c. Remain well-informed concerning the duties and responsibilities the Committee may have on the state and local level, as well as a member's individual duties and responsibilities;
  - d. Remember that the member represents the entire community at all times;
  - e. Accept the appointment as a means of unselfish service, and not for the purpose of personal or political benefit;
  - f. Make all decisions relative to individual appointments based only upon merit, experience, and qualifications, and avoid engaging in political patronage, and;
  - g. Avoid voting on any matter in which the individual member has a conflict of interest, as defined in the Town of Charlotte's Conflict of Interest Policy.
2. The professional and personal conduct of members must be above reproach and avoid even the appearance of impropriety. Members shall refrain from abusive conduct, harassment, personal charges and or verbal attacks upon the character of other members of Committees, councils, the staff or the public.
3. Members shall perform their duties in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the Selectboard and the Town's policies governing the deliberation of public policy issues, meaningful involvement of the public, and implementation of policy decisions of the Selectboard by Town staff.
4. Members shall prepare themselves for public issues; listen courteously and attentively to all public discussions before the body; and focus on the business at hand. They shall refrain from interrupting other speakers, making personal comments not germane to the business of the body, or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of meetings.
5. Members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive workplace environment for Town employees and for citizens and businesses dealing with the Town. Members shall recognize their role in dealings with Town staff, as well as Town Staff's role with the Committee, and refrain from creating the perception of inappropriate direction to staff.

## **B. Responsibility to Municipal Administration:**

1. A member of any Town Committee during their interactions with the administrative officers of the Town shall:
  - a. Respect the role of professional management;
  - b. Recognize and support the administrative chain of command and refuse to act on complaints as an individual outside of the administration;
  - c. Recognize that binding decisions of a Committee are enforced by administrative officers of the Town; and
  - d. Direct all questions or concerns first to the appropriate Town personnel, then to the Town Administrator, and if necessary to the Selectboard. This is the most expedient way to resolve issues that need to be addressed; however, be advised that Town officials may not necessarily have jurisdiction over issues concerning elected or appointed officials.

## **C. Relationship to Other Board, Commission, or Committee Members:**

1. A member of any Town Committee, in the member's relations with fellow board members, shall:
  - a. Recognize that action taken during a public meeting is binding and that a single member alone cannot bind the Committee outside of a public meeting;
  - b. Not make statements or promises of how the member will vote on matters that come before the Committee until the member has had an opportunity to hear all aspects and sides of the issue during a public meeting;
  - c. Uphold the intent of the Executive Session and respect the privileged communication that occurs therein;
  - d. Make decisions only after all facts on a question have been presented and discussed; and
  - e. Respect the rights of members of the public, Town personnel, and other members of the Committee, despite differences of opinion.

## **D. Conflicts of Interest:**

1. In accordance with the Town's Conflict of Interest Policy and Vermont's Municipal Code of Ethics (see [24 V.S.A. § 1992](#)), a member of any Town committee or commission has an affirmative duty to avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest. The appearance of a conflict shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable individual with knowledge of the relevant facts.
2. If a member is confronted with a conflict of interest or the appearance of one, the officer shall immediately recuse themselves from the matter.

## **E. Prohibited Conduct**

1. In accordance with the Town's Conflict of Interest Policy and Vermont's Municipal Code of Ethics (see [24 V.S.A. § 1993](#)), a member of any Town committee or commission, shall NOT:
  - a. Direct any individual to act in a manner that would:
    - i. Benefit a municipal officer in a manner related to the officer's conflict of interest;
    - ii. Create a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest for the officer or for the directed individual; or

- iii. Otherwise violate the Municipal Code of Ethics as described in [24 V.S.A. § 1993](#).
  - b. Act unjustly or unduly favor or prejudice any person in the course of conducting official business.
  - c. Give, or represent an ability to give, undue preference or special treatment to any person because of the person's wealth, position, or status or because of a person's personal relationship with the officer, unless otherwise permitted or required by State or federal law.
  - d. Use their official position for the personal or financial gain of the member, their immediate family or household, or their business associate.
  - e. Make use of the town's materials, funds, property, personnel, facilities, or equipment, or permit another person to do so, for any purpose other than for official business unless the use is expressly permitted or required by State law; ordinance; or a written Town, departmental, or institutional policy or rule.
  - f. Engage in or direct another person to engage in work other than the performance of official duties during working hours, except as permitted or required by law or a written Town, departmental, or institutional policy or rule.
  - g. Accept or solicit any gift, loan, political contribution, reward, or promise of future employment based on any understanding that their vote, official action, or judgment of the municipal officer or candidate would be, or had been, influenced thereby.
  - h. Benefit from any contract entered into by the municipality and the officer, the officer's immediate family, or an associated business of the officer or the officer's immediate family, unless:
    - i. The benefit is not greater than that of other individuals generally affected by the contract;
    - ii. The contract is a contract for employment with the municipality;
    - iii. The contract was awarded through an open and public process of competitive bidding; or
    - iv. The total value of the contract is less than \$2,000.00.
2. In general, Town committee and commission members are not subject to restrictions concerning private, political activity without the use of municipal resources. However, all members have an obligation to foster a sense of public trust. To foster this trust, individual members have a responsibility to disclose to a committee any actual or potential personal interest or issue that pertains to a matter under consideration by the committee.

## **E. Compliance & Enforcement**

1. Members themselves have the primary responsibility to assure that these standards are understood and met, and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of government.
2. The chair of a committee shall promptly intervene when a member's actions appear to be in violation of the Code of Conduct. The Selectboard, by a majority vote of its members, may remove members whose conduct does not comply with the Town's standards. Members with statutory roles may be given for-cause removal protection. In that event, a special hearing will be held in order to determine whether the alleged actions of a committee member warrant removal.

**F. Ethics Training**

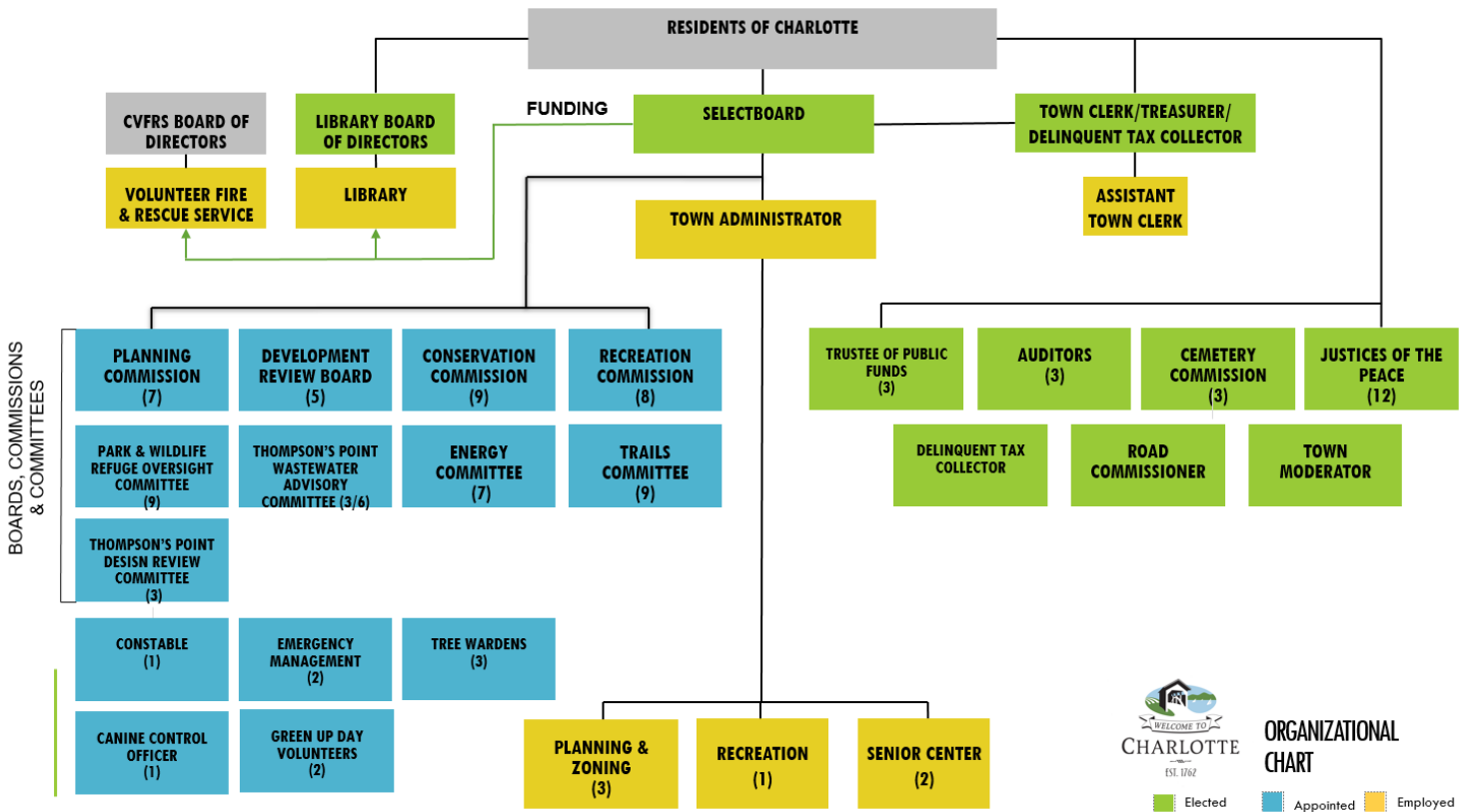
1. In accordance with Vermont’s Municipal Code of Ethics (see [24 V.S.A. § 1995](https://www.vermont.gov/doc/ethics)), all Town committee and commission members are required to complete an initial ethics training within 45-days of their appointment. This training has been provided by the State of Vermont’s Ethic’s Commission, and is available for all members at <https://ethicscommission.vermont.gov/training>.
2. When completing this initial ethics training, you will be prompted to include your, and one additional, e-mail address to verify you have successfully finished the course. You MUST include the Town Administrator’s e-mail ([townadmin@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:townadmin@townofcharlotte.com)) so this training verification can be reviewed by the Town Administrator, and kept on file at Town Hall.
3. Failure to comply with this may result in the Selectboard taking formal action to remove that member from their respective committee/commission.

**G. Annual Training**

1. Chairs for each committee, who are not regularly staffed by a Town employee, are expected to attend an annual training with the Town Administrator in May.

**SECTIONS II**  
**STRUCTURE OF CHARLOTTE’S GOVERNMENT**

**A. Town of Charlotte Organizational Chart**



## **B. Town Committees & Commissions:**

1. Charlotte Park and Wildlife Oversight Committee:
  - a. The Charlotte Park and Wildlife Refuge Oversight Committee is composed of nine volunteer residents that provide oversight to the management of the Park and Wildlife Refuge.
  - b. You can contact the committee via the committee email address, [charlotteparkvt@gmail.com](mailto:charlotteparkvt@gmail.com), or by contacting Town Hall at 802-425-3071, comments and questions welcomed!
  - c. The Oversight Committee meets regularly (generally monthly) to discuss park management maintenance, budget and volunteer projects either at Town Hall or at the Park and Wildlife Refuge. Notice of meeting date, location and agenda are posted on the [Town's Meeting Calendar](#), and on Front Porch Forum, at least 48 hours ahead of these meetings.
2. Conservation Commission:
  - a. The mission of the Charlotte Conservation Commission (CCC) is to support and advocate for the protection and enhancement of Charlotte's natural and cultural resources. To achieve this mission, we promote public understanding and appreciation of nature and create education and planning tools for resource management.
  - b. All are welcome at our meetings, which are posted on the [Town's Meeting Calendar](#). We hope to engage more Charlotters in our work, and are especially looking for folks with:
    - i. Personal experience with natural history and land conservation
    - ii. Natural resource planning and policy
    - iii. Environmental or biological sciences
    - iv. Environmental outreach and education
    - v. GIS mapping & engineering
    - vi. Familiarity with legal aspects of conservation
    - vii. Sustainable agriculture
    - viii. Community development
  - c. Please join us at our meetings or contact us at [conservation@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:conservation@townofcharlotte.com). We look forward to your participation!
3. Development Review Board:
  - a. The Charlotte Development Review Board (DRB) review and consider all projects requiring the following permits under the town's Land Use Regulations, to include:
    - i. Boundary Adjustments;
    - ii. Conditional Use review;
    - iii. Subdivision approval;
    - iv. Site Plan review;
    - v. Variances;
    - vi. Amendments to previously approved projects, and;
    - vii. Appeals of the Zoning Administrator's determinations.
  - b. The Development Review Board meets on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m., and for special meetings as needed.
  - c. Please refer to the [Town's Meeting Calendar](#) for a current schedule of upcoming DRB meetings. [Meeting minutes](#) and [audio recordings](#) of past meetings are available from our [Dropbox](#) account.

4. Energy Committee:
  - a. It is the Energy Committee's mission to:
    - i. Improve the way we produce and use energy in Charlotte by conservation, energy efficiency, renewables, transportation, buildings, and land-use planning.
    - ii. Work in partnership with other Town groups such as Sustainable Charlotte, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Commission, and Charlotte Central School.
    - iii. Promote energy education and awareness.
  - b. Please visit the Energy Committee's official site at [CharlotteEnergy.com](http://CharlotteEnergy.com) for more detailed information!
  - c. The Energy Committee generally meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7 p.m., but sometimes we have to change the date, so please check the [Town's Meeting Calendar](#) or keep an eye out on [Front Porch Forum](#).
5. Planning Commission:
  - a. The Planning Commission is responsible for drafting updates and other amendments to Charlotte's Land Use Regulations. These regulations govern what can be built, where in town, and with what restrictions.
  - b. The Commission is also responsible for preparing periodic updates to the Town Plan, and for coordinating planning projects related to transportation, housing, infrastructure and conservation.
6. Recreation Commission:
  - a. The Charlotte Recreation Commission is made up of seven members of the community supporting recreation in Charlotte. Members of the Commission volunteer their time and expertise in support of recreation in Charlotte.
  - b. In addition to volunteering their time and expertise, the Commission holds monthly meetings, which can be found on the [Town's Meeting Calendar](#).
  - c. We welcome ideas on recreation-related topics and feedback from the community, please consider attending a meeting or joining the commission!
7. Trails Committee:
  - a. The Trails Committee is responsible for developing and maintaining the Charlotte network of trails, in accordance with the town plan. Currently the committee maintains four separate trails (Pease Mountain, Plouffe, Town Link and Village Link) located throughout the town.
  - b. The Town Link trail will eventually connect the Town Beach, West Village, Mt. Philo, and the East Village.
    - i. In total, there are eight trails, parks and natural areas to visit in Charlotte. Click [here](#) to see a list of trail descriptions and maps.
    - ii. The Trails Committee operates under the guidelines established in the [Town of Charlotte Trail System Stewardship Plan](#), approved by the Selectboard in October, 2012.
8. Thompson's Point Wastewater Advisory Committee:
  - a. The Thompson's Point Wastewater Advisory Committee was created pursuant to the [Thompson's Point Wastewater Disposal System Ordinance](#).
  - b. Our meetings are posted on the [Town's Meeting Calendar](#).

9. Thompson's Point Design Review Committee:

10. Tree Warden:

- a. The Tree Warden for the Town of Charlotte is appointed annually by the Selectboard.
- b. Their jurisdiction is limited to only Town land, including Thompson's Point, the Town Green, Mutton Hill, Walley Woods and town planted trees in the rights-of-way. The removal or pruning of trees within the Tree Warden's zones of authority require permission of the Tree Warden.
- c. Mapping the town trees is another Tree Warden initiative undertaken with the support of the Urban and Community Forestry Program. There are several maps that have been developed.
  - i. The [Charlotte Public Tree Inventory](#) was created in 2016.
  - ii. The [Map of Roadside Ash Trees](#) shows the locations of ash trees on public property and public rights-of-way. This map has been used to guide planning and execution of the preemptive removals of potential hazard trees.

**C. Becoming a Committee or Commission Member:**

1. Qualifications:

- a. All Charlotte residents are qualified to apply for membership on any committee. Residents employed full-time or part-time by the Town may be appointed to Boards, Committees, and Commissions at the discretion of the Selectboard, subject to the Town's Conflict of Interest Policy.

2. Applying:

- a. The appointment application process begins with submitting a "Talent Bank - Committee Application Form" to the Town Administrator. This form can be found on the Town's website and, once completed, should be e-mailed to [townadmin@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:townadmin@townofcharlotte.com) with the subject line reading: "Talent Bank Application - (Your Last Name)."
  - i. The Talent Bank application will ask you to identify the name the committee to which you seek appointment and explain the reason(s) for your interest;
  - ii. The application also requests you provide a copy of your resume/letter that describes your education, occupation or other practical experience.
- b. You may register in the Talent Bank at any time, even when no vacancy exists on your desired committee.
- c. Should such a vacancy occur, you and all other Talent Bank applicants who declared a similar committee preference, will be contacted by the Town Administrator to schedule your appearance at a regularly scheduled meeting.

3. Interviewing:

- a. The Selectboard conducts interviews of all first-time applicants. Applicant interviews are conducted in open public session with the Selectboard, which are video-recorded by the Town. Members of the designated committees may also be present to participate in the interview.
- b. The Selectboard strives to create a welcoming climate for each interview. Applicants should be prepared to answer general questions for the Board as well as provide information about

their experience and qualifications. Fifteen minutes are usually scheduled for each interview, although the actual duration may vary.

- c. The Select Board does not entertain comments from the public about an applicant during interview sessions.
  - d. Oftentimes, there are more candidates than available open seats. If you are not appointed to your desired committee seat, you will be contacted by the Town Administrator to determine if you wish to:
    - i. Maintain your registration in the Talent Bank, and possibly interview for a seat on the same committee should a vacancy occur during the year;
    - ii. Consider a new interview for an appointment to a different committee, or;
    - iii. Choose to withdraw your name from the Talent Bank.
4. Term Length:
- a. The term of an appointment is often unique to the individual Board, Committee, or Commission. Before applying for a position, you should reference the [Town's Annual Report](#) to determine the term length for the position you are applying for.
5. Appointment:
- a. All appointments require a majority vote of the Selectboard, convened in open public session. The motion to nominate an applicant will specify the name of the proposed appointee and designate the dates on which their term of service will start and expire.
  - b. If, for any reason, an appointed member leaves a committee before completion of a term, the appointed replacement's term of service will expire on the same date previously assigned to the vacating member.
6. Reappointment:
- a. Unless otherwise provided by State law, there is no Town policy that establishes limits on the number of terms a member may serve on a committee.
  - b. Prior to the designated date of their term's expiration, incumbent members of a committee will receive notification from the Town Administrator. The notification requests appointed members to indicate if their desire is to:
    - i. Conclude their service at term's end;
    - ii. Seek appointment for an additional term on the same committee, or;
    - iii. Apply for an appointment to a different committee.
  - c. A committee member is under no obligation to accept reappointment, nor is the Selectboard obligated to offer reappointment. Reappointment to an additional term on a committee is based on an evaluation of the committee member's contribution to the committee, the number of applicants seeking appointment, and the discretion of the Select Board.
  - d. Incumbent members of committees, who seek appointment to a different committee, shall also apply through the Town Talent Bank and will be scheduled for an interview with the Selectboard.
7. Resignation:
- a. Any member who, for any reason, chooses to resign before their term is complete shall provide immediate written notice of the resignation to the the Town Administrator, the Selectboard Chair, and the Committee Chairperson.

- b. Specifically, this written notice must be submitted by e-mail to [townadmin@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:townadmin@townofcharlotte.com), with the subject line reading: “Letter of Resignation - (Your Last Name),” and must indicate the effective date of resignation.
8. Removal:
  - a. Unless otherwise outlined by State law, the Selectboard may remove a committee member by majority vote at a regularly scheduled meeting. Prior to that meeting, the Selectboard shall provide written notice to the appointee, and hold a hearing in executive session.
  - b. Should a committee wish to request the Selectboard remove a member of their committee, they must first hold a hearing with the member in executive session and then, by majority vote, move to make the request that a member be removed.
  - c. Only the committee to which the member is party may request their removal. It is inappropriate for an outside committee or member to make such a request.

### **SECTION III** **GENERAL PROCEDURES**

#### **A. Election of Officers**

1. All committees and boards shall annually elect a Chair, Vice Chair and Clerk. For newly-formed committees meeting for the first time to elect officers, the individual with senior rank (e.g. the first person appointed by the Selectboard) shall serve as temporary Chair and preside over the nomination and election of officers.
2. It is the responsibility of the newly-elected Chair to notify the Selectboard Chair and the Town Administrator of changes in membership and officers. Ongoing committees should elect officers at the first meeting held after the reappointments each year, which typically occurs at the first meeting in May.

#### **B. Responsibility of Officers**

1. Chair: As the presiding officer, the Chair schedules the place, date, and time of meeting. The Chair creates the meeting agendas and ensures meeting notices are officially posted as required by Open Meeting Law. The Chair presides at all meetings, decides questions of order, calls special meetings, and signs official documents that require the Chair’s signature. The Chair has the same rights as other members to offer resolutions, make motions, discuss questions, and vote.
2. Vice-Chair: The Vice-Chair assumes all responsibilities of the Chair whenever the latter is absent from meetings, and performs other duties as necessary.
3. Clerk: The Clerk will be responsible for taking detailed notes at each meeting, and drafting meeting minutes for the Committee/Commission to approve. The Clerk is also responsible for ensuring that meeting minutes are recorded and, once approved, are filed with the Town.

#### **C. Notice of Public Meetings**

1. Vermont’s Open Meeting Law recognizes three types of meetings: regular, special, and emergency. Depending on the type of meeting, a board or other public body may need to provide advance notice by “publicly announcing” the meeting, by posting public notices, or both. Public bodies also usually

need to create an agenda in advance of each meeting and make it available to the public. (See 1 V.S.A. §§ 312(d)(1), (2)). See below for more information on agenda requirements:

- a. Regular Meetings: A public body schedules regular meetings by adopting a resolution setting the time and place of the meetings. This information must be made available to the public on request. When a board meets regularly on, for example, the first Tuesday of every month, the law does not require additional public announcement or posting of these meetings so long as the time and place has been clearly designated by resolution or other determining authority (statute, charter, regulation, ordinance, or bylaw). Public bodies must, however, create and make available meeting agendas for regular meetings.
  - b. Special Meetings: A special meeting occurs when a board meets at a time or place outside of its regular meeting schedule. At least 24 hours before each special meeting, a public body must publicly announce it by giving notice of the meeting's time, place, and purpose to a newspaper or radio station serving the area, as well as to any person who has requested in writing to be notified of special meetings. Municipal public bodies must also post a notice of each special meeting in or near the town office and in at least two other designated public places in the municipality. All public bodies must give oral or written notice to each member (unless a member has waived this notice). In addition, agendas must be created and made available for special meetings.
  - c. Emergency Meetings: An emergency meeting may be held in the event of a true emergency, that is, "only when necessary to respond to an unforeseen occurrence or condition requiring immediate attention." Emergency meetings do not require public announcement, posting of notices, or 24-hour notice to members, so long as some public notice is given as soon as possible before the meeting. (See 1 V.S.A. § 312(c)(3)). Please note that an emergency meeting should not be used if the public body is able to comply with the 24-hour notice requirements for special meetings. There is no agenda requirement for emergency meetings.
2. It is the responsibility of the committee to provide timely notice to the Public of the committee's scheduled public meetings. For the Town of Charlotte, a current list of meetings is posted on the Town website's meeting calendar, on the Town bulletin board outside of the Clerk's Office, and on Front Porch Forum. The Chair or another designated member will work with the Town Administrator and Planning and Zoning Assistant to obtain access to the Town website's meeting calendar via Catalis.

#### **D. Meeting Locations**

1. All meetings must be held in public, even if there will be no vote or decision reached, and should be duly noted in your meeting agenda.
2. The Town offers suitable meeting rooms at Town Hall, the Senior Center, and the Library.
  - a. For meetings at Town Hall contact the Town Administrator ([townadmin@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:townadmin@townofcharlotte.com)), or the Town Clerk ([mary@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:mary@townofcharlotte.com)).
  - b. For meetings at the Senior Center, contact the Senior Center Director ([lyork@charlotteseniorcentervermont.org](mailto:lyork@charlotteseniorcentervermont.org)).
  - c. For meetings at the Library, contact the Library Director ([margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org](mailto:margaret@charlottepubliclibrary.org)).

## **E. Meeting Agendas and Management of Meetings:**

1. Meeting Agendas:
  - a. The Agenda is a specific list of items to be discussed at a meeting of the committee. Agendas are created by the Chair, at times with advice and assistance of the Town Staff Liaison or members of the committee.
  - b. Agendas should be posted in order to provide the public with notice of the public meeting. Once the meeting date and agenda have been posted, only those topics specifically listed on the agenda may be discussed when the committee convenes.
2. Management of Meetings:
  - a. The Chair should ensure that discussions, deliberations or any motions made are within the realm of the posted agenda item. The Chair should rule as out-of-order any deliberations or discussion that appear to stray beyond the realm of the posted agenda item.
    - i. If the matter appears of sufficient interest to the members of the committee, or the public, it may be placed on a future meeting agenda.
    - ii. In limited situations, if an unforeseen issue arises which is time sensitive, the Chair can allow discussion thereon. This should not occur frequently and must be done in compliance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law.

## **F. Motions, Discussion & Voting**

1. Once recognized by the Chair, any member of a committee may make a motion for consideration and action. For clarity, motions should be made in the affirmative.
  - a. To advance discussion of the motion, the motion must be seconded by another member of the committee. Discussion does not proceed if there is no second to the motion.
2. During Discussion, the Chair will grant each member of the committee the privilege to comment, ask questions or otherwise deliberate on the motion.
  - a. Per Vermont Open Meeting Law ([1 V.S.A. § 312\(a\)](#)), members of the public should be given reasonable opportunity to express their opinion on matters considered by the committee, as long as order is maintained.
  - b. The Chair may set standards and limits for comments received from the public. This could include establishing set time limits for public comment (i.e. allowing for five minutes of public comment, or allowing each member of the public two-minutes to speak).
3. The member who made the motion may withdraw or revise the terms of the motion prior to the Chair's calling of a vote of the committee. The revised wording of the motion requires a second. Any future discussion or public comment of the revised motion is allowed at the discretion of the Chair.
4. The Chair will call for a vote once the Chair is satisfied that discussion and deliberations are concluded.
  - a. A voice vote of "Aye" or "Yes" will be counted in the affirmative. A voice vote of "Nay" or "No" will be counted in the negative. Members who choose to abstain from a vote will declare "Abstain."

- b. A motion is passed or approved only when a simple majority of participating members vote in the affirmative. A motion fails if the vote is tied— an equal number of members voting Yes or No.

### **G. Record Keeping & Meeting Minutes**

1. Each committee must maintain accurate minutes of their meetings which, at a minimum, will include the date, time, place, members present or absent, the business taken up at the meeting, a summary of discussions, and all votes or actions taken at each meeting, including executive sessions.
2. Per [1 V.S.A. § 312\(b\)\(2\)](#) draft meeting minutes must be posted to the Town’s website no later than five calendar days from the date of the meeting. Draft meeting minutes should be replaced by minutes reviewed and approved by the committee.

### **H. Quorum Requirement**

1. A board or other public body must comply with the open meeting law any time a “quorum” holds a “meeting,” that is, gathers to discuss its business or to take action (See [1 V.S.A. § 310\(5\)\(A\)](#)).
  - a. A quorum is a simple majority of the members of a public body. Quorum is calculated by counting the number of total positions on a board or committee, regardless of any vacancies or recusals.
2. For the purposes of the open meeting law, “meeting” does not include the following:
  - a. Any communication between members of a public body for the purpose of scheduling a meeting, organizing an agenda, or distributing materials to discuss at a meeting, provided that no other business of the public body is discussed or conducted (See [1 V.S.A. § 310\(5\)\(B\)](#)).
  - b. Occasions when a quorum of a public body attends social gatherings, conventions, training programs, press conferences, media events, or otherwise gathers, provided that the public body does not discuss specific business of the public body that, at the time of the exchange, the participating members expect to be business of the public body at a later time. (See [1 V.S.A. § 310\(5\)\(C\)](#)).
  - c. A gathering of a quorum of a public body at a duly warned meeting of another public body, provided that the attending public body does not take action on its business. ([1 V.S.A. § 310\(5\)\(D\)](#)).
  - d. Site inspections for tax assessments or abatements (See [1 V.S.A. § 312\(g\)](#)).
  - e. Routine, day-to-day administrative matters that do not require action by the public body, so long as no money is appropriated, spent, or encumbered (See [1 V.S.A. § 312\(g\)](#)).

### **I. Executive Session**

1. Vermont Open Meeting Law ([1 V.S.A. § 313](#)), permits a committee to hold an Executive Session for very limited, specific purposes. Most appointed committees rarely, if ever, convene in Executive Session.
2. To convene in Executive Session, the committee must first convene in open session, at which time a formal motion to enter into Executive Session must be made. This motion must announce the purpose of the Executive Session and refer to the applicable statute. An affirmative vote of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the committee’s members is required to enter into executive session.

- a. No formal or binding action can be taken in executive session.
  - b. Minutes are not required for Executive Sessions.
3. Consult with the Town Administrator in order to determine if your committee can enter into executive session. Notice of an intended Executive Session must be posted in the committee's agenda.

#### **J. E-mail, Texting, Telephone or Other Communication**

1. A committee may only conduct administrative business, such as notifying members of a scheduled meeting and agenda, by email or phone. Substantive discussions or deliberations on public business involving a quorum of members or “serial” discussions that occur via email or telephone or other electronic technologies will be deemed a violation of Open Meeting Law.
2. There is no distinction between written and electronic records. The ease by which email messages are sent and forwarded may inadvertently facilitate the improper discussion of public policy issues.
  - a. While it is important for boards and committees to be responsive to inquiries from citizens, members must be careful that their replies do not become quorum discussions among the members, which would violate the Open Meeting Law.
3. Members are also advised that email or text messages written or received in the capacity of a board, committee or commission member are considered public records which may be made available for public inspection in the same manner as hardcopy documents.
4. Use of one’s own computer and personal email accounts for Town business are also subject to the public records law.
5. All electronic mail sent and received at a Town-issued email address may be a public record subject to inspection and disclosure and scheduled retention and disposition. Employees and committee members acting in their official capacities should have no expectation of privacy in their use of electronic mail.

#### **K. Conflicts of Interest & Recusals**

1. Recusal is the responsibility of the individual member and is not subject to request by members of the committee, or the public. When a committee member recognizes that a potential conflict of interest exists, the member should announce recusal from all participation in the matter (i.e. from discussing, questioning, commenting and voting).
2. The recused member is advised to leave the meeting table or dais during deliberations on the matter to avoid any appearance of exerting undue influence. It is not necessary for a member to stay away from an entire meeting because he or she has a potential conflict of interest that may cause recusal on one agenda item. The member should plan to attend the meeting and participate in all other agenda items.

#### **L. Adoption of Rules & Regulations**

1. Unless precluded by State law, any Town committee or commission may adopt rules of procedure in addition to those provided in this handbook. These rules must be approved by majority vote of said committee or commission.

2. Once a Town committee or commission adopts additional rules of procedure, a copy of those rules must be e-mailed to the Town Administrator at [townadmin@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:townadmin@townofcharlotte.com).

#### **M. Access and Use of Town Counsel**

1. Town Counsel is appointed by the Selectboard to provide legal opinions and advice on Town matters. At the direction of the Selectboard, access to Town Counsel is administratively managed by the Town Administrator.
2. Should an appointed committee agree that the legal guidance or opinion of Town Counsel is needed on a matter under deliberation, a formal request should be directed to the Town Administrator by either the Town staff person assigned to the committee, or a committee member.
3. Requestors shall file a “Request for Legal Services” form with the Town Administrator. Both paper and digital submissions of this form are acceptable.
4. The request submitted to the Town Administrator shall include the subject matter of the legal advice requested and any written materials to provide background information for the request. With certain exceptions, questions presented to and advice received from Town Counsel are ordinarily protected by the Town’s attorney-client privilege. That information should be labeled as such and segregated in the committee’s files to avoid inadvertent disclosure and waiver of the privilege.

#### **N. Staff Support**

1. Some committees have a Town staff person who serves as an administrative assistant. In such cases, the town staff person may prepare and circulate information for meetings, post agendas, and perform other administrative duties.
2. Unstaffed committees are responsible for their own clerical work. However, with advance notice, Town staff can provide assistance in assembly of documents, photocopying, mailings, and other services.

#### **O. Use of Town Equipment and Facilities**

1. Town Hall Access:
  - a. For access to Town Hall, any committee that does not have a key to access Town Hall after regular business hours can request a temporary key through the Town Clerk’s Office. Any request for a key should be made at least two days in advance.
  - b. Once your meeting/event/etc. concludes you can return the key by placing it into the dropbox by the Town Hall front door.
2. Computer Access:
  - a. The Town provides a shared laptop, speakers and webcam to host your meetings.
  - b. If you would like to access the Town’s laptop for a meeting, and haven’t used it before, please reach out to the Planning and Zoning Assistant, or Town Administrator, to help you get set up. Additionally, there is public Wi-Fi available at Town Hall under “TOC2.”
3. Printing:
  - a. If you would like to have something printed for your committee to use, you can reach out to any employee at Town Hall to help you. Please be aware that the Town will charge the committee’s account for any printing requests over 50 pages at 10¢/page.
4. Town equipment and facilities may be used for official committee business only.

## **P. Committee Expenses**

- 1.

## **Q. Grant Writing & Administration**

1. Committees are highly encouraged to seek out grant opportunities that they may be qualified for.
2. Once a grant has been identified, the committee must first complete a Grant Proposal Application Form, and e- three months in advance of the grant submission deadline.
3. Completed proposal forms will be reviewed and discussed with the Town Administrator and if the goals of grant funding requests and proposal requirements are met, the proposal will be forwarded to the Selectboard for approval.

## **R. Public Records Law**

1. Under Vermont's Public Records Act, [1 V.S.A. §§ 315-320](#), any person has the right to request inspection or copying of a public record from a municipality. The law defines "public record" broadly, and includes "any written or recorded information, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which is produced or acquired in the course of public agency business." ([1 V.S.A. § 317\(b\)](#)).
2. If you, as a member of a board or committee, receive a request for public records please forward the request to the Town Administrator at [townadmin@townofcharlotte.com](mailto:townadmin@townofcharlotte.com).
  - a. If you have documents that are responsive to a public records request, they should also be promptly sent to the Town Administrator.
  - b. Depending on the request, the Town Administrator, with the assistance of Town Counsel, will ensure that any exempt/protected information is redacted and the requested information is provided to the requestor.

## **S. Municipal Employee Definition and Liability**

- 1.

## **T. Working with Volunteers**

- 1.

## **U. Civil Discourse**

1. The Selectboard recognizes the importance of civil discourse at all levels of the government including those who volunteer their time and services on behalf of the Town.
2. Committees should conduct themselves so as to maintain public confidence in their local government and in the performance of the public trust. They should strive at every meeting to treat every person fairly and with respect. In turn, it is expected that those members from our community attending Town committee meetings will display respect to the public, committee members and Town staff.
3. Professional respect does not preclude differences of opinion but requires respect for those differences and the people who express them. Everyone should strive for civil discourse on all matters.

## **V. Conduct at Other Committee Meetings & Town Meeting**

1. Effective Town government requires strong and informed citizen participation. An individual committee member has a right to speak publicly as a private citizen at Town Meeting but should not purport to represent the committee or exercise the authority of the committee unless specifically authorized by that body to do so.
2. When speaking at other Committee Meetings, and Town Meeting, as a private citizen, members should refrain from identifying themselves as members of a committee because it may be perceived that they speak for the committee. Members of committees who speak during Town, or Committee, Meetings should clearly state they are expressing views they hold as private citizens.

## **W. Conclusion**

1. We all possess valuable skills, experiences and insights gained from our education, occupations, or from time devoted as active volunteers for community groups or nonprofit organizations. Those assets can be of great benefit to the Town of Charlotte, but municipal service also requires an understanding of additional responsibilities or limits, often defined by law.
2. This Town of Charlotte Committee & Commission Handbook provides only a summary description of the distinct responsibilities, codes of interest, and unique obligations for citizens who volunteer and accept an appointment on a committee serving the Town.

## **SECTION IV:** **STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT**

### **A. Acknowledgement of Town's Conflict of Interest Policy**

### **B. Acknowledgement of Vermont's Ethics Policy & Training**

## **SECTION V:** **SEVERABILITY & SUPREMACY OF LAWS**

### **A. Severability of Policies**

### **B. Supremacy of State Law**

## **SECTION V:** **APPENDICES**

### **A. Volunteer Waiver**

- B. Preliminary Budget Form**
- C. Unbudgeted Expense Request Form**
- D. Grant Review Request Form**
- E. Selectboard Agenda Request Form**