

# TOWN OF ROCKLAND, MASSACHUSETTS



## BOARDS, COMMITTEES AND COMMISSIONS HANDBOOK

(January 2017)

**TOWN OF ROCKLAND**

**Signed Copy on File**

**With Town**



**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF  
BOARD AND COMMITTEE HANDBOOK**

Please sign and return this page to the Town Clerk's Office.

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the "Town of Rockland Board and Committee Handbook," and agree to familiarize myself with the contents thereof.

I have received a copy of the Mass. General Laws, Chapter 268a, §23, Standards of Conducts, and a copy of the Open Meeting Law.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Board / Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

Table of Contents	
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	5
<b>2. BOARD/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP</b> .....	5
Appointments .....	5
Oath of Office .....	5
Term of Office .....	6
Reappointments .....	6
Vacancies/Resignations/Lack of Attendance .....	6
<b>3. ORGANIZATION OF BOARDS–DUTIES OF OFFICERS</b> .....	6
Election of Officers .....	6
Duties of Officers .....	6
Chairman .....	7
Vice-Chairman .....	7
Clerk/Secretary .....	7
Associate Members .....	8
<b>4. MEETINGS</b> .....	8
Open Meeting Law .....	8
Definition of Meeting .....	8
Posting/Scheduling of Meetings and Agendas .....	9
Quorum .....	9
Conducting a Meeting .....	10
Meeting Schedule .....	10
Public Meetings vs. Public Hearings .....	10
Public Hearings .....	10
Public Hearing Guidelines .....	11
Executive Sessions .....	12
Meeting Minutes.....	13
Committee Handbook 2016	

Content of Minutes .....	13
Availability/Filing of Minutes .....	14
<b>5. CONDUCT OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS .....</b>	<b>14</b>
Conflict of Interest .....	14
Standards of Conduct for Appointed Town Officials .....	16
Standards of Conduct.....	16
Corrective Action .....	17
Speaking for a Board or Committee .....	17
<b>6. ADMINISTRATION .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Access to Public Records .....	18
Retention/Disposal of Public Records .....	18
Storage of Public Records .....	19
Use of Town Counsel.....	19
<b>7. USE OF TOWN FACILITIES, STAFF AND EQUIPMENT .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Scheduling Rooms .....	20
General Meeting Room Rules .....	20
Staff Support .....	20
Use of Equipment .....	21
<b>8. MEETING POSTING GUIDELINES .....</b>	<b>21</b>

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This handbook has been developed to assist committee members in carrying out their duties on the various boards, committees and commissions that serve the Town of Rockland. The information contained in this handbook is meant to serve as a guideline.

The specific duties and laws related to a particular board, committee or commission may be found in the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) or in some cases, in our Town Charter or Bylaws, which can be accessed through the town's website on the Town Clerk's page ([www.rockland-ma.gov](http://www.rockland-ma.gov)). This Handbook is not intended to create a contractual relationship between the Town and any board, committee or commission member, and nothing herein shall be construed to grant any rights or privileges in or to an appointment or reappointment to any such board, committee or commission.

## **2. BOARD/COMMITTEE/COMMISSION MEMBERSHIP**

### ***Appointments***

Most appointments to town boards (collectively refers to boards, committees and commissions) are made by the Board of Selectmen. Some appointments are made by the Town Moderator or elected positions. The appointing authority shall have sole discretion to make such appointments as they deem to be in the best interests of the Town.

Notices of vacancies on boards are publicly posted on the Town Hall bulletin board and the Town's website ([www.rockland-ma.gov](http://www.rockland-ma.gov)). Residents interested in serving on a board are encouraged to attend one or two meetings of the board on which they are interested in serving to become familiar with the time commitment and other functions of that board. An application can be obtained in the Selectmen's Office.

### ***Oath of Office***

Appointments will be announced upon approval of the Board of Selectmen. Written notification of appointment will be issued to newly appointed board members. Appointees must report before the next meeting of the board to the Town Clerk's office to be sworn to the faithful performance of their duties prior to taking any official action as a member of a board or committee (*MGL Ch.41, s. 107*). The Town Clerk will give appointees information about the Open Meeting Law, as required in *Chapter 39, Section 23B* of the General Laws.

Members are required to sign a written acknowledgment of receipt. Upon each reelection or reappointment, all municipal employees (which includes members of boards, committees and commissions) must be given a summary of the conflict of interest law prepared by the Ethics Commission and, every two years, they must complete an online training program prepared by the Commission. The online training program is available at [www.muniprog.eth.state.ma.us](http://www.muniprog.eth.state.ma.us). Once you have completed the program online, you will be prompted to print a Certificate of Completion, which must be kept on file at the Town Clerk's Office.

### ***Term of Office***

The full term of office for most positions on standing boards is three years, ending on June 30 of the third year. If a vacancy occurs in the membership of an appointed board, the appointing authority shall appoint a new member to serve for the balance of the unexpired term.

### ***Reappointments***

Appointed board members whose terms are due to expire on April 30 of the current year will be sent a notice sometime in March requesting that they inform the appointing authority as to whether or not they wish to be reappointed for an additional term. Such notice shall not be construed as an offer of reappointment nor shall it create any right or privilege to such reappointment.

### ***Vacancies/Resignations/Lack of Attendance***

In the event that a board member finds that he/she can no longer fulfill the duties of his/her term of office, he/she must provide a written resignation stating the effective date thereof to the appointing authority, with a copy to the Chairperson and the Town Clerk.

If there is a continued or unexplained absence of a board member, or a conflict of interest should arise, the Town Administrator may ask for a member's resignation, or if necessary, revoke the appointment. Also, the appointment of a board member who fails to attend three consecutive meetings may be terminated. Written notification to the Committee member will be given in the event of such action.

## **3. ORGANIZATION OF BOARDS**

### ***Election of Officers***

At the first meeting held after July 1st of each year, each board, committee or commission shall vote to select a chairman, vice-chairman and recording secretary. The new chairman shall notify the appointing authority and the Town Clerk of the names of officers. There is no limit on the number of consecutive terms a member may be elected to serve as an officer.

### ***Duties of Officers***

The following are basic duties of officers; boards are encouraged to modify these duties to suit their own particular needs.

### Chairman

- . Presides at all meetings, decides questions of order;
- . Calls meeting dates and times;
- . Ensures that meetings and agendas are properly posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law;
- . Sets agenda topics;
- . Represents the board before the Selectmen, other town bodies and the public, as required;
- . Ensures that members are kept informed of meetings;
- . Ensures that all members have taken the oath of office and acknowledged receipt of information from the Town Clerk with regard to the Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest Law;
- . Ensures that all members have acknowledged receipt and are familiar with this Board and Committee Handbook;
- . Ensures that a summary of the board's actions of the previous year are submitted to the Town Administrator for inclusion in the Annual Town Report;
- . Exercises control over public meetings and hearings, ensures that the proper decorum is maintained and that such meetings and hearings are conducted in an orderly and appropriate manner.

### Vice-Chairman

The Vice-Chairman acts as Chairman in the absence of the Chair.

### Clerk/Secretary

- . Ensures that minutes of every meeting are taken, prepared and filed with the Town Clerk in a timely manner, in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and the Town Bylaws.
- . Ensures that copies of documents and other exhibits used during meetings are provided and referenced in a list to be included as addenda to the approved meeting minutes, in accordance with the Open Meeting Law.
- . In the absence of paid staff, performs any other clerical or administrative duties, as required.

### Associate Members

From time to time, a board may find it useful to appoint associate members to assist the board in the successful completion of its charge. Appointments of associate members are made by the appointing authority, provided the board submits written substantiation of the need for associate members. Associate members are appointed for terms of one year.

## 4. MEETINGS

### *Open Meeting Law*

All board members are required to take the time to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Open Meeting Law (*MGL Chapter 30A, Sections 18-25*) and its accompanying regulations (*940 CMR 29.00*). The Open Meeting Law sets forth specific requirements for posting, scheduling, conducting, and recording meetings. The purpose of the law is to promote the democratic process in assuring that deliberations and decisions made by our public officials are conducted openly, and not hidden from the public. Failure to follow the Open Meeting Law may result in the invalidation of actions taken at a meeting and could result in the imposition of a penalty upon the public body of not more than \$1,000 for each intentional violation.

More information on the Open Meeting Law is available on the Attorney General's website:  
<http://www.mass.gov/ago/open-meeting>

### *Definition of Meeting*

For purposes of the Open Meeting Law, a "meeting" is defined as "a deliberation by a public body with respect to any matter within the body's jurisdiction; provided, however, "meeting" shall not include:

- . an on-site inspection of a project or program, so long as the members do not deliberate;
- . attendance by a quorum of a public body at a public or private gathering, including a conference or training program or a media, social or other event, so long as the members do not deliberate;
- . attendance by a quorum of a public body at a meeting of another public body that has complied with the notice requirements of the open meeting law, so long as the visiting members communicate only by open participation in the meeting on those matters under discussion by the host body and do not deliberate;
- . a meeting of a quasi-judicial board or commission held for the sole purpose of making a decision required in an adjudicatory proceeding brought before it; or
- . a session of a Town Meeting convened under section 10 of chapter 39 which would include the attendance by a quorum of a public body at any such session.

It is a violation of the Open Meeting Law to conduct "telephone meetings," "revolving door meetings," "e-mail meetings," or to hold other such discussions outside of a duly posted meeting at which the public is deprived of the opportunity to attend and monitor the decision making process. This includes individual conversations that occur in serial fashion in which a quorum of members participate and/or deliberate. "Deliberation" is defined as "an oral or written communication through any medium, including electronic mail, between or among a quorum of a public body on any public business within its jurisdiction; provided, however, that "deliberation" shall not include the distribution of a meeting agenda, scheduling information or distribution of other procedural meeting or the distribution of

reports or documents that may be discussed at a meeting, provided that no opinion of a member is expressed.”

### ***Posting/Scheduling of Meetings and Agendas***

The Open Meeting Law Regulations (940 CMR 29.03) provide, in part, that “public bodies shall file meeting notices sufficiently in advance of a public meeting to permit posting of the notice at least 48 hours in advance of the public meeting, excluding Saturdays, Sundays and legal holidays. The date and time that the notice is posted shall be conspicuously recorded thereon or therewith.”

Meeting notices and agendas must be posted in compliance with the specific instructions of the Town Clerk. Postings must be received in the Clerk’s office by 4:00 p.m. (in person), or by 3:00 p.m. by email, 48 hours prior to the next meeting. Meeting notices must include the name of the board, and the date, time and location of the meeting. Notices must also include a listing of the topics the chair reasonably anticipates will be discussed at the meeting. Chairpersons are expected to exercise good judgment when hearing/discussing/deliberating on issues not included on the agenda; that is, routine issues may be aired, while new and/or potentially contentious issues should be passed over to allow for proper posting and public discussion. Prior to filing a Meeting notice, you must first call the Town Administrator’s office to reserve a meeting room.

### ***Quorum***

In order for a board to take an official vote, a quorum must be present. A quorum is a simple majority of a governmental body, unless otherwise defined by law. A simple majority is based on the total number of positions on a board, whether or not all available positions have been filled. For example, a five-member board requires three members to be present in order to conduct business. If that five-member board has only three members and two vacant positions, the board would still require three members (not two) to constitute a quorum. Once a quorum is present, a board may act by a majority of the quorum, unless otherwise provided by law.

### ***Conducting a Meeting***

A committee may adopt formal rules of order, such as Robert’s Rule of Parliamentary Procedure. Although most committee discussions may seem too casual to be called debate, it is advisable for the committee to observe a minimum of generally accepted procedures. Attentive guidance by the Chair and adherence to adopted procedures can increase efficiency as well as maintain objectivity.

The Chair should limit all participants to concise, non-repetitive statements. In some cases, establishing time limits may be advisable. All who wish to speak should be allowed to do so before anyone is invited to speak a second time. Although desirable, it is not necessary for the committee to continue discussion until complete consensus is achieved. Other actions, such as calling for a vote, postponing until more information is available, or referring to a subcommittee may be required.

All votes must be taken publicly. The use of secret ballots is prohibited.

### ***Meeting Schedule***

Depending on a board or committee's workload, meetings may be held weekly, monthly, or bi-monthly. When possible, a regular meeting day, hour and location should be established.

It is strongly recommended that boards do not meet on Election Days and High Jewish Holidays. Careful preparation before meetings (e.g., organizing agenda items, distributing information in advance, posting all information online, and anticipating possible questions, can expedite discussion, facilitate action and avoid long and exhausting meetings) is the responsibility of the Chair.

### ***Public Meetings vs. Public Hearings***

All meetings of municipal boards, committees and commissions are public meetings – meaning that they are open to the public. The public is welcome to attend and observe; however, they do not have the right to participate unless they are invited to do so by the Chairman.

A public hearing is held for the purpose of obtaining information from which the board can reach a determination, usually regarding the issuance of a license or permit. Abutters to Zoning Hearings are notified by Certified Mail and may attend to observe and participate in the public testimony portion of the hearing.

### ***Public Hearings***

The Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission, Board of Assessors and Board of Health are sometimes required by state law or local regulation to hold public hearings. Hearings are different than meetings and are held for the purpose of obtaining information from which the board can reach a determination, usually regarding the issuance of a license or permit.

Such hearings will typically have requirements and time frames for advertising and posting public notice of the hearing, notifying abutters, and rendering and filing a decision. These requirements vary depending on the type of hearing. It is the responsibility of the Chairman to assure that the requirements of the public hearing process are properly followed.

### ***Public Hearing Guidelines***

Some procedures are common to all hearings. The Chairman should run the hearing and state the guidelines. All questions should be directed to the Chair. Some suggested guidelines follow:

- . Chair states guidelines and procedures including time limits and decorum.
- . Where necessary, Chair states background information.

- . Petitioner makes presentation.
- . Information presented from Town Officials and other boards or committees.
- . Board or committee members question petitioner.
- . Public directs questions and comments through the Chair.
- . The hearing may be continued to another session with a specific date, time and place announced at the hearing.
- . Once all facts, testimony, and opinions have been heard, the Chair closes the public hearing.
- . The board or committee begins deliberation in an Open Meeting session. Motions may be made and votes may be taken at the board or committee's discretion. The board or committee ultimately votes a decision on the application. The decision usually has a set deadline. A decision usually entails a vote of approval, disapproval, or approval with conditions. Conditions and a rationale for the decision should be clearly spelled out and be based on information given at the hearing, state law, town reports and studies, and other town planning documents. Decisions may not be arbitrary and capricious or based on legally untenable grounds.

It is important to note that in the hearing process, a decision must be based on the testimony and evidence submitted at the hearing or, if written, entered into the record at the hearing. The decision must be based on facts and cannot be arbitrary. The rules of evidence that apply in court do not apply in public hearings of local boards, committees or commissions. As such, hearsay and other evidence that would not be permitted in a court may be heard by a board, committee or commission, and accorded such weight as each member deems appropriate. Irrelevant, immaterial and information based on emotions are not appropriate evidence upon which to base a decision.

### ***Executive Sessions***

The Open Meeting Law requires that all meetings of a governmental body be open to the public, except for a few limited purposes for which a board may enter into executive session. All appointed boards are urged to consult with legal counsel (with prior authorization from the Town Administrator) if they have any question as to the process and/or permissibility of entering into executive session.

Executive session is closed to the public, but the board must first convene in a duly posted open session. A majority of the members must vote by roll-call in favor of a motion to enter into executive session. The motion must state the reason for the executive session and must state whether or not the board will return to open session. All votes taken in executive session must be recorded roll-call votes. Minutes must be taken during executive session; however, they will not be released until the matter discussed has been completed. Once the matter has concluded and the minutes have been approved, an electronic copy should be provided to the Town Clerk for posting on the town's website.

Executive session may be held only for the following purposes (see Attorney General's website (<http://www.mass.gov/ago/government-resources/open-meeting-law>) for further explanation of each exemption):

1. To discuss the reputation, character, physical condition or mental health, rather than professional competence, of an individual, or to discuss the discipline or dismissal of, or complaints or charges brought against, a public officer, employee, staff member or individual. (See MGL Ch. 30A, § 21 for individual rights.)
2. To conduct strategy sessions in preparation for negotiations with nonunion personnel or to conduct collective bargaining sessions or contract negotiations with non-union personnel.
3. To discuss strategy with respect to collective bargaining or litigation if an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the bargaining or litigating position of the public body and the Chair so declares.
4. To discuss the deployment of security personnel or devices, or strategies with respect thereto.
5. To investigate charges of criminal misconduct or to consider the filing of criminal complaints.
6. To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.
7. To comply with, or act under the authority of, any general or special law or federal grant-in-aid requirements.
8. To consider or interview applicants for employment or appointment by a preliminary screening committee if the chair declares that an open meeting will have a detrimental effect in obtaining qualified applicants; provided, however, that this clause shall not apply to any meeting, including meetings of a preliminary screening committee, to consider and interview applicants who have passed a prior preliminary screening.
9. To meet or confer with a mediator, as defined in section 23C of chapter 233, with respect to any litigation or decision on any public business within its jurisdiction involving another party, group or entity (see MGL Ch. 30A, § 21 for further provisions).
10. To discuss trade secrets or confidential, competitively-sensitive or other proprietary information provided in the course of activities conducted by a governmental body as an energy supplier under a license granted by the department of public utilities pursuant to section 1F of chapter 164, in the course of activities conducted as a municipal aggregator under section 134 of said chapter 164 or in the course of activities conducted by a cooperative consisting of governmental entities organized pursuant to section 136 of said chapter 164, when such governmental body, municipal aggregator or cooperative determines that such disclosure will adversely affect its ability to conduct business in relation to other entities making, selling or distributing electric power and energy.

## **Meeting Minutes**

### ***Content of Minutes***

Section 22 of the Open Meeting Law requires every governmental body to "... create and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings, including executive sessions, setting forth the date, time and place, the members present or absent, a summary of the discussions on each subject, a list of documents and other exhibits used at the meeting, the decisions made and the actions taken at each meeting, including the record of all votes." Minutes need not be verbatim transcripts of a meeting.

Any person may record a meeting with a tape recorder or other means of audio reproduction and/or videotape equipment, provided he or she announces his intention to do so and there is no active interference with the conduct of the meeting.

#### ***Minutes must include each of the following:***

- . The date, time and place;
- . A list of members present and absent;
- . A summary of the discussions on each subject;
- . A list of documents and/or exhibits used at the meeting;
- . The decisions made and the actions taken at each meeting, including a record of all votes; and
- . Copies of documents and/or exhibits, such as pictures or maps, used by the body at an open or executive session;

#### ***Minutes should include:***

- . Names of additional participants (not including press or observers);
- . Name of person taking minutes;
- . Time the meeting convened and the time it was adjourned; and
- . Who moved and seconded motions.

*A sample outline of minutes is located at the end of this handbook.*

### ***Availability/Filing of Minutes***

Meetings may not proceed without a designated secretary responsible for providing a written record of the meeting as prescribed by the Open Meeting Law. Audio or video recordings may not be used as permanent records of a meeting. The approval of the prior meeting's minutes should always appear as an agenda item to encourage timely completion and filing of the minutes. It should be noted that the minutes of an open meeting, in whatever form (notes, draft, tape recording, etc.), are considered public records and must be made available to the public upon request.

Boards and committees should strive for transparency, posting minutes as soon as they have been approved. A copy of the signed, approved minutes must be sent to the Town Clerk's office (by e-mail and hard copy) and posted to the Town's website.

## **5. CONDUCT OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS**

### ***Conflict of Interest***

Members of a board, commission or committee are considered municipal employees, regardless of their lack of compensation, and as such, are subject to the Conflict of Interest Law. A copy of the law may be viewed online at [www.state.ma.us/ethics](http://www.state.ma.us/ethics). The purpose of the law is to assure that the private financial interests and personal relationships of public employees do not conflict with their public obligations. The law also regulates the activities of public officials after their term of service is over. In general:

- \* You may not ask for or accept anything (regardless of its value) if it is offered in exchange for agreeing to perform or not perform an official act.
- \* You may not ask for or accept anything worth \$50 or more from anyone with whom you have official dealings. Examples of regulated "gifts" include: sports tickets, costs of drinks and meals, travel expenses, conference fees, gifts of appreciation, entertainment expenses, free use of vacation homes and complimentary tickets to charitable events. If a prohibited gift is offered, you may refuse or return it; you may donate it to a non-profit organization, provided you do not take the tax write-off; you may pay the giver the full value of the gift; or, in the case of certain types of gifts, it may be considered "a gift to your public employer," provided it remains in the office and does not ever go home with you. You may not accept honoraria for a speech that is in any way related to your official duties, unless you are a state legislator.
- \* You may not hire, promote, supervise, or otherwise participate in the employment of your immediate family or your spouse's immediate family.
- \* You may not take any type of official action which will affect the financial interests of your immediate family or your spouse's immediate family. For instance, you may not participate in licensing or inspection processes involving a family member's business.
- \* You may not take any official action affecting your own financial interest, or the financial interest of a business partner, private employer, or any organization for which you serve as an officer, director or trustee. For instance: you may not take any official action regarding an "after hours" employer, or its

geographic competitors; you may not participate in licensing, inspection, zoning or other issues that affect a company you own, or its competitors; if you serve on the board of a non-profit organization (that is substantially engaged in business activities), you may not take any official action which would impact that organization, or its competitors.

- \* Unless you qualify for an exemption, you may not have more than one job with the same municipality or county, or more than one job with the state.
- \* Except under special circumstances, you may not have a financial interest in a contract with your public employer. For example, if you are a full time town employee, a company you own may not be a vendor to that town unless you meet specific criteria, the contract is awarded by a bid process, and you publicly disclose your financial interest.
- \* You may not represent anyone but your public employer in any matter in which your public employer has an interest. For instance, you may not contact other government agencies on behalf of a company, an association, a friend, or even a charitable organization.
- \* You may not ever disclose confidential information, data or material which you gained or learned as a public employee.
- \* Unless you make a proper, public disclosure in writing -- including all the relevant facts -- you may not take any action that could create an appearance of impropriety, or could cause an impartial observer to believe your official actions are tainted with bias or favoritism.
- \* You may not use your official position to obtain unwarranted privileges, or any type of special treatment, for yourself or anyone else. For instance: you may not approach your subordinates, vendors whose contracts you oversee, or people who are subject to your official authority to propose private business dealings.
- \* You may not use public resources for political or private purposes. Examples of "public resources" include: office computers, phones, fax machines, postage machines, copiers, official cars, staff time, sick time, uniforms, and official seals.
- \* You may not, after leaving public service, take a job involving public contracts or any other particular matter in which you participated as a public employee.

*(Taken from State Ethics Commission website: "Introduction to the Conflict of Interest Law for the Public Sector")*

If a board member has a conflict of interest or an appearance of a conflict in any matter before the board, that member should not be counted in the quorum, or participate in or be present for any pertinent discussion or votes.

The law provides for the legal determination of conflict of interest status for any employee submitting a request to the appointing authority or State Ethics Commission. If board members have any questions about their activities, they should file a written request for a determination with Town Counsel, through

the Town Administrator. The answer to the request will be in writing and will become a matter of public record. A board member may also request a confidential opinion directly from the State Ethics Commission.

Each year, all municipal employees (which includes members of boards, committees and commissions) must be given a summary of the conflict of interest law prepared by the Ethics Commission and, every two years, they must complete an online training program prepared by the Commission. The online training program is available at [www.muniprogram.eth.state.ma.us](http://www.muniprogram.eth.state.ma.us). Once you have completed the program online, you will be prompted to print a Certificate of Completion, which must be kept on file at the Town Clerk's Office.

### ***Standards of Conduct for Appointed Town Officials***

The following policy sets forth expectations and guidelines to serve as a standard for achieving high levels of public confidence by maintaining professionalism and mutual respect among members of boards, committees and commissions in the Town of Rockland. This policy applies to all members of town boards, committees and commissions.

### ***Standards of Conduct***

Members of all boards, committees and commissions are expected to:

- \* Be well informed concerning the state and local duties of the board on which the members serve.
- \* Always keep in mind that they represent the Town of Rockland.
- \* Accept their position as a means of unselfish public service, not to benefit personally, professionally or financially from their position.
- \* Treat all members of the board, all applicants who come before the board, all staff members, and the public with respect, despite differences of opinion.
- \* Treat all staff as professionals, in a manner that respects the abilities, experience and dignity of each individual.
- \* Share information obtained on pending issues with other board members.
- \* Conduct themselves in a manner that maintains public confidence in our local government.
- \* Conduct official business in such a manner as to give the clear impression that they cannot be improperly influenced in the performance of their official duties.
- \* Abide by the ethics guidelines established under MGL Chapter 268A, making every effort to avoid any appearance of conflict, and properly disclosing any apparent conflict.

- \* Unless specifically exempt under MGL Chapter 30A, section 18-25 (Open Meeting Law), conduct the business of the public in a manner that promotes open and transparent government.
- \* Honor confidential matters not legally subject to disclosure that come before the Board in executive session.

### ***Corrective Action***

Anyone who feels that a board member is acting inconsistently with these standards of conduct may take one or more of the following actions, as deemed necessary, in the order listed below:

- \* Speak privately with the board member about his/her behavior in an effort to correct said behavior.
- \* Ask the Chairman of the board to speak with the individual in an effort to correct said behavior.
- \* Bring the matter to the attention of the appointing authority.
- \* File a formal complaint in writing to the Town Administrator.
- \* The Town Administrator shall conduct an investigation and issue a written report with a recommendation for corrective action within fourteen days of receipt of the complaint.
- \* The Town Administrator shall have the authority at his/her discretion to seek the services of an independent mediation service when the situation warrants.

### ***Speaking for a Board or Committee***

An individual board member has a right to speak publicly as a private citizen but should not purport to represent the board or committee or exercise the authority of the board or committee except when specifically authorized by that body to do so. If members identify themselves as members when speaking as private citizens, it may be perceived that they speak for the board or committee. Such a perception should be avoided. An individual board member should not speak publicly as a private citizen before the board upon which they sit.

## **6. ADMINISTRATION**

### ***Public Records***

With few exceptions, every document and record (hard copy or electronic) made or received by a board, committee, commission or other public entity is presumed to be a public record under the Massachusetts Public Records Law (MGL Chapter 66). As such, the public has a right of access to these

records. Town boards and departments are also obligated to properly secure and maintain public records. Public records should never be kept in a home or on private property of a board member.

***A Guide to the Massachusetts Public Records Law:***

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/pre/prepdf/guide.pdf>

***Access to Public Records***

950 CMR 32.00 defines a record custodian as “the governmental officer or employee who in the normal course of his or her duties has access to or control of public records.” The records custodian for boards and committees that do not have staff support would typically be the board’s clerk. The records custodian is responsible for providing access to the board’s records upon request. A reasonable fee may be charged for copies and for research involved in processing requests for records. (See above referenced guide for further explanation.)

***Retention/Disposal of Public Records***

No records should ever be destroyed before the Town Administrator has been consulted. The Public Records Law sets forth a prescribed period of time for the retention of public records and requires that all departments and boards formally request permission from the Secretary of State to dispose of records. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts “Municipal Records Retention Manual” was updated in 2010. The manual contains forms for requesting permission to destroy records. It also includes a detailed process for inventorying and managing records. Record retention periods differ for various boards and departments. A copy of the manual can be found at:

**Records Retention/Disposal Schedules:**

<http://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcrmu/rmuidx.htm>

Important note: Email correspondence is also considered a public record.

***Storage of Public Records***

The Secretary of State requires that any original records located outside of a municipal building must be stored in fire-resistant devices and/or safes. It is recommended that only copies of original records be removed from public property. Whether or not a board or committee has an office in a public building, provision must be made to securely store all records in a municipal building, and not at private residences.

### ***Use of Town Counsel***

Requests for opinions or assistance from Town Council must be directed through the office of the Town Administrator.

## **7. USE OF TOWN FACILITIES, STAFF AND EQUIPMENT**

This policy establishes a procedure for scheduling meeting room space in the Town Hall. It also sets forth criteria for use of the meeting rooms. It applies to all Town of Rockland departments, boards, committees and commissions, as well as any private (non-profit) use of the rooms, as may be allowed under this policy. Private parties are not permitted.

### ***Scheduling Rooms***

It is strongly recommended that boards meet in a town building. A meeting held in a private home or restaurant may give the appearance of being secret and discourage the public from attending. All open meetings of public bodies must be accessible to persons with disabilities. Meeting locations must be accessible by wheelchair, without the need for special assistance. There are three meeting rooms in the Town Hall. The rooms are primarily for public meetings of town boards and committees; such uses shall receive priority. Rooms may be used for other private, non-profit purposes on an intermittent basis, when not in conflict with regular town business use. Meeting rooms are scheduled through the office of the Town Administrator, on a first come, first served basis. Room assignments may be changed at the discretion of the Town Administrator, as deemed necessary. Please contact the Town Administrator's office at (781) 871-1874 X 100 to reserve a room prior to posting a meeting.

Meeting room reservations may be made by a designated member or representative of the board or group requesting use of the room, preferably at least 72 hours in advance of a meeting. Verbal or written cancellation of a meeting room reservation is required as soon in advance as possible.

Reservations may be requested verbally or in writing, but shall not be considered final until confirmed by the Town Administrator's office. It should be noted that reserving a meeting room does not constitute a meeting posting as required by the Open Meeting Law (MGL Ch. 30A, §18-25).

Town Hall offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM. The 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesdays of each month Town Hall is open 8:30 AM to 8:00 PM, September through June, but closed on Fridays during July and August. Meeting rooms are available during regular Town Hall hours and during the evening on Monday through Thursday. Requests for use of the meeting rooms on other days must be made through the Selectmen's office.

### ***General Meeting Room Rules***

All public meetings must remain open to the public, with the exception of executive sessions held in accordance with MGL Ch. 30A, § 21. The Chairman of the board/committee holding the meeting, or a similar person in charge (i.e., town employee serving as staff support), is responsible for assuring that the meeting room is left in an orderly fashion.

Food and beverages: Light refreshments are allowed in meeting rooms. The Chairman of the board/committee holding the meeting, or a similar person in charge (i.e., town employee serving as staff support), is responsible for assuring that all trash is removed and any spills or other messes are promptly and properly attended to.

No smoking or alcoholic beverages are allowed on the premises.

Repeated violations of these rules may result in restrictions on future scheduling and use of the meeting rooms.

### ***Staff Support***

Each board or committee is responsible for its own clerical work. However, with advance notice, the Town Administrator's office can provide assistance in coordinating photocopying, mailings, and other services. Some boards and committees have a staff person who serves as an administrative assistant. In such cases, the staff person provides assistance, rather than the duties that are expected of members. For instance, the staff administrative assistant may record minutes of meetings, prepare and circulate information for meetings and perform other administrative duties. Please be aware that most staff persons have limited hours and boards and committees should not ask for more than can reasonably be accomplished in those hours.

Some boards and committees have a professional staff person assigned as a liaison to the Town Administrator. The responsibility of the staff member is to provide technical support and information. The staff person keeps the Town Administrator informed of the body's work and any items of significance which may come up. In all cases, the Town Administrator provides general management, direction and supervision to the staff members and their daily operations.

### ***Use of Equipment***

Town equipment and facilities may be used for official board or committee business. Most boards and committees are assigned a mailbox in the Town Administration office that should be checked on a weekly basis. Board or committee mailing addresses should be: Rockland Town Hall, 242 Union Street. A copy machine is located in the copy room on the second floor of Town Hall, and is available to board and committee members for town business only.

## **8. MEETING POSTING GUIDELINES**

Posting shall contain the following:

1. Board Name
2. Meeting date, time and location
3. Agenda

The posting must be received in the Town Clerk's Office at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. NOTE: The 48 hours DOES NOT include Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays. The office closes at 4:30 each day, so if you send a posting after 3:00 p.m. by email, it will not be received until the following business day.

***Samples of a: Meeting Notice, Agenda Notice, Meeting Minutes and Executive Session on the following pages.***

TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF ROCKLAND  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

TIME STAMP TO BE  
PROVIDED BY TOWN  
CLERK

Board / Committee / Commission:

DATE:

TIME: AM/PM

LOCATION:

ROOM:

REQUESTED BY:

ALL MEETING NOTICES MUST BE FILED AND TIME STAMPED IN THE TOWN CLERK'S OFFICE AND POSTED ON THE MUNICIPAL BULLETIN BOARD 48 HOURS PRIOR TO THE MEETING, EXCLUDING SATURDAYS, SUNDAYS AND LEGAL HOLIDAYS (IN ACCORDANCE WITH MGL c. 30A, §§18-25) (EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2010).

For Town Clerk's Office Use Only:

Date Posted: Posted By:

TOWN CLERK  
TOWN OF ROCKLAND  
NOTICE OF PUBLIC MEETING

TIME STAMP TO BE  
PROVIDED BY TOWN  
CLERK

Board / Committee / Commission:

MEETING AGENDA

ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR MEETING

APPROVAL OF ANY BILLS OR EXPENSES

LIST OF TOPICS TO BE DISCUSSED

(OPEN MEETING LAW REQUIRES A LIST OF TOPICS THAT THE CHAIR REASONABLY ANTICIPATES WILL BE DISCUSSED AT THE MEETING)

## ***Sample Meeting Minutes***

Minutes of (name of committee)

Meeting Date:

Call to Order. The meeting was held in the Washington Room at Town Hall and was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Committee Members in Attendance. List all members present, including the recording secretary.

Committee Members Absent. List all absent members.

Staff in Attendance.

Others Participating. (optional)

Others in Attendance. (optional)

Agenda.

Approve Minutes from previous meeting(s).

Action Taken by Vote. List all votes taken.

Discussion.

Adjournment.

***Executive Session.***

Please note special protocol required for Executive Session detailed in Open Meeting Law Chapter 30, Section 21.

Items/Documents: Copies of any documents handed out at meetings should be listed and attached to the final Minutes.