

Brunswick, Maine

Town Committee Handbook

How to Join and Participate in a Town Committee



Contributors:

Jesse Bishop
Bill Dana
Jamie Ecker
John Eldridge
Julia Henze
Jennifer Hicks
Abby King
Nat Shed
Fran Smith
Sue Stableford
Sande Updegraph
David Watson

Submitted for Approval: May 15, 2023

Approved: May 15, 2023

The Purpose of Town Committees and This Handbook

The Purpose of Town Committees

Brunswick, Maine values the involvement of many citizens as volunteers on its numerous Committees, Boards, and Commissions. These volunteers support the work of the elected Town Council and the municipal staff by providing insights and recommending ideas on topics of interest and concern to the community. While the Town Council establishes and authorizes the committees and encourages each committee to create policy initiatives which can be presented to the Council, the Council's approval is needed to move forward with any new initiative. Committees and their members should not take action without approval and/or direction from the Council.

If you are a member of a Town Committee, thank you for volunteering. If you are thinking about applying to join a Committee, we welcome your application. (link – <https://www.brunswickme.org/227/Boards-Committees>)

The purpose of this handbook is to help guide and protect the work of the committee volunteers. It provides a list of existing committees, what they do, and how they fit into the municipal government network. In this handbook, the term Committee refers to all Town volunteer Committees, Boards, and Commissions.

Brunswick Committee List (March 2023)

Note:

The Staff Support positions listed below may change in response to Committee needs and staffing workload.

Adjudicatory (a committee that can settle or determine a dispute or decide a case)

Committee	Staff Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment Review Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Assessor
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marine Resources Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marine Resources Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Village Review Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Zoning Board of Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Codes Enforcement Officer

Advisory (a committee that makes recommendations but doesn't act on them)

Committee	Staff Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Planning Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cable Television Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• TV3 Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conservation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Environmental Planner
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Davis Fund Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Town Manager's Assistant
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recreation Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks & Recreation Director
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recycling & Sustainability Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Works Director

• Rivers & Coastal Waters Commission	• Marine Resources Officer
• Town Commons Committee	• Town Arborist
• Tree Committee	• Town Arborist
• Trust Fund Advisory Committee	• Finance Director

Ad Hoc (a committee created for a specific purpose)

Committee	Staff Support
• Climate Action Plan Task Force	• Environmental Planner
• Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee	• Town Planner
• Cook's Corner Advisory Committee	• Economic Development Director
• Housing Committee	• Economic Development Director
• LC4 * - MARC Committee *	• Economic Development Director
• Central Fire Station Advisory Committee	• Economic Development Project Manager
• Mare Brook Watershed Plan Committee	• Environmental Planner

*Midcoast Athletic & Recreation Complex

*Landing Community Center Complex Committee

Unique Chartered Committees

Committee	Staff Support
• Brunswick Topsham Housing Authority	• Authority Director
• Brunswick Topsham Water District	• District General Manager
• Brunswick Sewer District	• District General Manager

Town Council Sub-committees

Committee	Staff Support
• Appointments Committee	• Town Clerk
• Finance Committee	• Finance Director
• MRRA TIF Committee *	• Finance Director

*Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority Tax Increment Finance

Other Special Committees

Committee	Staff Support
• Citizen's Initiative Clarity Board	•
• Fence Viewer	•
• Growstown School	• District 3 Town Councilor
• Personnel Board	• Human Resources Director
• Recreation Commission	• Parks & Recreation Director
• Sealer of Weights & Measurers	• [state support]
• Voter Registration Appeals Board	• Town Clerk

NOTE:

A list of committees and their responsibilities appears in Appendix A.

Responsibilities of Committee Members and Officers

General Committee Responsibilities

- Adhere to the committee's charge or mission statement
- Review the charge periodically (not to exceed every 5 years) and make recommendations to the Town Council regarding any changes
- Procedures for changing the Committee charge may be found further in this document in the section titled "Reviewing Your Committee Charge"
- Inform the Council on issues pertinent to the charge and make recommendations through the Staff Support person regarding town policy and initiatives as appropriate
- Meet on a regular schedule as designated in its charge or on an as needed basis
- Receive public comment at official Committee meetings (any meeting of a quorum of members)
- Conduct meetings in accordance with town and state public information regulations and according to a set agenda; new items may be addresses under Other Business
- Set annual goals for the committee
- Report annually to the Council on committee goals and accomplishments (a suggested format is described further on in this document) according to a schedule prepared by the Appointments Committee
- Coordinate with Staff Support representative to make certain that all meetings are advertised and/or posted according to State Open Meetings Law
- Elect a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary (if appropriate) annually
- Inform the Town Clerk and Appointments Committee of changes in officers and meeting times
- Coordinate activities and recommendations with Town's annual capital planning and financing cycle (Capital Improvement Program and General Fund Budget)

Member Responsibilities

- Work to the best of your ability in support of committee activities
- Notify the Chair if you are going to be absent – attendance impacts a quorum
- Commit to attending meetings, being an active participant, engaging in respectful dialogue to carry out the Council's charge of the committee either in person or via remote access when appropriate (See Remote Meetings Policy in Definitions Section)

Chair Responsibilities

- Facilitate meetings
- Set an agenda with input from members and staff. In some committees the Staff Support person will set the agenda, e.g. Planning Board).
- Ensure that the agenda is posted in advance of the meeting
- Notify the Town Clerk of member resignations or leadership changes
- Ensure that the Staff Support Person updates the committee roster and committee web page with member changes, meeting minutes, and Video On Demand recording of meetings
- Serve as liaison between members and staff
- Conduct an orientation for all committee members which will include a review of Committee policies and this Handbook

Vice Chair Responsibilities

- Serve in the Chair's absence
- Assist the Chair with the Chair's responsibilities

Secretary Responsibilities

- Take minutes which include: location, date & time, members present, major topics, decisions (who voted), and actions taken
- Circulate minutes to the members for review, approval, and changes when appropriate
- Ensure that minutes are sent to the committee Staff Support person for posting on the Committee's web page

Staff Support Responsibilities

- Serves in an ex-officio, non-voting capacity
- Attends official Committee meetings
- Acts as the primary channel for information, legal support, and expenditure of funds requests
- Serves as the liaison between their appointed committee and the and Town Council Leadership and the Town Manager
- Maintains accurate on-line/website committee information

How to Become Involved in a Town Committee

How to Join a Town Committee

Joining a town committee is not difficult but does require a few steps so may take several weeks to complete. As a reminder, applicants must be Brunswick residents.

- A telephone call or visit to the Town Clerk's office (the record keeping department for the Town) is a good first step especially if you are not familiar with Brunswick's volunteer opportunities. (207-725-6658, 85 Union Street – Room 202).
- Make contact with the respective Committee's Chair
- You may also visit the Town's web page for the application - <https://www.brunswickme.org/277/Boards-Committees>. There you will find a fillable pdf form which can be completed on-line or by hand, printed and mailed, faxed, or delivered to the Clerk's office (fax - 207-725-6663). Committee information and committee membership may also be found here.
- **The Clerk's** office will telephone applicants to schedule an interview with the Appointments Committee (a group of 3 Councilors who have been designated to review applications and make recommendations to the full Council). Interviews take place on the evening of the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Town Hall. Each interview lasts 15 minutes. At that time the Appointments Committee will ask questions about the applicant's, experience, interest in volunteering for the Town and also answer any questions the applicant may have.
- Once all of the interviews have been completed the Appointments Committee will recommend candidates for vacancies, then transmit their selection to the Town Clerk.
- The Clerk will include these recommendations on the agenda for the full Council for the first regular meeting of the following month.
- At the time of the recommendations Councilors may suggest additional nominations, approve the entire slate, or approve/disapprove candidates on an individual basis.
- The Clerk will notify candidates of the results. Those approved will begin serving their term.
- Candidates appointed to an Adjudicatory Committee will need to be sworn in by the Town Clerk prior to serving.

Reappointment to Town Committee

The process is the same for renewing committee terms. The Clerk's office will notify committee members several weeks in advance of their term expiration date so there is time to re-apply and be interviewed. By not submitting a renewal application, the Appointments Committee will assume that the candidate no longer wishes to continue as a Committee Member.

Reappointment may be based on additional criteria including attendance record and contribution to the Committee's charge. Members are not obligated to reapply if they no longer wish to serve on the Committee and the Town Council is not obligated to recommend reappointment.

Member Terms

Most committees offer 3-year terms. The terms are staggered to provide continuity to their activities. However, candidates may be approved to complete an unexpired term if a previous member has resigned.

Resignation from a Committee

Committee members who wish to resign their position before the end of their term should notify the Town Clerk and Committee Chair in writing as soon as possible to allow for timely recruitment of a new candidate.

Committee Functioning and Procedures

When and Where Do Committees Meet

Most Committees meet one evening per month in Town Hall (85 Union Street). Some Ad Hoc or Other groups may meet on an irregular or as needed basis. Some committees may meet at other locations as identified in their charge from the Town Council.

All committee meetings are posted on the Event Calendar on the Town's web site, BrunswickME.org. Zoom links are available there as well and are posted by the Town Manager's Office person.

If a meeting time or location is changed notification shall be provided by the Staff Support person via email to all committee members and posting on the Town web site Event Calendar.

Sub-committees

Committees may establish their own Sub-committees, as approved by the Town Council. Sub-committees are subject to the same public meeting notice requirements as the full Committee. Committees may also work with community groups in support of activities related to each Committee's charge.

Reviewing your Committee Charge

The Town Council requests that each Committee review their charge at least every 5 years to make certain that it reflects current Town, Town Council, and Committee priorities and circumstances. The process to update a committee charge is as follows:

- If updates or changes are needed an edited draft should be sent to the Appointments Committee first for review. If no changes are requested a simple email to the

Appointments Committee is sufficient to acknowledge that the Committee has reviewed the charge.

- The Appointments Committee will then submit the draft with their feedback to the appropriate Staff Support person and Town Manager for further feedback.
- Finally, the Appointments Committee will forward the revised charge to Council Leadership for inclusion on an upcoming agenda.

Legal and Ethical Parameters

Adjudicatory Committees

- All general and sub-committee meetings must be publicly noticed.
- All meetings must be recorded with televised recording preferred.

Advisory and Ad Hoc Committees

- If a majority of membership is present, it must be publicly noticed.
- All meetings must be recorded with televised recording preferred.
- If working groups are meeting (fewer members than a quorum) they need not be publicly noticed.

Other Committees

- The Citizen's Initiative Clarity Board meetings are to be publicly noticed and recorded.
- The Fence Viewer, Growstown School, Personnel Board, Sealer of Weights & Measures, Appointments Committee, and Voter Registration Appeals Board are not held in public nor are they recorded.

Conflict of Interest

Citizens should not serve on any Committee where the individual's personal interest conflicts with that of the Committee or Town. (See Town Conflict of Interest Policy as adopted by the Town Council on March 7, 2022.)

Communication Methods

Among Council, Staff, and Committee Members

- Working documents and drafts can be sent by email, fax, or hand-delivered.
- Feedback from members should be sent through the Chair or Vice Chair.
- Discussion must happen at publicly noticed meetings not through email. Emails are part of the official Town record and are subject to Maine's Freedom of Access Act parameters.
- Staff Support members must be cc'd on all communications.
- The "Reply All" email function is discouraged except when reviewing logistics.

Among Committees

Formal requests or coordination should be handled among the Chairs.

With the Community

Public statements, press releases, and social media posts must be coordinated with the Committee Staff Support member and approved by the Town Manager.

Public Comment

Comments from the public are not required at Committee meetings, but are encouraged.

Training

This handbook will serve as a guide to conducting committee meetings. More formal training may be available through the Staff Support persons.

Definition of Terms

Ex-officio

The ex-officio member of a Committee holds that position by virtue of the ex-officio's office rather than the individual in that office. Ex-officio members should not be included in the count when determining a quorum. Whether or not the ex-officio member has voting privileges is determined in the Committee charge.

Public Notice

Brunswick adheres to the State Freedom of Access provisions found in Chapter 13, Subchapter 1. Public notice must be given for "all public proceedings of a body or agency consisting of 3 or more persons." All postings of public meetings are handled by the Town Manager's office and are posted to the Town's Event Calendar located on the web site home page at BrunswickME.org.

Quorum

A simple majority of the voting members.

Remote Meetings Policy - Adopted Feb 6, 2023 by the Town Council.

Remote participation – means telephonic or video technology allowing simultaneous reception of information and may include other means when such means are necessary to provide reasonable accommodation to a person with a disability.

Members of public bodies covered by this policy are expected to be physically present for public proceedings except when being physically present is not practicable. A member of the body who participates in a public proceeding by remote methods is present for purposes of a quorum and voting.

***Thank you for your willingness to serve Brunswick and
contribute to a brighter future for all of us.***

Appendices

Appendix A - List of committees and responsibilities

More detailed information can be found at <https://www.brunswickme.org/277/Boards-Committees>

Adjudicatory

Assessment Review Board

Serves as an appeals body to hear appeals of decisions of the Assessor or Town Council or on the exempt status of property.

Marine Resources Committee

Administers and coordinates the shellfish conservation program.

Planning Board

Reviews development plans against the Town's land use ordinance.

Village Review Board

Reviews new construction, exterior alterations, and demolition within the village review district.

Zoning Board of Appeals

Hears appeals of decisions of the Codes Officer, variance and special exception appeals of the zoning ordinance.

Advisory

Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Serves to advise and guide public policy on safe, non-vehicular transportation issues and development.

Cable Television Committee

Proposes policy and advises the Council on management and operation of community access TV channels.

Conservation Commission

Advocates for conservation values and stewarding our ecologically rich natural communities and open spaces.

Davis Fund Committee

Provides grants to local non-profit organizations for projects that provide “pleasure to the citizens of Brunswick” from the proceeds of the Nathaniel Davis Grant Fund.

Recreation Commission

Advises the Parks & Recreation Director on public recreation programs and policies.

Recycling & Sustainability Committee

Studies and develops recommendations for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, sustainable management of Brunswick’s solid waste, and management of the town’s facilities and government operations.

Rivers & Coastal Waters Commission

Oversees the implementation of the Harbor Management Plan and develops recommendations to the Town Council on the usage of the coastline, anchorages, moorings, and related town-owned property.

Town Commons Committee

Provides general management of the Town Commons property.

Tree Committee

Assists the Town in the dissemination of news and information regarding the selection, planting, and maintenance of trees and shrubs.

Trust Fund Advisory Committee

Establishes the investment objectives in its judgment are most appropriate for the town's pooled funds.

Ad Hoc

Climate Action Plan Task Force

Charged with developing strategies and actions to work toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the community.

Comprehensive Plan Update Steering Committee

Charged with updating the 2008 vision plan for Brunswick.

Cook’s Corner Advisory Committee

Charged with advising Council on re-development plans for the Cook’s Corner area.

Housing Committee

Charged with making recommendations to expand the Town’s housing stock including more low-income and mid-range options.

LC4 (Landing Community Center Complex Committee)

Charged with coordinating plans for the new recreation complex at Brunswick Landing.

Central Fire Station Advisory Committee

Charged with developing a proposal for use of the former downtown fire station.

Mare Brook Watershed Plan Committee

Charged with collaborating with the Planning Department to protect the watershed and the waterfront.

Unique Chartered Committees

Brunswick Topsham Housing Authority

Provides safe, quality affordable housing for eligible persons in need of assistance, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, age, handicap, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, or disability.

Brunswick Topsham Water District

Monitors the management of quality drinking water in the two towns.

Sewer District

Protects the health and environment of Brunswick through wastewater collection and treatment in an environmentally responsible, efficient, and reliable manner.

Council Sub-Committees

Appointments Committee

Consists of three Councilors appointed by the Chair; interviews applicants for Town Committees and recommends appointments to the full Council; assists staff in managing and promoting Town Committees.

Finance Committee

Provides councilor members with an opportunity for in-depth review and analysis of the Town’s financial matters, resulting in feedback for staff and recommendations to the Town Council.

MRRRA TIF Districts Committee

Works with MRRRA (Midcoast Regional Redevelopment Authority) to manage the use of TIF funds generated at Brunswick Landing

Other Committees

Citizen's Initiative Clarity Board

Reviews citizen-initiated ballot items to make certain that they are clearly stated and understandable; meets irregularly.

Fence Viewer

A single member serving in an historic position that traditionally settles disputes over fences following state guidelines on an as needed basis.

Growstown School

Assists with special projects involving the historic school property.

Personnel Board

Assists in the hiring and promotion of Police Officers and Firefighters.

Sealer of Weights & Measures

A state managed position that verifies standards of weights and measures; appointed by the Town.

Voter Registration Appeals Board

Adjudicates complaints regarding voter registration; meets as needed.

Appendix B - Frequently Asked Questions

How can the charge or mission statement of the committee be changed?

The committee decides on changes they feel are necessary. They send these recommendations to the Appointments Committee and to the Staff Support person. After review, the Appointments Committee will send the request to Town Council Leadership to be included on a future Town Council agenda for approval, changes, or disapproval.

What is the process for bringing an agenda item to the Town Council?

Requests for items (other than changes to the Committee charge) should be sent to Town Council Leadership by the Committee Staff Support person for inclusion on an upcoming agenda.

Where can I find a Committee Application Form?

On the Town's web site <https://www.brunswickme.org/277/Boards-Committees>

Are School Board Members and School Committees selected using these processes?

No. School Board Members are elected from electoral districts as are Town Councilors. The Board and the School Department have their own processes for volunteer opportunities and management.

What questions are normally asked of the applicant in an Appointments Committee interview?

- "Tell us about your interest in this Committee."
- "Are there other Committees that are of interest as well as the one for which you are applying?"
- "How does your (work/volunteer/educational) experiences relate to this committee's work?"
- "In what ways would you work to develop cooperation and/or consensus within the committee?"
- "Are you able to attend the committee's meetings (*i.e.* – *second Tuesday at 7 PM for two hours*) for the next three years?"
- "What are some new ideas and/or new practices that you would like to see during your time on the (name of committee)?"
- "Do you understand the advisory and/or adjudicatory roles of this committee?"

Appendix C - Suggested format for Town Council presentation

The presentation should be designed to inform the community about town volunteer opportunities.

- It should focus on accomplishments and goals of each Committee.
- It should be no more than 5 minutes in length and may or may not include visual assistance (power point, etc).
- Although one person normally presents having other Committee members in attendance demonstrates support and enthusiasm for the Committee's mission.
- It may/should contain a promotional message to encourage citizen participation on Committees.

End

