



**TOWN OF HINESBURG SELECTBOARD
OPERATING GUIDELINES FOR ORDERLY CONDUCT OF BUSINESS**

PREAMBLE

These Operating Guidelines are intended to facilitate the orderly conduct of the business of the Town of Hinesburg and specifically to establish an understanding among the members of the Selectboard, staff and the public of the existence of a consistent procedure for agendas and participation in and at meetings of the Selectboard.

PARTICIPATION

It is the intent of the Selectboard to exercise the authority and trust vested in it as a representative body to conduct the affairs of the public, as it deems, on the merit of the information before it, as being in the best interest of the Town of Hinesburg and the majority of its residents. The Selectboard will afford all parties the opportunity to prepare comments upon issues before they are discussed in a public meeting. The Board also encourages citizens to attend meetings and use the Public Comment agenda item to share information and opinions with the Selectboard. The Selectboard shall make every effort to allow public input on Selectboard decisions. Whenever possible, decisions will be delayed to provide the time to disseminate pending decisions to our town citizens.

To the extent possible, all Selectboard meetings will be accessible in real-time via webcast and the applicable government access cable station and recorded. In addition, public participation will be allowed via virtual platforms when possible.

1. **Regular Public Meetings** – These regularly scheduled meetings are held two times a month as established by the Selectboard at their annual Organizational Meeting which is held the next regularly scheduled meeting following the Town's Annual Meeting in March. The meetings shall have a warned agenda where items are reported on and discussed and motions may be made and voted upon.

Regular participation shall include the members of the Selectboard and the Town Manager and staff or consultants whose participation is pertinent to the issues on the agenda. Other individuals shall be included by inclusion on the agenda (see number five (5) below, "Agenda").

2. **Special Meetings** - Special meetings are held other than the regularly scheduled meetings for the purpose of reviewing one or more reports, budget proposals, schedules, formats, or proposals, and formulating or amending same but otherwise a "regular meeting."
3. **Public Hearings** -Public hearings shall be warned fifteen (15) days in advance and held on specific agenda items and any person wishing to attend and be heard may do so. Anyone wishing to speak may do so only when

recognized by the Chair, and shall state their name for the record. All comments and opinions shall be relevant and shall be presented in a productive and respectful manner. Minor clarification may be requested and granted at the discretion of the Chair. The Chair may establish procedures for input including, but not limited to, time limits, sign-up sheets, and division of speakers pro and con, except in the latter case provision for rebuttal shall be made.

4. **Informational Meetings** - Informational meetings shall be restricted to the agenda item. The meeting shall begin with a presentation of the item by the Selectboard, the Chair, a staff member and/or a consultant when appropriate. The purpose is to present information to the public through statements, presentation of audio-visual displays and response to audience questions. This exchange should be exhausted prior to receiving comments and opinions to assure that everyone is afforded the opportunity to become familiar with the issue. Public comment under the public hearing procedure may then be heard if the Selectboard so votes. The Selectboard may combine public informational meetings and public hearings in the same meeting or may hold them separately on a given issue.
5. **Agenda** - Prior to finalizing the agenda the Town Manager shall consult with the Selectboard Chair or Vice-Chair in the absence of the Chair. Each meeting shall have an agenda listing time and place, type of meeting, and items to be discussed or acted on. Items listed on the agenda shall be worded to describe the nature of the business or issue to be considered by the Selectboard. Any Selectboard member may request that a new business item be placed on the regular meeting agenda by informing the Town Manager's office and with the consent of the Chair five (5) working days preceding the scheduled meeting date. The agenda may be amended by consent of a majority of the Selectboard.
6. **Open Meeting Law and Executive Session** – Vermont State Statutes 1 V.S.A. Section 313) have extensive guidelines pertaining to deliberative and executive sessions and there are limited situations when executive session is appropriate as well as specific motions that must be made when entering executive session. “The Open Meeting Law applies when a quorum (majority of the members of the board) are engaged in discussion or decision making about a topic that is within the purview of the board (a subject over which the board has authority and responsibility.)” (VLCT Selectboard Institute) Board members are advised to consult with the Town Manager and use VLCT’s extensive resources on this topic.
7. **Absences** - When a Selectboard member is to be absent from a duly warned meeting of the Selectboard, he or she should notify the Chair and Manager as soon as is practicable. The Chair and Manager will then determine if a quorum of members will be present at the meeting and if not, cancel the meeting. A new meeting will be scheduled for such time when a quorum will be present. If arranged in advance with the Town Manager’s office, members may also participate via speakerphone or other applicable and available technology. Members who miss a meeting are encouraged to read the draft minutes, listen to the audio recording and/or watch the video recording.
8. **Media Relations** - The Town Manager (or his/her designee) is the designated spokesperson and point of contact for the media on administrative matters, Town business/projects or staff information. The Selectboard Chair, or Vice-Chair if the Chair is unavailable, will be the primary spokesperson for the Town for the media on matters regarding Selectboard decisions. After a vote of the Selectboard, dissenting members shall not work to undermine the decision of the Selectboard.

CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

1. The meeting shall be called to order by the Chair, who shall proceed through the agenda as presented or who shall oversee its change or amendment through an orderly process.
2. All participants shall address the Chair who shall ensure that each participant has the opportunity to be heard without interruption or competing conversations.

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99 3. All participants wishing to speak shall seek recognition from the Chair. Only the Chair should interrupt the
100 speaker, and only in exercise of the impartial role of Chair. Speakers shall strive to keep statements relevant to
101 the agenda item being discussed and the Chair shall use his/her discretion in limiting the length and repetitive
102 nature of comments.
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104 4. Side conversations should be kept limited at the Board's table and from the audience. Persons invited to
105 participate should come to the table/microphone provided.
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107 5. Only the Chair may, at an appropriate time, call for a vote on a motion made and seconded. A member may,
108 however, move the question.
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110 6. The Chair should assure that each member of the Selectboard has an opportunity to speak.
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112 7. Corrections of all punctuation, spelling, grammar, and formatting errors to the Minutes may be made by the
113 Town Manager's office prior to the meeting. Proposed corrections or clarification of all substantive changes
114 should be discussed during the open meeting.
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116 8. A quorum is defined as three members. For the purposes of transacting the business of the Town, the
117 concurrence of three members present is necessary in accordance with 1 V.S.A. § 172. For example, if three
118 members are present at a meeting and all three vote in the affirmative to take binding action, then said action
119 is considered binding. If three members are present at a meeting and two of the three vote in the affirmative
120 to take binding action, then said action is not considered binding as two members voting in the affirmative does
121 not constitute an action taken by a majority of the Board as a whole.
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123 9. Upon failure to yield to the Chair, any person may be warned and then expelled from the meeting place in the
124 event of unruly or disrespectful behavior.
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127 MOTIONS AND VOTES

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129 1. The parliamentary conduct of meetings shall generally follow the intent of latest edition of "Robert's Rules of
130 Order, Newly Revised" in all cases where they are applicable.
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132 2. It shall be the responsibility of the Chair to steer each issue to a conclusion. He or she shall be alert to repetition
133 and at the appropriate time shall ask the body if they are ready to vote, shall entertain motions, or shall invite
134 additional comment.
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136 3. Motions shall not always be necessary on each item, however, if the Selectboard wishes to create policy, give
137 direction, enact, enable, or adopt a proposal, or an ordinance, or anything within its authority, it shall be by
138 motion made and seconded and a recorded vote.
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140 4. The motion before the Selectboard shall be read and the Chair shall assure the body is prepared to vote.
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142 5. Members have a right to abstain, but are highly discouraged from doing so. A member may offer a reason for
143 abstention, but is not required to do so.
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145 6. Conflict of interest is guided by the most recent version of the Town's Conflict of Interest Policy.
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147 7. Petitions from the public may be accepted and acknowledged. The Selectboard may then place the item on a
148 future agenda for discussion and possible action. When petitions are placed on agendas for regular meetings, a
149 spokesperson may be allowed to speak briefly on behalf of the signers. Further action shall be as deemed

appropriate by the Selectboard. The administration, consultants, or others shall not be called upon to respond to a petition without a reasonable opportunity to investigate and prepare a response.

8. All decisions of the Selectboard shall be explicit with the intent that all members, the staff, the Manager and the public shall be able to understand the action from reading the minutes.
9. Any member of the Selectboard may call for point of order on violation of these rules compelling a ruling of the Chair.
10. The use of cell phones or other handheld devices for uses unrelated to business during meetings is discouraged. Phones or devices should either be turned off or placed on a setting that does not utilize an audible ring (such as "silent" or "vibrate").
11. All policies shall be introduced at a Selectboard meeting and acted upon at the next meeting or a future meeting. The policy shall be signed and dated by a quorum of the Selectboard and recorded in the Town Manager's office and acknowledged as received by the Town Clerk and stored in the vault under "Selectboard Policies" and on the Town's website. Policies affecting the public shall also be posted on the Town's website.
12. Resolutions may be introduced and adopted at the same Selectboard meeting.
13. The Selectboard must give unanimous consent before proceeding past 11:00 p.m.
14. In accordance with Vermont's Open Meeting Law (1 V.S.A Section 311) email communications should be held to a minimum and used to convey information only, not to gain consensus on issues that should be discussed in an open meeting format.

INTERACTION WITH STAFF/OFFICIALS

1. **Selectboard Roles** - In order to ensure the efficient and effective delivery of Town services, the Selectboard is required to work directly with the Town Manager when dealing with the administrative services of the Town. The Selectboard recognizes the primary functions of staff as executing Selectboard policy, implementing adopted goals and priorities, addressing day-to-day issues and keeping the Selectboard informed. Staff is committed to take guidance and direction from the Town Manager or assigned Department Head which follows the policy direction of the Selectboard as a whole. All Selectboard members with concerns affecting the Town should bring those concerns to the full Selectboard and Town Manager before contacting staff or an outside agency. Selectboard members should also be proactive in recognizing and acknowledging staff's work and successes.
2. **Selectboard/Town Manager Relationship** - The Town Manager respects and is sensitive to the policy responsibilities of the Selectboard and acknowledges that the final responsibility for establishing the policy direction of the Town is held by the Selectboard. The Town Manager is subject to a professional code of ethics as a member of the International City/County Management Association (ICMA). This code requires the Town Manager to ensure actions are in support of the Town's best interests. Violations of such principles can result in censure of the Town Manager by ICMA. (Refer to Appendix B, ICMA Code of Ethics and specific "Board/Manager Expectations" included in Appendix C.)
3. **Information Requests** - The Town Manager is the information liaison between the Board and the staff. Requests for information from the Selectboard that require more significant research are solicited because of a citizen complaint or Board concern shall be directed to the Manager and the Manager will determine if the information can be responded to promptly or if Board consensus needs to be obtained due to the amount of time needed to respond or nature of the request. Requests for routine, readily available and easily obtained information can

be directed to the appropriate department director. All Board members will be informed of staff requests and staff response where a significant amount of time and/or resources to respond is involved.

These Operating Guidelines are adopted under the authority of Vermont General Law governing Selectboard and Town Manager obligations and powers and as such are incumbent upon all persons in attendance at Selectboard meetings.