

Procedure for the Creation and Oversight of Selectboard Committees and Appointments to Committees, Boards and Commissions

The Selectboard views the committees that it charters as effective tools for involving interested citizens in contributing to the decision-making processes of local government. The Board strives to appoint citizens to serve on its committees who can offer a balanced, unbiased cross-section of opinion and experience regarding a particular issue, and who are able to represent the varied and sometimes conflicting interests of the community as a whole.

This same commitment to diversity of opinion and experience applies to appointments that the Selectboard makes to panels that are authorized by statute, such as the Development Review Board and Planning Commission, or by ordinance, such as the Downtown Improvement District Commission.

Types of Selectboard Committees

The Selectboard generally appoints two types of committees – Standing Committees and Ad Hoc Committees – to meet its needs. The type chosen is dependent upon on the scope and anticipated duration of the issue being addressed, and the level of formality required to address it.

Standing Committees are created to provide sustained focus to issues of high importance regarding the delivery of municipal services or matters affecting the economic and social well-being of the community. Examples include the Infrastructure Committee, Parks & Recreation Committee and Energy Committee.

Ad Hoc Committees are created to work on specific, short-term projects or issues and are disbanded when their work is complete. Ad Hoc Committees can take several different forms; however, the two most commonly used by the Selectboard are:

1. **Task Forces**, whose members are appointed to focus on a single issue that can be analyzed within just a few meetings and to formulate a recommendation for the Board's consideration. The now-disbanded Economic Health Task Force was a recent example.
2. **Steering Committees**, whose members are typically appointed to focus on a large municipal project or a multi-faceted issue requiring sustained attention. Examples of steering committees, past and present, include the Town Offices and Recreation Facilities Steering Committee and the Economic Health Committee.

Appointments to Selectboard Committees and Statutory Boards and Commissions

Each year after Town Meeting, the Selectboard advertises within the community for individuals interested in filling available seats on its Standing and Ad Hoc Committees, as well as Boards and

Commissions established by statute, and makes appointments in April. When making appointments to a committee, the Board seeks to balance the need for maintaining appropriate subject-matter knowledge and experience amongst its members to address the issues with which the committee has been charged, with the desire to give as many qualified community members as possible an opportunity to serve. Vacancies that occur during the year may be advertised immediately, or at the Board's discretion, may be held open until the next annual appointment cycle.

Citizens wishing to be considered for appointment to a Town panel may submit an Application for Appointment to Town Boards, Committees, Commissions, Task Forces & Official Positions to the Town Manager's Office, 77 Main Street or kramsay@townofmiddlebury.org at any time during the year.

The Relationship of Selectboard Committees to the Selectboard and Town Manager

Committees created by the Selectboard are directly accountable to the Board. The work of each committee is guided by a formal, written charge developed by the Board, which describes the area(s) of focus for the committee and, if appropriate, expected deliverables and a timeframe or milestones for the presentation of its recommendations.

On rare occasions, a committee may identify the need to expand or otherwise alter its charge in response to specific events or changing circumstances that might require it to shift its work focus. An amendment to a committee charter requires the approval of the Selectboard which, depending upon the nature and extent of the change, may also elect to alter the composition of the committee, as needed.

Selectboard committees function in a strictly advisory capacity to the Selectboard and, as such, cannot engage consultants, sign contracts or otherwise commit Town funds or staff resources. A committee may, from time to time, find it valuable to consult with or seek assistance from Town staff regarding the matters that it is working on. Requests to engage staff in committee work on an occasional or ongoing basis should be directed to the Town Manager, who will assess the potential impact to other existing work priorities.

Vermont Open Meeting Law Requirements

All Selectboard-chartered committees and bodies established by statute or ordinance are subject to the requirements of Vermont's Open Meeting Law. The law also applies to subcommittees and working groups created by these panels in the course of doing their work.