

TOWN OF HOLDERNESS BOARD APPOINTMENT PROCESS

A. INTRODUCTION

Volunteer boards and committees play a vital role in the management of the Town of Holderness. In all, there are several such boards, some of which have elected membership and others made up of members appointed by the Board of Selectmen (BOS). A complete list of the various boards and their current members can be found in the Annual Town Report available at the Holderness Town Offices. The Town Report also contains a report of the board's activities over the previous year and upcoming projects. For the most part, the seats on the appointed boards consist of staggered three-year terms. Every year, the Board of Selectmen reviews the seats for which terms have ended, and decide whether to reappoint existing members to another three-year term, or appoint a new member to that seat. Also, some committees are created to perform a single task or for a single purpose and the member's terms may be limited to the time the committee exists.

While the Board of Selectmen makes appointments to these boards, the boards are not and should not be agents of the Selectmen. The Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment and Conservation Commission were created under the laws of the State of NH and, other than appointments, operate independently of any control or influence of the Board of Selectmen (although the Board of Selectmen has an *ex officio* seat on the Planning Board). The Holderness Budget Committee also operates independently of any control or influence of the Board of Selectmen, although the Board of Selectmen has an *ex officio* seat on the Budget Committee. Budget Committee members are appointed by the Town Moderator.

B. OBJECTIVES

In making appointments to volunteer boards and committees, the Board of Selectmen has the following objectives:

1. To appoint qualified individuals who will ensure that the boards do the best possible job and serve the best interests of the Town.
2. To appoint individuals who recognize that their responsibility is to apply the applicable state laws, as well as local regulations and ordinances.
3. To appoint individuals with a mix of professional backgrounds and experiences, in an effort to represent the diversity of the community and not a particular constituency or agenda.
4. To appoint individuals who are willing to commit the necessary time and energy to become familiar with the laws, regulations and procedures that board members must understand.
5. To appoint individuals whose backgrounds and employment do not present frequent conflicts of interest with issues being discussed by the board, and who are willing to recuse themselves from the discussion when such conflicts arise.

C. CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Independence and Public Input:** Because these boards operate independently of the Board of Selectmen, the Selectmen are not authorized to impose on the boards any rules or procedures governing their operations. Following state law, boards set their own meeting times and frequencies and elect their own chairpersons. The Board of Selectmen has found that board members are very responsive to suggestions from the public and take very seriously their roles as public servants. All meetings of these boards are public meetings and can be attended by any

citizen or member of the press. The Selectmen have found that the boards welcome input from the public and that those with concerns will be recognized to express those concerns at any meeting. Any resident can have an impact on town government by simply attending meetings and participating in the discussion.

2. **Term Limits:** By state statute, all board members are appointed for three-year terms. There is no legal requirement that establishes the number of terms that can be served, although the question of term limits has been discussed in a variety of public meetings and there are clearly many opinions on the subject. Even if the current Board of Selectmen adopted a policy of appointing members for a limited number of terms, future Selectmen could change that policy. Because all boards operate in public, and anyone can attend and participate in their meetings, term limits are not as essential as they would be in a private organization whose operations are shielded from public view.

The Board of Selectmen recognizes that over the years it has often been difficult to get well qualified individuals to serve, and an arbitrary term limit might do more damage than good by forcing a better qualified individual to leave the board. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Selectmen to evaluate the contribution of each board member at the end of a three-year term, and determine whether that member wants to and/or should be allowed to continue serving. In making this determination the Selectmen will consider the opinion of the board chair, the performance of the board, the mix of experienced and newer members, the mix of backgrounds, and the level of voter confidence in and satisfaction with board decisions and operations.

3. **Board Alternates:** Each of the boards has a provision for the appointment of alternates. The Board of Selectmen has in the past appointed alternates to the Conservation Commission and ZBA and Planning Board. The Selectmen recommend that boards think of alternates as potential board members, but alternates are not guaranteed a board seat. The Selectmen further recommend that alternates attend as many meetings as possible to ensure familiarity and continuity with the issues and procedures and to gain confidence that they could provide excellent public service if moved into regular board membership. Some alternates may be former board members who are called on to substitute for absent regular members. The Selectmen suggest using alternate slots for a combined purpose of training future members and providing opportunities for emeritus members to continue serving and contributing their expertise.

D. Board Appointment Process

1. Town Advertisement of open positions
 - Local notices and web notices beginning in January and as resignations occur. Occasionally a paid ad or press release will be issued in the local newspaper (s).
 - Board descriptions & member responsibilities available to interested members
2. Application Form
 - Coincide with filing period for elected officers
 - Town will maintain a running list of interested volunteers (volunteers do not have to re-submit their names)
3. Attendance at board meetings for interested applicants
 - Planning Board: at least 2 meetings
 - Zoning Board: at least 2 meetings

- Conservation Commission: at least 2 meetings

4. Interview

- Board of Selectmen (public meeting)
- Timing of interview: late February/early March or as needed

5. Considerations

- Awareness of general philosophy and process of Master Plans and Zoning Ordinances
- Time commitment: availability per month, year (available for subcommittees?)
- Ability to attend and interest in attending training sessions & pertinent seminars
- Mix of professional backgrounds & experience (helpful: law, engineering, architecture, conservation)
- Commitment to the community
- Ability to read maps and plans
- Absence of conflict of interest (or willingness to address perceived conflicts)
- History of volunteerism

E. 2008 Appointed Boards and Committees

A. Boards

- Planning Board
- Zoning Board of Adjustment
- Conservation Commission
- Budget Committee

B. Committees

- Recreation Committee
- Energy Committee
- Honor Roll Committee
- Patriotic Purposes Committee