

# RTM MEMBER HANDBOOK



## **RTM Members' Handbook**

**Congratulations on being elected to the Greenwich Representative Town Meeting. There is a lot to learn and this manual is designed to get you started.**

### **A Brief History**

The first Greenwich Town meeting was held on February 5, 1664. The townspeople met to discuss separating from Stamford. It took several years, but on May 11, 1668, the General Assembly in Hartford declared Greenwich a township. With a small population, we governed ourselves through Town meetings...every citizen was a 'member'. By 1800, the population had grown to over 3,000, and by 1900, the population was over 12,000. By 1933, with a population of over 33,000, the Town Meeting model was no longer practical, so the Town adopted the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) model of government...a member represents a number of their neighbors.

**Each member of the RTM represents the same number of electors.** The number of RTM members has been set at 230. Every two years before the RTM elections, the Town Clerk divides the number of electors in the Town by 230 to determine how many electors each member will represent.

Next, it must be determined how many RTM members each of the 12 districts of the RTM will have. **The number of RTM members a District has equals the number of electors in the District divided by the number of electors each RTM member represents.**

### **How the RTM Fits into Town Government**

The Selectmen administer / run the Town and set policies for the Town. In order to carry out these policies, the First Selectman, along with the Department leadership, creates a yearly Town budget. In recent years, the Board of Estimate and Taxation (BET) has set guidelines for the Town, its departments and the Board of Education (BOE) to follow; the budget is expected to fall within these BET spending guidelines. Over the month of February, the BET reviews the proposed budget with the input of the First Selectmen and the Department leaders. The BET can cut or add to any item. The Board of Education budget is independent of this process, but it too is expected to fall within the BET guidelines. In May, it is the job of the RTM to review and adopt appropriations (spending authorization) and resolutions supporting the budget. We, the RTM, can cut items, but we are not able to add items.

The RTM is the legislative body of the Town. We are led by the Moderator who is elected by the RTM from among its members at the beginning of every term. The second in command is the Moderator Pro Tempore who takes over for the Moderator should the need arise. The Moderator Pro Tempore is also elected by the RTM from among its members at the beginning of every term. The Town Clerk, who is an elected official, serves as the secretary of the RTM and is an ex-officio, non-voting member of the body. Other ex-officio, non-voting members of the body are the Selectmen, the Town Attorney, the members of the Board of Education, and the members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation, all of whom are elected officials.

### **What We Do, Historic Highlights and Routine Business**

As a member of the RTM, you will have a voice in forming the future of Greenwich.

**The RTM examines and passes the Town budget. It can only approve, reduce or eliminate items.** Town employees develop the budget within the guidelines set forth by the BET at the beginning of the budget process. The RTM is NOT able to increase or add items to the budget.

**The RTM votes on the acceptance of gifts.** In 1940, the Town accepted the gift of Binney Park and in 1953 we accepted the Montgomery Pinetum. We routinely accept gifts of trees, benches, and fireworks, for example. We routinely accept grants including federal or state funding for Town projects. We examine the benefit to the Town of the gift along with the ongoing costs to maintain the gift.

**The RTM votes on all appropriations over \$5,000 that have not already been approved through the budget process.** In 1945 the Town purchased Tod's Point. We built and rebuilt Greenwich High School. We most recently replaced New Lebanon School with significant State aid. We approve interim appropriations for emergency situations such as repairing the flood damages at Cos Cob School and Greenwich High School in 2018.

**The RTM is the final authority on Municipal Improvements (MI).** Changes to municipal properties must be granted municipal improvement status in order to be funded. The RTM reviews and votes on such things as the 2017/2018 Town pool in Byram and the rebuilding of schools.

**The RTM also passes Sense of the Meeting Resolutions (SOMRs), which are used to encourage other bodies to act or to express the sentiment of the RTM on a topic of current interest.** In 1946, the RTM expressed opposition to placing the United Nations in Greenwich. More recently, the RTM expressed its support for continuing to have The Nathaniel Witherell be a Town operated nursing home.

**The RTM reviews and either approves or rejects appointments to Town Boards, Commissions and other bodies whose membership is nominated rather than elected.** Appointments are one of the most important jobs of the RTM. Boards, such as Planning and Zoning, Historic District, and Alarms Appeals to name a few, can greatly impact our lives by ensuring the quality of our neighborhoods. A board like Parks and Recreation can make our leisure time more enjoyable.

**The RTM can create special committees to deal with a specific area of concern.** Currently we have two long standing special committees, Labor Contracts and Claims. Other special committees are created when needed to advise, oversee or review areas. Others have included RTM Governance, Nathaniel Witherell Capital Improvements and the Plan of Conservation and Development.

**The RTM reviews and votes on all ordinances, except for ordinances dealing with traffic and parking.** The RTM can also initiate ordinances. Residents are impacted by ordinances almost daily, and it is important that ordinances reflect the will of the people rather than the will of one group. In 2018 we passed an ordinance restricting the use of plastic bags.

## **How We Do It**

**Process** The RTM meets 8 times a year to conduct Town Business. Our regular meetings are in January, March, April, May, June, September, October and December; it may be easier to remember that the RTM does NOT have a regular meeting scheduled in February, July, August and November. In May we vote on the budget, so May is known as budget month. Typically, the RTM meets the second Monday of the month, with committee and district meetings being held the week before. Meeting dates are set and published before the term begins. You can find the dates for the current term at [www.Greenwichct.gov](http://www.Greenwichct.gov). We attempt not to meet on religious holidays or school breaks.

**Agenda/Call Package** The agenda for RTM meetings is referred to as “the Call.” It includes the items that are to be discussed and voted on in the meeting. The order of the call is pre-determined. Items postponed from a prior meeting are first on the Call, and the order of the rest of the Call is determined by when the item is received by the Town Clerk. Each item presented to the Town Clerk for inclusion is time and date stamped.

The Call package comes out at least two weeks before the meeting. It can be mailed to the member or the member can elect to use the online version. At any time, a member can change the manner in which they receive the Call by notifying the Town Clerk. Our Charter requires that the time, place and purpose of all meetings be noticed five days in advance of the meeting.

The Call package includes:

1. A list of the monthly scheduled meetings giving the time and place of the District and Committee meetings and the items referred to each Committee.
2. The Call
3. The “Explanos” which include the items listed in the Call and further clarification or explanation supporting each item. It is important to remember that RTM members vote on the item as it appears in the Call, NOT how it appears in the Explanos information.
4. Additional information regarding items is often part of the Call package, and these are clearly marked as to which item on the Call the information pertains.

**Reviewing the Call** It is the job of the RTM to review and vote on the items on the Call. The Moderator assigns each item to Committees for review. Each Committee reviewing the Call item has the help of experts on the item, such as elected officials, Town employees, proponents and/or opponents of the item.

It is the job of the Committee to fully vet the item. If there are unanswered questions, it is the job of the Committee to get those answers before the full RTM meeting. It is the job of each member of the Committee to understand all aspects of the item, so that they can explain the item to their District members and answer any of their questions. The Committees issue reports providing information on the items discussed and their votes. It is through the work of the Committees that RTM members better understand each item. This structure of Committees’ meeting before the Districts meet enhances the flow of information.

Members should review the Call before Committee meetings and prepare questions about items. You are encouraged to reach out to the Chair of your Committee (as a Delegate or Alternate) and share any questions in advance of the Committee meeting. If you have questions on items referred to other committees, share those questions with the Delegate / Alternate from your district who serves on that committee.

**Standing Committees** The RTM has 11 standing Committees. Each District assigns a delegate and alternate to every Committee. Each Committee examines the Call items it is assigned from the viewpoint of its mission. For example, the Finance Committee would look at the financial implications of the item while Legislative and Rules would concentrate on the legality of the item. A full description of the duties of each Committee can be found in our Rules Appendix B. The 11 standing Committees are:

**Appointments** interviews and evaluates all nominees for Boards, Commissions, Agencies, etc.

**Budget Overview** acts in an advisory capacity regarding the budget.

**Education** reviews operations of our education system, the libraries and the museum.

**Finance** reviews all the financial activities of the Town.

**Health and Human Services** reviews items touching on the environment and health and welfare of our residents.

**Land Use** reviews items relating to planning, zoning and land use.

**Legislative and Rules** reviews and rules on the legal aspects of an item.

**Parks and Recreation** reviews items dealing with our parks, marine and recreation facilities.

**Public Works** deals with items relating to public buildings, roadways, sewer and recycling.

**Town Services** reviews the items related to Town administration, police, fire, public safety, purchasing and risk.

**Transportation** reviews all transportation items including traffic, parking, highways and fleet.

**There are two Special Committees of the RTM. RTM members self-nominate to join these Special Committees.** Prospective members are interviewed and approved by the appropriate Committee, which then nominates their candidate/s for consideration by the full RTM. The appointment is made by a vote of the RTM.

**Claims Committee** has the power to act in the place of the RTM with regard to the settlement of claims against the Town. Ten RTM members make up the Claims Committee, nine of whom are appointed by the RTM and the tenth is automatically the Moderator who chairs the Committee.

**Labor Contracts Committee** reviews every aspect of labor contracts negotiated by the Town or the Board of Education. The LCC informs the RTM as to the strengths and weaknesses of the contract and advises the members how to vote on the contract. Currently, seven RTM members serve on this committee, five delegates and two alternates.

**Two ways to be elected to the RTM**

Most RTM members will be elected in November of odd years at the general election two-year term beginning the following January. A member elected in November of 2019 will take office in January of 2020 for the 2020-2021 term.

Other members will be elected to the RTM to fill a seat vacated by a member who resigned, moved out of Town, or died. The vacated seat is filled by the remaining members of the District at an interim election. Those members elected at an interim election take office immediately and serve out the remainder of their predecessor's term. (Please refer to the RTM Member Vacancy Interim Election Guidelines.)

### **Organizing to Serve**

Because there is a January RTM meeting following elections, and the Committees need to be covered by the new RTM members, the Districts meet in December to organize their members for the new term.

**If you are elected in the November general election, your first District meeting will be the December meeting of your RTM District (prior to your official start).** At this meeting, the Call for the December RTM meeting will be discussed first. Next, a Special Meeting of the new District will be held to organize for the next term. You will elect District officers for the next term and elect the District's delegate and alternate to each of the 12 Standing Committees for the coming term. Your district chair will notify you about this organizational meeting. Please refer to the December Organizational Meeting Guidelines.

**Your first Committee meeting** will be the January Committee meetings. The time and place of the meeting will be on the list of meetings in your RTM package or you can find it online.

**Your first full RTM meeting** will be the January meeting. This is the organizational meeting for the new term. The first order of business is to swear in all members for the new term. Please note that if you show up late, you must see the Town Clerk because you need to be officially sworn in BEFORE you vote on any item. At this meeting we will elect from among our members a Moderator who will run the meeting and determine which items go to which Committees. We will also elect from among our members a Moderator Pro Tempore who will act in the place of the Moderator when needed. The Moderator Pro Tempore also oversees the explanatory comments.

**Seating at the RTM meeting.** We sit by Districts in the Central Middle School auditorium. Signs designate which District sits where. Only District members

should sit in the area designated for the District. There is an area at the back of the auditorium that is marked for visitors. You are welcome and encouraged to attend the December Committee meetings and the December full RTM meeting, but you will not be voting and will be sitting with the visitors.

## **General Information about RTM, Committee and District Meetings**

**All RTM meetings, including its Committee meetings, District meetings and full RTM meetings, are open to the public and are subject to the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).** The public is welcome to all RTM meetings. All business is conducted within the view of the public and all votes are public record.

The public is invited to speak on items at all meetings when recognized by the leader of the meeting (Moderator or Chair depending on the meeting). It is desired to have a robust discussion / debate in the Committee. The Chair will guide that discussion and the members and public should follow the guidance the Chair provides. If the public wishes to speak in the Committee or District meetings, they should contact the Chair in advance to let them know. Other forms of public input can include letters or emails to the Chair which they will forward to the District or Committee members. As a reminder, at all times, the discussion / comments are directed to the item and should never be a personal attack on anyone.

An RTM Committee meeting can only exclude the public by going into executive session, which is rare. The law is very specific on when and how a meeting can enter executive session. Only delicate topics, such as discussion with legal teams about negotiations on property purchase or lease, labor negotiation strategy, or discussion on performance evaluations or dismissal of an employee, can prompt an executive session.

**Addressing the group on a non-Call item** Hearing from the public on what is on their mind is important to the RTM. If a member of the public wants to address a meeting on an item that is not on the Call or agenda for the meeting, s/he should contact the Moderator or Chair of the meeting in advance and request permission to address the group on a particular topic. Granting of permission to address the group on a non-Call item is at the discretion of the Chair or Moderator or may depend on a vote of the body to be addressed.

**Addressing the full RTM on a Call item** At meetings of the full RTM, a member of the RTM or a member of the public may address the body on a Call item. Once the item has been put before the body by the Moderator and the reports of the Committees that took up



the item have been given, the Moderator will call for discussion. It is best to notify the Moderator in advance when you want to address the body on a particular Call item. If the Moderator expects an item will have many people wishing to speak, he will have a speaker signup sheet at the entrance to the auditorium.

**Addressing a Committee or District on a Call item** When a member of the public wants to address a Committee or District on a Call item, they should contact the Chair of the Committee or District in advance and discuss addressing the body. The Chair will explain what time is best and how much time would be set aside for the presentation.

**How meetings are conducted** The full RTM meeting at Central Middle School is led by the RTM Moderator and conducted following Parliamentary Procedure. (Please see Appendix to the Rules Parliamentary Procedures at [www.greenwichct.gov](http://www.greenwichct.gov)). According to Robert's Rules of Order, parliamentary procedure is based on the consideration of the rights of all the stake holders. Using this known procedure, you protect the rights of the majority as well as the rights of the minority and the rights of individual members. It is always best to know the rules before you play the game. Read up on Roberts's Rules so you will not be caught off guard by the procedure. One simple guideline to remember is to only speak on the topic that is being discussed on the floor. For example, if we are discussing an amendment to an item, do not speak to the merits of the original item but only to the amendment.

**Decorum - the RTM is a nonpartisan collegial body** Disrespecting any individual is NOT allowed. All comments are to be directed at the item, not at an individual. Any and all questions go through the Moderator. The Moderator can ask an appropriate person to respond to the question, but a response is not required. As an example, if you want to ask a previous speaker to expand on an item, you ask the Moderator to ask the previous speaker for that clarification and the Moderator decides how to handle your request.

When you want to address the RTM on the item, you raise your hand or stand and wait for the Moderator to recognize you. Once recognized by the Moderator, you should move quickly to the podium and state your name and District. You must address the topic before the body, or the Moderator has the right and will stop you. You address the Moderator as Mr. Moderator or Madam Moderator, whichever is appropriate. Refer to the RTM Rules Appendix for more on motions...rising for a point of order, a point of information, or others.

RTM meetings start on time with the Pledge of Allegiance. The Moderator recognizes people who have requested and received permission to address the group for such things as announcements or commemorations. The next order of business is to organize the Call.

**Organizing the Call** The items on the Call are now divided into three groups: items to be taken up and voted separately, items that can go onto the combined calendar, and items that can go onto the consent calendar. All of the items on the Call are of equal importance, but some require more review and discussion than others. The Committee and District Chairs inform the Moderator after their meetings which items they think should go onto which group. The Moderator decides and informs the body by email through the District chairs how he intends to organize the items on the Call.

The **consent calendar** has those items that require the least review and can be put to a vote as one group without hearing the Committee reports in the full RTM meeting. These items are grouped and put before the body and voted on as one item without discussion. Typically, these will be items that passed committees unanimously, such as be re-nominations to a Board or acceptance of a yearly grant.

The **combined calendar** has items that require a bit more review. As each item on the combined calendar is presented, the reports of the Committees that reviewed the items are presented to the full body. After the reports are presented, the items are voted on as one group without discussion. Normally, the combined calendar will include new nominations with no objections or interim appropriations that had no questions or concerns.

The rest of the Call items make up the **regular calendar** where each item is presented, Committee reports are delivered and discussed, and each item is voted on individually.

An item may be easily removed from either the consent calendar or the combined calendar. As an example, the Moderator will move to put certain items on the consent calendar. If you do not want one of those items on the consent calendar, this is the time to make a motion to remove that item from the consent calendar. The Moderator will ask for a second. If there is a second, the Moderator will ask for discussion to divide and then call for a vote of those in favor. If there are 20 members in favor of removing this item from the consent calendar, it will be placed on the regular calendar to be voted separately.

**District and Standing Committee Meetings** In general, District and Standing Committee meetings are a bit less formal than the full RTM meeting. However, they also start on time, are nonpartisan collegial bodies, and the same respect for fellow members and guests is expected. A member must wait for the Chair to recognize her/him before s/he speaks. Questions should be asked through the Chair. In these smaller bodies a less formal atmosphere often works more efficiently, but the Chair always has the right to call the body back to order and to move the discussion forward. In most District and Standing Committee meetings, visitors can speak. The Chair and the members may decide differently as needed.

**Special Committee Meetings** Both the Claims and Labor Contracts Committees do not hold regularly scheduled meetings. Their meetings are executive sessions because they deal with sensitive topics that fall under the FOIA guidelines.

**General Organization** When you have questions or are unsure of how to accomplish something, contact your District Chair. Most of the time s/he will be able to quickly and easily guide you through the RTM process. If you desire, ask the District Chair if the issue can be discussed at a District meeting. If the Chair or the other members do not have the answer, then the Chair will take your concern to the Moderator or Moderator Pro Tem who will help get you the answer.

You have been elected to vote. It is your job to educate yourself enough on a topic to cast a vote. Ask questions at your Committee and District meetings to insure you are well-informed.

**Conflict of interest and abstaining** A member is required to abstain from voting on an item when he has a conflict of interest related to that item. Within the RTM, a conflict of interest means a financial conflict. You have a conflict of interest if you will be uniquely impacted by a decision. An example would be if you are a contractor to the Town and the item being discussed directly relates to your work. Reach out to your Chair to discuss any concerns.

**Your Responsibilities as an RTM member** Attendance is critical towards making a positive impact within the RTM. RTM members are expected to attend 24 meetings per year – your committee meeting, your district meeting and the full RTM meeting are each held eight months of each year. If your attendance at the full RTM meeting or your district meeting falls below 2/3rds of the total meetings, you will have to collect signatures and petition onto the ballot in the next election. It's important to clear your calendar for all RTM meetings and stay for the entirety of the meeting. Your fellow members rely on your perspective and experience. Everyone understands that other obligations will compel you to miss some meetings, but your working hard to attend and giving your chairs notice when you can't attend are valued efforts within the RTM.

It is your responsibility to inform yourself on all the items on the Call. That means you must read and understand the Call items. Show up prepared to your Committee and District meetings. All Committee meetings are open, and you are welcome to attend. The time and place that the Committee meets is listed online.

One of the most important jobs we, as RTM members, have is to understand the budget. It may seem overwhelming if you are not used to reviewing budgets. As a starter take one section and really look at it. Watch on TV as the BET questions the department employees about their budget

**If you are a delegate to a Committee, it is your responsibility to make sure that Committee meeting is covered. If you are not able to attend a meeting, you must notify your alternate and your District Chair. Your job as the delegate from your District is to thoroughly understand any item referred to your Committee and to bring back to your District enough knowledge to help explain items to your members and answer questions on the item.**

**If you are the alternate to a Committee, please attend all meetings. Learn how the Committee functions. Share your questions or concerns with your Delegate. Get to know the opinions of the other members of the Committee. Keep the time for the Committee meeting free so you will be available to become the voting member if needed.**

**Always properly identify yourself** Lastly, when addressing any group either in person or in writing, make sure to identify yourself correctly. If you are speaking for yourself, you can identify yourself as a member of the RTM but also include a statement such as, “The views and opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent those of the RTM or its recognized committees.” If a group has gotten together and conducted research and is presenting its findings, then the disclaimer would read, “The views and opinions expressed here are those of the undersigned and do not necessarily represent those of the RTM or its recognized committees.”

### **Foundational Documents**

- 1. Please go to [www.greenwichct.gov](http://www.greenwichct.gov) and read over the Charter Article 13 Representative Town Meeting**
- 2. Look at the Rules of the Representative Town Meeting of Greenwich also at [www.greenwichct.gov](http://www.greenwichct.gov)**
- 3. Lastly look over the Appendix to the Rules of the Representative Town Meeting at [www.greenwichct.gov](http://www.greenwichct.gov)**

### **Additional items not covered above**

**Wi-Fi Passwords**

**Town Hall no password**

**Central Middle School gpswif1**

**Some useful Acronyms**

**BAN Bond Anticipation Note**

<b>BET</b>	<b>Board of Estimate and Taxation</b>
<b>BOC</b>	<b>Budget Overview Committee</b>
<b>BOE</b>	<b>Board of Education</b>
<b>BOS</b>	<b>Board of Selectmen</b>
<b>CDAC</b>	<b>Community Development Advisory Committee</b> Each District appoints a member to this
<b>CIP</b>	<b>Capital Improvement Plan</b>
<b>IWWA</b>	<b>Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Agency</b>
<b>LCC</b>	<b>Labor Contracts Committee</b>
<b>OPEB</b>	<b>Other post-employment benefits</b>
<b>PILOT</b>	<b>Payment in lieu of taxes</b>
<b>POCD</b>	<b>Plan of Conservation and Development</b>
<b>P&amp;Z</b>	<b>Planning and Zoning Commission</b>
<b>PZBA</b>	<b>Planning and Zoning Board of Appeals</b>
<b>SOMR</b>	<b>Sense of the Meeting Resolution</b>
<b>SNAC</b>	<b>Selectmen's Nominating Advisory Committee</b>
<b>TNW</b>	<b>The Nathaniel Witherell</b>

## **December Organizational Meeting Guidelines**

The December Organization Meeting is the meeting of each District, following the November elections, when district leadership and committee delegates and alternates are elected. All members are sworn in for their two-year term at the full RTM meeting in January; holding the organizational meeting in December allows members to attend January committee meetings.

### **Prior to the Organizational Meeting:**

1. After the November election, each district chair should contact the Town Clerk's office to request the contact information of newly elected RTM members.
2. The district chair should create and validate an email distribution list for the new term.
3. The district chair should reach out to all newly elected members, congratulate them on joining the RTM, and invite them to the December Organizational Meeting. The Chair should also encourage the new members to review the RTM Rules, particularly the Appendix, which describe all of the standing committees and outline their responsibilities.
4. The district chair should describe the Special Standing Committees (Labor Contracts and Claims), as well as the Community Development Advisory Committee, and explain how those committee positions are filled.
5. The district chair should ask all members to circulate their district leadership and committee interests prior to the December Organizational Meeting. This allows the district to gauge which committee elections might be more competitive.
6. The incumbent district chair should prepare a handout/poster to be used during the Organizational Meeting as well any other meeting material, such as ballots, email distribution lists, etc.

### **At the December Organizational Meeting:**

1. The district chair should explain how officers and standing committee delegates are nominated and elected. The chair should stress that all members are eligible to run for any district officer position and/or committee position that interests them and that no member "owns" a seat on a committee. In smaller districts where positions outnumber members, members may serve as a delegate/alternate on multiple committees if necessary.

2. It's helpful if one of the district officers prepares a poster/handout that lists all of the standing committees and the day of the week that the committees meet. This form will make it easier to keep track of how many members are interested in serving on a particular committee.
3. Only those members elected to serve in the new term may vote in the organizational meeting elections.
4. District officers are elected before electing members to standing committees. The newly elected officers will then run the remainder of the meeting.
5. The election of district officers is conducted by written ballot. The current district chair or secretary should bring blank slips of paper to the meeting.
6. Those interested in running for chair, vice chair, or secretary of a district may either self-nominate or have another member offer the nomination.
  - Nominations require a second.
  - If two individuals express an interest in the same position, the candidates should consider making a brief (no more than three minute) statement regarding their qualifications and why they are interested in the position.
  - Members may ask questions directed at the candidates at the conclusion of their remarks.
  - When it is time to vote, each member must cast a written ballot. The name of the candidate, the position for which the candidate is running, the signature of the voting member, the date and the round of voting must appear on the ballot.
  - The candidate who receives the majority (half + 1) of affirmative votes from those present is the winner.
  - There may not be a clear winner after the first round of voting, in which case, successive voting rounds continue until a candidate receives a majority of votes. If more than two candidates are running for the same position, the candidate that receives the lowest number of votes is dropped from the next round of voting. It's helpful to denote the voting round number on the ballot to eliminate confusion in the event of multiple rounds.
  - The ballots for all district officer elections must be saved and submitted to the Town Clerk's office the following day for record keeping/archival purposes.
7. After the district officers have been elected, the members should turn their attention to standing committee assignments. The district chair may want to provide a very brief overview of the functional responsibilities and time commitments for each committee. The district chair should explain the difference between the role of delegate and alternate. The district chair should also remind members that any member may attend any committee meeting, and, in the event that the delegate or the alternate is not present, s/he may vote as a representative of the district.
8. Prior to electing members to serve on standing committees, the district chair should run down the list of standing committees and determine whether there are multiple members interested in serving on the same committee.
8. Contested standing committee elections should be taken up first, so that the member not elected to the committee has an opportunity to put his/her name forward for another standing committee.

9. Contested elections to standing committees should be conducted by written ballot, following the same format as outlined for the district officers' elections above.
10. Non-contested committee elections do not require a written ballot. If a member volunteers for a standing committee and the majority of members agree with the appointment, the member is assigned to the standing committee.
11. After delegates have been elected to standing committees, the district should fill the alternate seats on the committees.
12. At the conclusion of the organizational meeting, the district secretary should  
  
prepare a list identifying the district officers and the standing committee delegates/alternates and submit that list to the Town Clerk for inclusion on the RTM website.



## **RTM Member Vacancy** **Interim Election Guideline**

It is [strongly] recommended that the District follow this guideline to fill a vacancy.

Section 171 (a), (b), (c), (d) of the Charter of the Town Of Greenwich outlines the formal procedure for handling a member's resignation and/or filling a district vacancy. All District Chairs should be familiar with the election rules outlined in the Charter.

If an RTM district has a vacancy at any point during the term, the Charter of the Town of Greenwich provides that the members of that District may conduct an interim election and elect someone to fill the vacancy.

### **Resignation of a member**

When a member desires to resign from the RTM, they must notify their District Chair and the Town Clerk of such in writing (an email is acceptable) of his/her resignation.

In the event of a vacancy, the District Chair must make arrangements to conduct an interim election. The District Chair should email the members to advise them of the resignation and state that they will request the Town Clerk to call a special meeting. [ note that the Charter calls for a petition to be submitted, it is seen as acceptable that emailing the district can satisfy that.] An interim election is held at a special meeting that is called by the Town Clerk. That special meeting may or may not coincide with a regular District meeting. The District Chair should also advise the Moderator Pro Tem of the vacancy.

Working with the appropriate District Chair, the Town Clerk notifies the remaining members of the District , calling for a special meeting of the remaining district members for the purpose of filling any vacancy.

### **Publicizing a district vacancy.**

The District Chair is responsible for outreach to get candidates to fill the vacancy. They should:

- Communicate to and encourage its District members to reach out to others letting them know of the vacancy (neighbors, friends, school PTAs, religious houses of worship, neighborhood associations, etc.)
- Contact former members or others who had previously expressed interest in serving (not currently serving) to let them know of the vacancy
- Coordinate with the Town Clerk and Moderator Pro Tem to publish a notice on the Town website, a public service announcement in the local newspapers / news outlets and radio (WGCH) as well as through the NextDoor app (see attached sample)
- Be available to help interested citizens to understand the work of the RTM and what is expected of its members

**Responsibilities of the District Chair prior to the interim election.**

The District Chair should contact the interested candidate(s) and describe the time commitment involved and review the responsibilities of an RTM member; confirm that the candidate's address falls within the district's boundaries; and provide the candidate with the time, location, and date of the special election. It's helpful if the candidate prepares a brief biography and a statement of why they are interested in serving on the RTM that can be shared with the district prior to the interim election (this is not a requirement to participate in the election).

The District Chair should contact the Registrar of Voters and confirm that any interested candidate(s) is/are a registered voter(s) and eligible to serve on the RTM.

**The Special Meeting of the District.**

A quorum of district members is required in order to hold an interim election. The RTM Rules define the district quorum requirements as a majority of district members. The successful candidate must receive a majority of affirmative votes from those district members present in the meeting and voting.

The District Chair will call the special meeting to order. The District Chair is responsible to introduce interested candidates, coordinate to have the District Secretary and one other member count the ballots, instruct the members of the voting procedure, hold the vote and announce the voting results.

1. Candidates should plan to attend the Special Meeting and present themselves. A candidate need not be present at the interim election to be considered for the position. If a candidate is unable to attend the interim election, s/he may have someone speak on his/her behalf and/or prepare a summary of qualifications and a statement of interest to be circulated at the meeting.
2. The district should hear from each candidate.
  - a. Candidates may introduce themselves and speak up to three minutes to the group about their qualifications and interest in serving on the RTM.
  - b. Candidate speaking order is determined alphabetically by last name.
  - c. Questions may be asked by the members and should be reserved until after all of the candidates have had an opportunity to speak. For fairness, each candidate should be given an opportunity to answer the questions asked, trying to limit to less than a minute.
3. In order to successfully elect a candidate, the individual must receive a majority of affirmative votes by those district members present and voting. A majority is defined as half, plus 1. For example, if a district has 16 members present and voting, the winning candidate would need 9 affirmative votes to be elected. In the event no candidate gets a majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes will be dropped and another round of voting is done. This process will continue until a candidate is elected.
4. All voting must be conducted by written ballot. Ballots must include the position being filled, the name of the candidate desired, the name and signature of the member casting the vote, and the date of the election. If more than one round of voting was required, the round of voting should also be included on the ballot. At the conclusion of the election, all ballots must be submitted to the Town Clerk's office within twenty-four hours for record keeping purposes.
5. Ask the newly elected member to complete the RTM Contact Form. The form and the ballots should be provided to the Town Clerk the next business day. Information provided is entered into the RTM database and used by the Town Clerk to contact members. Also update any distribution / contact lists. Remind the newly elected member to see the Town Clerk to be sworn in (must be done before they vote)

It is also important to note that a district vacancy may also create a standing committee vacancy. If so, the district may want to fill standing committee vacancies after electing the new member.

It is also possible to postpone an interim election. If district members believe that a candidate that presents him/herself would not serve the District well, the district should make a motion to postpone the election and perform additional outreach to identify viable candidates.

## **Public Speaking Tip Sheet**

### **Welcome to the Town of Greenwich RTM meeting!**

Members of the public are encouraged to speak about topics that are important to them. If you intend to speak on an item, here are some tips to help you best communicate your views to the RTM:

- The RTM is a non-partisan, collegial body. All speakers and members are treated with respect.
- Please sign in on one of the “Speaker Sign-Up” sheets. The sheets are located on a table at the Central Middle School auditorium entrance and inside the auditorium on the stage near the Moderator’s lectern.
- At the appropriate time, the Moderator will invite you to speak on the item for which you signed up. Please come forward as quickly as possible and be prepared. Please introduce yourself and where you live.
- Please begin speaking once you have been recognized by the Moderator and have been given the floor to speak.
- Be brief and concise. Typically, there is a three (3) minute time limit imposed on each speaker. Please tailor your comments to meet this time limit.
- If you are part of a large group that shares the same position on an issue, please consider appointing 2 or 3 members to speak on behalf of your group.
- It’s ok to “pass.” If you have the same comments or views that have already been expressed by previous speakers, when called on by the Moderator, it is desired to indicate that you support the previous speaker’s comments (either for or against) and “pass.” This procedure helps to cut down on redundancy and save time.
- Please provide your thoughts on the item, and do not make any references to individual speakers...it is the item that we are considering.
- Please remember that RTM meetings often last late into the night, so cutting down on redundancy is appreciated by RTM members.
- If you have any further questions about the process, please reach out to any RTM member at the meeting who can further assist you.

**We look forward to hearing what you have to say!**

## Basics of Parliamentary Procedure

- I. History Of Rules of Procedure
- II. Applicable Rules
  - A. State law – e.g., Freedom of Information Act
  - B. Local law – Town Charter, local ordinance
  - C. RTM Rules
  - D. Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11<sup>th</sup> ed., 2011
  
- III. Basics of Robert’s Rules
  - A. Pattern of Formality – serves to maintain chair’s position of impartiality and help to preserve an objective and impersonal approach, especially when serious divisions of opinion arise.
    - 1. Customs observed by members
      - address chair as Mr. or Madam President, Chairman, Speaker, Moderator, etc.
      - should not be addressed as “you” (“Do I understand the chair to state . . . ?”)
      - address only the chair, or address each other through the chair (“Mr. Speaker, may I ask the member to explain . . . ?”)
      - never speak while seated
    - 2. Customs observed by presiding officer
      - speaks of self in the third person (“The chair rules that . . . .”)
      - does not address the member as “you” (“The chair must ask the member to confine his remarks . . . .”)
  
  - B. Call to Order; Order of Business
    - 1. Quorum
    - 2. “The meeting will come to order.”
    - 3. Order of Business
      - established order of business (Minutes, Reports of Officers, Committees, Unfinished Business, New Business)
      - if there is no binding order of business, any member who obtains the floor can introduce any legitimate matter
  
  - C. Means by which business is brought to the floor
    - 1. Motions – Types:
      - Main, Subsidiary, Privileged, Incidental
  
    - 2. Obtaining and Assigning the Floor
      - must be recognized by the chair
      - general procedure (first come, first served)

#### D. Handling the Motion

1. A member makes a motion
2. Another member seconds
3. The chair states the question on the motion. Only this step places the motion before the assembly. (Can be withdrawn or modified by maker prior to this step.) There may be occasions when you should refuse to accept a motion. (See, Motion for the Previous Question, below)

#### E. Consideration of a Main Motion

1. Committee Reports
2. Debate on the motion (time limits; cannot speak twice when others waiting their turn; prohibition on personal references)
3. Motion to Amend – most widely used subsidiary motion. The proposed amendment must be “germane” – that is, closely related to or having bearing on the subject of the motion to be amended.
4. Chair puts the question to a vote. (Make sure the assembly understands what they are voting on. Motions to amend can be confusing.)
5. Chair announces the vote.

#### F. Points it may be helpful to know

1. Virtually any ruling of the chair is appealable. An appeal must be seconded, is debatable (with some exceptions), and requires a majority in the negative to reverse the chair’s decision. (“Shall the decision of the chair be sustained?”)
2. If the rules prevent you from doing what you desire, move to suspend the rules. This motion is not debatable and requires a 2/3rds majority to pass.
3. Point of Order – This incidental motion is used to point out a violation of some rule that has occurred. It is in order even when another is speaking and does not require a second. The chair rules on the point of order by stating, “The Point of Order is (or is not) well taken.”
4. Motion for the Previous Question – (“I move the previous question.”) This motion, if adopted, immediately closes debate on the pending question and requires an immediate vote on that question. The motion for the previous question is not debatable and requires a 2/3rds majority to pass.

If you are the chair and you believe the motion for the previous question has been made prematurely (an important item of business is pending and debate has just begun; an individual who has key information has not had a chance to speak; the person making the motion had just spoken for 5 minutes, etc.), Remember: you can refuse to accept the motion. Explain your

reasons for doing so, and perhaps offer to recognize the member after certain others have been given a chance to speak so that the motion can be made then. If you do this judiciously, you likely will gain the respect of the members.

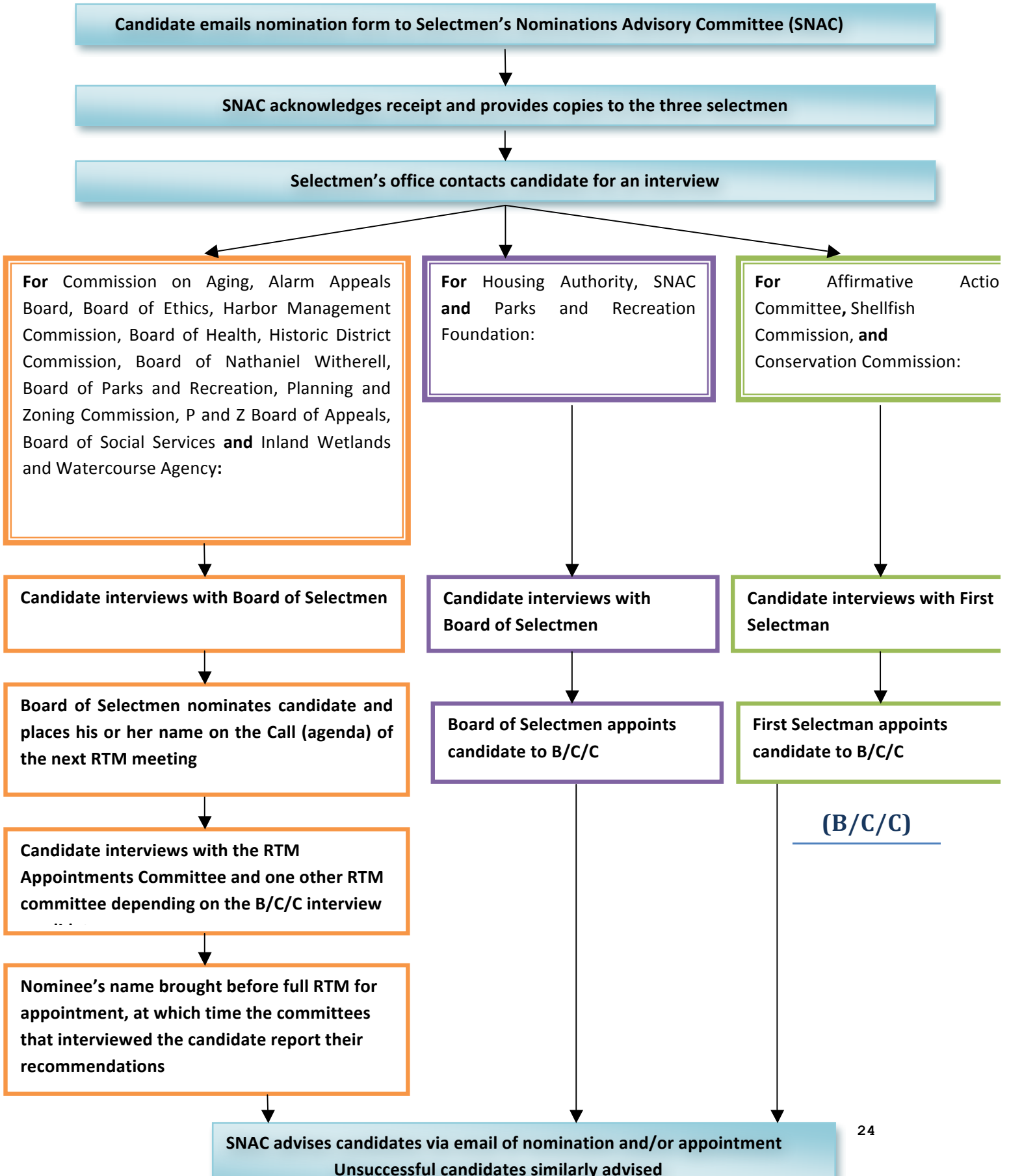
5. Important differences between motions:
  - a) Motion to Postpone to a Certain Time – if adopted, the postponed item automatically comes back in its identical form at the appointed time;
  - b) Motion to Postpone Indefinitely – its adoption kills the pending question. It is typically used when the assembly would prefer not to take a position on the pending question;
  - c) Motion to Refer (Commit) – generally used to send a pending question to a relatively small group of selected persons – a committee – so that the question may be carefully investigated and put into better condition for the assembly to consider.  
Necessary details: motion must include the name of the committee, its members or the manner of selecting the members. The motion might also include a deadline by which the question is returned to the assembly.
  - d) Motion to Lay on the Table – a commonly misused motion. This motion is designed to lay the pending question aside temporarily *when something else of immediate urgency has arisen*. A chair should rule that the motion is not in legal order if the evident intent is to kill or avoid dealing with a question. The chair should suggest the proper motion, which most likely is the motion to postpone indefinitely. If an item is tabled, it may be “taken from the table” during the same session or at the next session after it was laid on the table.
  - e) Motion to Reconsider – moving party must have voted with the prevailing side. It requires a second but the seconder need not have been on the prevailing side.

Informative Websites:

Robert’s Rules of Order Official Site – <http://www.robertsrules.com>

Stran Trout’s Parliamentary Procedure Home Page –  
<http://www.newkent.net/rulesoforder.html>

# Becoming a Member of a Town Board/Commission/Committee





TO: All Members of the RTM

FROM: Town Clerk's Office, 101 Field Point Road, Greenwich, CT 06830

We are preparing the RTM Online Membership for the new term commencing. Please provide the requested information back to us as soon as possible by email [tclerk@greenwichct.org](mailto:tclerk@greenwichct.org) or regular mail.

Please fill in the blanks below and return this form to the Town Clerk's Office as soon as possible. (PLEASE PRINT)

Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_ District

---

<b>Last Name</b>	<b>First Name</b>	<b>Middle Initial</b>	
_____	_____	_____	
<b>Office Phone</b>	<b>Home Phone</b>	<b>Cell Phone</b>	
_____	_____	_____	
<b>Street Address</b>	<b>Town</b>	<b>Zip Code</b>	<b>Fax Number</b>
_____	_____	_____	_____
<b>Occupation</b>	_____	<b>E-Mail Address</b> _____	

I (name stated above) waive receipt of a hard copy of the RTM meeting documents for entire term. I will access them online.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

I (name stated above) wish to continue to receive hard copy in the regular mail for entire term of.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

All RTM members MUST be aware of the Town Code of Ethics and the Connecticut Freedom of Information Act. [The Town Code of Ethics https://library.municode.com](https://library.municode.com)

- [The Connecticut Freedom of Information Act.](#)
- <https://www.ct.gov/foi/cwp/view.asp?a=4161&Q=488540&foiNav=l>

By signing below you acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to comply with the above policies.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

