

Town of Red Hook

TOWN BOARD MINUTES - Record Series Description

Volume IV

March 6, 1934 - 1947

Volume IV of the Town Board minutes is sewn and glued, with leather binding in poor - fair condition. It has 500 pages with printed numbers and no index. The records are in fair - good condition, with no tears. However, the paper is becoming brittle and shows significant yellowing and browning.

Entries are handwritten, with variations in ink. In some places, ink has bled through the paper. Smudges and stains are common. Corrections are frequent, either by cross-outs or by correction fluid, which has made some parts barely legible. Some handwriting is difficult to decipher.

From 1941 - 1947, there are many inserts in Volume IV, which have been stapled or glued to the pages. Pencilled numbers were added to the inserts to direct the order for microfilming and prevent loss of order should they become detached. The inserts are generally typed and include such documents as budgets, resolutions, notice of election, specifications and contracts for equipment purchases, certificates of indebtedness, and agreements with the State for snow removal.

Organization of the Town Board Minutes Volume IV is by chronological order of recording, which in this time period is also the order of events.

STRUCTURE:

Throughout the period 1934 - 1947, Town Board meetings were held monthly (The particular day changed over the years.), with special meetings called as needed. Some special meetings continued to occur on a regular basis, such as meetings as a Board of Canvassers to certify election results or as a Board of Auditors to pay bills, both in November. At the end of December, a special year end meeting was held for examining the Supervisor's accounts. By 1942, the first meeting held in January has become a reorganizational meeting, at which appointments were made, official bank and newspaper/s were designated, salaries for officials and employees set, and bonds of officials approved. Some of the reasons for calling other special

meetings were to approve purchases, certificates of indebtedness, or transfers of money, to fill vacancies and to conduct public hearings.

The Town Board consisted of the Town Supervisor and 4 Justices of the Peace. In 1939 a proposition was put before the voters to decide whether or not to change from elected Justices of the Peace to elected Councilmen for the Town Board. By one vote, the positions of 4 Justices of the Peace were retained.

As established in the early 1900's, the structure of the Town Board minutes remains fairly consistent. The date, time and place (Town Clerk's office) were noted, as well as whether it was a regular or special meeting. The Town officials present were listed. The purpose of the meeting would be noted, if it were a special meeting. The minutes of the last meeting usually were read. Appointments may have been made (or at other places in the meeting). Bills to be paid were audited and ordered paid, usually listing the payee, nature of claim, amount claimed and amount allowed. The Town Board would authorize Fund transfers, intermunicipal agreements, expenditures or other fiscal business (varying amount of detail). Presentations by guests or requests would be heard, discussed and acted upon, though with little detail recorded. The minutes generally would be read and approved before a motion to adjourn. The Town officials present and the Town Clerk would sign the minutes.

Resolutions and motions were made with notation of the name of the persons making and seconding (usually); roll call votes were rare. A new development was that public hearings were held before decisions were made on certain matters - highway purchases, granting franchises, approval of Fire Company contracts and budgets. Very little detail of discussions or reasons for decisions was recorded.

CONTENT:

DOG CONTROL: There is little mention of animal control issues, though the Town pays a Dog Warden.

ELECTIONS: The Town Board continues its responsibility to meet each November as a Board of Canvassers to certify election results for Federal, State and local elections. Candidates and their votes are listed by election district in 1935, their total votes thereafter. The Town Board annually designates and pays for polling places (listed). The Town Board appoints and pays election inspectors, 2 Democratic, 2 Republican and 2 alternates for each of the 6 election districts (listed).

HIGHWAYS: Highway matters remain a major part of Town Board business. There is little description of road locations, except for pieces which were abandoned (Cruger Island Road is an issue for several meetings until it is finally closed in 1936.). However, the maintenance of highways requires more time and decisions. The Town Board asks for inventories of Town machinery (not listed). Special meetings are held for purchases or repairs of equipment; details of equipment specifications are included in the minutes. The Town negotiates leases for a gravel bank and for land for a stone crusher, as well as the purchase of a building to house machinery.

In November, The Highway Superintendent submits for Town Board approval his estimates for the following year; he signs a Determination and Agreement for expenditures in the first quarter of the year (some details). The Town Board sets wages for employees (per hour); by 1938, highway employees and their wages are listed, usually in the beginning of the year. In 1940, Workmen's Compensation is extended to the Highway Superintendent.

SCHOOLS: Town Board involvement in schools is only reflected in the payment of an Attendance Officer, election of a School Director, and the approval of a bond for school money.

PUBLIC WELFARE: There is no mention of town responsibility for support of the poor.

PUBLIC SAFETY: Public Safety is a continued responsibility. The Town Board approves the formation of an Emergency Relief Squad and Fire Police in 1939. Several meetings are held in 1946 to discuss and approve the request of the Red Hook Fire Company for the formation of a Fire Protection District. The Town Board signs a contract with the Fire Company.

COURTS: Each July, the Supervisor, 3 Assessors and Town Clerk met to choose trial jurors, whose name, address and occupation are recorded until 1944; only total numbers are given thereafter.

There are details of several legal claims for injuries addressed by the Town Board.

TAXATION: Hearing of a taxpayer's complaint and granting of a refund for taxes overpaid are the only mention of Taxation issues.

PUBLIC HEALTH: Public Health continues to be a

responsibility of the Town Board, as they oversee and pay bills of the Nursing Association until 1947. The Consolidated Health District is listed as a Fund, but receives no other mention.

FRANCHISES: The Town Board approves the franchise for a bus line in 1939.

TOWN HALL: In 1943, the Town Board begins to develop plans for a Town Hall under the Post War Public Work Plan. While a final plan is discussed in 1945, there is no further mention.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Fiscal accounting continues, as the Supervisor gives an annual report (no details), and submits to an examination of the accounts (details of Funds), usually at the end of December. In 1943, the first monthly Supervisor's report is mentioned (no details). Annual Town Clerk's reports and Justices of the Peace reports are accepted (no details).

BUDGET: As the financial responsibilities of the Town Board increase, the annual estimate of the Highway Superintendent is replaced by the estimates for the budget of 1943 (preliminary budget). The process of fiscal planning begins earlier, in October, as it now requires approvals of estimates for a preliminary budget, public hearings on the preliminary, and approval of a final budget (immediately following the hearing). Town officials (Supervisor, Town Clerk, Highway Superintendent) are still paid per meeting or per day.

The Town Board minutes continue to document the growth and changes in Town responsibilities. The need for buildings to house Town machinery and to conduct Town business is one indication of this growth; the development of a budget process is another.

Controversy among officials is sometimes indicated. One Highway Superintendent resigns, but is asked to reconsider; another is asked to resign.

There is occasional evidence of historical and regional events, such as the resignation of the Supervisor to serve in World War II. Some influence of Federal and State policies is reflected; the Town Board resolves to sue the State for the difference in State Aid in 1941. Otherwise, issues remain relatively local in scope.