

Town of Red Hook

TOWN BOARD MINUTES

Volume V RECORD SERIES DESCRIPTION

1948 - 1957

Volume V of the Town Board Minutes is post bound with leatherette binding that is in fair to good condition. There are 339 pages of records with handwritten numbers (page numbers 273 and 318 are used twice) and no index. Records are in good condition, with minor browning and yellowing of the pages.

Entries are handwritten with variations in ink. Stains, smudges, corrections and erasures are common. In some places, handwriting and inks are barely legible, often as a result of corrections.

There are many typewritten inserts, almost as many as the number of pages. Most of the inserts have been glued in, but some have been stapled. Condition of the inserts is fair; many have been folded, curled, tattered and torn, sometimes taped. Frequently the margins of the inserts have been removed. Pencilled numbers were added to the inserts for purposes of microfilming order and to prevent loss of order should they become detached. Where documents that were mentioned in the minutes were not found attached, notation has been made. The types of documents included as inserts are: resolutions, bonds, notices of publication, contracts and bids.

STRUCTURE:

Regular Town Board meetings continued to be held monthly, with special meetings held as needed. The structure of the minutes remains the same as that established in the early 1900's, as notes of regular or special meeting, date, time, location (Town Clerk's office) and Town officials present were recorded. The minutes of last meeting occasionally were read. The Supervisor's monthly report was read and approved. Appointments, if any, were made. Bills were audited and ordered paid (listed with name of claimant, nature of claim, amount and amount allowed); they have become a lengthy part of the record. Transfers of money from one Fund to another Fund are common. Any presentations, public hearings or other business were addressed; motions were made for any decisions. Minutes of the meeting were read and approved, followed by adjournment and signatures of Town officials.

It was routine for the first meeting of the year to be held as a reorganizational meeting. At this meeting, the Town Board

made all regular appointments, designated the official bank and newspaper/s, approved bonds of officials, and set salaries of officials and employees. It was also routine to hold a year end meeting to approve annual reports of the Supervisor (balances of Funds), Town Clerk and Justices of the Peace.

Public hearings are routinely held for highway equipment purchases and budgets. The Town Board would set a date for the hearing and instruct the Town Clerk to advertise it.

There is not much detail of discussion of issues or reasons for decisions included in these minutes, but the increased number and complexity of issues and fiscal matters brought to the Town Board reflect in the minutes. Roll call votes are recorded more frequently as decisions become more controversial.

CONTENT:

DOG CONTROL: There is little mention of dog control, though the Town appoints and pays a Dog Control Officer.

ELECTIONS: The Town Board continues to act as a Board of Canvassers for general elections, certifying and recording votes. The Town Board designates polling places, and appoints and pays election inspectors (2 Republican, 2 Democratic and 2 alternate per district for 6 election districts).

HIGHWAYS: Highway matters remain a large part of Town Board business, with public hearings and approvals for equipment purchases. Highway employees and their salaries are still listed at the beginning of the year. In 1956, the Town Board sets minimum standards for new Town roads, indicating that at this point, the Town business is accepting roads for maintenance, but not constructing them. The Town Board accepts several new roads. Yearly contracts with the County Highway Department are signed for control of snow and ice.

SCHOOLS/EDUCATION: The Town Board approves funds for the public libraries in 1949, but otherwise, Town Board responsibility for education decreases, as the School District is no longer a part of the budget in 1954.

PUBLIC SAFETY: Constables are appointed yearly. In 1955, the VFW requests immediate 24 hour policing of the Town and Villages, and the installation of radio communication (no action).

Other public safety issues require more attention. The Town Board approves and funds fire alarm phone systems. It also approves yearly contracts with the Red Hook and Tivoli Fire Companies. It approves the incorporation of a Bard College Fire Department in 1952.

Street lighting increases in importance with the formation of

the Forest Park Lighting District in 1957 and requires more accounting. It is followed by the formation of the College Park and Holt Road Lighting Districts.

COURTS: The Supervisor, Town Clerk and Assessors continue to choose jury lists, though only numbers of jurors are recorded.

TAXATION: Equalization rates are a minor issue.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY: The Supervisor gives an annual report, which lists amounts in a General Fund, Withholding Tax, Consolidated Health District Fund, Fire Protection District Fund, Highway Fund (4 items) and later additions of Lighting District Funds. Town Clerk and Justice of the Peace annual reports are accepted, with details of total receipts and disbursements. Bonds for officials are approved and amounts are recorded.

PUBLIC HEALTH: The Consolidated Board of Health continues as a budget item, until it is abolished in 1958, though no other details of its business are recorded.

BUDGET: Preliminary budgets for the following year are approved in October. A public hearing is held; the budget is adopted immediately thereafter and included in the minutes. The budget resolution has a formal structure.

PERSONNEL: Personnel matters increase, as the Town Board deals with paid vacations and Social Security.

PLANNING AND ZONING: Planning and zoning issues become an important matter of Town business. In 1952, the Town Board appoints an Administrator of the Building Code and in 1953 a Multiple Housing Administrator is mentioned. In 1953, a committee is formed to locate a site for a Town dump.

A Zoning Commission is appointed in 1955. Subsequent reports, meetings and hearings are recorded until the Town Board votes against adopting a Zoning Ordinance in 1957.

PUBLIC RECREATION: Recreation is added as a matter of Town Board business. There is consideration of property to be donated for recreation purposes and appointment of a Recreation Commission.

Volume V of the Town Board minutes reflects an increasing number of issues that are becoming a responsibility of the Town. It contains information of persons elected or appointed, and types of businesses listed as claimants for bills. Interaction with State and County agencies is reflected, as well as consideration of some regional issues, such as plans for the Kingston Rhinecliff Bridge, and a resolution to support a State effort to provide a modern highway system.