

Town of Red Hook
109 South Broadway
Red Hook, N.Y. 12571

TOWN BOARD MINUTES

General Record Series Description

April 6, 1813 - 1993

This microfilming of the record series for the Town Board Minutes of the Town of Red Hook includes the proceedings of the Town Board meetings and documents accepted by the Town Board, from the time of formation of the Town (out of the northern part of the Town of Rhinebeck) on April 6, 1813, to the end of 1993. There are two gaps in this time span of the Town Board minutes; there are no meetings recorded from 1866 - 1869 and from 1894 to December 28, 1904, for which no explanation has been found. The record series consists of 13 volumes, plus the remainder of 1993 included in Volume XIV. Information in the Town Board minutes is not restricted.

The legal requirements for the minutes of a Town Board are found in the description of the duties of the Town Clerk in McKinney's Consolidated laws of New York State, 1987 edition, Section 30, Chapter 62. "The Town Clerk shall have custody of all records, books and papers. He shall keep complete and accurate record of proceedings of each Town Board meeting and all propositions adopted pursuant to this chapter. The Town Clerk has no discretion to include in the minutes only those discussions which he thinks are important, but rather must include in minutes all activities and considerations of the Board and record all votes. A verbatim record is not required unless ordered by the Town Board. The Town Clerk must transcribe Town Board resolutions in the minutes and may not incorporate them by reference to a resolution book. The Town Clerk must include in the minutes names of each Board member present, but is not required to record others."

The legal requirements for the Town Board minutes have certainly evolved over the 180 year time span included in this record series, as the business of Town government has increased in scope and complexity. The first evidence of this fact is that Volume I of the Town Board minutes covers a period of 63 years, whereas recent volumes cover only 3 - 4 1/2 years (There is a variation in the number of pages and size of volumes.).

Volumes I - IV (1813 - 1947) are sewn and glued with leather bindings; Volumes V - XIV (1948 - 1993) are post bound (with the exception of volume VIII, which is sewn and glued), with leathette bindings. Early minute books are

not indexed; present minutes are. Entries in Volumes I - VIII (1813 - 1973) are handwritten, though typed and handwritten inserts are included in Volumes IV - VIII (1934 - 1973). Volumes IX - XIV (1974 - 1993) are typewritten, with typed and handwritten inserts. There is much variation in legibility, particularly in early volumes, and in some instances, misspellings of names and grammatical construction may affect the interpretation of the record.

The organization of the Town Board minutes is by chronological order of recording. This means that the actual event, action or consideration being recorded may not be in chronological order, particularly in early years, when travel time and transfer of information were much slower. There are some instances where recording dates are not in chronological order.

The structure of the Town government has changed over the years, as can be seen in the recording of elected and appointed offices. Some early government positions are the same in present times - Supervisor, Town Clerk, Tax Collector. Some positions have changed responsibilities: the 3 Highway Commissioners have been replaced by a Highway Superintendent; Justices of the Peace are no longer members of the Town Board (having been replaced by Councilmen). Some offices no longer exist, such as Overseers of the Poor, Fenceviewers and Overseers of Highways. New positions have been created, among them a Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals and Water Board.

The contents of the Town Board minutes also have changed greatly over the 180 year time span. Early minutes include simple recording of dates and places of meetings, decisions made, appointments and elections, descriptions of highway and school districts and some financial accounting, particularly for highway matters and school districts. Town monies were spent for schools, highways and support of the poor. In early years, most Town officials served without pay (except for the Tax Collector, who kept a percentage of the taxes), and there were no budgets.

Present minutes include some of the same information, as well as discussion of issues and considerations such as street lighting, municipal water, solid waste disposal, fire protection, speed limits and safety, zoning and planning, recreation programs and facilities, and legal claims. School District, public health and public welfare matters are no longer handled by the Town. Many Town officials are paid and an extensive budget is necessary.

Because of the great differences in condition and content of the Town Board minutes, this description of the record series is general. A detailed description precedes each volume.