

## Town Citizen Advisory Groups Background

### 1. What is the purpose of a Citizen Advisory Group?

- Way for local governments to engage citizens in the democratic process
  - Provide assistance to the legislative body when formulating public policy and help transform policy decisions into action
  - Build public consensus on issues before elected officials make a decision
  - Give community a forum for discussion
- Provide judicious advice from a citizen perspective after they:
  - Study critical issues
  - Take public testimony
  - Perform independent research
  - Review staff report and recommendations
- Help plan the future of their communities

### Types of Citizen Advisory Groups

Types*	Definition
Committee	A body of persons delegated to consider, investigate, take action on, or report on some matter
Board	A group of persons having managerial, supervisory, investigatory, or advisory powers
Commission	A group of persons directed to perform some duty or a government agency having administrative, legislative, or judicial powers
Task Force	A body appointed by the city council to study or work on a particular subject or problem

\* The terms are often used interchangeably; so it is useful to have an agreed upon roles and responsibilities

### 2. When and how are Citizen Advisory Groups formed?

- Established with there is a need
- Usually, Statutes/ Resolutions/ Motions provide that the council or commission may by ordinance, establish advisory boards with such function and number of members it may determine
- Advisory groups may be permanent (created by ordinance or resolution) or standing groups. When the need is no longer present, the board should be abolished unless it is required by statute

### 3. Who is a member of Citizen Advisory Groups?

- Number of members needed depends on the duties, responsibilities, and membership requirements
- Membership criteria for some boards reflect the purpose of the body being created (i.e. May need special knowledge or represent certain groups)
- Members may be elected/ appointment by the legislative body for a term
- Essential members of the advisory board include: 1) Chairperson and Vice Chairperson elected by the board and 2) Secretary

- Liaison representatives (i.e. Superintendent of schools, state police, fire marshal, etc.) may interact with committees if requested by the Chairperson of the committee to attend the Committee meetings
4. What does a Citizen Advisory Group do?
- For efficient operation, a formal procedure for creating boards, accompanied by a set of operating procedures for board members is needed.
  - Jurisdictions should adopt policies and procedures for their advisory boards and require that essential basic issues be covered in the document that creates each board. Those basics include:
    - The purpose of the board with specific goals to provide direction
    - Membership qualifications
    - Number of members and appointment procedure
    - Length of appointment and method for removal or replacement
    - Internal organization
    - Procedures for the conduct of meetings and meeting schedules
    - Administrative assistance from staff
    - Reporting requirements
    - Evaluation process
  - Additional topics that might be included in a procedures manual or handbook are: procedures for recruiting board members, selection process and selection criteria, staff liaisons, filling vacancies, record keeping requirements, ethics, compliance with the open public meetings act, and compliance with the appearance of fairness statutes. For advisory bodies authorized by state statute, check to see if the statutes establish specific requirements for the body, such as number of members, qualifications for membership, and appointment procedures.
5. What are the staffing requirements for a Citizen Advisory Group?
- Prior to the formation of a new board or commission, consideration should be given to the staff who will be assigned to the board, the resources that will be needed, and the fiscal impacts.
6. How to finance a Citizen Advisory Group?
- The general practice is that members of voluntary advisory boards do not receive compensation, though some expenses may be reimbursed.
  - The board may expend funds as appropriated by the town.

Prepared on June 4, 2014

**[ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED BY DEEP RIVER, CONNECTICUT'S  
COMMUNITY HEALTH COMMITTEE (CHC)]**

- Provide health-related articles for the town newspaper (i.e.: proper disposal of needles used by diabetic residents, programs for drug take-backs)
- Separate email address that would allow citizens to contact the CHC privately
- Organize community health events (i.e.: “Soup for You,” support food pantry, discussions of civil preparedness and health topics at informational gatherings and senior housing)
- Have funding through the DR Community Fund & Memorial Fund

Prepared on June 4, 2014

**[PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE ORDINANCES FROM THE TOWN OF GRISWOLD, CT]**

Chapter 72. PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

[HISTORY: Adopted by the Special Town Meeting of the Town of Griswold 5-24-2006; amended in its entirety 3-22-2011. Subsequent amendments noted where applicable.]

§ 72-1. Continuation of Committee.

The Town of Griswold shall continue to have a Public Health and Safety Committee.

§ 72-2. Appointment; membership; terms.

A. The Public Health and Safety Committee shall consist of seven members, each of whom shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen for a term of six years, with terms to commence on July 1. Appointments and terms shall be staggered as follows:

(1) Group A members. There shall be two Group A members. Group A members shall be members whose terms are scheduled to expire on June 30, 2012. Upon the expiration of the current terms of Group A members, successive appointments shall be made for terms beginning on July 1, 2012, and every six years thereafter. The current Group A term that is unfilled shall not be filled and that membership position is hereby canceled.

(2) Group B members. There shall be two Group B members. Group B members shall be members whose terms are scheduled to expire on June 30, 2014. Upon the expiration of the current terms of Group B members, successive appointments shall be made for terms beginning on July 1, 2014, and every six years thereafter. The current Group B term that is unfilled shall not be filled and that membership position is hereby canceled.

(3) Group C members. There shall be three Group C members. Group C members shall be members whose terms are scheduled to expire on June 30, 2016. Upon the expiration of the current terms of Group C members, successive appointments shall be made for terms beginning on July 1, 2016, and every six years thereafter.

B. Vacancies in any position may be filled by appointment by the Board of Selectmen only for the balance of the term for which the member was or may have been appointed. The Board of Selectmen may, for good cause, terminate the membership of any person on the Committee and replace that person with another for the balance of the relevant term. Good cause shall include, but shall not be limited to, frequent absences from Committee meetings.

§ 72-3. Meetings.

The Committee shall meet monthly with the exception of July and August, but the Committee may otherwise meet as often as it deems necessary.

§ 72-4. Officers.

A. Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. The Committee shall elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson for subsequent one-year terms (each to commence on July 1 and expire on June 30 of the following year) at the last regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee prior to the expiration of the terms of the current Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. If the position of Chairperson or Vice Chairperson should become vacant for any reason, the Committee shall elect a replacement for the balance of the relevant term as soon as

possible after the vacancy occurs. The Vice Chairperson shall act in place of the Chairperson whenever the Chairperson is absent or the Chairperson's position is vacant. If the Committee should fail to elect a Chairperson or Vice Chairperson in accordance with this section, the Board of Selectmen may appoint such officer for the relevant term.

B. Secretary.

(1) The Committee shall elect a Secretary for subsequent one-year terms (each to commence on July 1 and expire on June 30 of the following year) at the last regularly scheduled meeting of the Committee prior to the expiration of the term of the current Secretary. If the position of Secretary should become vacant for any reason, the Committee shall elect a replacement for the balance of the relevant term as soon as possible after the vacancy occurs.

(2) The duties of the Secretary shall include but not be limited to the taking of minutes of all meetings and the filing of same with the Town Clerk. The Secretary shall also file the agenda for all meetings with the Town Clerk.

§ 72-5. Powers and duties.

The duties of the Public Health and Safety Committee shall be as follows:

A. To receive complaints regarding potential and/or existing unsafe or hazardous conditions at places or facilities open to the public in the Town as well as Town-owned properties. The Committee may look into each complaint and, if appropriate, forward the complaint along with any Committee findings to the agency having jurisdiction in the particular matter. The Committee may request that the receiving agency advise the Committee of any action that it takes.

B. To recommend educational programs for the specific purpose of promoting public safety and accident prevention.

C. To work with other Town agencies and/or commissions and with private, civic, business and other organizations and groups to accomplish this initiative.

D. To execute projects and to study problems of public safety and accident prevention as may be specifically assigned to it by the Board of Selectmen.

§ 72-6. Liaison representatives.

The Board of Selectmen, the Superintendent of Schools, State Police, Fire Marshal, Planning and Zoning Commission, the Borough of Jewett City and the Chiefs of local fire departments may assign liaison representatives to interact with the Committee and, if requested by the Chairperson of the Committee, attend Committee meetings.

§ 72-7. Compensation and expenditures.

The members of the Committee shall serve without compensation. The Committee may expend such funds as are appropriated to it by the Town.

Prepared on June 4, 2014

**[SAMPLE TOWN COMMITTEE NEWS ARTICLE]**

**Simsbury Created Committee To Address Mental Health, Drug Abuse**

February 03, 2014|By NICHOLAS RONDINONE, nrondinone@courant.com, The Hartford Courant

SIMSBURY — A new committee is forming in town that joins the town, the board of education, clergy and the community together to address mental health and substance abuse.

The community of care committee, which was recently endorsed by the board of selectmen, will leverage the resources of each group individually in order to address the issues around substance abuse and mental health, according to officials.

"It stemmed from an initiative where the clergy, the town staff and the board of education got together and said what more can we do to highlight some of the programs that are out there," First Selectwoman Mary Glassman said.

Pastor Woody Eddins, who helped create the committee and will serve as co-chair, said he had approached officials with concern of drug use in town.

"I have unfortunately had the opportunity to do two funerals in town ... of people who have died of drug overdoses," Eddins said. "I've seen other drug related issue where parents struggle with this and need some place to turn.

Eddins said families go through a lot of problems and don't know what support is available both with addiction and other mental health issues. Some of the help comes from the education system, the law enforcement, and many other groups, but each do not have all the answers, Eddins said. The group, Eddins said, would get together and discuss problems and propose programs around these issues.

"By having all the players there at one time, we can share our resources and learn what is going on so we can help guide people," Eddins said.

The group would include members from the police department, the school system, the town's department of social service and members of the community, according to the proposal.

"It's about solving problems as a community," said Selectwoman Lisa Heavner who worked on proposal for the committee. "It's educating the public about what's available."

The program is modeled after the community for concern in Canton, which Simsbury has worked with in developing community of care, Glassman said. The program will have no cost to the town, Glassman said. There was some confusion about a grant funding the program, but Glassman said there isn't a grant and it is all done by volunteers. Those interested in volunteering can contact the first selectmen's office at 860-658-3230 or via email at mglassman@simsbury-ct.gov.