



# TOWNSHIP OF NEW BRITAIN

*Bucks County, Pennsylvania*

## BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Cynthia M. Jones, Chair  
MaryBeth McCabe, Vice-Chair  
William B. Jones, III  
Stephanie Shortall  
Bridget Kunakorn

---

# Boards and Commissions Volunteer Handbook

Adopted | February 5, 2024



**New Britain Township**

207 Park Avenue

Chalfont, PA 18914

(215) 822-1391

[www.newbritaintownship.org](http://www.newbritaintownship.org)

Dear Board of Commission Volunteer,

Welcome to New Britain Township and thank you so much for being willing to volunteer your time on one of our many Boards and Commissions. We appreciate your interest and support in the Township.

Without the assistance of our volunteers, New Britain Township would not be the great place it is to live, work and recreate. I hope that your tenure with the Township as a volunteer is a pleasant and meaningful one.

To assist in the process, we've put together this handbook to help. The handbook should provide you with information on how the Township is structured and who works at the municipal building. The handbook outlines the roles and responsibilities of our many volunteers and how to operate as a volunteer board or commission. The handbook also addresses issues surrounding the Sunshine Law and advertising for meetings, how to go about making recommendations to the Board of Supervisors, fundraising efforts by your board or commission, how to resolve conflicts and communication as well as how to make a budget request.

The most important aspect of being a volunteer on a Township Board or Commission is to have fun. However, we believe this handbook will guide you along your path as a volunteer.

Thank you again for caring enough about your community to be willing to volunteer your time on our behalf.

## **Department Details**

Interim Township Manager	John Granger
Chief of Police	Richard Clowser
Public Works Superintendent	Ryan Cressman
Finance Director	Kristin Carpenter
Director of Planning & Zoning	David Conroy
Open Records Officer	John A. Granger
Tax Collector	Nicole Percetti
Township Engineer	Craig Kennard, Gilmore & Associates
Township Solicitor	Flager & Associates Scott Holbert

## **Structure of Each Board and Commission**

The structure of each Board/Commission is similar, although the number of members can vary. Each Board/ Commission shall have a Chair, Vice Chair and Recording Secretary. The Chair of Board/Commission is elected at the first meeting in January. The only exception to this rule is the Environmental Advisory Council, whose chair is appointed by the BOS in their reorganization meeting in January.

The Vice Chair and Recording Secretary should also be selected at the first meeting of the Board/Commission in January. The Vice Chair is responsible for chairing the Board/Commission should the Chair be absent from a meeting. The recording secretary is responsible for keeping the minutes of each meeting. The minutes must be submitted to the Township once they have been approved. The minutes are a record of what was done at the meeting, not a record of what was said. They should include the date and time of the meeting, the people in attendance of the meeting, and the action taken at the meeting. For examples of correct meeting minutes, please visit our website and view the most recent BOS meeting minutes <https://newbritaintownship.org/government/township-government/boardofsupervisors/board-of-supervisors-meetings/>

## **Boards and Commissions Role in New Britain Township**

The role of all of our Boards and Commissions is the same: Act as an advisory board to our BOS. Understanding the role of Advisory Boards is the key to understanding your function as a committee member. Advisory Boards were created by our BOS to provide advice on specific issues. Advisory Boards are expected to drill down and focus on key issues, such as the environment and the parks. Each member of the Board/Commission has been hand selected by the BOS due to their specific skill set and knowledge base. Working together to focus on the issues the BOS has set forth. Advisory Boards create recommendations to the BOS.

**Advisory Boards DO:**

- Create recommendations
- Research topics and prepare presentations for the BOS
- Accept that all of their recommendations to the BOS may NOT be passed
- Receive public input

**Advisory Boards DO NOT:**

- Create policy
- Dictate the direction of the BOS
- Act on the convictions of one member
- Consider the recommendation as passed until it is ratified by the BOS

The goal and mission of each Board/Commission is individualized, but the same results should be produced: recommendations to the BOS which are well researched and supported by a majority vote of the Board/Commission.

**Responsibilities of Boards and Commissions Members**

Each Board/Commission has differing tasks required of its members. All Boards and Commissions members should follow the rules outlined below:

1. Have fun! You are part of an important team of citizen volunteers working to represent your neighborhood and your community. We hope you enjoy your service to the Township!
2. Each member of a Board/Commission is expected to attend all of his/her committee meetings. In order for our Boards and Commissions to be successful and move forward with projects, we have created a Boards and Commissions attendance policy. We sincerely value the input and expertise of all of our volunteers. For the success of the Boards and Commissions, it is imperative that members attend the committee meetings. No member should miss more than 4 meetings in one year. Prior to missing a meeting, the member should alert the chair of their Board/Commission that they will not be attending the meeting. If the member misses 4 or more meetings, it is the Chair of the Boards and Commissions responsibility to notify the Township Manager (TM). The TM will submit a memo to the BOS requesting the member's removal from the Board/Commissions they serve on. We want to make sure that when you are appointed to a Boards and Commissions you are aware of the commitment level of that committee. Please make sure to speak with your chair when you are appointed to ascertain the level of commitment required as a member. Each committee varies. It is important that, if you feel the commitment level is too high, you let your Chair or BOS Liaison know so that we can find a better match for you. Please make your Chair aware if you have extenuating circumstances, such as an illness, so that we can hold your place on the committee.
3. Boards and Commissions members should take care to avoid conflicts of interest in their role as Board/Commission committee members. This line can sometimes be difficult to navigate. Most Boards and Commissions members are appointed to Board/Commission because they have some sort of expertise or interest in the mission of the Board/Commission. No personal business of a member should benefit from the member's role on a Board/Commission. If a member ever feels unclear about a conflict of interest, they should contact their chair to discuss the issue.
4. No Boards and Commissions member should inappropriately utilize township resources. This is true of finite items like computers, money and facilities, but also applies to township staff time. All request made of township staff, including professional staff such as solicitor and engineer, should be made through the Chair of the committee, to the Township Manager. Once approval is gained from the Township Manager, the Chair may work directly with the approved staff member.
5. Members of Boards and Commissions should be aware that they are representative of their community. Therefore, public expression should accurately reflect the majority opinion of the Boards and Commissions. This doesn't mean that members can't have a personal opinion, but if they are speaking in public about that opinion they should identify it as personal and not the opinion of the majority of their Boards and Commissions

6. Any interaction with the media must be coordinated with your Chairperson, with prior approval from the Township Manager. Boards and Commissions should have a standard message that is put out to the media. The Chairperson, after consulting the TM, will be the person speaking with the media if necessary.

7. Boards/Commissions members should make an effort to be aware of other Boards and Commissions in the Township and their roles in relationship to the Board/Commission the member serves on. For example, members of the Parks and Recreation Board should have an understanding of the topics addressed by the Environmental Advisory Committee (EAC). The EAC could be planning the purchase of trees. The Park and Recreation Board may have an opinion on that purchase. All of our Boards and Commissions minutes and agendas are posted online. Please take time to peruse them at your leisure to help keep your Committee up to date.

8. Each Board/Commission member should be familiar with Roberts Rules and agree to adhere to them during Board/Commission meetings. The main points are as follows:

**The Boards and Commissions chair sets the agenda for the meeting. All members will receive the agenda and meeting packets at least 3 days prior to the meeting. The agenda and approved meeting minutes from each Board/Commission are posted online.**

a. Advisory Board meetings can take place without a quorum. A quorum is determined as 50%+1 of the Commissions/Boards. Major decisions, such as controversial topics or decisions to request budget money or to spend money etc. must be made with a quorum. Each member is responsible for letting the chair know if they will be attending the meeting.

b. The approval of the minutes from the previous meeting should be the first thing on each Boards and Commissions agenda. Voting is done by one member making a motion, which is then seconded by another member. The Chair then allows for discussion and calls for a vote. Votes are made verbally.

c. The Chair proceeds through the agenda leaving time for discussion of each issue. Robert's Rules allow the Chair to limit discussion. This limitation can be done by setting a time limit on each issue or by allowing two pros and two cons to the debate. Once a motion has been made and ratified by a majority vote, the issue is closed. It is important to remember that majority rules. As a member of a Board/Commission, you are part of a team. Individual opinions need to be put aside in order to support the majority rule.

d. Each meeting ends with a motion to adjourn followed by a second and a vote. All announcements, such as the time of the next meeting should be done before closing. After the vote to close, people may stand and leave the room.

### **Sunshine Laws and Meeting Advertisement**

In January the BOS's first meeting is the reorganization meeting. At this meeting they set the meeting dates for the entire year. The Chair of each Board/Commission informs their staff Liaison of their preferred time and date of meetings and of any cancellations for the year.

As a Second Class Township we are required to follow certain laws regarding advertising of meetings and hosting of public meetings. The Sunshine Laws protect the right of the public to be present at all meetings of agencies and to witness the deliberation, policy formulation and decision making of agencies. It is vital to the enhancement and proper functioning of the democratic process that secrecy in public affairs undermines the faith of the public in government and the public's effectiveness in fulfilling its role in a democratic society.

In the Township we adhere strictly to the Sunshine Laws. We advertise all of our Boards and Commissions meetings on our Township Website. We do not allow Boards and Commissions to meet without having first

advertised the meeting. It is important to note that any gathering of the majority of the members of a Boards/Commission that includes voting and deciding on issues counts as a meeting, even if it is not held at the Township Building.

### **Making a Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors**

Boards and Commissions can make two types of recommendations to the BOS. They can make a recommendation to the BOS to adopt a new ordinance (law). They can also ask the BOS to adopt a resolution (policy statement) about a certain topic.

When an ordinance is formed it creates an enforceable law for our Township. Ordinances dictate how we operate everyday as a municipality and also dictate how our citizens can operate within our municipal boundaries.

We create ordinances to establish internal and external policy. If a Board or Commission wish to change or create a policy of the BOS they should do so through the ordinance process.

Please visit <https://ecode360.com/NE0937> to view some of our recently enacted ordinances. Many Boards and Commissions were involved with recommendations to the BOS on these ordinances.

A Board/Commission may generate the creation of an ordinance. They may author an ordinance or enlist our professional staff to assist with the writing of the ordinance. If Boards and Commissions utilize professional staff members, this must be done through the Chair, who works with the Township Manager to utilize staff time. Again, there is a cost associated with most business we conduct in the Township and it is important the staff requests go through one office in order to control the resources utilized by Boards and Commissions.

A resolution is a formal statement of a decision or expression of support or lack of support for a certain topic or issue. They are adopted by a majority vote of the BOS.

### **The process for submission of a recommendation to the BOS is as follows:**

1. Boards and Commissions vote via formal motion in a meeting on the action they are recommending to the BOS. If they are proposing an ordinance or resolution, it should be already written and viewed by all members at their meeting. If minor changes need to be made, that is fine.
2. The staff liaison of the Board/Commission sends a memo to the Township Manager explaining the ordinance or resolution they have drafted. The Township Manager will forward the ordinance to the Township Professional Staff for review (if necessary). The Township Manager will let the Boards and Commissions know which BOS agenda the item will appear on.
3. The Board/Commission and or Chair of the Board/Commission should try to attend the meeting of the BOS, so that they can answer any questions the BOS may have and be there to support their recommendation.
4. The BOS may vote to approve the motion. They may also vote to make changes to the recommendation. It is important that the Board/Commission remembers their advisory role at this point. If the BOS decides to change the ordinance or not to vote for its approval, the Board/Commission must accept their action. If it is not approved, the Board/Commission can try reworking the ordinance in accordance with the BOS recommendations.

## **Fundraising**

Fundraising is an integral part of some of our Boards and Commissions work. Some committees don't do any fundraising, while for others fundraising is the main goal of the committee. Here are some recommendations of successful fundraising strategies our Boards and Commissions utilize:

1. Make your fundraising efforts personal. Approach organizations personally rather than by phone or mail.
2. Approach places that you frequent regularly, they will be most likely to be interested in supporting your cause.
3. Make sure to always be cordial, if an organization or person rejects your request try to keep the doors open to the future. Someone who isn't interested at this time in donating money may be interested in the future in donating in-kind services.
4. Have an organized goal and fundraising plan.
5. Check with your staff liaison for Township resources. We have fundraised many times for the wonderful programs and capital projects that have helped to build this Township. We don't have to re-invent the wheel. Your liaison may be able to guide your committee to fundraising success. It is important to note that staff members are not responsible for fundraising. Fundraising is solely the task of Boards and Commissions members.
6. Funds raised by advisory committees reside in the Township Budget and are governed by Township rules for expenditure. For example, in 2024, we are required to get three quotes if we are spending over \$12,600 and we would need to go through the formal bid process if we are spending over \$23,200 (note: these limits can change annually due to State mandates). This is just one example of the rules that govern local government spending.

Please check with your staff liaison on the process your committee should utilize for spending funds. All expenditures will need to be approved by the committee and approved by the Township Manager. Finally, the Board of Supervisors have the final approval on how fundraised monies are spent. If a Board/Commission earmarks funds for expenditure that the Township Staff disagree with, the issue will go before the BOS for decision. Boards and Commissions are still advisory, even when dealing with funds they fundraised. Please remember that many of the capital items that committees fundraise for need to be maintained and insured by the Township. Staff may have different ideas on how the funding should be spent and it's important that the committees utilize the professional experience of our staff and rely on their recommendations.

## **Board/Commission Conflict Resolution Protocol**

Teams sometimes have issues which require resolution of conflict. We feel that it is important to provide a process for reconciliation of conflict within Boards and Commissions, so that they can continue to move forward with their vital work and quickly repair any issues between members that are preventing success. If you or someone on your committee has had an issue with another committee member, we recommend the following action:

1. Speak to your Chair and make sure they are aware of the issue.
2. Ask for a conflict resolution meeting which consists of:
  - A. A meeting is set up with the Chair of the committee, BOS Liaison to the Committee and Chair

of the BOS and the members of the Boards and Commissions that are having an issue.

- B. The purpose of the meeting is to clarify the issue and come to a conclusion on a solution for the issue. The BOS Chair will serve as an unbiased mediator in the meeting.

Once a conflict resolution meeting has occurred, the Board/Commission Chair is responsible for monitoring the conflict and ensures that the issue has been resolved. If the issue is not resolved, all parties will be invited to a second meeting. At this meeting direct action will be decided upon by the BOS Chair. This direct action may result in the recommendation of the removal of one or more members of the Board/Commission in order to resolve the issue at hand. If a member is removed from one Board/Commission, they are welcome to serve on another Board/Commission in the Township, but are not able to be reappointed to the Board/Commission they were removed from.

3. Chair of Board/Commission is welcome, at any time, to begin the conflict resolution process for members of their committee. Staff Liaisons are also, welcome at any time, to commence the conflict resolution process for the committees they serve on.

### **Communication**

Some committees in our Township have chosen to be paper free. This decision was made to reduce the cost of paper, reduce paper waste and make our operations more efficient. Our Boards and Commissions utilize email as a primary source of communication with members. While it is not required to have email to serve on a Board/Commission, it is very strongly recommended. Here are some tips and guidelines for email communication with Boards and Commissions and Township staff:

1. Make sure you reply to the person who sent the email. Sometimes Township clerical staff may send an email on behalf of the Township Manager or other staff member. Make sure you reply to the person who is noted in the salutation of the email, not the clerical staff member who may have sent it.
2. Make sure you check your email frequently, as many important documents, such as agendas and minutes; etc. will be distributed this way.

### **Training & Education**

The Board encourages committee members to take advantage of any education or training session that is offered to Township employees. Sessions are offered by the Bucks County Planning Commission, state agencies, and nongovernmental organizations.

The administration will circulate educational/training opportunities to the committee membership. You are encouraged to participate in any of these sessions.

Contact the Township Manager to register for the session. The Township may be approached to pay for registration fees.

### **Budget Requests**

The Township operates on a calendar fiscal year (January through December). If your committee feels that you need to spend money to accomplish one of your committee's goals, you will need to go before the BOS to get funding and permission for the project. Some projects may be immediate emergencies, such as, feasibility plans or studies. Other requests could be planned in the future and should be incorporated in the budget process. Boards and Commissions should work with their staff liaison, if they feel that will have a spending need for the next year. The Board/Commission will present the budget request in the appropriate line item and the BOS will make a decision as to whether or not to fund their request as part of the budget process.



## **Committee Role & Responsibilities**

Each committee is established by a specific Township ordinance, which specifies in detail the purpose, duties, responsibilities, terms and other applicable governing information related to the committee. The below summary is an outline of each committee's roles and responsibilities as governed by the ordinance.

### **Planning Commission**

**Role:** The New Britain Township Planning Commission is an advisory Commission. The Commission makes recommendations on all subdivision and land development applications and either draft or comment on all Zoning Ordinance Amendments. Each member is appointed by the Board of Supervisors.

The qualifications of members of the Commission and its duties and powers are prescribed in the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code Act of July 31, 1966, 247 Article II, Sections 201 through 211, provided that the Board of Supervisors may assign to said Commission such other duties as it may deem appropriate which are not inconsistent with the powers and duties provided by said code.

#### **Responsibilities (from the PA Municipalities Planning Code):**

Elect a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson from the Commission's members. The Secretary of the Planning Commission is the appointed Township Secretary of the Township.

Establish a schedule of public meetings in coordination with the Township Secretary and by approval of the Board of Supervisors.

The Commission shall maintain and monitor the Comprehensive Plan for the development of the Township.

Make recommendations to the governing body concerning the adoption or amendment of official maps of the Township as needed.

Prepare and recommend subdivision and land development and building or housing code regulations for consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

Review the zoning ordinance, subdivision and land development ordinance, official map, and other provisions governing land.

Review all applications received by the township for land development applications and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.

Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors to be submitted in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity.

### **Environmental Advisory Council**

**Role:** The purpose of the Environmental Advisory Council is to advise the Board of Supervisors and other committees and staff as applicable, on matters dealing with the protection, conservation, management of natural resources located within the Township.

#### **Responsibilities:**

Elect Vice Chairperson, and Secretary.

Establish a schedule of public meetings in coordination with the Township Secretary and by the approval of the Board of Supervisors.

Recommends plans and programs, including proposed amendments to Township ordinances related to the committee purpose.

Recommend and conduct education programs and special events.

Identify important environmental and conservation issues requiring analysis or regulatory action and provide review to the Board of Supervisors.

Provide review and advisory comment to the Board of Supervisors regarding subdivision and land development plans.

Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors to be submitted in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity.

### **Veterans Committee**

**Roles:** The Veterans Committee assists with fundraising for Veterans Park and helps plan events honoring New Britain Township residents who served or are serving in the United States Armed Forces.

**Responsibilities:** The committee volunteers and participates in township-sponsored activities, discussions, votes, and acts to honor our Veterans and expand Veterans Park to support the Board of Supervisors overall vision for New Britain Township.

Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors to be submitted in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity.

### **Parks & Recreation Commission**

**Role:** Oversee the use, maintenance, and improvements to Township Parks, manage the existing recreation programs and develop new programs to ensure resident satisfaction and enjoyment.

**Responsibilities:**

Elect a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary.

Establish a schedule of public meetings in coordination with the Township Secretary and by the approval of the Board of Supervisors.

Recommend rules and regulations to the Board of Supervisors for the governance and use of the park facilities.

Recommend and conduct approved educational and recreational programs and special events.

Review subdivision and land development applications as applicable when related to park and recreation facilities for advisory comment to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors to be submitted in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity.

### **Zoning Hearing Board**

**Role:** The Zoning Hearing Board is a quasi-judicial branch of the Township government with respect to the Township's Zoning Ordinance. The Board hears and sends decisions on variances, special exceptions, curative amendments, validity challenges and appeals of the decision of the Zoning Officer.

Every municipality which enacts or has enacted a Zoning Ordinance shall create a Zoning Hearing Board.

#### **Responsibilities:**

Elect a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson.

Establish a meeting schedule on an as needed basis in coordination with the Township Secretary.

The Zoning Hearing Board shall have exclusive jurisdiction to hear and render final adjudications in the following matters: Substantive challenges to the validity of any land use ordinance, appeals from the determination of the Zoning Officer, applications for variances from the terms of the Zoning Ordinance, and applications for specific exceptions under the Zoning Ordinance.

Appoint Counsel to the Zoning Hearing Board.

Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors to be submitted in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity.