

## ASSESSMENT SUMMARY:

Few in the community are aware of the proposed changes to the town's recreation committee. Fewer understand the ramifications of the changes. This pamphlet is meant to expand awareness and express an opposing view.

The proposed legislation restricts and prohibits volunteer participation and shifts responsibilities to unstated persons or places. Changes affect not only the current town board but future boards, as well. The restrictions are prejudicial and inconsistent with practices and policies elsewhere in our town. Indeed, none of the other four (4) committees in Town have a policy or even rules they must abide by.

Costs will rise to fill volunteer shoes. The town board will be diverted from its intended purpose, or recreation will be cut back. The impetus for the law does not better our community. Instead, the changes seem to be in response to the current town board's disregard for the rule of law, or another attempt to replace our representative democracy with a partisan oligarchy.

A couple of the proposed legislative changes make sense:

- 1) Housekeeping will clean up residual verbiage from the commission era.
- 2) More extensive definition of the research and investigative responsibilities of the committee are consistent with traditional responsibilities.

The town board should consistently follow the rule of law, make housekeeping changes, add expanded definitions, and stop there!

## THE LANDSCAPE:

The majority of Dutchess County towns have recreation committees. Generally, committees identify community needs, plan programs and facilities, recommend budgets to support those needs, help keep participants safe and provide supervision.

Most towns have recreation directors who handle the administration of recreation. Volunteers make up committees. Recreation directors are usually paid. Working together, they actively deliver programs or events. Both committee members and rec directors are appointed by their respective town boards. Involvement varies by municipality, year, and situation. Recreation in Rhinebeck has been typical of the Dutchess County norm.

Prior to the mid-70's, recreation commissions were commonplace. Commissions had separate finances and were largely autonomous. Many committees continued to be called commissions and operate as such even after the state outlawed recreation commissions.

Rhinebeck's recreation commission was abolished in the mid-70's and replaced with a recreation committee, which has kept recreation affordable for more than forty (40) years. The proposed law to change Rhinebeck recreation comes with a price tag:

**Prices for summer recreational programs increased this year by an average of 38% overall - all against the Rec Committee's recommendations.**

*Prepared by  
The Rhinebeck  
Republican Committee*

# POSITION ON RHINEBECK RECREATION

*A hearing on proposed  
Local Law  
that plans to  
**ABOLISH**  
the current  
Recreation Committee  
is scheduled for*

**MONDAY**  
**June 27, 2016 at 6:45**  
**P.M.**  
*Rhinebeck Town Hall*

*Do you see something wrong?  
Make your voice heard & say  
something or write something!*

## GOOD GOVERNMENT IS MEANT TO WORK FOR YOU

### WHO CONTROLS RECREATION?

Existing legislation from the 70's defines the responsibilities of the committee, recreation director and town board. Before then, the recreation committee was a commission that had broader powers and a separate bank account. Ever since the 70's legislation was enacted, the Town Board ("TB") has had the final say on staffing and financials.

### HOW HAS IT WORKED FOR FOUR DECADES?

The 70's legislation charges the committee with defining recreation programs and recommending a budget to support the programs. The committee is also responsible for recruiting a suitable recreation director, who delivers the programs. The recreation director recruits and manages seasonal employees to budget.

Summer camp is run by the part-time recreation director and seasonal employees. Programs like aqua Zumba/tumbling are outsourced. Volleyball is run by volunteers, whereas other programs (swim team) are run by volunteers plus seasonal employees. Soccer and Little League are run by private groups, but use town fields. Still other programs, like masters swimming have been initiated by the recreation director. Programs and events change, but continuity, accountability, flexibility, and operational support have always been responsibilities of the volunteer recreation committee. The 70's legislation recognized the importance of recreation to Rhinebeck's quality of life.

The chair of the recreation committee is a Town Board member who is appointed by the Supervisor. The chair calls meetings and presides. He/she votes in the event of a tie. Currently, the legislation provides for seven (7) committee members. The committee has not functioned at full complement in several years due in large part because of this Town Board's tone. During the past 18 months, it has only had 2 volunteers to rely upon. One volunteer was just recently appointed.

**THE RULE OF LAW:** There is a legal principle that the law should govern a nation, as opposed to being governed by arbitrary decisions of individual government officials. This rule implies that every citizen is subject to the law, including the law makers themselves. Complying with the rule of law prevents decay in our trust of government officials. Until new legislation is adopted, elected officials, employees, and volunteers are bound by the existing legislation.

Yet, this Town Board has ignored the rule of law for the past 18 months, operating recreation via arbitrary decisions - as though no rules exist. The Chairman no longer holds regularly scheduled meetings, frequently cancels agreed upon meetings, and the **TB passes resolutions that state Rec Committee recommendations that not only never were made but were never discussed by the Rec Committee!** No meeting dates, minutes, or agendas are posted and frequently no action is taken when volunteers have applied to join the committee. **None of the town board members have publicly tried to restore the rule of law.**

The current modus operandi is looking like a remake of the 2007 Steve Block play. There's a new cast, but the plot is pretty much the same . . . **less community involvement and more bureaucracy.**

With the current TB and proposed local law, volunteers are disenfranchised and recreation is run like an oligarchy. The proposed local law adds prejudicial treatment of volunteers that doesn't apply anywhere else.

As town boards change, personalities and recreational preferences change too. However, none of this justifies obviating the rule of law or telling the public that recommendations were passed by the Rec Committee that were never even discussed by them!

### **IS THE TOWN BOARD AWARE OF FINANCIAL PRESSURES OF ITS RESIDENTS?**

Most families use our recreation programs because of affordability. It is the only affordable solution for some residents. Use of the parks and summer camp have increased since the onset of the recession in 2008.

Volunteers are being disenfranchised and as the TB disregards the rule of law, this has occurred within just six (6) months:

- 1) **Senior Resident Pool pass increased 150% this year!**
- 2) Rec Committees recommendations were ignored and the TB adopted more than **a 35% average increase** in fees for pool entry costs, summer camp & swim lessons.
- 3) TB eliminated the sibling discount for summer campers and reduced services. **A family with 3 kids will pay 44% more this year for summer camp. A family with 4 kids will pay 60% more for summer camp.**
- 4) TB eliminated Rhinebeck's long held tradition inviting free swim on Memorial and Labor Day (but free pool passes are still given to year-round employees and their families).

Affordability is not a factor for this Town Board! Financial costs will continue to soar as this TB and future ones realize that it cannot handle the traditional workload that the recreation committee did. Lack of volunteers will be used to rationalize hiring full-time, full-benefit, certified recreational professionals, which means increased costs & stressed tax burdens.

Historically volunteer recreation committee members performed maintenance and improvement projects themselves. Will this or future town board(s) roll up their sleeves to do the same? Will they know who to ask? Or will more staff be hired just in case something must be done? Will rec programs be cut to balance budgets because recreation is no longer a priority? Will recreation be treated as a community service? Or just a means to generate revenue?