



**WEST VINCENT**

*Doing What's Right to Protect What's Left*

**TOWNSHIP COMMITTEE MANUAL**

**January 2025**

**FINAL**

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## **SECTION 1 – INTRODUCTION**

**Congratulations!** You have been appointed to a West Vincent Township committee position.

We extend our gratitude in accepting your appointment and look forward to your contribution to the Township. This manual is your guide containing information and tools regarding Township committee participation.

West Vincent Township is a rural Township of the second class located in northern Chester County, PA. As of the 2020 census, the Township population was 6,600 and the total Township area is 17.8 square miles. West Vincent Township was incorporated and recognized as a Township in 1832.

The Township is governed by a three-member Board of Supervisors elected to six-year terms. The terms are staggered so that a new Board member is elected every two years. The Board of Supervisors sets policy and goals for the Township.

The Township appoints a Township Manager, Secretaries, and Treasurer, who work with staff and the Township consultants, including the Township Engineer, Zoning Officer, Building Code Official, and Solicitor to carry out the policies and mission of the Township and provide programs and services to meet the needs of residents.

Township Departments include Administration, Police, Building and Zoning, and Public Works.

The Board of Supervisors also appoints the members of the Township's committees, who help support and advance the Township goals.

## **SECTION 2 – TOWNSHIP WEBSITE**

Please visit [www.westvincentwp.org](http://www.westvincentwp.org) to orient yourself to the Township mission, functions, resources, such as voting district maps and zoning maps and all Township committees.

Please refer to the Communications Plan document for projects, plans and timing.

## **SECTION 3 – TOWNSHIP ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES**

West Vincent Township is responsible for the primary functions of local government services provided to residents. These functions include the maintenance of roads, bridges, and related infrastructure, police services, storm water management, recreation, land use planning, in addition to a variety of additional services and activities.

### **MISSION**

*The Mission of West Vincent Township is to provide high quality service to all members of our community in an efficient, fiscally responsible, sustainable, and inclusive manner. The Township fulfills this mission through a dedicated team of elected officials, staff, and volunteers guided by the following core values:*

## **CORE VALUES**

1. **Integrity & Honesty:** The Township will be dedicated to the highest ideals of honor and integrity in all public and personal relationships, truthfulness and transparency in communications, and observance of ethical guidelines contained in Federal and State Law, the municipal code, and internal policies.
2. **Operational and Fiscal Efficiency:** The Township will seek continuously to find ways to maximize the use of resources provided by the taxpayers and recommend cost saving measures in maintaining and in improving operational performance.
3. **Professionalism in Public Service:** The Township will honor our positions in service through civility and decorum in our interactions with our peers, residents, and officials.
4. **Teamwork:** The Township will foster an environment of equality and respect, where people are included, valued, treated with dignity, and work together for the benefit of the entire community.
5. **Commitment to Excellence & Continuous Improvement:** The Township will make it a duty to continually improve, develop, and encourage the abilities of our workforce.

## **SECTION 4 – COMMITTEE ROLE & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each committee is established by a specific Township ordinance or resolution, 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 ordinance or resolution.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Role:** The West Vincent 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.
- Hold public hearings and meetings.

## **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 renders 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 Chairman and Vice Chairman.
- Establish a meeting schedule on an as needed basis in coordination with the Township Secretary.
- The Zoning Hearing Board shall have exclusive jurisdictions 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.

*See Ordinance 179-2017, Section XXVII for complete description, establishment and provisions of the Zoning Hearing Board.*

## **PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION**

**Role:** The Parks & Recreation serves in an advisory capacity which advises the Township BOS on how to maintain, equip and operate parks and other recreational facilities and programs .

### **Responsibilities:**

- Elect a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary.
- Recommend rules and regulations to the Board of Supervisors for the governance and use of the park facilities.
- Make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors related to park facilities.
- Recommend and conduct approved educational and recreational programs and special events designed to meet the various leisure time interests of all Township residents.
- Review subdivision and land development applications as applicable when related to park and recreation facilities for advisory comment to the Board of Supervisors.

- Advise and assist in the development and acquisition of adequate financial support for park and recreation facilities and programs.
- Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors to be submitted in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity.

*See Ordinance No. 146-2009 for complete description, establishment and provisions of the Parks & Recreation Commission.*

### **OPEN SPACE REVIEW BOARD**

**Role:** The purpose of the Open Space Review Board is to identify, review, evaluate, and rate the relative desirability of parcels of real estate in the Township and make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors related to the acquisitions of interests in real property.

**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 procedures for reviewing property interests to the Board of Supervisors.
- Rate the relative desirability of particular parcels of interest in the Township for consideration of preservation initiatives.
- Review proposed ordinance revisions that relate to the protection, preservation, and management of open space in the Township.
- Coordinate with other Township committees regarding plans incorporating preservation initiatives.
- Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors covering the activities of the committee in the first quarter of the succeeding year.

*See Ordinance No. 99 – 1999 for complete description, establishment and provisions of the Open Space Review Board.*

### **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, and management of natural resources located within the Township.

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

## **SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE**

**Role:** The Sustainability Committee is responsible for advising the Board of Supervisors regarding the implementation of the Township’s Sustainability Plan and Workplan. The committee’s approach is founded on the principles of stewarding a community that meets its current needs without compromising the needs of future populations. Conservation measures and environmental objectives are included in the Sustainability Workplan.

### **Responsibilities:**

- Elect a Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Secretary.
- Establish a schedule of public meetings in coordination with the Township Secretary and by approval of the Board of Supervisors.
- Undertake implementation of the Sustainability Workplan in coordination with stakeholders, officials, and staff.
- Review subdivision and land development plans as applicable for advisory comment to the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.
- Submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors no later than in the first quarter of the succeeding year of activity covering the activities of the committee.

*See Ordinance No. 6 – 2012 complete description, establishment and provisions of the Sustainability Committee.*

## **HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**Role:** The purpose of the Historical Commission is to serve in an advisory capacity on issues related to historic preservation in the Township.

### **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.
- Maintain an inventory of historic resources in the Township.
- Make recommendations to the Board of Supervisors concerning revisions to the Historic Map Inventory.
- Conduct research and document historic resources in the Township.
- Review and comment on subdivision and land development plans, including historic impact studies.
- Review and provide advisory comment related to zoning permits as prescribed in the Township Zoning Ordinance.
- Advise and comment on Zoning Hearing Board and Board of Supervisors regarding requests for special exceptions, conditional uses, and variances affecting historic resources.
- Undertake educational activities and interpretive programming.
- Submit an annual report of the activities of the Commission in the first quarter of the succeeding year covering activities of the Commission.

*See Ordinance No. 186 – 2018 for a complete description, establishment and provisions of the Historic Commission.*

## **LITTER LIFTERS OF WEST VINCENT AD HOC COMMITTEE**

**Role:** The role of the Litter Lifters Ad Hoc Committee is to establish a program to reduce the amount of litter on Township streets and roads through periodic litter collection events on streets and roads within the Township, including state roads as long as the “Adopt a Highway” contract is maintained, and municipal properties.

This is an ad hoc committee with a maximum of seven members appointed each year or as necessary as vacancies arise. Initial appointments in 2023 are staggered to permit rotation over the three-year terms.

### **Responsibilities:**

- The Ad Hoc Committee will meet on an as needed basis.
- Report to the Township Manager and coordinate all litter collection events with the Chief of Police.
- Develop educational programs and social media events.
- Submit annual report to Board of Supervisors.

*See Resolution No. 14-2023 for a complete description, establishment and provisions of the Litter Lifters of West Vincent Township Ad Hoc Committee.*

## **TRAFFIC SAFETY AD HOC COMMITTEE**

**Role:** The role of the Traffic Safety Ad Hoc Committee is to identify traffic safety issues of concern in the Township relating to all types of motorists. Vehicular, commercial, agricultural, motorcycle, bicyclists, equestrians, pedestrians and any other mode of transportation or recreational users on Township or State Roadways

This is an ad hoc committee established for a period of five (5) years with the BOS, in its sole discretion, determining to extend the Ad Hoc Committee for a subsequent five (5) year terms and on-going rolling five-year increments. If the Ad Hoc Committee is not extended for any subsequent term, the Ad Hoc Committee shall be disbanded. This Ad Hoc Committee consists of a maximum of seven members appointed each year or as necessary as vacancies arise. Initial appointments in 2024 are staggered to permit rotation over the three-year terms.

### **Responsibilities:**

- The Ad Hoc Committee will meet bi-monthly.
- Identify issues of concern within the Township via residents, accident reports, police, committee members, Board of Supervisors and Township Manager.
- Strategize possible solutions to address areas of concern from a multiple perspective approach relying on personal experience, professional expertise (WVPD, WV Public Works, PennDOT) and proven techniques utilized by other municipalities and the state to enhance traffic safety. Develop.
- Submit annual report to Board of Supervisors.

*See Resolution No. 17-2023 for a complete description, establishment and provisions of the Traffic Safety of West Vincent Township Ad Hoc Committee.*



## COMMITTEE LIAISONS

Most committees may have a committee liaison to attend Township committees of mutual interest for the purpose of idea sharing and to better facilitate programs and projects in the Township.

The Board of Supervisors each serves as liaison to the various committees to aid in this effort.

## COMMUNICATING COMMITTEE BUSINESS

All committee agendas and minutes are to be recorded in a timely manner and forwarded to the Township Secretaries for filing in the Township records and for posting on the Township website. In accordance with The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act (“Sunshine Act”), 65 Pa.C.S. §§ 701-716 (Open Meetings Law), **agendas and previous meeting minutes must be available and posted no later than 24 hours before the next meeting date.** Minutes are an effective way to help those members of the Township community to stay informed regarding committee business. **Committees will be required to submit their agendas and previously approved meeting minutes at least 48 business hours before their scheduled meeting** to allow for posting to the Township website in compliance with the Sunshine Act.

All committees may make recommendations for various action items related to their mission through a vote of their committee only for meetings where the agenda has been posted for at least 24 hours before the published public meeting date. **If agendas are not received in compliance with the act, no business can be conducted at said meeting.** All actions related to subdivisions, land development, and zoning shall be communicated to the Township Manager in writing promptly following the committee meeting.

Additionally, **forward all actions related to project and budget requests to the Township Manager.** Proposals may be required to come before the Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors as applicable.

## 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 Chester County Planning Commission, state agencies, and nongovernmental organizations. You are encouraged to participate in any of these sessions.

Each committee is required to submit an annual budget by mid-September of each year. It is imperative that committees account for attendance at these training/meeting sessions in their annual budgets. **All education, training or meeting sessions with associated fees must be approved by the Township Manager prior to registering for that session. Reimbursement or attendance is not guaranteed for sessions that have not been budgeted and/or approved.**

If approved to attend a session, please contact the Township Secretaries to arrange for registration.

Additionally, **forward all actions related to project and budget requests to the Township Manager.** Proposals may be required to come before the Planning Commission and/or Board of Supervisors as applicable.

## SECTION 5 – MEETING SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE

In compliance with the Sunshine Act, the Township annually advertises the meeting schedule of the Township committees in a newspaper of general circulation and on the Township website calendar. All meetings are typically held at the West Vincent Township Building, 729 St. Matthews Road, Chester Springs, PA 19425, unless advertised differently.

Every year after the Reorganization of Township Business in January by the Board of Supervisors, committees must conduct their own Reorganization and elect their committee roles including Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, as applicable.

The date, time, and location of special meetings will be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation and posted on the Township website throughout the year as they are scheduled. The public is welcome to attend all meetings with the exception of executive sessions.

Should there be a need to cancel or reschedule a meeting, or schedule a special meeting, please contact the Township Secretaries. The Township Secretaries and Website Administrator **need at least one week's notice in order to advertise for a meeting.**

Committee members are expected to attend their advertised meetings, however we do realize that emergencies may arise. Any committee member that misses four (4) meetings annually without communicating with their committee or liaison ("no call/no show") will be assumed to have resigned their position on that committee.

Please ensure your committee exchanges contact information to ensure you may stay in communication regarding committee business. **Committee agendas are to be established by the committee Chair.** In coordinating the agenda, issuance of minutes, and other content, **please include the Township Manager and both Township Secretaries** in your correspondence to allow for posting on the Township website and for our records.

Township staff manage an official Township Facebook and Township website. Meeting notices will be published using these social media outlets. **Should your committee have a program or alert you would like posted, please send this information to the Township Secretaries for posting.**

## **SECTION 6 – OFFICIALS LIST & VACANCIES**

The Township Officials List is available at the Township Building. It is updated each time there is a change (resignation, new appointments, etc.).

**If you wish to resign** from your committee position, please submit a letter for resignation to the Chair of your committee. Each committee shall then accept the resignation of the committee member and record this action in their meeting minutes. Please notify the Township Manager and Township Secretaries when a committee member resigns from a volunteer position.

If your committee has a vacancy, the Township will advertise and recruit new members using our Volunteer Application available at the Township Building or located on the Township website. The Board of Supervisors appoints all new committee members at a Board of Supervisors meeting.

The specific terms for each committee are established by Ordinance or Resolution. Please review your committee's Ordinance/Resolution for information related to committee terms. Current appointees and their terms are posted on the Township website.

The Supervisors may also appoint an alternate member to serve an initial term of the committee, and his/her successors shall thereafter by appointment for the same term. The alternate member shall have the power to vote on all matters coming before the committee when authorized by the Chairperson in the absence of a regular member.

## **SECTION 7 – MEETING CONDUCT**

To ensure that all Township meeting business is conducted in an effective and inclusive manner, **committees must adhere to the parliamentary procedures as prescribed in Roberts Rules Order.** You may request a copy of these rules at the Township office.

## **SECTION 8 – SUNSHINE ACT & RIGHT TO KNOW LAW**

Under the Sunshine Act, all Township meetings shall be open to the public. All meetings must be advertised.

**The law requires that minutes must be taken**, which include the date, time, and place of the meetings; the names of the members present; the substance of all official actions as a record, by individual board members, of the roll call votes taken; and the names of all citizens who appear officially and the subject of their comments.

The law allows for non-public meetings called “executive sessions,” to discuss matters related to personnel, collective bargaining, real estate, and litigation. Committees may hold executive sessions only in the above-mentioned circumstances. Should there be a need for clarification regarding these requirements, contact the Township Manager.

The PA Right to Know Law that took effect in 2009 dramatically changed the public’s right to access records in Pennsylvania. The Township is considered a government agency and subject to its law. Right to Know Request forms are available on the Township website and administered by Township staff. **Please understand that all emails between Township officials and/or committee members are considered public record.** Additionally, while committee members may use email to exchange information on an issue, **a vote or policy decision cannot be made on a subject via email by a quorum of its members.**

**Please ensure the committee member responsible sends agendas and approved minutes to Township staff for posting on the Township website.**

## **SECTION 9 – ETHICS ACT**

The Pennsylvania Public Officials and Employee Ethics Act applies to all elected officials, and certain appointed officials. The Act provides that public office is a public trust and that any effort to realize personal financial gain is a violation of the trust.

**The Act requires that the Board of Supervisors, Parks & Recreation Commissions, and Zoning Hearing Board must file a statement of financial interest with the Township.** If you are a member of one of these groups, you will receive a form from the Township in the first quarter of the year to be completed and submitted to Township staff.

## **SECTION 10 – THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The West Vincent Township Comprehensive Plan helps guide Township activities and promote the quality of life of our region. The Phoenixville Regional Comprehensive Plan serves as the Township’s official Comprehensive Plan. The plan in place was updated in 2019 and represents the interests of Phoenixville Borough, Charlestown, East Pikeland, West Vincent, and Schuylkill Townships. The Comprehensive Plan was updated in 2021 to include West Pikeland Township as they have joined in Phoenixville Regional Planning Committee (PRPC). Phoenixville Borough hosts the PRPC Comprehensive Plan and other relevant documents.

## **SECTION 11 – THE ZONING ORDINANCE**

The Zoning Ordinance regulates the “how, what, and where,” of development within the Township.

The “how” part of the Zoning Ordinances specifies how the development of land is to take place. Items such as the number of parking spaces that are required for an office building, the distance a building must be from the property line, and how large a store sign can be are regulated by the Zoning Ordinance.

The “what” part of the Ordinance addresses what types of uses are allowed within the Township. Most Zoning Ordinances contain three different types of uses. The first is a “use by right,” under which an applicant can obtain a zoning permit simply by filling out an application. These are typically innocuous uses with known impacts on the Township. The second is a “conditional use.” These uses would usually have a more significant impact on the Township, because of either the intensity of the use or size. Accordingly, they require a hearing before the Board of Supervisors, who has the power to impose conditions provided they are supported by evidence on the record. The third type is a “special exception,” which is similar to a conditional use, except the hearing is held by the Zoning Hearing Board.

The “where” part of the ordinance is the Zoning Map which depicts the Zoning District within which the various uses are permitted. The Zoning Map is part of the Zoning Ordinance, and like the Zoning Ordinance, can be amended by the Board of Supervisors.

Ordinance revisions are reviewed by staff, the Planning Commission, other applicable committees, and the Board of Supervisors.

## **SECTION 12 – SUBDIVISION & LAND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS**

Before a property owner can convey part of his or her property to another party, or before non-residential building or substantial construction in the Township is completed, a property owner must go through the subdivision and land development process. The Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) sets forth the standards that must be used when subdividing or developing a property.

It requires that the plan must contain specific information such as property boundaries, water courses, contour lines, stormwater management, roadways, etc. The plan is created by a licensed professional and is reviewed by the Planning Commission, with input by committees as applicable, the Township Engineer, and Zoning Officer. After the review is completed the Planning Commission makes a recommendation that is sent to the Board of Supervisors for formal action.

## **SECTION 13 – BUDGET PROCESS**

The Township budget operates on a calendar year cycle. By August of each year, please have your committee meet and discuss goals and objectives related to the budget for the following year. **Submit all budget requests to the Township Manager by September 15, annually.** Please note that these are requests. Check the approved budget to verify your committee's annual budget.

**Each committee may vote on a recommended expenditure within their approved budget and relay this request to the Township Manager for approval.**

If at any time you would like a finance report related to your committee, please contact the Township Manager. The Township's adopted budget and monthly financial reports are available on the Finance page located on the Township website.