

TO: Stow town boards and committees
FROM: Board of Selectmen
DATE: November 17, 2009
RE: Committee Management

As shown on the attached organization chart, the Selectmen appoint about 20 committees involving 100 volunteers. Other boards also appoint various committees, subcommittees, and task forces. As you know, the town depends on these groups to perform a great deal of valuable work for our community.

Unfortunately, once committee members are appointed, there is very little regular follow up to check on progress or possible need for additional resources. In addition, committees do not always have clear objectives, specific tasks, deliverables, and deadlines. All too often, we appoint members with "indefinite" terms. Thus, it is not surprising to discover that some groups have been meeting for years with no end in sight. Finally, we generally do not tell applicants what is expected in terms of their time and effort. Some committees and task forces are very labor-intensive and volunteers may find that the expectations are not compatible with their other responsibilities.

To address these problems, the Selectmen have developed the attached Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for "Committee Management". This SOP would apply to committees, subcommittees, and taskforces, but "working groups" would be excluded.

The Selectmen intend to use this SOP for all of the groups we appoint, and we encourage other appointing boards to adopt the SOP as well. As a first step, we have identified three groups that may benefit from this SOP. Over the next few weeks a Selectman will contact the respective chairmen to begin the implementation process.

Finally, we recognize that this is a new SOP and there will likely be suggestions for improvement. We welcome your comments.

Thank you.

Steve Dungan
Chairman, Stow Board of Selectmen