

East Hampton Government 101:

A Basic Guide to Participating in Our Community's Government

Background

The Town of East Hampton, founded in 1648, includes: the incorporated village of East Hampton, a portion of the incorporated village of Sag Harbor, the unincorporated portions of East Hampton, and the hamlets of Amagansett, Montauk, Springs and Wainscott. An area of 70 square miles, the Town stretches some 25 miles from Wainscott on the west to Montauk Point on the east.

The Town has two governing bodies: the **Town Board** and **Town Trustees**. Within the Town, each incorporated village has its own municipal government.

East Hampton's legislative power is vested primarily in the **Town Board**, established by the State of New York in 1788. The Board is responsible for managing taxes, roads, police, parks, zoning and general governance of the Town. The Board consists of five elected council members including its head, the Town Supervisor.

The historic Town government is the *Trustees of the Freeholders and Commonalty of the Town of East Hampton*. The **Trustees** were created and granted sole authority over the Town of East Hampton in 1686 by King James II through a "patent" (a land grant) from Thomas Dongan, the Royal Governor of New York. It is one of the earliest documents for a representative government by elected officials in the "New World" of North America.

Today, the Trustees are an autonomous, governing body, consisting of nine elected officials. They are responsible for the management of 70 miles of ocean and bay beaches and shoreline; numerous ponds, harbors and waterways; and aquaculture.

Government Structure

East Hampton Town Board

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|
| Town Supervisor | | 2-year term |
| Town Board Council | 4 members | 4-year term |

Other Elected East Hampton Town Officials

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Highway Superintendent | | 2-year term |
| Town Clerk | | 4-year term |
| Justices | 2 justices | 4-year term |
| Assessors | 3 assessors | 4-year term |

East Hampton Town Trustees

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|----------|-----------|-------------|
| Trustees | 9 members | 2-year term |
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Administrative Boards

Of the Town of East Hampton

These Administrative Boards, appointed by the Town Board, have decision-making powers.

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Architectural Review Board | 5 members | 5-yr term |
| Board of Assessment Review | 3 members | 5-yr term |
| Board of Ethics | 10 members | 4-yr term |
| Licensing Review Board | 8 members | 5-yr term |
| Planning Board | 7 members | 7-yr term |
| Zoning Board of Appeals | 5 members | 5-yr term |

Town Board Citizens

Advisory Committees (CACs)

CACs represent the various villages and hamlets within East Hampton. CACs have no decision-making powers. Each has one Town Board member to serve as its liaison. CACs report their findings and recommendations to the Town Board through their liaison. Members are volunteers appointed by the Board for a one-year term. Each must reside in or own property in their respective hamlet.

- Amagansett Citizens Advisory Committee
- East Hampton/Sag Harbor Citizens Advisory Comm.
- Montauk Citizens Advisory Committee
- Springs Citizens Advisory Committee
- Wainscott Citizens Advisory Committee

Town Board Subject-Matter Advisory Committees

These Committees have no decision-making powers. Each committee has one Town Board member to serve as its liaison. The committees report their findings and recommendations to the Town Board through their liaison. Members are volunteers appointed by the Board for a one-year term.

- Agricultural Advisory Committee
- Airport Management Advisory Committee
- Amagansett Life Saving & Coast Guard Committee
- Anti-Bias Task Force
- Business Committee
- Coastal Assessment & Resiliency Planning Committee
- Community Housing Opportunity Fund Advisory Board
- Community Preservation Fund Advisory Board
- Deer Management Advisory Committee
- Disabilities Advisory Board
- East Hampton Arts Council
- Emergency Preparedness Task Force
- Energy Sustainability Committee
- Fire Advisory Committee
- Fisheries Advisory Committee
- Harbors & Docks Slips Committee
- Housing Authority
- Inter-Agency Committee
- Latino Advisory Committee
- Montauk Playhouse Community Center Board of Managers
- Nature Preserve Committee
- Property Management Committee
- Recycling & Litter Committee
- Volunteer Ocean Rescue & Auxiliary Squad
- Waterfront Advisory Committee
- Water Quality Technical Advisory Committee

Town Cemetery Boards

These advisory Boards have no decision-making powers. Each board has one Town Board member to serve as its liaison. The Boards report their findings and recommendations to the Town Board through their liaisons.

- Fort Hill Cemetery Advisory Board
- Oak Grove/Atlantic Avenue Cemetery Board

Trustee Committees

These Committees have no decision-making powers. They report their findings and recommendations to the Town Trustees. With one exception, all Trustee committees consist solely of Trustees. Committees typically receive and welcome input from members of the general public.

- Accabonic/Hog Creek Committee
- Aquaculture Committee
- Beaches Committee
- Education Committee
- Finance Committee
- Georgica & Other Ponds Committee
- Harbor Management & Dredging Committee
(includes up to 5 non-Trustees serving 3-year terms)
- Napeague & Lazy Point Committee
- Northwest Creek Committee
- Pump-Out Boats Committee
- Records & Website/Social Media Committee
- Roads Committee
- Storm Water Management Committee
- Three Mile Harbor Committee

How to Participate

In East Hampton there are many ways to participate in governance. In addition to election to a board or other office, or appointment to an administrative board, these include participating in the many committees advising the Town Board or Board of Trustees.

Committee Participation

Both the Town Board and the Town Trustees receive input from committees of residents and experts (listed above) to advise them. Membership is by appointment, and members of the community are encouraged to apply. Each committee has one Board or Trustee member assigned to it; that person serves as liaison back to their respective governing body.

To Learn More About Committee Appointments Contact:

East Hampton Town Board

- Website: eamptonny.gov
- Phone: 631-324-4141

East Hampton Town Trustees

- Website: trustees.easthamptonny.gov
- Phone: 631-267-8688

Getting Elected as a Town Trustee or a Town Board Member

East Hampton has three major political parties: Democratic, Republican and Independence. Any registered voter may run for any Town office, but it is necessary to be a member of one of the three major parties, be a member of another qualified party (e.g. Working Families) or receive permission from an existing party leader to appear on that party's line on a ballot. To be eligible to run, any candidate must also obtain a number of signatures of registered voters as specified by election law.

Participating in Political Parties

Anyone may join a political party or change to a different party using the standard voter registration form available at a local Post Office, through a party representative or online at www.elections.ny.gov. Under New York State Election Law, only someone who has joined a political party by a prescribed date may vote in that party's primary.

A voter may attain an official position in a political party by running for its county committee or accepting an interim appointment to fill a vacancy. Each town has a "Town Committee" consisting of two county committee members for each election district.

East Hampton Town Democratic Committee

The East Hampton Town Democratic Committee is the body formally recognized by Democratic Party officials at the county, state and national levels as representing the Democratic Party in East Hampton.

The Committee is made up of 38 members – two from each of the Town's 19 election districts. The Committee normally meets on the third Wednesday of every month at 6:45 PM at St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Amagansett, 436 Montauk Highway, across from the Amagansett Post Office. In addition to the 38 Committee members, non-committee members are welcome to attend as guests.

Beginning in February of every election year, the East Hampton Town Democratic Committee forms a subcommittee to screen and interview potential candidates for Town office. The subcommittee then submits its recommendations to the full, 38-member Committee for a vote in May. Those selected by the Committee in May become the official Democratic Party candidates for election to Town offices.



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