

By Laws
for the
Valley Community Watch

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***By- Laws
Valley Community Watch***

Article I - Name

The name of the organization shall be: Valley Community Watch & Civic Association.
Wherever the term VCW appears in this document refers to this organization.

Article II - Mission Statement

- a. It is the mission of the VCW to work together as neighbors to maintain and improve the quality of life in our neighborhood by creating a caring and supportive environment in which to live and raise our children while maintaining our property values.
- b. We will achieve these goals by reaching out and getting to know each other through our VCW Newsletter, phone chains, block-by-block initiatives and social events. We will sustain property values by participating in controlling crime, enhancing our physical appearance through the care and maintenance of our homes, property, school, play spaces and business areas and by being a unified voice in town policy when relevant to the well being of our neighborhood.
- c. We are the Valley Community Watch & Civic Association, “a neighborhood caring for each other.”

Article III - VCW Area

The area served by the VCW is defined as the north western most point of Northfield and Gregory Avenues, south to the northern most border of South Orange at approximately Luddington Road, and from Gregory Avenue east to the Orange border.

Article IV – Government

- a) The Board of Trustees is made up of 7 distinct roles, each of which are defined on Article V
- b) The Executive Board is made up of the Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Board of Trustees.
- c) Roberts Rules of Order will govern all VCW meetings.

Article V - Officers & Roles

a. Chairperson

1. The Chairperson shall be considered the Chief Executive officer of the association.
2. The Chairperson shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Trustees and of the association.
3. The Chairperson may be the co-signer of checks.
4. Statements representing the official view of the association shall be made by the Chairperson or his or her designee only. (See article XIII)
5. The Chairperson shall have the power to appoint and disband committees.
6. The Chairperson has the right to call a special meeting of the organization when deemed necessary.

b. Vice Chairperson

1. In the absence of the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall have all the duties and responsibilities of the Chairperson.
2. Vice Chairperson may be the co-signer of VCW checks.
3. Vice Chairperson shall serve as Chairperson of at least one Prime Committee.

c. Secretary

1. The Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining and providing to the Board members accurate minutes of all officially sanctioned meetings.
2. The Secretary is responsible for internal communications for the organization.
3. The Secretary shall provide written copies of meeting agendas for the public at all meetings.
4. The Secretary shall be copied on all correspondence to the Executive Board and shall keep records of all such correspondence.
5. The Secretary will take attendance at all Executive Board meetings.

6. The Secretary is responsible for aiding the Chairperson in the execution of all VCW correspondence.

d. Treasurer

1. The Treasurer shall be the Chief Financial Officer of the organization and shall be responsible for the receipt, custody and safekeeping of the organization's funds.
2. The Treasurer shall render to the Board at monthly meetings a written report of the organizations finances.
3. The Treasurer shall be a co-signer of checks and will be responsible for all accounts payable and receivable for the organization.
4. The Treasurer shall facilitate the annual financial reports.
5. The Treasurer shall be present at any and all financial audits and/or meetings pertaining to the finances of the VCW.

e. Chair Emeritus

1. The Chair Emeritus is a position that shall only be held by a prior Chairperson of the organization.
2. He/she shall act as an advisor to the board.
3. With the designation of the Chairperson he/she may act as spokesperson for the organization. (See article XIII.)
4. The Chair Emeritus shall serve as the Chairperson for at least one Prime Committee.

f. Sergeant-At-Arms

1. The Sergeant-At-Arms is responsible for the dignity and decorum of meetings.
2. He/she shall monitor the entrance and exit of persons to the meeting place.
3. He/she shall be empowered to remove unruly or disorderly persons and serve as the Parliamentarian for the organization, ensuring that accurate procedures of rules are followed.

g. Communications

1. Communications shall be responsible for the notices of meetings, programs and events to the members and general public via information channels including e-mail, web site, print and other publications.
2. Communications is required to have approval by the Chairperson and Secretary for any communication to be disseminated to the public.
3. Communications is responsible for collecting names and information from all VCW members and residents in attendance at all Public meetings.
4. Communications is responsible for updating and maintaining a database of members.
5. Communications is responsible for distributing all related information pertaining to membership.
6. Communications is responsible for collecting dues and passing them to the Treasurer, and for keeping records of payment status, eligibility to vote in General Voting Issues and membership accounts receivable.

Article VI - Meetings

- a. The first 30 minutes of each board meeting will be dedicated to the Board of Trustees and is considered a Board of Trustee Session. The Board may include or exclude the general public from this portion of the meeting at will with no cause required.
- b. The remainder of the monthly board meetings will be open to public attendance. A period of public comment, not to exceed 30 minutes, will be including at each board meeting, immediately proceeding Chairperson's reading and discussion of the agenda items and after regular order of business.
- c. The Chairperson may schedule a special presentation or dialogue with a community member on the agenda of any board meeting. Such additions must be communicated to the Board in writing at least one week prior to the meeting.
- d. Board of Trustees meeting agendas must be distributed to all board members at least one week prior to the meeting by email. Public meeting agenda must be distributed to all members by email one week prior to the meeting.
- e. Notice of meetings should be submitted to the West Orange Chronicle for publication on the Thursday prior to the meeting. No additions to the agenda may be made after this period unless deemed urgent or necessary by the Chairperson.

- f. Hard copies of the public agendas must be available for distribution to the public at the meetings.
- g. Any subject or general order of business can be carried over to next meeting at the discretion of the Chairperson and majority vote of the Board of Trustees.
- h. VCW meetings will be held on the third Monday of each month facilities permitting. Every effort will be made to find an alternative location for a meeting if the usual facilities are not available.
- i. On a bi-annual basis the VCW will host an open meeting to include the township administration and officials in an effort to foster greater communication and opportunity for residents to interface with officials and department representatives. These meeting will be held in concert with Robert's Rules of Order.

Article VII - Goals & Objectives

- a. Block Captains
- b. Organize block captains program for each block in VCW area whose responsibilities will be to keep records of names, addresses, phone numbers and emails of block residents. Be aware of and communicate to VCW any special needs of residents. Communicate to VCW Board on behalf of residents or to residents on behalf of the VCW Board. Organize a system of block awareness among residents.
- c. The VCW will encourage compliance by property owners and tenants in the VCW area to adhere to all township ordinances in accordance with the VCW mission statement.
- d. The VCW will serve as the eyes and ears of the neighborhood and report concerns to town officials and VCW board members and take responsibility for the safety and well being of our residents, children and seniors.
- e. The VCW will organize fundraising and spirit building events for the neighborhood.
- f. The VCW will provide welcome information to new VCW residents.
- g. The VCW will provide educational programming in the areas of safety, emergency preparedness, home repair and property maintenance.
- h. The VCW will work with the Neighborhood Preservation Program as the primary community organization on all programs, events and redevelopment initiatives.
- i. The VCW will be the clearing house for information from local, county, state and national officials and approved organizations at the discretion of the Board of Trustees.

Article VIII - Membership

In an effort to generate income to support the organizational structure of the VCW we have created two levels of membership.

- a. All residents and/or their appointed representative (by certified letter and approval of the board by a majority vote) will be considered general members of the VCW and may vote in the elections for the Board of Trustees.
- b. Voting members are those that pay a nominal membership fee (see fees and funds on Article IX) and may vote in both the board elections and for all general public voting issues of the VCW. General Public Voting issues are determined by the VCW board.

Article IX - Funds

Additional funds raised for the VCW will be through grants, other contributions, fundraising initiatives and membership dues.

Membership fee is \$5 per adult.

Article X - Banking

A bank account for the VCW will be held in a primary community bank, overseen by the VCW Treasurer and at least two additional members of the Executive Board. All withdrawals will require two out of three signatures which should include the current Chairperson and/or one or more Vice Chairpersons and the Treasurer.

Article XI - Contracts and Permits

All contracts and permits entered into or dissolved on behalf of the VCW shall require at least two signatures of officers on the Executive Board.

Article XII - Prime Committees and Committees

Prime committees are those that are continuous committees and are considered primary and pertinent to the mission and goals of the VCW. Chairpersons of the Prime committees will be selected at the discretion of the Executive Board.

Prime committees include, but are not limited to:

- Fundraising
- Public Relations
- Government Relations
- *Elections (See Elections Article XV)
- Hospitality
- Welcome

Committees are those that serve a specific purpose or goal on a non-continuous basis. All board members are required to serve on at least one committee annually.

Article XIII - Public Statements and Official Positions

Statements representing the official view of the association shall be made by the Chairperson or his or her designee only. (The official point of view on any issue of the organization is determined by a majority vote of the Board of Trustees.)

Article XIV - Board Voting

Quorum

All meetings must have a majority of Board of Trustees members (4 out of 7) to hold a vote.

Voting

Whenever possible, votes must take place at a scheduled Board of Trustees meeting. For issues that must be addressed in between Board of Trustees meeting, the votes can be done electronically, by e-mail.

2/3's majority is necessary for a vote to carry.

Committees must pass voting issues to the Executive Board.

General Public Voting

General Public Voting issues are determined by the VCW board. A 2/3's majority of paid voting membership is required for a vote to carry.

Article XV - General Elections

- A. General elections will be held on each odd year, in November.
- B. The election date in November will be determined by a vote of the 'voting membership' in attendance at the regular September meeting.
- C. Election notices and call for nominees must take place at least 57 days before the election date. Nominations for positions must take place at least 30 days and no more than 35 days before the election (normally at the October meeting).
- D. Nominees must be present at the nominating meeting or they may select a voting member to represent them by submitting written notice to the Elections Chairperson before the nomination meeting is called to order.
- E. A voting member may act as a representative for one nominee only.
- F. Nomination proceedings:
 - a. Only voting members in good standing may be nominated for a position on the Board of Trustees of the VCW.
 - b. All general and voting members of the VCW may put forth a nominee for a board position.
 - c. The Nomination Meeting will proceed as follows:
 - i. Called to order by the Elections Chairperson.
 - ii. Nominations taken by members in order of positions as listed in Article V.
 - iii. Each nomination is verbally accepted by nominee
 - iv. Each nominee is approved by a majority show of hands of the voting membership.
 - v. Each approved nominee signs the nomination roster or in case of a representative, the nominee's name must be entered and the entry co-signed by the representative.
 - vi. The process is continued until all nominations are complete and no further requests are presented to the Elections Chairperson.
 - vii. Elections Chairperson will call the nomination proceeding to a close.
- G. The election process (defined below) will be supervised and facilitated by the Elections Chairperson.

- H. An election committee of no less than three and no more than five, additional persons shall be selected and voted on by the board of trustees (in the September Board of Trustees meeting) and may VCW voting members in good standing. The election committee's function will be to support the Elections Chairperson in the facilitation of the election and bring election issues before the Board of Trustees for resolution.
- I. Elections will be held in the evening hours of the date of the public meeting of the month of November unless another date is selected by a vote (see Article XIV) at the prior September meeting.
- J. The election time period will commence at 6PM and close at 9:00PM.
- K. Ballots will be printed with a list of candidates for each office in the order as listed in Article V and candidates will be listed for each office in alphabetical order.
- L. All non-minor residents of the VCW area as determined in Article III may vote in the General election.
- M. Voters must be of legal voting age and must show proof of VCW area residency with one of the following items
 - a. Valid drivers license with photos and/or certified photo identification card.
 - b. Passport and utility bill with corresponding name on it.
 - c. A business letter with name and address printed on it.
- N. Ballots will be filled out by VCW members at the polling place, folded and placed in a secure box specifically designed for that purpose.
- O. The ballot box will be attended by the Sgt. at Arms and/or the person designated by the Executive Board at all times during the election proceedings.
- P. No proxy and/or absentee ballots will be permitted or accepted.
- Q. No ballots may be removed from the polling area for any reason until post count.
- R. Observers shall be nominated and voted on by the Board of Trustees (see Article XIV).
- S. No less than two, no more than four, non-biased election observers shall be present at all times during voting and vote counting in an effort to assure fairness of the election process. At least one of the observers shall be a member of the WO Community Services Unit.
- T. Ballots shall be counted at the close of voting by the Elections Chairperson, confirmed in writing by the Elections committee and witnessed by the members of the observation committee.

- U. Election results must be presented before 12PM of the date of the election, via telephone or email to the Chairperson and Secretary of the Board of Trustees.
- V. The Communications Chairperson is responsible for communicating the election results by the end of the following day via email to the VCW residents and advertised to the community paper by the publishing deadline of the following week.
- W. A written tally of the voting records and the sign-in sheet of voters shall be presented to the Secretary of the Board of Trustees by the Election Chairperson within 48 hours of the close of the election.
- X. Post count, all ballots will be placed into an envelope, sealed and returned to the Elections Chairperson for a “challenge period” of 48 hours.
- Y. If the election is not challenged within 48 hours of the close of the election, ballots may be destroyed by the Elections Chairperson.
- Z. To challenge the election the challenger must submit a written statement of ‘intent to challenge’ to the sitting Chairperson and the Elections Chairperson within 48 hours of the conclusion of the election.
- AA. If the election is challenged, the ballots must be recounted within seven days of the conclusion of the challenge period, by the Elections Chairperson with the Executive Board and challenger(s) present.
- BB. The VCW elections may be postponed for extreme inclement weather, municipal or state-wide State of Emergency or vote of the Board of Trustees (see article XIV).
- CC. The December meeting date following an election will be considered the re-organizational meeting and include the transfer of all VCW documents to the incoming Secretary. January 1 of the following year will be considered the first day of the new term.

Article XVI - Terms

1. Each officer will hold their seat on the board for at least two years, and not more than two consecutive terms. They can be re-elected for another position.
2. Emeritus is welcomed as a board advisor after his/or two terms as Emeritus is concluded and may be present at Board of Trustees meetings, open and closed but does not retain a vote on the board.
3. If a seat becomes vacant due to resignation, a move or disciplinary action, that Board position must be voted on and filled within three consecutive VCW meetings by a majority vote of the Board. The replacement will fill out the term of the vacating board member and will be able to be reinstated for their own term by vote at the next election cycle.

Article XVII - Disciplinary Action

Absences

All board members are required to notify the Chairperson and Secretary in cases of “excused” absences from board meeting. In cases of a missed meeting due to an emergency, board members must inform the Chairperson and Secretary of the reason of their absence within 48 hours of the close of the board meeting.

Any board member who has three consecutive absences may, at the discretion of the board, be removed from the Board of Trustees by a majority vote of the board members at the next consecutive meeting.

“Excused” absences are considered;

- A- Illness or bereavement
- B- Work conflicts
- C- Religious commitment

Behavior requiring disciplinary action:

Such behavior includes items such as:

- A- Conviction of a violation against the Township, State or Federal criminal code.
- B- Infractions against these By-Laws as written or as in intended.
- C- Harassment and/or blatant disregard for others.
- D- Evidenced lack of interest in the activities or administration of the organization.
- E- Unilateral acts or actions on behalf of the VCW without full vetting and a majority vote of the board.
- F- Misrepresentation to public of the VCW its mission, members or program partners.

All accusations of behavior requiring of disciplinary action must be submitted in writing to the Chairperson and Secretary and will be scheduled for a hearing by the Chairperson in a closed session of the Board of Trustees. (In the case of an accusation made concerning the Chairperson, the Vice Chairperson shall assume the role and responsibility of the Chairperson for the purpose of facilitating the hearing and culminating result of said hearing.) The Board of Trustees may by a majority vote ask for the resignation of a Board member. There shall be no appeals of this process.

Article XVIII - By - Laws & Amendments

These By-laws shall serve as a guide to govern the organization and its membership. Amendments of each article of these By-laws may be adjusted, revised, amended or rescinded without any effect or impairment on any other article by a majority of the Board at an officially noticed Board of Trustees meeting. This action must be placed on the agenda and written notice given to all Board members at least two weeks prior to the date of meeting.

Article XIX - Ratifications

This document shall be considered ratified upon approval of a majority vote of the sitting Board of Trustees of the association at the _____ meeting, called and notated in the order below:

Call to Vote by Chairperson

Call to second by

Vote Tally

Motion to accept vote by Chairperson

Second by

Result

Date and time

Signature of all sitting board members