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Charter of the Town of Rindge

Rindge, New Hampshire

PREAMBLE

We, the people of the Town of Rindge, in order to preserve and enhance our unique community, establish a government that is open, accountable, and responsive to the will of the people. We recognize the values of self-governance, civic engagement, and the shared responsibility to uphold the welfare, prosperity, and security of all who call Rindge home.

With deep respect for our town's history and a commitment to shaping its future, we adopt this Charter as the foundation of our government. We pledge to foster transparency, fiscal responsibility, and fairness in all civic matters. Guided by the principles of democracy, integrity, and community service, we strive to ensure that Rindge remains a place where all voices are heard, where progress is made with wisdom, and where future generations will thrive.

United in purpose and spirit, we enact this Charter as a testament to our shared values and as a lasting commitment to the prosperity and well-being of the Town of Rindge and its people.

REFERENCES

The following statutes, policies, governing documents, and other authoritative resources were referenced in the development of this Charter. These references ensure legal compliance, policy alignment, and best governance practices for the Town of Rindge.

NEW HAMPSHIRE REVISED STATUTES ANNOTATED (RSA) REFERENCES

1. Municipal Governance & Authority

- a. RSA 31:39 – Powers and Duties of Towns
- b. RSA 31:98-a – Contingency Funds
- c. RSA 32 – Municipal Budget Law
- d. RSA 33 – Municipal Finance Act (Bonding & Borrowing)
- e. RSA 39:1 – Town Meeting Process
- f. RSA 41:8 – Selectmen’s Authority
- g. RSA 41:9 – Selectmen’s Financial Duties
- h. RSA 41:9-a – Authority to Establish Fees
- i. RSA 41:29 – Duties of the Town Treasurer
- j. RSA 42:1 – Oath of Office for Municipal Officers
- k. RSA 49-D:3 – Forms of Municipal Government

2. Elections, Town Meeting, and Citizen Initiatives

- a. RSA 40 – Budgetary Town Meeting Rules
- b. RSA 40:13 – Official Ballot Referendum (SB2) Procedures
- c. RSA 44:1 – Powers of Elected Officials
- d. RSA 45:1 – Town Officers and Election Procedures
- e. RSA 91-A – Right-to-Know Law (Open Meetings & Public Records)

3. Financial Management, Administrative Reports & Transparency

- a. RSA 6:45, II – Public Deposit Investment Pool
- b. RSA 31:105-107 – Municipal Indemnification & Immunity
- c. RSA 507-B – Tort Liability for Governmental Units
- d. RSA 21-J:34 – Financial Reporting Requirements for Towns
- e. RSA 32:22 – Annual Financial Statements & Audits
- f. RSA 32:5-b (2024 Update, SB 383) – Local Option Tax Cap Regulations
- g. RSA 4:47 – Governor’s Emergency Fund Authority
- h. RSA 21-P:46 – State Emergency Response & Disaster Relief

4. Land Use, Zoning, and Environmental Regulations

- a. RSA 155-E – Local Regulation of Excavations
- b. RSA 162-K – Community Revitalization and Economic Development
- c. RSA 674:5-8 – Capital Improvement Plans
- d. RSA 676 – Local Land Use Enforcement
- e. RSA 79-A – Current Use Taxation & Land Conservation
- f. RSA 485-A – Water Quality and Septic System Regulations
- g. RSA 483-B – Shoreland Protection Act

5. Public Safety, Emergency Management & Health

- a. RSA 154:2 – Fire Department Governance
- b. RSA 162-H – Energy Facility Siting & Public Health Considerations
- c. RSA 265 – Traffic Regulation & Road Safety
- d. RSA 128 – Town Health Officers & Public Health Regulations

- e. RSA 149-M – Solid Waste Management & Recycling Regulations
- f. FEMA Guidelines – Disaster Preparedness, Emergency Response & Funding
- 6. State Legislation Advocacy & Intergovernmental Cooperation**
 - a. RSA 15:5-6 – Prohibition on Public Funds for Political Purposes
 - b. RSA 49-D:3 – Municipal Authority for Legislative Advocacy
 - c. RSA 31:8 – Intergovernmental Agreements and Regional Cooperation
 - d. NH House & Senate Legislative Bulletins (2024) – Updates to Municipal Laws and Regulations

TOWN OF RINDGE GOVERNING DOCUMENTS & POLICIES

- 1. Rindge Zoning Ordinance (2024)
- 2. Rindge Subdivision Regulations (2011)
- 3. Rindge Site Plan Regulations
- 4. Planned Unit Residential Development Regulations (2021)
- 5. Rindge Excavation Regulations (2006)
- 6. Driveway Regulations (2017)
- 7. Blasting & Heavy Construction Site Plan Regulations
- 8. Budget Advisory Committee Rules & Procedures
- 9. Board of Selectmen Rules of Procedure & Guidelines
- 10. Civility Policy & Code of Conduct
- 11. Rindge Master Plan (Latest Version)
- 12. Rindge Annual Budget & Fiscal Reports
- 13. Rindge Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

FEDERAL LAWS & NATIONAL STANDARDS

- 1. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) – Accessibility in Governance
- 2. Civil Rights Act of 1964 – Equal Protection & Non-Discrimination
- 3. Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) – Employee Rights & Compensation
- 4. Clean Water Act (EPA Standards for Municipal Water Management)
- 5. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Disaster Funding Guidelines
- 6. U.S. Census Bureau – Population & Demographic Data for Municipal Planning

NEW HAMPSHIRE CONSTITUTION & LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- 1. New Hampshire Constitution, Part I, Bill of Rights
- 2. New Hampshire Constitution, Part II, Form of Government

REGIONAL AND STATEWIDE COOPERATION AGREEMENTS & REPORTS

- 1. NH Department of Revenue Administration – Municipal Finance & Tax Reports
- 2. NH Department of Environmental Services – Land Use & Conservation Policies
- 3. NH Department of Safety – Public Safety and Disaster Preparedness Regulations
- 4. NH Municipal Association (NHMA) – Town Governance Best Practices
- 5. Monadnock Regional Planning Commission Reports – Regional Development & Zoning Coordination
- 6. NH School Administrative Unit (SAU 47) Agreements – Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District
- 7. Rindge-Franklin Pierce University Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) – Higher Education & Economic Development Initiatives

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8. NH Legislative Bulletins (2024 Updates) – Official State Legislature Changes Affecting Municipal Operations

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FINAL STATEMENT

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CHAPTER 1

FOUNDATIONAL & GENERAL PROVISIONS

ARTICLE I: GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1: Title of the Charter

1. This document shall be known and cited as the Charter of the Town of Rindge, New Hampshire.
2. This Charter serves as the foundational governing document for the town, defining its structure, authority, and responsibilities.

Section 2: Definitions

For the purposes of this Charter, the following definitions shall apply:

1. “Town” refers to the Town of Rindge, New Hampshire.
2. “Board of Selectmen” refers to the executive body responsible for municipal governance as outlined in this Charter.
3. “Town Meeting” refers to the legislative body of the Town of Rindge, composed of registered voters who participate in municipal decision-making.
4. “Ordinance” refers to a law enacted by the town in accordance with state statutes and this Charter.
5. “RSA” refers to the New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated, which governs municipal law.
6. Any other terms not defined herein shall be interpreted in accordance with their common legal usage or as defined in state law.

Section 3: Establishment and Authority

1. This Charter establishes the governing framework for the Town of Rindge, ensuring a structured and transparent system of governance.
2. The Town of Rindge operates under the authority granted by New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA) 49-B, governing municipal charters, and all other applicable state laws.

Section 4: Name and Boundaries

1. The municipality shall be known as the Town of Rindge, New Hampshire.
2. The geographic boundaries of the town shall remain as presently established unless altered in accordance with New Hampshire law and voter approval.

Section 5: Powers of the Town

1. The town shall have all powers of self-governance granted to municipalities by the New Hampshire Constitution, state statutes, and this Charter.
2. These powers include, but are not limited to, the ability to:
 - Enact, amend, and enforce ordinances, regulations, and policies.
 - Own, acquire, manage, and dispose of property and resources.
 - Enter into contracts, intergovernmental agreements, and regional partnerships.
 - Levy and collect taxes, fees, and assessments as authorized by law.

- Regulate land use, development, and public safety measures.
- 3. The town may exercise any power not specifically denied by the New Hampshire Constitution, state law, or this Charter.

Section 6: Interpretation of Powers

- 1. The powers of the town shall be interpreted broadly to allow flexibility in governance and community development.
- 2. Where there is a question about the authority granted under this Charter, the interpretation that expands the town's ability to act in the public interest shall prevail, unless expressly restricted by law.

Section 7: Continuation of Existing Government

- 1. All existing ordinances, bylaws, and regulations shall remain in effect unless repealed or amended under the provisions of this Charter.
- 2. All elected and appointed officials, boards, commissions, and employees shall continue in their respective roles until new provisions are implemented.

Section 8: Adoption and Amendment of the Charter

- 1. This Charter shall be adopted following approval by a majority vote of the town's registered voters at a duly warned election.
- 2. Amendments to this Charter shall follow the procedures established in Article XXIX.
- 3. The town shall conduct a formal review of the Charter at least once every ten (10) years to ensure it remains current and effective.

Section 9: Interpretation of the Charter

- 1. This Charter shall be interpreted liberally to give full effect to the powers intended to be conferred upon the town.
- 2. If any provision of this Charter is found to be in conflict with state or federal law, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

ARTICLE II: REAFFIRMATION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

Section 1: Commitment to Individual Rights

1. The Town of Rindge reaffirms its commitment to protecting the fundamental rights and freedoms of all residents, as guaranteed by:
 - a. The United States Constitution.
 - b. The New Hampshire Constitution.
 - c. All applicable federal and state laws.
2. The town shall not enact or enforce any ordinance, regulation, or policy that infringes upon these inalienable rights, except as permitted by law for the protection of public welfare.

Section 2: Equal Protection and Non-Discrimination

1. The town shall ensure equal treatment and protection under the law for all residents, regardless of:
 - a. Race, ethnicity, or national origin.
 - b. Religion or creed.
 - c. Gender, gender identity, or sexual orientation.
 - d. Age, disability, or socioeconomic status.
2. Discriminatory actions in town governance, employment, public accommodations, and town services shall be strictly prohibited.
3. The town shall comply with all federal and state civil rights laws, including but not limited to:
 - a. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
 - b. The Civil Rights Act of 1964.
 - c. The New Hampshire Law Against Discrimination (RSA 354-A).

Section 3: Freedom of Speech, Assembly, and Participation

1. Residents shall have the right to freely express their opinions and participate in town governance without fear of retaliation.
2. The town shall facilitate open public forums, town meetings, and civic engagement opportunities, ensuring that all voices can be heard.
3. Public spaces shall be available for peaceful assembly and lawful demonstrations, subject to reasonable time, place, and manner regulations in accordance with state law.

Section 4: Right to Due Process and Transparency

1. The town shall uphold fair and transparent administrative processes, ensuring that all residents:
 - a. Have access to public records and information under the Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A).

- b. Are provided due process in disputes, hearings, and enforcement actions.
 - c. Have the ability to appeal decisions affecting their rights or property.
- 2. The town shall establish clear guidelines for public complaints, grievances, and procedural fairness.

Section 5: Property Rights and Land Use Protections

- 1. The town shall recognize and respect private property rights, ensuring that any land use regulations balance individual ownership interests with community well-being.
- 2. Eminent domain shall only be exercised in strict compliance with state and federal law, and property owners shall be afforded fair compensation and due process.
- 3. Land use policies shall reflect the town's commitment to sustainable development, conservation, and smart growth principles.

Section 6: Right to Safety and Security

- 1. All residents have the right to live in a safe and secure community. The town shall ensure:
 - a. Effective law enforcement and emergency response services.
 - b. Policies that protect against crime, violence, and public hazards.
 - c. Access to emergency preparedness resources and community policing programs.
- 2. The town shall take measures to prevent and respond to domestic violence, harassment, and threats to public safety, in collaboration with local and state agencies.

Section 7: Rights of Future Generations

- 1. The town recognizes its responsibility to future generations by ensuring sustainable policies and responsible governance.
- 2. Environmental protections, responsible budgeting, and long-term planning shall be prioritized to ensure that Rindge remains a livable, thriving community for years to come.

ARTICLE III: OPEN GOVERNMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

Section 1: Commitment to Transparency

1. The Town of Rindge is committed to open and transparent governance, ensuring that all municipal operations, decision-making processes, and public expenditures remain accessible and accountable to residents.
2. The town shall promote proactive disclosure of public information, allowing residents to engage meaningfully in government affairs.

Section 2: Public Records and Open Meetings Compliance

1. All municipal records, including electronic communications and meeting materials, shall be managed in accordance with RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know Law).
2. The Town shall ensure real-time access to public meetings via digital platforms, in line with updated NH transparency requirements.
3. The Town shall maintain and preserve municipal emails, meeting minutes, and digital records for the time periods specified under new NH record-keeping laws.

Section 3: Open Meetings and Public Participation

1. All meetings of elected and appointed boards, commissions, and committees shall be open to the public, except as permitted under RSA 91-A for nonpublic sessions.
2. The town shall provide reasonable notice of meetings, including agendas, through official town communication channels.
3. The public shall have the opportunity to attend, observe, and provide input at all open meetings, ensuring meaningful engagement in town decision-making.
4. Remote access options, such as live-streaming and recorded sessions, shall be made available whenever possible to improve accessibility.

Section 4: Financial Transparency and Accountability

1. The town shall adopt policies ensuring full financial transparency, including:
 - a. Publicly available annual budgets and financial reports.
 - b. Clear tracking and disclosure of public funds, contracts, and expenditures.
 - c. Adherence to independent auditing and financial oversight standards.
2. Residents shall have access to information on municipal salaries, contracts, and major capital expenditures, except where legally confidential.
3. The town shall establish mechanisms for public input on budgetary and financial matters, including budget hearings and citizen advisory roles.

Section 5: Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policies

1. Town officials and employees shall conduct all public business with integrity, impartiality, and accountability.

2. All elected and appointed officials shall comply with state and local ethics laws, including disclosing potential conflicts of interest.
3. The town shall establish and maintain a Code of Ethics to provide guidance on:
 - a. Ethical decision-making in governance.
 - b. Conflict-of-interest disclosures.
 - c. Public accountability measures.
4. Violations of ethical standards may result in disciplinary action, removal from office, or other legal consequences, as permitted by law.

Section 6: Citizen Engagement and Digital Governance

1. The town shall utilize digital platforms to enhance transparency and accessibility, including:
 - a. Maintaining an updated municipal website with public records, notices, and meeting schedules.
 - b. Providing online access to budgets, town ordinances, and governing documents.
 - c. Using electronic notifications, surveys, and public forums to encourage citizen engagement.
2. The town shall provide educational resources and workshops to help residents understand town governance, their rights, and how to participate effectively.

Section 7: Reporting and Accountability

1. The town shall establish a system for reporting concerns related to transparency, ethics violations, or noncompliance with public access laws.
2. An annual Transparency and Accountability Report shall be prepared by the Town Administrator and presented to the Board of Selectmen, summarizing:
 - a. Compliance with Right-to-Know laws.
 - b. Steps taken to improve public access and transparency.
 - c. Any recommendations for policy improvements.
3. Residents shall have the right to request investigations or reviews of government actions that they believe violate open government principles.

ARTICLE IV: FORM OF GOVERNMENT

Section 1: Municipal Government Type

1. The Town of Rindge shall operate under the Town Meeting-Selectmen form of government, as provided for in New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA 49-D:3) and this Charter.
2. This structure ensures that legislative authority remains with the Town Meeting, while executive functions are carried out by the Board of Selectmen and administrative functions are overseen by the Town Administrator.

Section 2: Town Meeting as the Legislative Body

1. The legislative authority of the Town of Rindge shall be vested in the Town Meeting, in which all registered voters of the town may participate.
2. The Town Meeting shall have the power to:
 - a. Adopt, amend, or repeal ordinances, regulations, and policies.
 - b. Approve the annual budget and capital expenditures.
 - c. Authorize the issuance of municipal bonds and other long-term financial commitments.
 - d. Act on matters placed before it by the Board of Selectmen, petitioned warrant articles, or other authorized entities.
3. The Town Meeting shall be conducted in accordance with New Hampshire law (RSA 39 and RSA 40), ensuring democratic participation and procedural fairness.

Section 3: Board of Selectmen as the Executive Body

1. The executive authority of the town shall be vested in the Board of Selectmen, which shall be responsible for overseeing town affairs, implementing policies, and ensuring efficient municipal operations.
2. The Board shall consist of three (3) elected members, serving staggered terms as provided by law.
3. The Board of Selectmen shall have the authority to:
 - a. Enforce town ordinances, regulations, and policies.
 - b. Supervise and manage town departments, boards, and committees.
 - c. Appoint the Town Administrator and other key municipal officials, as specified by this Charter.
 - d. Approve contracts, manage town property, and oversee financial operations in accordance with voter-approved budgets.
4. The Board of Selectmen shall conduct business in compliance with open meeting laws, ensuring transparency and public participation.

Section 4: Town Administrator as the Chief Administrative Officer

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1. The Town Administrator shall be appointed by the Board of Selectmen and shall serve as the chief administrative officer responsible for day-to-day operations of the town government.
2. The Town Administrator shall:
 - a. Implement policies and directives of the Board of Selectmen.
 - b. Oversee town departments and ensure efficient service delivery.
 - c. Prepare and manage the annual budget and financial reporting.
 - d. Supervise town employees, except those appointed by elected boards.
 - e. Serve as the principal liaison between town government and the public.
3. The Town Administrator's authority, duties, and responsibilities shall be further defined in Article IX: Town Administrator.

Section 5: Elected and Appointed Officials

1. In addition to the Board of Selectmen, the town shall elect officials in accordance with state law and local requirements, including but not limited to:
 - a. Town Moderator (responsible for presiding over Town Meeting).
 - b. Town Clerk (responsible for maintaining town records, voter registration, and official documents).
 - c. Tax Collector and Treasurer (responsible for tax collection and town financial management).
 - d. Library Trustees, Cemetery Trustees, and Other Elected Boards, as established by law.
2. The Board of Selectmen shall appoint other officials, department heads, and members of town boards, commissions, and committees as necessary for effective governance.

Section 6: Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances

1. The Town Meeting, Board of Selectmen, and Town Administrator shall operate with distinct responsibilities to maintain checks and balances in town governance.
2. No official, board, or committee shall exercise powers beyond those granted by this Charter, state law, or voter approval.
3. The town shall ensure that all decision-making processes remain fair, transparent, and accountable to the residents of Rindge.

Section 7: Amendments to Form of Government and Periodic Review

1. The structure of the town government may be amended as provided in Article XXIX: Amendment and Revision of the Charter.
2. The town shall conduct a formal review of its governmental structure at least once every ten (10) years to assess its effectiveness and consider any necessary changes.

3. The Board of Selectmen may appoint a Charter Review Committee to recommend improvements to the town's governance framework.

Section 8: Transition and Implementation

1. The provisions of this article shall take effect upon adoption of this Charter, with a transition plan developed to ensure continuity of government functions.
2. Any changes to the structure of government shall be implemented in accordance with Article XXIX: Transition Provisions.

ARTICLE V: POWERS OF THE TOWN

Section 1: General Powers

1. The Town of Rindge shall have all powers of self-governance granted to municipalities under the New Hampshire Constitution, state statutes (RSA 31, RSA 49-B, and other applicable laws), and this Charter.
2. The town shall have the authority to adopt and enforce ordinances, resolutions, and policies to protect the general welfare, safety, and property of its residents.
3. The powers of the town shall be liberally construed, allowing for flexibility in addressing local needs and challenges unless explicitly restricted by law.

Section 2: Specific Municipal Powers

The Town of Rindge shall have the authority to:

1. Legislate and regulate – Enact, amend, and repeal ordinances, regulations, and policies consistent with state law.
2. Public safety and law enforcement – Establish and maintain police, fire, emergency response, and other safety services.
3. Finance and taxation – Assess and collect taxes, fees, and special assessments as permitted by law.
4. Property and land use – Acquire, lease, manage, and dispose of real and personal property, including buildings, lands, and other assets.
5. Infrastructure and public utilities – Construct, maintain, and regulate roads, bridges, water systems, and municipal facilities.
6. Economic development – Encourage and regulate commerce, industry, and economic activity for the benefit of the community.
7. Environmental protection – Adopt measures for conservation, zoning, and natural resource management.
8. Contracts and intergovernmental agreements – Enter into cooperative agreements with local, state, federal, and regional entities.
9. Public health and welfare – Establish programs to promote the health and well-being of town residents.
10. Elections and governance – Conduct municipal elections, manage local government operations, and maintain civic engagement initiatives.

Section 3: Home Rule Authority

1. The Town of Rindge shall exercise broad home rule authority, allowing it to adopt laws and regulations suited to local governance, provided they do not conflict with state or federal law.
2. If a power is not expressly prohibited by law, the town shall have the authority to act in the best interests of its residents.

Section 4: Eminent Domain and Property Rights

1. The town may exercise eminent domain only in strict compliance with state and federal law, ensuring due process and just compensation for affected property owners.
2. The town shall respect and protect private property rights, ensuring that land use regulations balance individual ownership interests with community well-being.

Section 5: Limitations on Powers

1. The Town of Rindge shall not enact any ordinance, regulation, or policy that conflicts with state or federal law.
2. The town shall not delegate or transfer legislative authority of the Town Meeting to any other governing body, except as explicitly authorized by this Charter or state law.
3. No town regulation shall restrict constitutional rights beyond what is permitted under New Hampshire or federal law.

Section 6: Enforcement of Municipal Authority

1. The town shall have the power to enforce ordinances, regulations, and policies through fines, penalties, and legal actions as permitted by law.
2. The Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, and law enforcement agencies shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with town policies.
3. Violations of town ordinances may result in fines, revocation of permits, or other appropriate remedies as outlined in applicable laws and regulations.

CHAPTER 2

GOVERNANCE & DECISION- MAKING

ARTICLE VI: CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND ETHICS

Section 1: Purpose and Policy

1. The Town of Rindge is committed to maintaining the highest standards of integrity, transparency, and public trust in municipal government.
2. This article establishes ethical guidelines, conflict-of-interest rules, and accountability measures to ensure that all town officials, employees, and volunteers act in the best interest of the community.

Section 2: Definition of Conflict of Interest

1. A conflict of interest exists when an official, employee, or volunteer has a financial, personal, or business interest that could improperly influence their decisions or actions on behalf of the town.
2. Examples of conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Engaging in town business that results in personal financial gain.
 - b. Voting on matters that directly affect a business or organization in which the official or their immediate family has an interest.
 - c. Accepting gifts, favors, or compensation from individuals or entities seeking to influence town decisions.
 - d. Using town resources, personnel, or confidential information for personal benefit.

Section 3: Disclosure and Recusal

1. Any town official, employee, or volunteer with a known conflict of interest shall:
 - a. Disclose the conflict in writing to the Town Clerk and appropriate governing body.
 - b. Recuse themselves from discussions, deliberations, or votes related to the conflict.
2. Failure to disclose a known conflict may result in disciplinary action, removal from office, or other legal consequences as permitted by law.

Section 4: Ethics Code and Conduct Standards

1. The town shall establish a Code of Ethics applicable to all elected and appointed officials, employees, and volunteers.
2. The Code of Ethics shall include provisions on:
 - a. Fair and impartial decision-making.
 - b. Prohibition of nepotism and favoritism in hiring and appointments.
 - c. Use of town resources solely for official purposes.
 - d. Respectful and professional conduct in public service.
3. All town officials shall be required to sign an annual ethics acknowledgment statement, confirming their understanding of the ethical requirements.

Section 5: Ethics Committee and Enforcement

1. The town may establish an Ethics Committee to provide guidance, review alleged violations, and recommend corrective actions.
2. Alleged violations shall be reported in writing to the Ethics Committee or Board of Selectmen for investigation.
3. Penalties for ethical violations may include:
 - a. Formal reprimand or censure.
 - b. Suspension or removal from office or employment.
 - c. Fines or restitution if unlawful financial gain is determined.
4. All enforcement actions shall be carried out in accordance with due process and state law.

Section 6: Whistleblower Protections

1. Town employees and officials shall be protected from retaliation when reporting violations of this article in good faith.
2. Any act of intimidation, demotion, or termination against a whistleblower shall be subject to disciplinary action and possible legal consequences.

Section 7: Public Transparency and Ethics Training

1. The town shall maintain a public record of all conflict-of-interest disclosures, available for public inspection.
2. Ethics training shall be provided to newly elected and appointed officials, with refresher training available as needed.

ARTICLE VII: TOWN MEETING

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

The Town of Rindge operates under the Official Ballot Referenda (SB2) form of Town Meeting, as authorized by RSA 40:13. This two-session process allows for deliberation, debate, and amendments before final ballot voting.

Section 2: Structure of Town Meeting (SB2 Format)

1. Deliberative Session – Voters debate and amend warrant articles before finalization for ballot voting.
2. Official Ballot Session – Finalized warrant articles appear on the ballot for town-wide vote.

This system ensures broad voter participation while maintaining an open deliberation process.

Section 3: Deliberative Session Procedures

1. Held annually between the first and second Saturdays following the last Monday in January (RSA 40:13, II).
2. The Town Moderator presides, ensuring compliance with parliamentary procedures and state law.
3. Warrant articles may be debated and amended, but amendments must be germane to the article and cannot change its fundamental purpose (RSA 40:13, IV).
4. **New 2024 Update: Any amendment that materially changes an article's intent is invalid and subject to legal challenge.**

Section 4: Official Ballot Session Procedures

1. Held on the second Tuesday in March (RSA 40:13, III).
2. Voters cast ballots to approve or reject finalized warrant articles.
3. **New 2024 Update: Election officials must ensure enhanced ballot security by adhering to expanded audit and storage requirements.**

Section 5: Budget Adoption Process

1. The Budget Committee prepares the proposed budget, which is reviewed at the Deliberative Session before appearing on the ballot.
2. If the proposed budget is rejected, the town adopts the Default Budget, as outlined in RSA 40:13, IX(b).
3. **New 2024 Update: The default budget must now include an itemized list of changes from the prior budget, distinguishing contractual obligations from discretionary spending.**

Section 6: Warrant Articles and Citizen Petitions

1. Warrant articles must be properly noticed and formatted per RSA 39:3 and RSA 40:13, II-a.
2. Citizen petitions require 25 signatures or 2% of the town's voters (whichever is less) and must be submitted by the second Tuesday in January (RSA 39:3).

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3. New 2024 Update: The full proposed budget must be available online at least 30 days before the Deliberative Session to enhance public transparency.

Section 7: Reconsideration, Recount, and Legal Challenges

1. RSA 40:13, XI prohibits reconsideration of ballot votes.
2. Recounts may be requested within five days of election results per RSA 40:4-c and follow strict verification procedures.
3. Legal challenges to warrant articles, ballot votes, or procedural errors must be filed in Superior Court under RSA 31:127.

Section 8: Public Notice and Transparency Requirements

1. The Board of Selectmen must publish all warrant articles at least 30 days before the Deliberative Session (RSA 40:13, II-a).
2. Public hearings on the proposed budget are required, allowing citizens to ask questions and provide input.
3. New 2024 Update: Election officials must comply with expanded public notice requirements, including digital posting mandates.

Section 9: Emergency and Special Town Meetings

1. Special Town Meetings may be called by the Board of Selectmen with court approval (RSA 31:5).
2. Bond-related warrant articles require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote (RSA 33:8-a).

ARTICLE VIII: BOARD OF SELECTMEN

Section 1: Establishment and Authority

1. The Board of Selectmen shall serve as the executive body of the Town of Rindge, responsible for implementing town policies, overseeing municipal operations, and ensuring compliance with state law and this Charter.
2. The Board shall exercise only those powers expressly granted by state law, this Charter, or voter approval at Town Meeting.
3. The Board shall act collectively as a governing body; no individual selectman shall have unilateral authority over town affairs unless specifically delegated.

Section 2: Composition, Election, and Terms

1. The Board of Selectmen shall consist of three (3) members, each elected at-large for staggered three-year terms.
2. Elections shall be conducted in accordance with New Hampshire election laws.
3. Vacancies on the Board shall be filled pursuant to RSA 669:63, allowing the remaining members to appoint a replacement until the next regular town election.

Section 3: Powers and Responsibilities

The Board of Selectmen shall have all powers, duties, and responsibilities granted by New Hampshire law (RSA 41, 91-A, and 49-D) and this Charter:

1. Governance and Administration
 - a. Oversee the administration of town departments and ensure efficient municipal operations.
 - b. Appoint the Town Administrator, subject to contract terms and performance review.
 - c. Develop and implement town policies, ordinances, and administrative procedures.
2. Financial Management
 - a. Prepare and recommend the annual town budget to Town Meeting.
 - b. Authorize expenditures and sign contracts in accordance with voter-approved appropriations.
 - c. Oversee town revenues, investments, and financial planning in compliance with RSA 32 (Municipal Budget Law).
3. Appointments and Personnel Oversight
 - a. Appoint members to boards, commissions, and committees, except where elections or other statutory provisions dictate otherwise.
 - b. Conduct performance reviews of the Town Administrator and oversee department heads.
4. Ordinances and Public Welfare

- a. Enforce town ordinances and regulations consistent with state law.
 - b. Ensure public safety by supporting police, fire, and emergency services.
 - c. Establish policies for town roads, public works, and municipal facilities.
5. Intergovernmental Relations
- a. Represent the town in dealings with state, federal, and regional agencies.
 - b. Enter into cooperative agreements with other municipalities and public entities.

Section 4: Organization and Meetings

1. Chairperson and Leadership
- a. The Board shall elect a Chairperson and other officers annually at its first meeting following town elections.
 - b. The Chairperson shall preside over meetings, set agendas, and act as the primary spokesperson for the Board.
2. Meetings and Public Access
- a. The Board shall hold regular public meetings, with dates and times established by town policy.
 - b. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson or by petition of a majority of Board members.
 - c. Emergency meetings may be convened in accordance with RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know Law).
3. Quorum and Voting
- a. A quorum for conducting business shall consist of two (2) members.
 - b. Official actions require a majority vote of those present unless otherwise specified by law.
4. Public Participation and Transparency
- a. The Board shall conduct meetings in accordance with open meeting laws, ensuring transparency and public engagement.
 - b. Meeting minutes, decisions, and town policies shall be publicly accessible.

Section 5: Limitations and Ethical Standards

- 1. The Board of Selectmen shall not interfere in the day-to-day administration of town departments under the authority of the Town Administrator.
- 2. Members shall adhere to the town's Conflict of Interest and Ethics Policy (Article VI) and disclose any financial or personal interests in matters before the Board.
- 3. No member shall use their position for personal gain or political advantage.

4. Violations of ethical standards may result in censure, removal, or legal action, as provided by state law and town policies.

Section 6: Removal and Recall

1. A selectman may be removed for cause, including malfeasance, neglect of duty, or violations of ethics laws, in accordance with RSA 42:1-a.
2. Residents may petition for a recall election under procedures established by state law, requiring a valid petition and voter approval.

ARTICLE IX: TOWN ADMINISTRATOR

Section 1: Establishment and Role

The Town Administrator is an appointed official responsible for overseeing daily town operations under the policy direction of the Board of Selectmen. This position is established under RSA 37, which defines the authority and responsibilities of a Town Administrator in New Hampshire municipalities.

The Town Administrator does not have legislative or executive authority beyond what is delegated by the Board of Selectmen and applicable state laws.

Section 2: Appointment and Qualifications

1. The Town Administrator is appointed by the Board of Selectmen based on professional qualifications, education, and experience in public administration.
2. Appointment is for an indefinite term, unless otherwise specified in an employment contract.
3. The Town Administrator serves at the pleasure of the Board of Selectmen and may be removed by majority vote, subject to applicable employment policies.

Section 3: Powers and Responsibilities

The Town Administrator's duties include:

1. General Administration & Policy Implementation

1. Implements policies established by the Board of Selectmen.
2. Ensures compliance with town ordinances, policies, and state laws.
3. Supervises day-to-day town operations, personnel management, and administrative functions.

2. Financial Management & Budget Preparation

1. Prepares and submits the annual town budget in collaboration with the Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee, and department heads.
2. Ensures compliance with RSA 32 (Municipal Budget Act) and RSA 40:13 (SB2 budget rules).
3. Oversees expenditures, procurement, and contract compliance.
4. **New 2024 Update: The Town Administrator must publish a detailed breakdown of budget changes and provide an online version of the proposed budget in compliance with new RSA 40:13, II-a requirements.**

3. Personnel & Human Resources Oversight

1. Manages town employees, except those under the direct authority of elected boards, commissions, or independent entities (such as the Fire Department and Library, per RSA 154:2 & RSA 202-A:6).
2. Administers hiring, evaluations, and personnel policies with Selectmen's approval.
3. **New 2024 Update: Ensures compliance with updated NH labor laws (RSA 275), including:**
 - a. **Pay equity standards for municipal employees.**

- b. Expanded whistleblower protections under RSA 275-E for employees reporting financial mismanagement.**

4. Coordination Between Departments & Boards

- 1. Serves as a liaison between the Selectmen, town departments, and outside agencies.
- 2. Ensures efficient coordination of services, interdepartmental communication, and municipal planning efforts.

5. Public Relations & Resident Assistance

- 1. Responds to public inquiries, complaints, and concerns, ensuring accountability in town operations.
- 2. Maintains effective communication with residents, businesses, and civic groups regarding town affairs.

6. Cybersecurity & Digital Governance (New 2024 Updates)

- 1. Ensures the town complies with new cybersecurity mandates under RSA 91-A.
- 2. Implements data protection and public records security measures for municipal records.
- 3. Mandates cybersecurity training for all employees handling electronic town records.
- 4. Oversees digital access and transparency initiatives, ensuring compliance with the Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A).

Section 4: Limitations of Authority

The Town Administrator does not have unilateral executive authority and may not:

- 1. Set town policy—policy decisions rest with the Board of Selectmen.
- 2. Hire, fire, or discipline employees without Selectmen approval, except where delegated.
- 3. Exercise authority over the Fire Department or Library, per RSA 154:2 and RSA 202-A:6.
- 4. Enter into long-term contracts or financial commitments without Selectmen approval.

Section 5: Accountability and Oversight

- 1. The Town Administrator reports directly to the Board of Selectmen, which conducts annual performance evaluations.
- 2. The Board may adjust compensation, responsibilities, or employment status as needed.
- 3. Public complaints regarding the Administrator’s performance may be addressed through:
 - a. Public comment at Selectmen’s meetings.
 - b. Executive session reviews as permitted by law.

Section 6: Removal and Vacancy

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1. The Board of Selectmen may remove the Town Administrator by majority vote, with or without cause, subject to contract terms.
2. In the event of a vacancy, the Board may appoint an Interim Town Administrator while conducting a search for a permanent replacement.

ARTICLE X: ELECTIONS AND VOTING

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

The Town of Rindge conducts municipal elections, Town Meeting voting, and special elections in accordance with:

1. RSA 40:13 (SB2) – Governing Official Ballot Referenda
2. RSA 659 – Election Procedures
3. RSA 669 – Town Elections
4. RSA 654 – Voter Qualifications and Registration
5. 2024 Legislative Changes affecting election security, absentee voting, and ballot counting

These laws regulate:

1. The Official Ballot Referenda (SB2) voting system
2. The election of town officials
3. The administration of voting procedures and ballot security
4. Voter rights, registration, recounts, and recount procedures

Section 2: Election of Town Officials

1. Annual elections occur on the second Tuesday in March, coinciding with the Official Ballot Session of Town Meeting (RSA 40:13, III).
2. The following officials are elected by town-wide vote:
 - a. Board of Selectmen members (three-year staggered terms)
 - b. Town Clerk (three-year term)
 - c. Moderator (two-year term)
 - d. Supervisors of the Checklist (six-year staggered terms)
 - e. Budget Committee members (three-year terms)
 - f. Other elected positions as defined by statute or town ordinance
3. Election results are final unless a recount or legal challenge is filed under RSA 40:4-c.
4. 2024 Legislative Update: Any changes in town officer election procedures enacted at Town Meeting shall take effect at the next municipal election.

Section 3: Voter Eligibility and Registration

1. Any United States citizen, age 18 or older, domiciled in Rindge is eligible to vote (RSA 654:1).
2. Voter registration is available year-round, except during the 10 days preceding an election (RSA 654:27).

3. Same-day voter registration is permitted on Election Day with proof of residency (RSA 654:7-a).
4. 2024 Legislative Update: Election officials must verify voter registration documents in compliance with newly enacted verification standards.

Section 4: Polling Places and Election Procedures

1. The Board of Selectmen designates polling locations in compliance with RSA 658:9.
2. Polls remain open for a minimum of eight hours (RSA 659:4).
3. The Moderator oversees election procedures, ensuring compliance with state law.
4. 2024 Legislative Update: NH law now expands election monitoring and observer rights, ensuring transparency in the voting process.

Section 5: Absentee and Early Voting

1. Absentee ballots are available for voters unable to vote in person due to absence, disability, or religious observance (RSA 657:1).
2. Absentee ballots must be requested, completed, and returned before the close of polls (RSA 657:17).
3. 2024 Legislative Update: New restrictions on absentee ballot processing apply; clerks must now adhere to stricter ballot verification rules.
4. New post-election absentee ballot handling procedures ensure secure ballot storage until recount periods expire.

Section 6: Ballot Procedures and Counting

1. The Town Clerk and Election Officials ensure proper ballot preparation and security (RSA 656:1).
2. Hand counting or electronic tabulators may be used to count ballots, as permitted under RSA 659:63.
3. Election results are posted publicly immediately following the count (RSA 659:70).
4. 2024 Legislative Update: Revisions to ballot security measures and recount transparency.

Section 7: Special Elections and Recalls

1. Special elections to fill vacancies are held in accordance with RSA 669:61.
2. Town officials may be recalled if authorized by a future charter amendment or state law.
3. Bond articles require a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority vote if placed on the ballot (RSA 33:8).
4. 2024 Legislative Update: New rules for conducting special elections and verifying petition-based ballot measures.

Section 8: Election Transparency and Public Notice

1. The Town Clerk must publish election notices at least 10 days in advance (RSA 669:5).

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2. Election results must be posted publicly and certified by the Moderator and Town Clerk (RSA 659:73).
3. Public election audits or recounts may be conducted upon request (RSA 660:2).
4. 2024 Legislative Update: Towns must now comply with enhanced election audit procedures and new state reporting requirements.

ARTICLE XI: CITIZEN INITIATIVE AND REFERENDA

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

The Town of Rindge recognizes the right of residents to propose, amend, and repeal municipal ordinances and policies through citizen initiatives and referenda. These processes ensure that governance remains responsive to the will of the community.

Citizen initiatives and referenda are governed by:

1. RSA 49-D:4 – Local charter amendment procedures
2. RSA 40:13 (SB2) – Warrant article and ballot referenda rules
3. RSA 39:3 – Citizen petitioned warrant articles
4. RSA 31:131 – Local referendum process
5. 2024 Legislative Changes affecting petition requirements and legal challenges

Section 2: Citizen Initiative Process

A citizen initiative allows residents to propose new ordinances, policies, or amendments to existing municipal laws.

1. Requirements for Citizen Initiatives

1. Petition must be signed by at least 25 registered voters or 2% of the town's voters (whichever is less) (RSA 39:3).
2. The petition must be submitted to the Board of Selectmen no later than the second Tuesday in January for inclusion on the Town Meeting warrant (RSA 40:13, II-b).
3. The proposed ordinance must not conflict with state law or existing contractual obligations.

2. Selectmen Review and Public Hearing

1. The Board of Selectmen must review the petition for legal and procedural compliance within 10 business days.
2. A public hearing must be held at least 15 days before the Deliberative Session to allow discussion and input.
3. **New 2024 Update: Petitions must be posted online at least 30 days before the Town Meeting to enhance transparency (RSA 40:13, II-a).**

3. Town Meeting & Ballot Approval

1. If a citizen initiative is not amended at the Deliberative Session, it proceeds to the Official Ballot Session for a town-wide vote (RSA 40:13, IV).
2. A simple majority vote is required to adopt the ordinance unless otherwise specified by law.

Section 3: Referenda and Reconsideration of Ordinances

Residents may call for a referendum to repeal or amend an existing ordinance or warrant article.

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1. Petitioning for a Referendum Vote

- a. Requires a petition signed by at least 5% of registered voters within 30 days of the ordinance's passage (RSA 31:131).
- b. The referendum must appear on the next municipal election ballot unless a special election is called.
- c. **New 2024 Update: Special elections require court approval unless mandated by law.**

2. Exemptions from Referenda

- a. Annual budgets and bond articles cannot be repealed via referendum.
- b. State-mandated policies or ordinances required by federal law are also exempt.

Section 4: Public Notice and Hearings

1. Warrant articles proposed via citizen initiative must be publicly posted at least 30 days before the Deliberative Session (RSA 40:13, II-a).
2. Public hearings are mandatory for all proposed ordinances and must be advertised in at least two public locations and on the town website.

Section 5: Implementation and Legal Compliance

1. Adopted initiatives take effect immediately unless the article specifies a later date.
2. Selectmen must ensure compliance with all state and federal laws when implementing approved initiatives.
3. **New 2024 Update: The Town Clerk must certify all referendum petitions and verify voter signatures before submission to the ballot.**

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CHAPTER 3

FINANCIAL & ADMINISTRATIVE OPERATIONS

ARTICLE XII: MUNICIPAL FINANCE, BUDGETING, AND FISCAL OVERSIGHT

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the financial policies, budgeting processes, and fiscal oversight for the Town of Rindge, ensuring compliance with:
 - a. RSA 32 (Municipal Budget Law)
 - b. RSA 31:39 (Powers of Towns)
 - c. RSA 41:9 (Selectmen's Financial Authority)
 - d. RSA 40:13 (SB2) (Official Ballot Referenda Budgeting)
2. The town shall maintain fiscal responsibility, transparency, and sustainability in the management of public funds, expenditures, debt, and revenue sources while ensuring long-term financial stability.
3. **New 2024 Legislative Update: Compliance with the Taxpayer Transparency Act, requiring municipal disclosure of budgetary impacts on tax rates and household tax burdens.**

Section 2: Annual Budget Process

1. The annual municipal budget shall be prepared, presented, and adopted in compliance with RSA 32:5 and shall include:
 - a. General Fund Expenditures (Town operations, personnel, infrastructure, and services).
 - b. Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) and long-term municipal investments.
 - c. Revenue Projections from taxes, grants, fees, and other sources.
 - d. Debt Service Obligations and reserve fund allocations.
2. Budget Preparation Process:
 - a. The Town Administrator and department heads shall develop a draft budget, reviewed by the Board of Selectmen before submission to the Budget Advisory Committee (BAC) for recommendations.
 - b. The Budget Advisory Committee must provide recommendations before the final budget is presented at the Deliberative Session of the Town Meeting.
 - c. The Selectmen finalize the proposed budget and submit it for voter approval at the Official Ballot Session.
3. Public Engagement Requirements:
 - a. The Budget Committee must hold at least one public hearing before finalizing the budget (RSA 32:5, I).
 - b. **New 2024 Legislative Update: The full proposed budget must be posted online at least 30 days before the Deliberative Session to improve public accessibility (RSA 40:13, II-a).**
4. Town Meeting Approval & Implementation:

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- a. The final budget is placed on the ballot for voter approval.
- b. If the proposed budget fails, the town adopts the default budget, defined under RSA 40:13, IX(b).

Section 3: Revenue Collection and Expenditures

1. Taxation Authority: Property taxes shall be levied and collected in accordance with RSA 76 (Taxation Laws).
2. Fees & Permits: The town may collect fees for licensing, land use permits, and municipal services under RSA 41:9-a.
3. Expenditure Controls:
 - a. No municipal expenditure shall exceed the amount appropriated, except as permitted under RSA 32:11 (Emergency Expenditures).
 - b. All payments must be reviewed and authorized by the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.
4. New Local Option Tax Cap (SB 383, RSA 32:5-b, 2024 Update):
 - a. The town may adopt a tax cap by majority vote at Town Meeting.
 - b. The cap may be fixed (\$ amount), percentage-based, or adjusted for inflation/population growth.
 - c. If adopted, the cap can only be overridden by a supermajority vote at Town Meeting.

Section 4: Financial Oversight and Reporting

1. The Board of Selectmen shall conduct quarterly financial reviews of town accounts and expenditures.
2. The Town Treasurer shall maintain accurate records of all revenue and expenses in compliance with RSA 41:29.
3. The Town Administrator shall ensure financial transparency by publishing:
 - a. An Annual Financial Report.
 - b. Budget and audit results on the town website.
4. **New 2024 Legislative Update: Public Deposit Investment Pool (HB 1241, RSA 6:45, II)**
The town may invest in the NH Public Deposit Investment Pool, prioritizing deposits in NH-based banks to enhance local financial stability.
5. The town shall submit an annual financial report to the NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA) in compliance with new state financial transparency laws.
6. All municipal accounts, including revenues, expenditures, capital reserves, and debt obligations, shall be reviewed and reported annually in accordance with RSA 32 and new financial oversight standards adopted in 2024.

7. The town shall publish a publicly accessible financial summary on its website, ensuring transparency in municipal expenditures and financial planning.

Section 5: Capital Improvement Planning

1. The town shall maintain a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) in accordance with RSA 674:5-8, outlining projected infrastructure projects, facility upgrades, and major investments over a six-year period.
2. Capital projects may be funded through:
 - a. Annual budget appropriations.
 - b. Bonded debt (RSA 33:3).
 - c. Impact fees, grants, or state/federal aid.
3. All capital expenditures exceeding \$100,000 shall require Town Meeting approval.

Section 6: Reserve and Emergency Funds

1. The town shall maintain a Reserve Fund for unexpected expenses, with withdrawals requiring a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen.
2. **New 2024 Legislative Update: Disaster Relief Funding (SB 499, RSA 4:47, 21-P:46)**
 - a. **The town may request up to \$25,000 in state emergency funds per declared disaster.**
 - b. **The Board of Selectmen must apply to the Governor & Executive Council for approval.**
3. The town shall maintain a contingency fund (RSA 31:98-a) for non-disaster emergencies.

Section 7: Debt Management and Borrowing Authority

1. The town may issue municipal bonds under RSA 33 (Municipal Finance Act).
2. Any borrowing exceeding \$1 million shall require a 3/5 majority vote at Town Meeting.
3. The town shall not carry an operating deficit and must maintain a debt limit below 3% of assessed property valuation (RSA 33:4-a).

Section 8: Public Participation and Financial Transparency

1. The town shall provide easy public access to:
 - a. Annual budget reports.
 - b. Financial audits.
 - c. Expenditure details.
2. A public budget forum shall be held annually to encourage resident input on municipal spending priorities.

ARTICLE XIII: BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the governance, structure, and responsibilities of appointed and elected boards, commissions, and committees in the Town of Rindge.
2. The authority for municipal boards and commissions is derived from:
 - a. RSA 673 – Establishment of Land Use Boards
 - b. RSA 41:8 – Selectmen’s Authority to Establish Committees
 - c. RSA 32:17 – Budget Advisory Committee
 - d. RSA 31:39 – General Powers of Municipalities
 - e. SB2 Provisions – Impacting town meetings and decision-making
 - f. 2024 Legislative Updates – Governing committee transparency and digital access requirements

Section 2: General Provisions

1. All boards, commissions, and committees must operate in compliance with RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know Law) regarding meetings, minutes, and public access.
2. Each entity must define its scope, authority, and responsibilities in accordance with town policies and applicable state laws.
3. Membership terms, qualifications, and appointment procedures must be publicly available on the town website.
4. **New 2024 Legislative Update: All committees must now publish meeting agendas at least 48 hours in advance and ensure that minutes are available within five business days of the meeting.**

Section 3: Types of Boards and Commissions

The following boards and commissions serve key roles in the administration and governance of the town:

1. Elected Boards and Commissions

- a. Board of Selectmen (RSA 41:8) – Governing body overseeing town administration.
- b. Budget Advisory Committee (RSA 32:17) – Provides recommendations on town expenditures.
- c. Planning Board (RSA 673:1) – Oversees land use planning, site plans, and zoning recommendations.
- d. Zoning Board of Adjustment (RSA 673:3) – Hears appeals on zoning decisions.
- e. Library Trustees (RSA 202-A:6) – Manages town library operations and funding.
- f. Cemetery Trustees (RSA 289:6) – Maintains public cemeteries.

2. Appointed Boards and Commissions

- a. Conservation Commission (RSA 36-A) – Oversees natural resource preservation and wetlands management.
- b. Heritage Commission (RSA 673:4-a) – Advises on historical and cultural preservation.
- c. Economic Development Committee – Promotes business growth and investment.
- d. Energy Committee – Recommends energy efficiency policies for town operations.
- e. Recreation Committee – Assists in planning town recreational programs.
- f. Other ad hoc committees as needed by the Selectmen or Town Meeting.

Section 4: Membership, Qualifications, and Removal

1. Board and commission members must be registered voters of the Town of Rindge, unless an exception is made by the Board of Selectmen.
2. Appointments:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen appoints members to all non-elected boards and commissions, unless otherwise specified by law.
 - b. Land use board appointments follow RSA 673 procedures.
3. Term Lengths:
 - a. Most appointed positions serve three-year staggered terms to ensure continuity.
 - b. The Selectmen may fill vacancies for unexpired terms in accordance with town policy.
4. Removal for Cause:
 - a. Board and commission members may be removed for misconduct, neglect of duty, or failure to attend meetings under RSA 673:13.
 - b. Any removal must include due process, including notice and an opportunity to respond.

Section 5: Vacancies and Appointments

1. Vacant elected positions shall be filled through a special election, unless the next municipal election is within 120 days (RSA 669:61).
2. Appointed board vacancies shall be filled by the Board of Selectmen within 45 days of the vacancy.
3. If a vacancy remains unfilled after 60 days, the Selectmen may solicit public applications or appoint an interim member until the next election.

Section 6: Public Engagement and Transparency

1. All board and commission meetings must be open to the public, except when permitted under RSA 91-A:3 (Nonpublic Sessions).
2. Meeting notices and agendas must be posted at least 48 hours in advance at the Town Office and on the town website.

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3. Minutes must be made available within five business days of approval.
4. New 2024 Legislative Update: All land use boards must provide digital access to zoning, site plan, and subdivision regulations to ensure public transparency.

Section 7: Special Provisions for Land Use Boards

1. The Planning Board and Zoning Board of Adjustment must comply with RSA 673 and RSA 674 when making land use decisions.
2. Public Hearings:
 - a. All proposed zoning amendments must be presented in at least one public hearing before inclusion on the Town Meeting ballot (RSA 675:3).
 - b. All major site plan reviews require abutter notifications per RSA 676:4.
3. Zoning and Land Use Regulation Changes:
 - a. Amendments to zoning regulations require a town-wide vote.
 - b. The Planning Board may propose zoning changes, but they must be approved by ballot vote per RSA 675:4.

ARTICLE XIV: APPOINTMENTS AND REMOVAL OF OFFICIALS

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article governs the appointment, confirmation, and removal of town officials, department heads, and committee members in accordance with:
 - a. RSA 41:8 – Selectmen’s Authority Over Appointments
 - b. RSA 669 – Election and Appointment Procedures
 - c. RSA 154:2 – Fire Chief Appointment and Department Authority
 - d. RSA 202-A:6 – Library Trustee Authority
 - e. RSA 32, 41:8, and 41:9 – Financial Oversight and Selectmen Authority
 - f. SB2 Provisions – Impacting town governance and warrant articles
 - g. 2024 Legislative Updates – Strengthening due process protections
2. The Board of Selectmen has the authority to appoint or remove officials, except where appointments are governed by state law, town ordinance, or this Charter.
3. The Fire Chief and Library Director operate independently of Selectmen authority, except where financial oversight responsibilities intersect under RSA 32, 41:8, and 41:9.

Section 2: Appointment Process

1. Board of Selectmen Appointments:
 - a. The Selectmen appoint non-elected department heads, board members, and committee officials, unless otherwise mandated by law.
 - b. Selectmen must provide public notice for all vacancies before an appointment is made.
 - c. All appointments must be approved by a majority vote of the Selectmen.
2. Town Administrator’s Role in Appointments:
 - a. The Town Administrator facilitates the hiring process for town employees, including reviewing applications, coordinating interviews, and making hiring recommendations to the Board of Selectmen.
 - b. The Town Administrator does not have independent hiring authority but ensures that the hiring process is transparent, efficient, and compliant with town policies and applicable laws.
3. Special Appointment Authorities:
 - a. Fire Chief: Per RSA 154:2, the Fire Department appoints its own chief internally, without Selectmen involvement. The Selectmen do not control Fire Department personnel or operations, except where financial matters intersect with municipal budgeting.
 - b. Library Director: Per RSA 202-A:6, the Library Trustees appoint the Library Director and manage library operations independently from Selectmen authority.

- c. Police Chief: Appointed by the Board of Selectmen following a public recruitment process and compliance with state law enforcement hiring regulations.
- d. Town Clerk and Tax Collector: These are elected positions per RSA 41:16, unless the town votes to make them appointed.

Section 3: Removal of Appointed Officials

- 1. Grounds for Removal:
 - a. Any appointed official, department head, or committee member may be removed for cause, including misconduct, incompetence, dereliction of duty, or failure to attend meetings.
 - b. Selectmen may remove appointed officials by majority vote following a public hearing and due process procedures.
 - c. Removal authority does not extend to the Fire Chief or Library Director, except where financial oversight responsibilities intersect with Selectmen authority under RSA 32, 41:8, and 41:9.
- 2. Due Process and Appeal Rights:
 - a. Written notice of removal must be provided to the affected official at least 14 days before the final decision.
 - b. Any official may request a hearing before the Board of Selectmen prior to removal.
 - c. Certain department heads, such as the Police Chief, may only be removed for just cause following RSA 41:48.
- 3. Vacancy Management:
 - a. If an appointed official resigns, is removed, or is unable to serve, the Board of Selectmen shall appoint a replacement within 45 days.
 - b. If the vacancy is not filled within 60 days, the Town Administrator may facilitate the selection process for an acting official, subject to Selectmen approval.

Section 4: Performance Evaluations and Oversight

- 1. The Town Administrator shall conduct annual performance reviews for all department heads, ensuring compliance with town policies and operational efficiency.
- 2. The Board of Selectmen may request additional performance evaluations for appointed officials as needed.
- 3. Public Feedback Mechanism:

Residents may submit formal concerns or complaints regarding appointed officials, which must be reviewed in a public hearing if deemed necessary.

- 4. **New 2024 Legislative Update:**

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Towns must now submit performance reviews of senior department heads as part of their annual municipal report to the NH Department of Revenue Administration.

Section 5: Temporary and Emergency Appointments

1. Interim and Acting Appointments:

- a. If an appointed position becomes vacant unexpectedly, the Board of Selectmen may appoint an interim official until a permanent replacement is selected.
- b. The Town Administrator may facilitate the selection of an acting department head in cases of short-term absences (less than 30 days).

2. Emergency Appointments:

In the event of a declared emergency, the Selectmen may appoint temporary emergency personnel without a full public hearing process, subject to RSA 21-P:39 (Emergency Management Provisions).

Section 6: Appointments to Boards and Commissions

1. Appointments Process for Town Boards and Committees:

- a. The Board of Selectmen appoints members to all town committees and commissions, unless state law assigns this authority elsewhere.
- b. All appointments are subject to open recruitment and public notification.
- c. Appointees must be registered voters of Rindge, unless otherwise stated.

2. Term Lengths:

- a. Most appointed board members serve staggered three-year terms.
- b. Term limits may be imposed by town ordinance.

3. New 2024 Legislative Update – Increased Transparency in Board Appointments:

Towns must now publish all board and commission appointments online and maintain a public database of board members, including term expiration dates.

ARTICLE XV: MUNICIPAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC UTILITIES

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article governs the maintenance, development, and oversight of municipal infrastructure and public utilities in Rindge, ensuring compliance with:
 - a. RSA 231 – Town Roads and Bridges
 - b. RSA 149-M – Solid Waste Management and Recycling
 - c. RSA 38 – Municipal Water and Sewer Utilities
 - d. RSA 47:17 – Town Authority Over Public Works
 - e. RSA 374:22 – Public Utility Regulation and Coordination
 - f. SB2 Provisions – Affecting municipal budgeting and town meeting decisions
 - g. 2024 Legislative Updates – Addressing broadband expansion, energy efficiency, and municipal water supply improvements
2. The Board of Selectmen shall oversee public infrastructure policy, ensuring town facilities, roads, utilities, and waste management services are maintained efficiently.
3. The Town Meeting shall approve funding for major infrastructure projects, capital improvement plans, and changes to public utilities.

Section 2: Public Roads and Bridges

1. The Town of Rindge owns, maintains, and regulates municipal roads, bridges, and rights-of-way under RSA 231.
2. Road Classification:
 - a. Class V Roads (Town-maintained roads) are the responsibility of the Department of Public Works (DPW).
 - b. Class VI Roads (Unmaintained town roads) remain open to public access but are not maintained by the town unless voted otherwise at Town Meeting.
 - c. Private Roads: The town has no obligation to maintain or repair private roads, except in emergency situations.
3. Bridge Maintenance:
 - a. The town shall inspect bridges biennially and conduct necessary repairs per state-mandated safety standards.
 - b. Funding for bridge rehabilitation may be supplemented by state aid under RSA 234.
4. Winter Maintenance:
 - a. Plowing and road treatment services shall be conducted by the DPW.
 - b. RSA 231:59-a (2024 Update) – Allows municipalities to coordinate with private contractors for snow removal during extreme weather events.

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5. New 2024 Legislative Update - Road Improvement Grants:

The town may apply for state transportation grants for resurfacing and road improvement projects under the State Aid Highway Program.

Section 3: Public Buildings and Facilities

1. The town shall maintain all municipal buildings, town offices, fire and police stations, libraries, and recreational facilities.
2. Capital Improvement Planning (CIP):
 - a. All major facility upgrades or new building projects must be included in the town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) per RSA 674:5-8.
 - b. Town Meeting approval is required for expenditures exceeding \$100,000.
3. Public Access and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance:
 - a. All town buildings must be ADA-compliant and accessible to all residents.
 - b. State grant funding is available for ADA-related improvements.

Section 4: Water and Sewer Services

1. Municipal Water & Sewer System (if applicable):
 - a. The town may establish and regulate municipal water and sewer services under RSA 38.
 - b. Rates and user fees must be set annually and approved at Town Meeting.
2. Private Water and Septic Systems:
 - a. The town does not regulate private wells or septic systems, except as required by state and local health regulations.
 - b. Septic system failures must be addressed through the NH Department of Environmental Services (DES).
3. New 2024 Legislative Update - Clean Water Grants:

The town may apply for new state and federal clean water infrastructure funding, with priority given to sewer expansion and stormwater runoff mitigation projects.

Section 5: Solid Waste Management and Recycling

1. Trash and Recycling Collection:
 - a. The town shall regulate and manage solid waste disposal and recycling in accordance with RSA 149-M.
 - b. Curbside collection may be provided through municipal or contracted services depending on Town Meeting approval.
2. Transfer Station and Hazardous Waste Disposal:
 - a. The town shall maintain a transfer station for resident use.

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- b. Annual hazardous waste disposal events shall be coordinated to ensure proper handling of chemicals, electronics, and other hazardous materials.
3. **New 2024 Legislative Update - Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Program:**

The state has introduced new guidelines requiring manufacturers to participate in recycling costs for certain materials, reducing the town's financial burden.

Section 6: Energy and Sustainability Initiatives

1. The town shall implement energy-efficient policies to reduce municipal costs and environmental impact.
2. Renewable Energy Projects:
 - a. The town may participate in solar, wind, or hydroelectric energy programs in coordination with the NH Public Utilities Commission.
 - b. Municipal buildings may incorporate solar panel installations, subject to Town Meeting approval.
3. LED Streetlights:

The town shall phase in LED lighting for streetlights and municipal facilities to reduce energy consumption.

4. **Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure (2024 Update):**

The town may apply for state funding to install public EV charging stations at municipal buildings or parking areas.

Section 7: Utility Coordination and Broadband Access

1. Public Utilities and Franchise Agreements:
 - a. The town may negotiate contracts with public utility providers for electricity, gas, and telecommunications services.
 - b. All agreements must be reviewed annually by the Selectmen.
2. Broadband Expansion (2024 Update):
 - a. The town may enter into public-private partnerships to expand broadband access to underserved areas under RSA 33-B.
 - b. New state grants are available to support rural high-speed internet expansion.
 - c. The town shall establish a Broadband Advisory Committee to assess internet service needs.

Section 8: Funding and Capital Improvements

1. Funding for Infrastructure Projects:
 - a. Town infrastructure projects may be funded through:
 - i. Annual town budget appropriations

- ii. Grants and state aid
- iii. Impact fees from developers
- iv. Public-private partnerships

2. Capital Reserve Funds:

- a. The town may establish capital reserve funds for road repairs, facility upgrades, and emergency infrastructure needs per RSA 35.

Section 9: Public Input and Transparency

- 1. Residents shall have access to information regarding town infrastructure projects, including budgets, plans, and timelines.
- 2. Annual Public Works Forum:

The DPW shall host a public forum each year to discuss planned infrastructure projects and take public input.

- 3. Emergency Communications:

The town shall use multiple communication channels (website, social media, local news) to notify residents of road closures, power outages, and public works updates.

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CHAPTER 4

PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

ARTICLE XVI: PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the framework for public health, safety, emergency services, and regulatory enforcement in Rindge, ensuring compliance with:
 - a. RSA 128 – Health Officer Appointment and Duties
 - b. RSA 147 – Sanitation, Nuisance Abatement, and Health Regulations
 - c. RSA 151 – Regulation of Healthcare Facilities and Emergency Medical Services
 - d. RSA 154 – Fire Department Authority and Emergency Response
 - e. RSA 265 – Traffic and Road Safety Regulations
 - f. RSA 674 – Building, Zoning, and Code Enforcement
 - g. Mutual Aid and Interagency Cooperation Agreements – Coordination with Regional, State, and Federal Agencies
 - h. SB2 Provisions – Impacting governance and public safety funding
 - i. 2024 Legislative Updates – Addressing EMS funding, law enforcement modernization, disaster preparedness, and public health mandates
2. The Board of Selectmen, Emergency Management Director (EMD), Health Officer (if appointed), and Fire and Police Chiefs shall ensure that public safety services align with state and federal laws.
3. The Town Meeting shall approve funding for public health and safety initiatives, including police, fire, emergency services, environmental health programs, and disaster preparedness efforts.

Section 2: Fire, EMS, and Emergency Response

1. Fire and Rescue Services

1. The Rindge Fire Department (RFD) provides fire suppression, emergency response, and public fire safety education per RSA 154.
2. Fire Chief Authority:
 - a. Appointed internally per RSA 154:2, without Selectmen oversight on personnel matters.
 - b. Responsible for fire prevention, hazardous materials response, emergency preparedness, and community outreach.
 - c. Works with the Emergency Management Director (EMD) on disaster planning and mutual aid coordination.
3. Funding and Capital Planning:
 - a. Fire department capital improvements shall be included in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) per RSA 674:5-8.
 - b. Fire equipment upgrades may be funded by state and federal grants.

2. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

1. Rindge EMS shall provide emergency medical response, patient transport, and crisis intervention under RSA 151.
2. The EMS Director shall oversee personnel, ambulance services, and medical emergency coordination with local hospitals.
3. **New 2024 Legislative Update - Expanded EMS Funding:**
 - a. **The town may apply for state grants for EMS expansion, new equipment, and improving response times.**
 - b. **The NH Emergency Medical Services Modernization Act provides additional rural EMS funding.**

3. Interagency Cooperation and Mutual Aid Agreements

1. Rindge shall maintain mutual aid agreements with surrounding towns and state agencies for fire, EMS, and disaster response.
2. The Fire Department and EMS shall coordinate with:
 - a. NH Division of Fire Safety and State Fire Marshal's Office
 - b. Mutual aid networks with neighboring towns
 - c. Regional emergency response teams
 - d. State and federal emergency management agencies (FEMA, NH Homeland Security, NH DES, etc.)

Section 3: Law Enforcement and Public Safety

1. The Rindge Police Department (RPD) shall provide law enforcement services under RSA 105 and RSA 265.
2. Police Chief Authority:
 - a. Appointed by the Board of Selectmen, responsible for crime prevention, patrols, investigations, and traffic enforcement.
 - b. Works with state and federal agencies for major crime investigations and law enforcement training.
3. **New 2024 Legislative Update - Law Enforcement Training and Funding:**
 - a. **All officers must complete expanded de-escalation, crisis intervention, and mental health response training per SB 322 (2024).**
 - b. **The town may apply for state grants for police body cameras, officer training, and department technology upgrades.**

Section 4: Public Health Services and Mental Health Programs

1. Health Officer Appointment and Responsibilities

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1. The Board of Selectmen may appoint a Health Officer under RSA 128:1 to oversee local health regulations and disease prevention.
2. If no Health Officer is appointed, the State Health Department shall assume jurisdiction over public health matters.
3. The Health Officer (if appointed) shall:
 - a. Investigate health complaints and enforce sanitation codes per RSA 147.
 - b. Conduct public facility and food service inspections.
 - c. Develop a public health emergency response plan in coordination with state agencies.
4. Public Health Emergency Preparedness (2024 Update):
 - a. The town must update its public health emergency plan every five years.
 - b. The state now offers grants for local health emergency planning.

2. Mental Health and Social Services

1. The town shall support access to mental health resources by coordinating with:
 - a. Monadnock Community Hospital and regional mental health providers
 - b. NH Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) crisis response teams
 - c. Nonprofit and community-based counseling programs
2. Mental Health Crisis Response Program:
 - a. The Police and EMS departments shall integrate mental health response training into emergency protocols.
 - b. Crisis intervention officers shall be trained in de-escalation and emergency psychological support.
 - c. The town may apply for state funding for mental health first aid training.

Section 5: Building and Zoning Code Enforcement

1. The town shall enforce all local and state building codes, zoning laws, and health-related ordinances under RSA 674.
2. Building Inspector and Code Enforcement Officer Authority:
 - a. Conduct inspections to ensure compliance with zoning, fire safety, and public health regulations.
 - b. Issue permits, violations, and corrective action notices for code infractions.
3. The Selectmen may appoint a Code Enforcement Board to oversee compliance with:
 - a. Rental housing safety laws
 - b. Fire prevention codes

- c. Environmental health ordinances

Section 6: Disaster Preparedness and Public Warning Systems

1. The Emergency Management Director (EMD) shall oversee disaster planning, response, and recovery efforts per RSA 21-P.

2. Emergency Operations Plan:

The town shall maintain an updated emergency response plan, covering flooding, severe weather, pandemics, and hazardous material spills.

3. Public Warning Systems (2024 Update):

- a. The town shall implement modernized alert systems, including:

- i. Text and email alerts (NH Reverse 911 System).

- ii. Social media and website notifications.

- iii. Local radio and news updates.

- iv. Municipal emergency sirens and electronic signs.

Section 7: Public Engagement and Community Safety Programs

1. Neighborhood Crime Prevention Initiatives:

The Police Department shall organize neighborhood watch programs and public safety forums.

2. Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness Education:

The Fire Department shall conduct public fire drills, safety workshops, and home fire prevention inspections.

3. Community Health and Wellness Programs:

The town shall partner with local schools, businesses, and nonprofits to promote public health awareness campaigns.

ARTICLE XVII: EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, RESPONSE, AND RECOVERY

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the framework for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery in Rindge, ensuring compliance with:
 - a. RSA 21-P – State Emergency Management and Disaster Response Authority
 - b. RSA 154 – Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Responsibilities
 - c. RSA 644:2 – Civil Disorder and Emergency Public Safety
 - d. RSA 31:39 – Municipal Authority for Public Health and Safety Regulations
 - e. Mutual Aid and Interagency Agreements – Coordination with regional, state, and federal emergency agencies
 - f. SB2 Provisions – Impacting governance, emergency appropriations, and funding
 - g. 2024 Legislative Updates – Addressing expanded emergency funding, response coordination, and disaster recovery grants
2. The Emergency Management Director (EMD), Fire Chief, Police Chief, and Board of Selectmen shall oversee emergency planning, preparedness, and disaster response efforts.
3. The Town Meeting shall approve funding for emergency management initiatives, capital improvements to emergency facilities, and local disaster relief measures.

Section 2: Emergency Management Program

1. The town shall maintain an Emergency Management Program (EMP), overseen by the Emergency Management Director (EMD), to coordinate planning, response, and recovery efforts.
2. The Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) shall be reviewed and updated every five years, in accordance with RSA 21-P:39, and shall include:
 - a. Risk and hazard assessments (natural disasters, hazardous materials, pandemics, etc.).
 - b. Mutual aid agreements with regional and state emergency agencies.
 - c. Evacuation procedures, shelter operations, and disaster recovery plans.
 - d. Continuity of government and essential services.
3. The EMD shall coordinate with the NH Department of Safety and Homeland Security (HSEM), FEMA, and regional emergency response networks.

Section 3: Emergency Response

1. Activation of Emergency Powers

1. The EMD, Fire Chief, or Police Chief may request the Board of Selectmen to declare a Local State of Emergency, activating emergency response protocols under RSA 21-P:39.
2. A State of Emergency may be declared due to:

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- a. Natural disasters (flooding, hurricanes, severe storms, wildfires).
- b. Public health crises (pandemics, toxic exposure events).
- c. Civil disturbances or threats to public safety.
- d. Infrastructure failures (dam failures, water contamination, major transportation accidents).

2. Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and Incident Command System (ICS)

1. The town shall establish an Emergency Operations Center (EOC) at a designated facility for centralized command and coordination.
2. Incident Command System (ICS) shall be implemented to coordinate response efforts between municipal, regional, and state agencies.
3. Key agencies participating in the EOC include:
 - a. Fire, Police, and EMS
 - b. Department of Public Works (DPW)
 - c. Health Officer (if appointed) and Public Health Officials
 - d. NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM)
 - e. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) (if applicable)

3. Public Emergency Warning Systems

1. The town shall implement modernized alert and warning systems for rapid emergency notifications:
 - a. NH Reverse 911 System (Emergency telephone and text alerts).
 - b. Municipal sirens and electronic signage for critical notifications.
 - c. Local radio and television emergency broadcasting.
 - d. Public alerts via website, social media, and email notifications.

2. New 2024 Legislative Update - Emergency Communications Enhancements:

The state now provides funding for rural emergency communication upgrades, including new radio towers, mobile response units, and cybersecurity protections for municipal emergency networks.

Section 4: Mutual Aid and Interagency Coordination

1. Rindge shall maintain formal mutual aid agreements with neighboring towns, state agencies, and federal partners to enhance response capabilities.
2. Mutual aid networks include:
 - a. Fire and EMS mutual aid pacts under RSA 154:24-30.

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- b. Police assistance agreements with state and regional law enforcement agencies.
 - c. Public Works mutual aid for disaster response and infrastructure repairs.
 - d. Medical and public health partnerships with NH DHHS and regional hospitals.
3. The town shall participate in annual interagency emergency drills to test and improve response coordination.

Section 5: Disaster Recovery and Community Resilience

1. Post-Emergency Recovery

1. After an emergency, the town shall initiate a structured disaster recovery process, including:
- a. Damage assessments and infrastructure restoration planning.
 - b. Financial relief efforts for affected residents and businesses.
 - c. Coordination with state and federal agencies for long-term recovery aid.

2. Emergency Financial Assistance and Relief Funds

1. **New 2024 Legislative Update - Local Disaster Relief Grants:**
- a. **The town may request up to \$25,000 in state emergency relief funding per declared disaster.**
 - b. **The Governor and Executive Council must approve all state emergency fund allocations.**
2. The town may establish a Disaster Relief Reserve Fund to support emergency response and community recovery efforts.

3. Community Resilience and Hazard Mitigation Planning

1. The town shall develop long-term hazard mitigation strategies to reduce risks associated with natural disasters, including:
- a. Stormwater management and flood control measures.
 - b. Reinforcement of critical infrastructure (bridges, public buildings, utilities).
 - c. Energy resilience projects, including backup power for emergency shelters.
2. The town may apply for FEMA and state grants to support disaster prevention initiatives.

Section 6: Public Education and Community Preparedness

1. Annual Emergency Preparedness Drills:
- a. The town shall conduct public emergency preparedness drills for schools, businesses, and community groups.
 - b. The drills shall cover evacuation procedures, shelter-in-place protocols, and fire safety training.
2. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) Program:

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The town may establish a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) to train volunteers in basic disaster response skills, first aid, and light search-and-rescue techniques.

3. Public Health and Safety Awareness Campaigns:

The town shall develop public health outreach programs on disaster preparedness, emergency communications, and personal safety.

ARTICLE XVIII: EMERGENCY POWERS AND AUTHORITIES OF TOWN OFFICIALS

Section 1: Purpose and Scope

1. This article establishes the emergency powers and authorities of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Emergency Management Director (EMD), Fire Chief, and Police Chief during a declared state of emergency.
2. These provisions ensure that town officials can take swift and legally authorized actions to protect public health, safety, and welfare.
3. Emergency powers shall be exercised in compliance with:
 - a. RSA 21-P – Emergency Management and Homeland Security
 - b. RSA 154 – Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)
 - c. RSA 4:45-47 – State and Local Emergency Declarations
 - d. RSA 128 – Public Health Authority
 - e. RSA 41:11-a – Selectmen’s Authority over Town Property in Emergencies
 - f. SB2 Provisions – Impacting governance of emergency response actions
 - g. 2024 Legislative Updates – Expanding authority for local emergency response, suspension of non-essential services, and public health mandates

Section 2: Declaration of a Local State of Emergency

1. Authority to Declare an Emergency
 - a. The Board of Selectmen, upon the recommendation of the Emergency Management Director (EMD), Fire Chief, or Police Chief, may declare a Local State of Emergency (LSE) under RSA 21-P:39.
 - b. If the Board of Selectmen is unable to convene, the Town Administrator, in consultation with the EMD, may issue a temporary emergency declaration until a formal meeting can be held.
 - c. A declaration must be publicly announced via town website, social media, local news outlets, and emergency alert systems.
2. Conditions Warranting a Declaration
 - a. Natural disasters (severe storms, flooding, wildfires, dam failures).
 - b. Public health emergencies (pandemics, toxic exposure, mass casualty incidents).
 - c. Infrastructure failures (road collapses, gas leaks, power outages).
 - d. Civil disturbances, large-scale criminal activity, or threats to public order.

Section 3: Emergency Powers of the Board of Selectmen

1. Authority to Allocate Resources

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- a. The Selectmen may redirect town funds for emergency use under RSA 32:11, subject to later ratification by the legislative body (Town Meeting).
 - b. Emergency purchases of equipment, medical supplies, and protective gear shall be prioritized.
2. Temporary Suspension of Local Ordinances
 - a. The Selectmen may suspend local ordinances and regulations that would hinder emergency response efforts, except for those required by state law.
 - b. Examples:
 - i. Zoning restrictions to allow temporary shelters or emergency medical facilities.
 - ii. Permit requirements to expedite road repairs, debris removal, or construction.
3. Emergency Orders and Restrictions
 - a. The Board may enact curfews, evacuations, and public safety measures to prevent harm.
 - b. They may restrict access to certain areas, such as flood zones or crime scenes.
4. Emergency Contracting Authority
 - a. The Board may authorize emergency contracts for services, equipment, and repairs without normal bidding processes under RSA 31:39.

Section 4: Emergency Powers of the Town Administrator

1. Administrative Coordination
 - a. The Town Administrator shall serve as the emergency administrative coordinator, ensuring continuity of government functions.
 - b. They shall work with department heads to assess staffing needs, allocate personnel, and oversee logistics.
2. Suspension of Non-Essential Services
 - a. The Town Administrator, in consultation with the Selectmen, may temporarily suspend town operations that are not critical to emergency response.
 - b. Examples:
 - i. Closing town offices or recreational facilities.
 - ii. Suspending public events and municipal meetings.
 - iii. Redirecting non-emergency personnel to assist emergency response efforts.

Section 5: Emergency Powers of the Emergency Management Director (EMD)

1. The EMD shall be the primary coordinator for emergency response and recovery efforts, working in compliance with RSA 21-P.
2. The EMD shall:

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- a. Activate the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) and lead disaster response coordination.
- b. Direct the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), serving as the town's command hub.
- c. Request state and federal assistance as needed.

Section 6: Emergency Powers of the Fire Chief and Police Chief

1. Fire Chief:

- a. The Fire Chief may mobilize additional firefighting resources, including regional mutual aid agreements under RSA 154:24-30.
- b. They shall oversee hazardous materials incidents, fire suppression, and search-and-rescue efforts.

2. Police Chief:

- a. The Police Chief shall enforce emergency public safety orders, evacuations, and access restrictions.
- b. They may deploy additional officers, request mutual aid, and establish temporary security checkpoints.

Section 7: Public Health and Safety Orders

1. Issuance of Public Health Orders

- a. The Board of Selectmen, upon consultation with the Health Officer (if appointed) or NH DHHS, may issue emergency public health orders related to:
 - i. Quarantine and isolation procedures.
 - ii. Restrictions on mass gatherings.
 - iii. Sanitation requirements for businesses and public spaces.

2. New 2024 Legislative Update - Expanded Public Health Authority:

- a. The state now allows local boards to adopt emergency health orders more rapidly, with direct coordination from NH DHHS.
- b. The town may apply for emergency funding to enforce health and safety measures.

Section 8: Legal Protections and Liability

1. Immunity for Emergency Responders

- a. Town officials, employees, and emergency responders shall not be held personally liable for actions taken in good faith during an emergency, per RSA 21-P:41.
- b. Immunity does not apply in cases of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

2. Legal Protections for Municipal Actions

- a. The town shall not be liable for damages arising from emergency response efforts, except where state or federal laws provide for restitution or relief.

Section 9: Termination of Emergency Powers

1. Termination Process
 - a. A Local State of Emergency shall be lifted by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen once conditions have stabilized.
 - b. The emergency automatically expires after 60 days unless renewed by the Selectmen.
2. Post-Emergency Review and Reporting
 - a. The EMD shall submit an after-action report detailing:
 - i. Response effectiveness and areas for improvement.
 - ii. Financial impact and resource utilization.
 - iii. Recommendations for future preparedness.
 - b. A public debriefing shall be held to review emergency actions and gather resident feedback.

Section 10: Coordination with State and Federal Agencies

1. State-Level Coordination:
 - a. The Emergency Management Director (EMD) shall serve as the town's primary liaison with the New Hampshire Department of Safety (DOS), Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) during emergencies.
 - b. The town shall comply with RSA 21-P:39, which mandates integration of local response efforts with state emergency protocols.
2. Federal Assistance and Compliance:
 - a. The town shall follow FEMA's National Incident Management System (NIMS) for disaster response coordination.
 - b. In the event of a federally declared disaster, the Board of Selectmen shall authorize the EMD to submit requests for FEMA public assistance funding.
 - c. The town shall adhere to federal emergency preparedness laws, including:
 - i. Stafford Act (FEMA disaster relief funding).
 - ii. National Response Framework (NRF) for large-scale incidents.
 - iii. Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act (EPCRA) for hazardous materials response.
3. Interagency Mutual Aid Agreements:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen and EMD shall maintain intergovernmental agreements with regional, state, and federal agencies to ensure resource-sharing in emergencies.
 - b. Active partnerships include:

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- i. NH Mutual Aid Fire and EMS Agreements (RSA 154:24-30).
- ii. Regional Law Enforcement Task Forces (State Police, FBI, Homeland Security).
- iii. Statewide Emergency Communications and Response Networks.

CHAPTER 5

LAND USE, ZONING, AND ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

ARTICLE XIX: LAND USE, ZONING, AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the land use, zoning, and development framework for the Town of Rindge, ensuring compliance with:
 - a. RSA 674 – Local Land Use Law (Zoning, Site Plans, and Subdivision Regulations)
 - b. RSA 676 – Land Use Enforcement, Penalties, and Appeals
 - c. RSA 155-E – Excavation Regulations
 - d. RSA 483-B – Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act
 - e. RSA 79-E – Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive
 - f. 2024 Legislative Updates – Addressing affordable housing, impact fees, and streamlined development review processes
2. The Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA), and Board of Selectmen shall oversee land use policies, permitting, and enforcement.
3. The Master Plan, as authorized by RSA 674:1, shall guide all development decisions, ensuring growth aligns with Rindge’s vision and sustainability goals.

Section 2: Zoning Regulations

1. The Town of Rindge shall maintain and enforce a comprehensive zoning ordinance governing land use and development, which shall be updated periodically.
2. The zoning ordinance shall define:
 - a. Districts (Residential, Commercial, Industrial, Conservation, Mixed-Use, etc.).
 - b. Permitted and Conditional Uses within each district.
 - c. Setback, height, and density restrictions for new developments.
 - d. Special overlay districts (such as historic or floodplain districts).
3. The Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) shall have the authority to grant:
 - a. Variances (RSA 674:33) for hardship cases.
 - b. Special Exceptions as outlined in zoning ordinances.
 - c. Administrative Appeals for zoning enforcement decisions.
4. **New 2024 Legislative Update - Workforce Housing and Zoning Adjustments:**
 - a. **Towns must accommodate workforce housing in compliance with RSA 674:58-61.**
 - b. **The Planning Board shall incorporate housing-friendly zoning provisions to meet regional workforce needs.**

Section 3: Site Plan and Subdivision Regulations

1. The Planning Board shall oversee site plan and subdivision regulations, ensuring all developments comply with RSA 674:35-44.
2. Site plan review is required for:
 - a. Commercial, industrial, and multi-family residential projects.
 - b. Major land use changes impacting traffic, stormwater, or utilities.
3. Subdivision approvals require:
 - a. Lot size and frontage minimums based on zoning district standards.
 - b. Access to public/private roads and emergency services.
 - c. Compliance with environmental protection and stormwater management standards.
4. Impact Fees and Development Contributions (RSA 674:21):
 - a. The town may assess impact fees on new developments to offset infrastructure costs.
 - b. Fees must be used for roadway improvements, schools, fire/police services, or water/sewer expansions.

Section 4: Development Standards and Environmental Protection

1. All developments must comply with local, state, and federal environmental laws, including:
 - a. RSA 483-B – Shoreland Protection Act (Restrictions on development near water bodies).
 - b. NH DES Wetlands Bureau Regulations (Permitting required for wetland alterations).
 - c. Stormwater Management Standards (Required under MS4 regulations for municipalities).
2. **New 2024 Legislative Update - Climate Resilience and Smart Growth Standards:**
 - a. **Municipalities are encouraged to adopt climate resilience zoning and require developers to account for flood risk, extreme weather events, and sustainable infrastructure.**
3. Tree Cutting and Landscaping Requirements:
 - a. Large-scale developments must submit a landscaping and vegetation retention plan.
 - b. Clear-cutting in conservation zones or near water bodies shall be regulated.
4. Affordable Housing and Mixed-Use Developments:
 - a. The Planning Board shall promote diverse housing options, including:
 - i. Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
 - ii. Multi-family housing
 - iii. Senior housing
 - iv. Mixed-use village centers

Section 5: Growth Management and Smart Development

1. The town may enact growth management ordinances to:
 - a. Prevent overdevelopment that strains municipal services.
 - b. Maintain Rindge's rural character and natural resources.
 - c. Ensure that roadways, schools, and emergency services can support new growth.
2. Village Center Development Initiatives (RSA 79-E):
 - a. The town may offer tax incentives for redevelopment of historic or underutilized properties.
 - b. Mixed-use zoning shall be encouraged to support walkable, community-friendly spaces.

Section 6: Blasting, Excavation, and Heavy Construction

1. Excavation Operations (RSA 155-E):
 - a. All excavation activities require a permit from the Planning Board.
 - b. Operations must follow dust, noise, traffic, and site restoration guidelines.
 - c. Reclamation plans must be approved for gravel pits, sand mining, or similar activities.
2. Blasting and Heavy Construction Regulations:
 - a. Contractors must comply with town-adopted blasting ordinances to minimize impact on residents.
 - b. Advance notice shall be required for blasting within 500 feet of homes or businesses.

Section 7: Land Use Enforcement and Compliance

1. Zoning Compliance:
 - a. The Zoning Enforcement Officer shall enforce all land use, zoning, and building codes.
 - b. Violations shall be handled in accordance with RSA 676:17, including fines or cease-and-desist orders.
2. Site Plan & Subdivision Enforcement:
 - a. Failure to comply with approved site plans may result in:
 - i. Revocation of permits.
 - ii. Requirement to restore altered land to its original condition.
 - iii. Legal action through the Board of Selectmen.
3. Public Complaints and Investigations:
 - a. Residents may file land use complaints through the town website or Selectmen's office.
 - b. Investigations shall follow due process and right-to-appeal procedures.

Section 8: Regional Coordination and Planning

1. Participation in Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs):
 - a. The Town of Rindge shall actively participate in regional planning efforts through the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) to ensure coordinated growth and infrastructure development.
 - b. The Planning Board shall collaborate with surrounding municipalities on:
 - i. Transportation planning and road connectivity.
 - ii. Water and sewer service extensions.
 - iii. Shared economic development strategies.
2. Intermunicipal Land Use Coordination:
 - a. Rindge may enter into intermunicipal agreements to:
 - i. Coordinate large-scale development projects impacting multiple towns.
 - ii. Establish joint zoning regulations for environmentally sensitive areas.
 - iii. Address regional workforce housing needs.
 - b. Agreements shall comply with RSA 36:45-58 (Regional Planning Commission Powers).

Section 9: Conservation and Environmental Protection

1. Preservation of Open Space and Natural Resources:
 - a. The town shall maintain and enforce conservation easements to protect vital land and water resources.
 - b. The Rindge Conservation Commission shall oversee land preservation efforts in accordance with RSA 36-A.
 - c. Developers shall be encouraged to incorporate green space and conservation land into new projects.
2. Shoreland and Wetlands Protection (RSA 483-B):
 - a. Development within 250 feet of designated shorelands must follow NH DES Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (RSA 483-B).
 - b. Any alteration to wetlands requires a Wetlands Permit from NH DES.
3. Sustainable Development Incentives:
 - a. The town shall explore tax incentives for sustainable building practices, such as:
 - i. Energy-efficient construction.
 - ii. Solar and renewable energy installations.
 - iii. Low-impact stormwater management systems.

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- b. New commercial and industrial developments shall be encouraged to pursue LEED certification or similar green building standards.

ARTICLE XX: MUNICIPAL LAWS, ORDINANCES, AND REGULATORY POLICIES

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the process for adopting, amending, enforcing, and appealing municipal ordinances and regulatory policies in Rindge.
2. The Town shall have the authority to enact local laws and regulations in accordance with:
 - a. RSA 31:39 – Town Ordinances and Bylaws
 - b. RSA 41:11-a – Regulation of Town Property
 - c. RSA 47:17 – Municipal Regulatory Authority
 - d. RSA 155 – Public Health Regulations
 - e. RSA 265 – Traffic, Parking, and Roadway Safety
 - f. RSA 466 – Dog and Animal Control
 - g. 2024 Legislative Updates – Including new provisions for local ordinance enforcement, fines, and digital accessibility of municipal codes

Section 2: Enactment of Ordinances

1. Legislative Process:
 - a. New ordinances must be proposed, reviewed, and adopted in compliance with RSA 31:39 and the SB2 governance model.
 - b. Ordinances may be initiated by:
 - i. The Board of Selectmen, with public input.
 - ii. A citizen petition under RSA 39:3, requiring a minimum number of registered voters to propose an ordinance.
 - iii. The Planning Board, for zoning and land use regulations.
2. Public Hearing and Adoption:
 - a. A public hearing must be held at least 14 days before adoption of any new ordinance.
 - b. The ordinance must be posted on the town website and in public locations for review.
 - c. After public input, the ordinance may be:
 - i. Adopted by the Board of Selectmen (RSA 31:39).
 - ii. Submitted to Town Meeting for a vote (if required by law or upon public petition).

Section 3: Categories of Municipal Ordinances

The Town may enact ordinances governing the following areas:

1. Public Safety and Nuisance Control:

- a. Fire safety regulations (RSA 154).
 - b. Noise ordinances and quiet hours.
 - c. Animal control and leash laws (RSA 466).
2. Traffic and Parking Regulations:
 - a. Speed limits and road use restrictions (RSA 265).
 - b. Parking enforcement, snow emergency regulations, and public road maintenance.
3. Health, Sanitation, and Environmental Protection:
 - a. Waste disposal, recycling, and hazardous materials management (RSA 149-M).
 - b. Public health codes, including septic system regulations (RSA 147).
 - c. Wetlands and shoreland protection (RSA 483-B).
4. Business and Commercial Regulations:
 - a. Licensing of businesses and vendors.
 - b. Regulation of short-term rentals (Airbnb, VRBO).
 - c. Consumer protection ordinances.
5. Land Use and Zoning Compliance:
 - a. Enforcement of zoning laws and building codes (RSA 676:17).
 - b. Regulation of excavation, blasting, and heavy construction (RSA 155-E).
6. Town Property and Public Spaces:
 - a. Rules for public parks, beaches, and recreation areas.
 - b. Use of town buildings for public and private events.

Section 4: Enforcement of Ordinances and Penalties

1. Local Enforcement Authority:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen shall have authority over ordinance enforcement.
 - b. Enforcement officers may include the Police Department, Fire Chief, Health Officer, and Code Enforcement Officer.
 - c. Violations may be referred to the Zoning Board of Adjustment (for land use infractions) or the District Court (for civil penalties).
2. Penalties and Fines:
 - a. Violators of municipal ordinances may be subject to fines as established by law:
 - i. Up to \$1,000 per day for zoning violations (RSA 676:17).
 - ii. \$100 per offense for parking violations (RSA 265).

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- iii. Additional penalties for repeat offenders, nuisance properties, and health code violations.

3. New 2024 Legislative Update - Expanded Local Ordinance Enforcement:

- a. Towns now have greater authority to issue citations and enforce local regulations.
- b. Civil penalties for ordinance violations may now be issued without requiring court intervention in minor cases.

4. Abatement and Compliance Orders:

- a. The Town may issue cease-and-desist orders for ongoing violations.
- b. Property owners may be required to remediate environmental damage or correct violations at their expense.

Section 5: Codification and Public Access

1. Codification of Ordinances:

- a. All municipal ordinances shall be compiled into a single Town Code, which shall be:
 - i. Available online.
 - ii. Updated annually.
 - iii. Indexed for easy public reference.
- b. The Town Clerk shall oversee codification, ensuring compliance with RSA 31:39-c.

2. Digital Access and Public Records:

- a. The Town shall maintain a digital ordinance repository accessible on the town website.
- b. Public requests for ordinances shall be processed in compliance with RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know Law).

3. Ordinance Review and Repeal:

- a. Ordinances shall be reviewed at least every 5 years for relevance and effectiveness.
- b. The Board of Selectmen may repeal outdated ordinances by majority vote, following a public hearing.

Section 6: Appeals and Amendments

1. Appeal of Ordinance Violations:

- a. Residents may appeal ordinance violations to:
 - i. The Zoning Board of Adjustment (for land use issues).
 - ii. The Board of Selectmen (for non-zoning matters).
 - iii. The New Hampshire Superior Court, if necessary.

2. Amendment Process:

- a. Ordinances may be amended or repealed through the same legislative process required for adoption.
- b. Citizens may propose amendments through a petition warrant article (RSA 39:3).

Section 7: Legal Protections and Liability

- 1. Municipal Immunity (RSA 507-B:5):
 - a. The Town of Rindge, its elected officials, employees, and agents shall not be held liable for discretionary decisions made in good faith while enforcing municipal ordinances and regulations.
 - b. Liability protection extends to:
 - i. Actions taken under RSA 31:104 (Indemnification of Officials).
 - ii. Code enforcement officers executing their duties lawfully.
 - iii. Selectmen and town staff acting within their legal scope of authority.
- 2. Qualified Immunity for Officials:
 - a. Town officials are entitled to qualified immunity when:
 - i. Acting within the scope of their official duties.
 - ii. Enforcing ordinances in good faith.
 - iii. Making decisions based on reasonable legal interpretations.
- 3. Indemnification of Town Employees and Officials (RSA 31:105-106):
 - a. The Town shall indemnify municipal employees and officials from personal liability for claims arising out of the lawful performance of their duties, unless:
 - i. The act was willful misconduct.
 - ii. The action was outside the scope of their official capacity.
 - b. The town shall provide legal defense in cases where employees or officials are sued for actions taken on behalf of the town.
- 4. Legal Challenges and Judicial Review:
 - a. Any ordinance challenged in court shall be defended by the Town Attorney or legal counsel appointed by the Selectmen.
 - b. If an ordinance is ruled unenforceable, the town may:
 - i. Amend the ordinance to comply with legal requirements.
 - ii. Appeal the decision to a higher court.
- 5. Protection from Unfounded Complaints:

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- a. Town employees, officials, and board members shall be protected from harassment or unfounded legal complaints related to their enforcement of town ordinances.
- b. The town may pursue legal action against individuals filing malicious or frivolous lawsuits against municipal staff.

ARTICLE XXI: AMENDMENT, REVIEW, AND APPEAL OF ORDINANCES

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the procedures for amending, reviewing, and appealing municipal ordinances in compliance with:
 - a. RSA 31:39 – Authority for Municipal Ordinances
 - b. RSA 675:3-5 – Amendments to Zoning Ordinances and Regulations
 - c. RSA 49-B – Charter and Bylaw Amendments
 - d. RSA 676:17 – Enforcement and Appeals of Local Regulations
 - e. 2024 Legislative Updates – Changes related to public notice requirements and digital access to ordinance changes.
2. The Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, and citizens through petition articles may initiate ordinance amendments.
3. Appeals of ordinances shall follow procedures set forth in state law and town regulations.

Section 2: Amendment of Ordinances

1. Amendment Process:
 - a. Ordinances may be amended by:
 - i. Board of Selectmen (RSA 31:39) for general ordinances.
 - ii. Planning Board (RSA 675:3-5) for zoning ordinances.
 - iii. Citizen Petition (RSA 39:3) if a petition with sufficient signatures is submitted.
 - b. All proposed amendments must be reviewed in a public hearing and published for public access.
2. Public Hearing and Notification Requirements:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen or Planning Board must hold a public hearing at least 14 days before adoption of an amendment.
 - b. The proposed amendment must be:
 - i. Published in a local newspaper.
 - ii. Posted at Town Hall and on the town's website.
 - iii. Sent to relevant town boards and commissions for review.
 - c. Zoning ordinance amendments must follow the process set forth in RSA 675:3-5.
3. Voting and Adoption:
 - a. General ordinances may be adopted by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen.
 - b. Zoning amendments require a Town Meeting vote under SB2 rules.

- c. Citizen petition amendments are placed on the Town Meeting warrant for a public vote.

Section 3: Periodic Review of Ordinances

1. Comprehensive Review Every Five Years:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen shall conduct a review of all municipal ordinances every five years to:
 - i. Identify outdated or conflicting regulations.
 - ii. Ensure compliance with state and federal law.
 - iii. Address community development and zoning needs.
 - b. The Planning Board shall review all land use, zoning, and subdivision regulations at least every five years.
2. Emergency Amendments:
 - a. If a new state or federal law requires immediate compliance, the town may adopt an emergency amendment by Selectmen's vote, followed by a full public hearing at the next Town Meeting.

Section 4: Appeal of Ordinances and Enforcement Actions

1. Legal Challenge and Judicial Review:
 - a. Residents may challenge a town ordinance through the following appeal mechanisms:
 - i. Zoning Board of Adjustment (RSA 676:5) for land use decisions.
 - ii. Superior Court (RSA 31:39-a) for disputes over municipal ordinances.
 - iii. Legislative amendment via Town Meeting vote (RSA 39:3) for ordinance repeal or revision.
2. Appealing a Violation or Enforcement Action:
 - a. Individuals or businesses receiving an enforcement order or penalty may:
 - i. Request a reconsideration hearing before the issuing authority.
 - ii. Appeal to the Zoning Board of Adjustment for zoning-related violations.
 - iii. Seek judicial review in New Hampshire Superior Court.
3. Injunctions and Legal Actions:
 - a. The town may seek an injunction against ordinance violators through court proceedings under RSA 31:39-c.
 - b. In cases where a law is successfully challenged in court, the town must:
 - i. Revise or repeal the ordinance to align with the court ruling.
 - ii. Notify residents and update the town code accordingly.

Section 5: Public Participation and Digital Transparency

1. Public Engagement in Ordinance Revisions:
 - a. The town shall ensure that residents have opportunities to participate in ordinance updates through:
 - i. Annual town forums on zoning and local laws.
 - ii. Public hearings before ordinance adoption or amendment.
 - iii. Citizen petition rights for initiating ordinance changes.
2. Digital Access to Ordinances and Amendments:
 - a. All municipal ordinances shall be:
 - i. Published on the town website and updated regularly.
 - ii. Made available in a publicly accessible digital repository.
 - b. The town shall provide an online public comment period for major ordinance changes.

ARTICLE XXII: ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY

Section 1: Purpose and Commitment

1. The Town of Rindge is committed to protecting its natural resources, wildlife, water quality, air quality, and open spaces while promoting sustainable land use, energy efficiency, and climate resilience.
2. This article aligns with:
 - a. RSA 36-A – Conservation Commissions & Land Protection
 - b. RSA 483-B – Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act
 - c. RSA 674:2 – Master Plan Environmental & Sustainability Goals
 - d. RSA 149-M – Solid Waste Management & Recycling
 - e. RSA 12-K – Broadband Expansion & Smart Growth
 - f. 2024 Legislative Updates on climate adaptation, renewable energy, and community-based conservation initiatives.

Section 2: Natural Resource Protection

1. Conservation of Open Space & Wildlife Habitats:
 - a. The Conservation Commission, in collaboration with the Planning Board, shall prioritize preservation of natural areas, wetlands, and wildlife corridors through conservation easements.
 - b. The town shall pursue funding for land preservation through grants, conservation bonds, and NH Land & Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP).
2. Shoreland and Water Resource Protection:
 - a. Development within 250 feet of designated shorelands shall comply with RSA 483-B (Shoreland Protection Act) to prevent erosion and maintain water quality.
 - b. The town shall monitor and prevent pollution from stormwater runoff, wastewater discharge, and industrial contaminants.
3. Forestry and Agricultural Land Conservation:
 - a. The town shall support sustainable forestry and farming practices under RSA 79-A (Current Use Taxation for Conservation Lands).
 - b. The town may adopt right-to-farm protections to encourage local agriculture while mitigating conflicts with residential development.

Section 3: Sustainable Development and Land Use

1. Smart Growth and Low-Impact Development (LID):
 - a. The town shall encourage cluster zoning and conservation subdivisions to preserve natural landscapes while allowing responsible growth.

- b. Developers shall be required to use low-impact stormwater management techniques such as permeable pavement and vegetative buffers.
- 2. Green Infrastructure Initiatives:
 - a. The town shall explore green infrastructure investments, including:
 - i. Rain gardens & bioswales for stormwater filtration.
 - ii. Native plant restoration projects in public parks.
 - iii. Tree canopy expansion to reduce heat islands.
- 3. Zoning and Land Use Coordination:
 - a. The Planning Board shall integrate sustainability principles into the Master Plan (RSA 674:2) and update zoning regulations accordingly.
 - b. The town shall establish a Renewable Energy Overlay District to promote solar, wind, and geothermal energy projects in designated areas.

Section 4: Climate Resilience and Energy Sustainability

- 1. Municipal Energy Efficiency:
 - a. The town shall audit energy use in municipal buildings and implement LED lighting, insulation upgrades, and HVAC retrofits to reduce costs and emissions.
 - b. Future town facility projects shall prioritize LEED certification or equivalent sustainability standards.
- 2. Community Solar and Renewable Energy:
 - a. The town shall support solar power incentives for homeowners and businesses, including:
 - i. Group net metering (RSA 362-A:9) for shared community solar projects.
 - ii. Expedited permitting for rooftop solar installations.
 - b. The town shall explore power purchase agreements (PPAs) for municipal solar arrays to lower electricity costs.
- 3. Disaster Resilience & Extreme Weather Preparedness:
 - a. The town shall update its Hazard Mitigation Plan to address flood risks, droughts, and severe storms.
 - b. The Emergency Management Director shall coordinate with state agencies on climate adaptation grant opportunities.
- 4. New 2024 Legislative Update - Renewable Energy Property Tax Exemption:
 - a. The town may adopt an exemption for renewable energy systems under RSA 72:61-72, reducing tax burdens on solar, wind, and biomass installations.

Section 5: Waste Management and Recycling

1. Municipal Solid Waste Reduction:
 - a. The town shall encourage waste diversion programs through composting, reuse initiatives, and "Pay-As-You-Throw" (PAYT) trash fees.
 - b. The town shall comply with RSA 149-M, ensuring that landfill operations prioritize recycling and waste-to-energy alternatives.
2. Household Hazardous Waste Collection:
 - a. The town shall hold annual hazardous waste collection events in partnership with regional waste management districts.
 - b. Residents shall be educated on proper disposal methods for electronic waste, motor oil, and paint.
3. Expanded Recycling Programs:
 - a. The town shall explore curbside recycling services and electronic waste collection points.
 - b. Commercial properties shall be encouraged to adopt recycling requirements aligned with state sustainability goals.

Section 6: Water Conservation and Quality Protection

1. Drinking Water and Aquifer Protection:
 - a. The town shall enforce wellhead protection ordinances to prevent groundwater contamination.
 - b. New commercial and industrial developments must submit a water impact assessment to the Planning Board.
2. Stormwater Management Regulations:
 - a. Developers shall follow EPA and NH DES stormwater runoff standards, ensuring compliance with RSA 485-A:17.
 - b. The town shall invest in rainwater harvesting systems and permeable surface infrastructure for municipal projects.
3. Drought Resilience Planning:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen may issue temporary water use restrictions during drought conditions, per state emergency management guidelines.
 - b. Public education campaigns shall promote low-water landscaping and efficient irrigation systems.

Section 7: Community Engagement and Education

1. Public Awareness Campaigns:
 - a. The town shall organize Earth Day cleanups, recycling drives, and sustainability workshops in partnership with schools and local businesses.

- b. A Sustainability Advisory Committee may be formed to engage residents in environmental initiatives.
- 2. Collaboration with State and Federal Agencies:
 - a. The town shall work with:
 - i. NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) on wetland permits and pollution controls.
 - ii. US Department of Energy (DOE) on renewable energy grants.
 - iii. NH Fish & Game Department on wildlife conservation.
- 3. Incentives for Sustainable Practices:
 - a. The town may offer property tax credits for energy-efficient home upgrades under RSA 72:62.
 - b. Local businesses adopting sustainable practices may receive recognition through a town-led Green Business Program.

Section 8: Funding and Implementation

- 1. State and Federal Grants:
 - a. The town shall seek funding from:
 - i. NH Clean Energy Fund for solar projects.
 - ii. Federal Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Grants for green infrastructure.
 - iii. LCHIP (Land & Community Heritage Investment Program) for conservation land acquisitions.
- 2. Public-Private Partnerships:
 - a. The town may collaborate with universities, non-profits, and private organizations on environmental research and sustainability projects.
- 3. Annual Sustainability Report:
 - a. The town shall publish an annual progress report on sustainability initiatives and environmental goals.

CHAPTER 6

CULTURAL, SOCIAL, AND TECHNOLOGICAL POLICIES

ARTICLE XXIII: CULTURAL AND SOCIAL POLICIES

Section 1: Purpose and Commitment

1. The Town of Rindge values its cultural heritage, civic engagement, and social well-being as integral components of a thriving community.
2. This article establishes policies that promote historical preservation, public arts, community events, inclusivity, and social services, aligning with:
 - a. RSA 31:9 – Authority for Town Cultural and Social Programs
 - b. RSA 79-E – Historic Preservation and Property Tax Relief
 - c. RSA 674:44-b – Heritage Commissions & Cultural Resource Protections
 - d. RSA 72:23-k – Property Tax Relief for Historic Properties
 - e. 2024 Legislative Updates on public spaces, accessibility, and cultural programming.

Section 2: Historic and Cultural Preservation

1. Preservation of Historic Buildings and Landmarks:
 - a. The town shall identify and protect historically significant buildings, landmarks, and districts under RSA 674:44-b (Heritage Commissions).
 - b. Property owners may receive RSA 79-E tax incentives for restoring historic structures in designated revitalization zones.
 - c. The town shall work with the NH Division of Historical Resources to secure grants for preservation projects.
2. Town Heritage Commission:
 - a. The town may establish a Heritage Commission to oversee preservation efforts, advise on historical land use, and promote local heritage.
 - b. The commission may develop historic walking tours, museum programs, and archival initiatives.
3. Adaptive Reuse of Historic Structures:
 - a. The town encourages adaptive reuse of older buildings to preserve their character while accommodating modern uses (e.g., repurposing mills into business spaces).

Section 3: Community Events and Civic Engagement

1. Annual and Seasonal Events:
 - a. The town shall organize civic events, parades, and seasonal celebrations to strengthen community identity.
 - b. Events may include:
 - i. Town-wide festivals (Independence Day, Winter Carnival, Harvest Fest).

- ii. Local arts & music showcases.
 - iii. Farmers' markets and craft fairs to support local businesses.
- 2. Public Recognition and Awards:
 - a. The town may establish citizen awards recognizing contributions to public service, volunteerism, and cultural preservation.
- 3. Civic Engagement & Volunteerism:
 - a. The town shall promote community volunteerism through town boards, commissions, and service initiatives.
 - b. An annual Volunteer Appreciation Event may be held to recognize civic contributions.

Section 4: Recreation, Public Spaces, and Libraries

- 1. Maintenance of Public Parks and Trails:
 - a. The town shall maintain recreational facilities, walking trails, and open spaces in partnership with the Conservation Commission.
 - b. Parks shall be accessible to residents of all abilities, following ADA guidelines.
- 2. Support for Rindge Public Library:
 - a. The Rindge Public Library shall be supported as a hub for:
 - i. Educational programming.
 - ii. Digital literacy training.
 - iii. Community events and historical archives.
- 3. Expansion of Public Spaces:
 - a. The town may develop community gathering spaces, such as plazas or outdoor seating areas, to enhance social interaction.

Section 5: Social Services and Inclusivity

- 1. Senior and Disability Services:
 - a. The town shall work with state and regional agencies to provide transportation, housing assistance, and wellness programs for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
 - b. The town shall explore age-friendly initiatives under AARP's Livable Communities Program.
- 2. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives:
 - a. The town shall ensure that all residents, regardless of background, have equal access to services, employment, and public participation.
 - b. The town shall comply with RSA 354-A (NH Civil Rights Act) and ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) in all municipal programs and facilities.

3. Support for Mental Health and Wellness:

- a. The town shall collaborate with local healthcare providers and non-profits to expand access to:
 - i. Mental health counseling.
 - ii. Substance use prevention programs.
 - iii. Community wellness initiatives.

Section 6: Educational and Lifelong Learning Programs

1. Collaboration with Schools and Universities:

- a. The town shall partner with Franklin Pierce University and the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District to expand:
 - i. Continuing education programs.
 - ii. Public lecture series.
 - iii. Workforce development training.

2. Adult Education & Workforce Readiness:

- a. The town shall support adult literacy, GED programs, and job training initiatives through partnerships with regional learning centers.

3. Youth Engagement and Leadership Development:

- a. The town shall promote youth involvement in civic projects, local government internships, and leadership programs.
- b. A Youth Advisory Council may be established to encourage student participation in local issues.

Section 7: Funding and Implementation

1. Grant Funding for Cultural and Social Programs:

- a. The town shall seek funding from:
 - i. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) for public arts projects.
 - ii. NH Humanities Council for historical and educational initiatives.
 - iii. LCHIP (Land & Community Heritage Investment Program) for cultural site preservation.

2. Public-Private Partnerships:

- a. The town may collaborate with local non-profits, universities, and businesses to support cultural programming and social services.

3. Annual Cultural & Social Policy Review:

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- a. The Board of Selectmen shall conduct an annual review of town cultural programs and initiatives, adjusting for emerging needs.

ARTICLE XXIV: DIGITAL GOVERNANCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND CYBERSECURITY

Section 1: Purpose and Commitment

1. The Town of Rindge is committed to leveraging technology to improve government efficiency, transparency, public engagement, and cybersecurity protections.
2. This article ensures that the town's digital governance policies align with:
 - a. RSA 91-A – Right-to-Know Law (Public Records & Transparency)
 - b. RSA 33-A – Municipal Records Retention & Digital Storage
 - c. RSA 644:21 – Cybersecurity & Protection of Municipal Digital Infrastructure
 - d. RSA 12-K – Broadband Expansion and Telecommunications Infrastructure
 - e. 2024 Legislative Updates on municipal cybersecurity, broadband expansion, and electronic government services.

Section 2: Digital Infrastructure and Services

1. Online Public Access to Government Services:
 - a. The town shall provide secure, online access to:
 - i. Meeting agendas, minutes, and public records per RSA 91-A.
 - ii. Tax and utility bill payments.
 - iii. Permit applications and licensing services.
 - iv. Town ordinances, budgets, and reports.
 - b. 2024 Legislative Update: Municipalities must ensure public records are digitally accessible for at least five years under new RSA 91-A requirements.
2. Broadband Expansion and Smart Infrastructure:
 - a. The town shall actively pursue broadband expansion initiatives in underserved areas, leveraging funding from:
 - i. NH Broadband Mapping & Planning Program (RSA 12-K)
 - ii. Federal Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) Program
 - b. The town may develop public Wi-Fi zones in key community areas to expand digital access.
3. E-Government Services and Automation:
 - a. The town shall transition to digital workflows for internal operations to improve efficiency in:
 - i. Budgeting and finance.
 - ii. Records management.

- iii. Interdepartmental coordination.
- b. The Town Clerk shall oversee the digitization of official municipal records to ensure long-term accessibility and compliance with RSA 33-A.

Section 3: Cybersecurity and Data Protection

- 1. Cybersecurity Standards for Municipal Systems:
 - a. The town shall adopt and maintain cybersecurity best practices in accordance with RSA 644:21 and industry guidelines, including:
 - i. Regular security audits and penetration testing.
 - ii. Multi-factor authentication (MFA) for government networks.
 - iii. Data encryption and backup redundancy to protect town records.
- 2. Municipal Data Breach and Incident Response Plan:
 - a. The town shall establish an incident response protocol to address cybersecurity threats, data breaches, and hacking attempts.
 - b. If a breach occurs, the Town Administrator and IT security personnel must:
 - i. Notify affected individuals and relevant state agencies.
 - ii. Conduct a forensic investigation and mitigate further risks.
 - iii. Implement corrective measures to prevent future incidents.
- 3. Public Access to Secure Digital Services:
 - a. To balance security with transparency, the town shall ensure:
 - i. Public records requests do not compromise sensitive government data.
 - ii. Online payment portals and municipal databases meet industry security standards.
 - iii. Compliance with state and federal digital privacy laws.

Section 4: Digital Transparency and Public Engagement

- 1. Enhancing Public Participation through Technology:
 - a. The town shall implement digital platforms for citizen engagement, including:
 - i. Live-streaming and recording public meetings.
 - ii. Online surveys and digital town forums for policy discussions.
 - iii. A municipal mobile app for notifications on public safety, events, and services.
- 2. Public Records Access and Open Data Policies:
 - a. The town shall maintain an open data portal, providing digital access to:

- i. Town budgets and financial reports.
 - ii. Public contracts and procurement records.
 - iii. Property tax assessments and land use plans.
- b. Public records shall be accessible electronically for at least five years per RSA 91-A.

Section 5: Digital Inclusion and Accessibility

- 1. Ensuring Equitable Digital Access for All Residents:
 - a. The town shall work to bridge the digital divide by:
 - i. Providing free computer access and digital literacy training at the public library.
 - ii. Partnering with local organizations to distribute affordable devices and internet assistance programs.
- 2. ADA Compliance for Online Services:
 - a. The town's digital platforms shall comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility standards, ensuring:
 - i. Screen reader compatibility for visually impaired residents.
 - ii. Closed captioning on all public video content.
 - iii. Alternative formats for individuals without internet access.

Section 6: Emerging Technology and Innovation

- 1. Exploring Smart City Technology:
 - a. The town may explore smart infrastructure projects, including:
 - i. Traffic sensors and automated signal controls for road safety.
 - ii. Smart water meters to track municipal water use efficiency.
 - iii. Solar-powered street lighting for energy conservation.
- 2. Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Municipal Services:
 - a. The town may explore AI-powered chatbots for automated public inquiries and AI-assisted data analysis for financial planning.
 - b. AI tools shall be regulated to ensure data privacy and prevent bias in decision-making.

Section 7: Oversight and Continuous Improvement

- 1. Creation of a Digital Governance Committee:
 - a. The town may establish a Digital Governance Advisory Committee to oversee:
 - i. Implementation of cybersecurity and data policies.
 - ii. Evaluation of emerging technology in municipal services.

- iii. Public feedback on digital initiatives.
- 2. Annual Technology & Cybersecurity Audit:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen shall commission an annual review of municipal technology infrastructure, evaluating:
 - i. Cybersecurity risks and compliance updates.
 - ii. Public digital service improvements.
 - iii. Opportunities for cost savings through technology.
- 3. Adoption of Future Legislative Mandates:
 - a. The town shall adjust digital governance policies in compliance with:
 - i. Future RSA 91-A amendments on electronic records retention.
 - ii. State-mandated cybersecurity training for municipal employees.
 - iii. Any NH Department of Information Technology (DoIT) requirements for municipal digital infrastructure.

**ARTICLE XXV: EDUCATION, SCHOOL GOVERNANCE, AND HIGHER LEARNING
PARTNERSHIPS**

Section 1: Purpose and Scope

The Town of Rindge recognizes the vital role of education in the community. This article outlines the governance and funding structure of public education in Rindge, the town's relationship with the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District, the role of the Board of Selectmen, and partnerships with Franklin Pierce University and other educational institutions.

Section 2: Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District

1. Governance and Authority
 - a. The Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District operates as an independent entity under RSA 195 and other applicable state laws.
 - b. The School Board is responsible for setting policies, managing school operations, and overseeing curriculum decisions.
 - c. The Superintendent of Schools administers the district and reports to the School Board.
2. Budgeting and Financial Oversight
 - a. The school budget is separate from the town's municipal budget and is prepared annually by the School Board.
 - b. The Board of Selectmen has no authority over school budget development or expenditures.
 - c. Rindge residents vote on the school budget during the School District Meeting, held separately from the annual Town Meeting.
 - d. The Budget Committee may review and provide recommendations on the school budget, but final approval remains with voters.
3. Dissolution of the Cooperative School District
 - a. The Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District may be dissolved through a legal process initiated by a feasibility study, typically commissioned by a petition or vote.
 - b. The New Hampshire Department of Education must review any proposed dissolution plan.
 - c. A majority vote of both Jaffrey and Rindge residents is required for dissolution.
 - d. Upon dissolution, Rindge would need to establish an independent school district or negotiate agreements with other school systems for student education.

Section 3: Relationship with the State and School Funding

1. State Education Funding and Cost Per Student
 - a. The State of New Hampshire provides financial aid to local school districts through adequacy grants, stabilization grants, and special education funding.

- b. The amount allocated is based on the cost per student formula, which considers factors such as enrollment, free/reduced lunch eligibility, and special education needs.
 - c. Rindge's share of the school budget is determined based on student population ratios between Jaffrey and Rindge, per the cooperative school district agreement.
- 2. Local Taxpayer Contributions
 - a. The difference between state aid and the total school budget is covered through local property taxes.
 - b. The town is responsible for collecting school-related tax revenues and transferring them to the district.
 - c. Changes in state funding formulas or local tax contributions can impact the town's financial obligations.
- 3. Future Funding Considerations
 - a. The town may advocate for adjustments to state funding policies to ensure fair allocations.
 - b. Periodic reviews of cost per student expenditures can help determine the financial sustainability of remaining in the cooperative district versus alternative education models.

Section 4: Role of the Board of Selectmen in Education

Although the Selectmen do not oversee school operations, they have responsibilities related to education, including:

- 1. Tax Collection & Fund Transfers: Ensuring that school district funds raised through property taxes are appropriately allocated.
- 2. School Facilities and Public Safety: Collaborating with the School Board, Police, and Fire Departments on safety measures, emergency response plans, and facility use agreements.
- 3. Community Liaison: Acting as a bridge between town residents and the school district on concerns regarding financial impact, infrastructure planning, and potential dissolution studies.

Section 5: Higher Education and Partnerships with Franklin Pierce University

- 1. Memorandums of Agreement (MOA)
 - a. The Town of Rindge maintains formal agreements with Franklin Pierce University to support community engagement, internships, and student volunteer programs.
 - b. The Selectmen may negotiate or renew these agreements to foster continued collaboration.
- 2. Economic and Educational Impact
 - a. Franklin Pierce University contributes significantly to the local economy and workforce development.

- b. The town supports efforts to strengthen educational opportunities by encouraging partnerships between the university and local schools.
- 3. Use of University Facilities for Town Purposes

Under certain agreements, the town and university may share facilities for public meetings, emergency response coordination, and cultural or educational events.

Section 6: Future Educational Planning and Review

- 1. Periodic Review of School District Status
 - a. The Town of Rindge may conduct feasibility studies to assess the effectiveness of remaining in the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District.
 - b. Any proposal to modify or dissolve the cooperative arrangement must follow state-mandated processes and voter approval.
- 2. Collaboration on Educational Development
 - a. The town encourages continued collaboration with regional and state education agencies to explore opportunities for improved student outcomes, facility upgrades, and cost efficiencies.
 - b. Partnerships with other institutions, including technical schools and community colleges, shall be explored to expand educational access.

Conclusion

Education remains a pillar of Rindge's commitment to community development. While the town government does not control public schools, it plays a supporting role in ensuring financial responsibility, student safety, and higher education partnerships. This article affirms Rindge's dedication to fostering strong educational institutions for current and future generations.

CHAPTER 7

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

ARTICLE XXVI: INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION

Section 1: Purpose and Commitment

1. The Town of Rindge recognizes the importance of collaborative governance and regional cooperation to improve municipal services, enhance efficiency, and advocate for the town's interests at the state and federal levels.
2. This article establishes policies for cooperative agreements, regional planning initiatives, shared services, intergovernmental relations, and state legislative advocacy, aligning with:
 - a. RSA 53-A – Agreements Between Governmental Units
 - b. RSA 36 – Regional Planning Commissions and Coordination
 - c. RSA 162-G – Municipal Economic Development and Cooperation
 - d. RSA 149-M – Solid Waste and Environmental Cooperation
 - e. RSA 21-P:40 – Mutual Aid for Emergency Services
 - f. 2024 Legislative Updates on intermunicipal agreements, shared services, regional emergency planning, and state-municipal advocacy.

Section 2: Legal Framework for Intergovernmental Agreements

1. Intermunicipal Agreements (RSA 53-A)
 - a. The town may enter into agreements with other municipalities, counties, and state agencies to share services and resources, provided that such agreements:
 - i. Are approved by the Board of Selectmen.
 - ii. Do not conflict with local ordinances or NH state law.
 - iii. Provide cost-effective benefits to Rindge residents.
 - b. These agreements may cover joint purchasing, infrastructure projects, and emergency preparedness.
2. Regional Planning and Development (RSA 36)
 - a. The town shall actively participate in the Southwest Region Planning Commission (SWRPC) and other regional planning initiatives to:
 - i. Coordinate land use and zoning policies.
 - ii. Develop sustainable growth strategies.
 - iii. Access state and federal funding for infrastructure and environmental projects.
3. State and Federal Cooperation
 - a. The town may apply for grants, technical assistance, and funding programs from:
 - i. NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) for road and bridge projects.

- ii. NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) for conservation and water protection.
- iii. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) for disaster relief.

Section 3: Shared Municipal Services and Resource Collaboration

1. Law Enforcement and Public Safety

- a. The Rindge Police Department may enter into agreements with neighboring law enforcement agencies to:
 - i. Share investigative resources and training programs.
 - ii. Provide mutual aid during emergencies (RSA 21-P:40).
 - iii. Participate in regional crime prevention task forces.

2. Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

- a. The Rindge Fire Department may enter into mutual aid agreements with surrounding municipalities under RSA 154:24 to:
 - i. Provide joint emergency response efforts.
 - ii. Establish regional training programs for firefighters and EMS personnel.
 - iii. Utilize shared resources such as emergency dispatch services and equipment.

3. Solid Waste Management and Environmental Protection

- a. The town shall participate in regional solid waste and recycling programs in compliance with RSA 149-M to:
 - i. Reduce landfill waste and promote sustainable disposal methods.
 - ii. Collaborate on hazardous waste collection and disposal.
 - iii. Explore regional composting and energy recovery initiatives.

4. Public Works and Infrastructure

- a. The town may collaborate with county and neighboring municipal public works departments to:
 - i. Share road maintenance equipment and snow removal services.
 - ii. Coordinate stormwater management and drainage improvements.
 - iii. Develop inter-town utility projects, including broadband expansion.

Section 4: Regional Economic Development and Transportation

1. Economic Growth and Business Collaboration (RSA 162-G)

- a. The town may participate in regional economic development councils to:
 - i. Attract businesses and industries that align with local economic goals.

- ii. Collaborate on workforce training programs with regional employers.
- iii. Develop business incentives that encourage local job creation.

2. Regional Transportation and Public Transit

- a. The town shall coordinate with NHDOT and the Southwest Region Planning Commission to:
 - i. Improve public transit options for commuters.
 - ii. Enhance bike and pedestrian pathways for sustainable mobility.
 - iii. Address traffic safety and congestion on major roadways.

Section 5: Coordination with Educational and Research Institutions

1. Partnerships with Franklin Pierce University

- a. The town shall maintain cooperative agreements with Franklin Pierce University for:
 - i. Community education and lifelong learning programs.
 - ii. Joint public safety training initiatives.
 - iii. Shared use of recreational and academic facilities.

2. Collaboration with Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District

- a. The town shall work with the School District Board to:
 - i. Explore shared-use agreements for town and school facilities.
 - ii. Promote youth civic engagement through town internship programs.

Section 6: Intergovernmental Relations and State Advocacy

1. Advocacy for Rindge's Interests in State Legislation

- a. The town shall track state legislative developments affecting municipal governance, including:
 - i. Changes in local taxation, state funding, and municipal budgeting laws.
 - ii. Proposed amendments to land use, zoning, and conservation regulations.
 - iii. Bills affecting education, infrastructure, and public safety.
- b. The Board of Selectmen, in coordination with NH Municipal Association (NHMA), may submit public testimony or resolutions to the NH Legislature advocating for policies that benefit Rindge.

2. Representation in State and Regional Committees

- a. The town may designate Selectmen, the Town Administrator, or representatives to serve on state commissions or advisory boards related to:
 - i. Transportation and infrastructure planning.

- ii. Environmental conservation and energy policies.
 - iii. Regional economic development initiatives.
- 3. Engagement with NH Municipal Association (NHMA)
 - a. The town shall participate in NHMA legislative policy conferences and municipal advocacy efforts to:
 - i. Gain insight into emerging legal and regulatory issues.
 - ii. Collaborate with other municipalities on joint policy positions.
 - iii. Access resources and training for municipal governance best practices.
- 4. Public Awareness and Community Involvement
 - a. The town shall inform residents of key state policy decisions that impact local governance through:
 - i. Public forums and town meetings.
 - ii. Digital newsletters and town website updates.
 - iii. Community advocacy groups focused on local and state governance.

Section 7: Oversight and Implementation

- 1. Intergovernmental Affairs Liaison
 - a. The Board of Selectmen may designate a town official or committee to oversee regional cooperation efforts and identify new partnership opportunities.
- 2. Annual Review of Agreements
 - a. All intermunicipal agreements shall be reviewed annually by the Board of Selectmen to ensure:
 - i. Compliance with state law.
 - ii. Fiscal responsibility and efficiency.
 - iii. Continued benefit to the residents of Rindge.

ARTICLE XXVII: STATE LEGISLATION ADVOCACY AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. The Town of Rindge acknowledges that state and federal legislation has a direct impact on municipal governance, public services, taxation, land use, environmental policies, and education funding.
2. This article establishes a framework for how the town, through its elected and appointed officials, will engage in legislative advocacy to protect and advance the interests of Rindge residents while ensuring compliance with New Hampshire state laws governing municipal advocacy and lobbying.
3. These advocacy efforts align with:
 - a. RSA 31:39 – Powers of Towns to Advocate for Local Interests
 - b. RSA 49-D:3 – Municipal Charter Authority and Home Rule
 - c. RSA 15:5-6 – Prohibition on the Use of Public Funds for Political Purposes
 - d. RSA 21-P – State-Municipal Coordination on Public Safety and Emergency Management
 - e. RSA 162-K – Municipal Economic Development and State Policy Influence
 - f. 2024 Legislative Updates on municipal lobbying, legislative tracking, and public engagement

Section 2: Role of the Board of Selectmen

The Board of Selectmen, as the executive body of the town, shall:

1. Monitor State and Federal Legislation – Track pending legislation and regulatory changes that could affect Rindge’s governance, municipal budget, property taxes, land use, environmental protection, and education funding.
2. Advocate for Rindge’s Interests – Engage with state legislators, executive agencies, and advocacy groups to represent the town’s position on proposed laws.
3. Draft and Submit Official Communications – With majority board approval, issue letters, testimony, or policy statements on behalf of the town to state and federal lawmakers.
4. Collaborate with the New Hampshire Municipal Association (NHMA) – Work with NHMA and other municipal coalitions to support or oppose legislation impacting local governance.
5. Provide Public Transparency – Ensure that all advocacy actions taken on behalf of the town are publicly recorded and available for residents to review.
6. Coordinate with the Town Administrator – The Board of Selectmen may assign the Town Administrator or a Legislative Liaison to assist in legislative tracking, policy analysis, and public reporting.

Section 3: Legislative Advocacy Process

1. Legislative Review – The Selectmen or an appointed legislative liaison shall review pending state and federal legislation and identify key bills that may impact the town.
2. Public Input and Engagement – The Selectmen shall provide opportunities for public feedback before adopting an official position on significant legislative matters. This may include:
 - a. Public hearings or town forums.
 - b. Surveys or written comment opportunities.
 - c. Inclusion of legislative updates in Selectmen’s meetings.
3. Approval of Advocacy Actions – Any official advocacy by the town must be authorized by a majority vote of the Board of Selectmen at a public meeting.
4. Communication with Legislators – The Selectmen may:
 - a. Submit formal letters to state representatives, senators, or agencies.
 - b. Provide testimony before the New Hampshire General Court (Legislature).
 - c. Participate in municipal advocacy events organized by NHMA.
5. Use of Town Resources – No municipal funds, employees, or resources shall be used for partisan political activity, per RSA 15:5-6 (Prohibition on Public Funds for Political Purposes).

Section 4: Legal and Procedural Compliance

1. Compliance with New Hampshire Lobbying Laws
 - a. Any municipal advocacy shall comply with RSA 15:1 et seq., which governs lobbying activities and public sector engagement with lawmakers.
 - b. If required by law, designated town officials engaging in legislative lobbying may be subject to state registration requirements.
2. Municipal Home Rule and Legislative Limitations
 - a. Per RSA 49-D:3 (Municipal Charter Authority), any advocacy action must align with the town’s governance powers and not exceed the authority granted under state law.
 - b. The town shall not engage in legal challenges against state legislation unless authorized by a Town Meeting vote or under an approved legal action by the Selectmen.
3. Public Disclosure and Reporting
 - a. All official advocacy actions shall be recorded in Selectmen’s meeting minutes and made publicly available.
 - b. The town shall maintain a Legislative Advocacy Report, detailing key legislative matters addressed by the Selectmen each year.

Section 5: Resident Participation in Legislative Advocacy

1. Resident Petitions for Advocacy

- a. Any group of at least 25 registered voters may petition the Selectmen to take a position on a legislative issue affecting the town.
- b. The Selectmen shall review and respond to such petitions at a public meeting within 30 days of submission.

2. Public Testimony by Residents

Residents may provide testimony on legislation as private individuals or, with Board of Selectmen approval, as designated representatives of the town.

3. Annual Legislative Forum

The Selectmen may organize an Annual Legislative Forum with state legislators to allow residents to engage with elected representatives about issues affecting Rindge.

Section 6: Advocacy for State Funding and Policy Initiatives

1. Education Funding and Local Aid

- a. The town shall advocate for fair and equitable state education funding formulas, ensuring Rindge receives an appropriate share of state aid for public schools.
- b. The Selectmen may work with the Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School Board to coordinate advocacy for school-related legislation.

2. State Grants and Municipal Aid

The town shall actively pursue state grants, revenue-sharing programs, and municipal aid opportunities to reduce local tax burdens.

3. Land Use, Conservation, and Infrastructure Support

The Selectmen may advocate for state funding for roads, bridges, broadband expansion, and environmental protection programs relevant to Rindge.

CHAPTER 8

LEGAL PROVISIONS, DISPUTE RESOLUTION, AND CHARTER AMENDMENTS

ARTICLE XXVIII: DISPUTE RESOLUTION AND ARBITRATION PROCESS

Section 1: Purpose and Scope

1. The purpose of this article is to provide a structured, fair, and legally compliant dispute resolution process for conflicts involving the Town of Rindge, its residents, municipal officials, employees, and governing bodies.
2. This process aims to minimize litigation, foster cooperation, and provide efficient resolutions to disputes through mediation, arbitration, and formal administrative appeals.
3. The provisions of this article align with:
 - a. RSA 502-A – Mediation and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR).
 - b. RSA 507-B – Municipal Liability and Legal Protections.
 - c. RSA 673:10 – Land Use Board Appeals and Dispute Resolution.
 - d. RSA 91-A – Right-to-Know Law and Public Access to Dispute Resolutions.
 - e. 2024 Legislative Updates – New municipal arbitration procedures and administrative review processes.

Section 2: General Dispute Resolution Process

1. Preliminary Informal Resolution
 - a. Whenever possible, parties involved in a dispute shall attempt to resolve issues informally through direct communication or mediation facilitated by the Town Administrator or a designated mediator.
 - b. Town officials shall encourage open dialogue and cooperative problem-solving before formal proceedings are initiated.
2. Formal Dispute Submission
 - a. If informal resolution is unsuccessful, any individual, business, or organization with a formal dispute against the town may submit a written request for dispute resolution to the Town Administrator.
 - b. The request must include:
 - a. A description of the dispute and relevant facts.
 - b. Any supporting documentation or evidence.
 - c. The resolution sought by the requesting party.
 - c. The Town Administrator shall respond within 30 days, outlining next steps in the dispute resolution process.

Section 3: Mediation Process

1. Purpose of Mediation
 - a. Mediation provides a neutral, non-binding forum for resolving disputes before moving to arbitration or litigation.

- b. Mediation shall be used for disputes involving municipal decisions, ordinances, administrative actions, or contracts.
- 2. Appointment of Mediator
 - a. The Board of Selectmen shall appoint a neutral mediator or refer the dispute to the NH Office of Mediation and Arbitration.
 - b. The mediator must be impartial, qualified, and experienced in municipal law.
- 3. Mediation Proceedings
 - a. Mediation shall be conducted privately unless otherwise required by law.
 - b. The mediator will facilitate discussions between the parties to identify solutions and negotiate settlements.
 - c. If a resolution is reached, the mediator shall prepare a written agreement signed by both parties.
 - d. If mediation fails to produce a resolution, the dispute may proceed to arbitration or formal administrative appeal.

Section 4: Arbitration Procedures

- 1. Applicability of Arbitration
 - a. Arbitration shall be used for disputes involving town contracts, procurement decisions, personnel matters, and regulatory enforcement actions.
 - b. Arbitration is not available for disputes concerning criminal matters, ethics violations, or matters explicitly reserved for court jurisdiction.
- 2. Arbitration Panel
 - a. If mediation fails, the matter may be referred to an Arbitration Panel consisting of three members:
 - i. One appointed by the Town Administrator.
 - ii. One selected by the requesting party.
 - iii. One neutral arbitrator mutually agreed upon by both parties.
- 3. Arbitration Process
 - a. The panel shall convene within 60 days of referral.
 - b. Both parties shall submit evidence, present witnesses, and provide testimony.
 - c. The arbitration panel shall issue a binding decision within 30 days, unless an appeal is filed under the provisions of Section 5.
- 4. Arbitration Costs
 - a. Arbitration fees shall be shared equally between the disputing parties, unless otherwise determined by the panel.

Section 5: Appeal of Arbitration Decision

1. Grounds for Appeal

- a. An arbitration decision may be appealed only under limited circumstances, such as:
 - a. Procedural errors affecting fairness.
 - b. New evidence unavailable at the time of arbitration.
 - c. Legal misinterpretations affecting the outcome.

2. Appeal Process

- a. Appeals must be filed within 30 days of the arbitration decision.
- b. Appeals shall be reviewed by the Board of Selectmen or an independent appeals board, depending on the nature of the dispute.
- c. The reviewing authority shall issue a final determination within 60 days, which may:
 - a. Uphold the arbitration decision.
 - b. Modify the ruling based on new evidence.
 - c. Remand the case for reconsideration.

Section 6: Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Options

1. Conciliation and Neutral Evaluation

For complex disputes, the town may engage in conciliation or neutral case evaluation with a subject matter expert.

2. Administrative Review Panels

Certain disputes, such as land use decisions and zoning violations, may be referred to an Administrative Review Panel before arbitration.

3. Public Ombudsman Assistance

The town may designate an Ombudsman to assist residents in navigating the dispute resolution process.

Section 7: Public Access to Dispute Resolution Procedures

1. Transparency and Public Records

- a. The Town of Rindge shall maintain publicly accessible records of dispute resolution cases, except those protected by confidentiality laws.
- b. Summary reports shall be published annually on the town website.

2. Accessibility of Procedures

- a. Residents shall have clear guidance on how to initiate dispute resolution via:
 - i. The town website.
 - ii. Public meetings.
 - iii. Information posted in the Town Hall.

Section 8: Exemptions and Limitations

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1. Criminal and Judicial Matters

This article does not apply to disputes involving criminal charges, ethics violations, or matters that require formal court intervention.

2. Matters Reserved for Town Meeting Vote

Disputes related to warrant articles, town budgets, and other legislative decisions may only be resolved through official town meeting votes.

ARTICLE XXIX: AMENDMENT AND REVISION OF THE CHARTER

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the process for amending, revising, and reviewing the Town of Rindge's Charter to ensure its continued relevance, effectiveness, and compliance with New Hampshire law and evolving community needs.
2. Charter amendments shall be conducted in accordance with:
 - a. RSA 49-B:5 – Procedures for Amending a Municipal Charter.
 - b. RSA 49-D – Forms of Government and Charter Provisions.
 - c. RSA 31:39 – Powers of Towns to Establish Governing Policies.
 - d. RSA 91-A – Public Access to Government Records and Meetings.
 - e. NH Secretary of State Requirements – Submission and Filing Process for Official Recognition.
 - f. 2024 Legislative Updates – New guidelines for municipal charter amendments, public hearings, and accessibility.

Section 2: Methods of Amending the Charter

The Charter may be amended or revised through any of the following methods:

1. Charter Commission Process (RSA 49-B:3-5)
 - a. The town may establish a Charter Commission to study and propose amendments.
 - b. A Charter Commission may be formed by:
 - a. A petition signed by at least 20% of registered voters.
 - b. A vote of the Board of Selectmen at a duly noticed public meeting.
 - c. The Commission shall have one year to draft proposed amendments, hold public hearings, and submit a final report.
2. Town Meeting Vote on Proposed Amendments (RSA 49-B:5)
 - a. Amendments may be proposed by the Board of Selectmen or by citizen petition.
 - b. Proposed amendments must be reviewed by the NH Attorney General's Office for compliance with state law.
 - c. Amendments must be approved by a 3/5 majority vote at Town Meeting.
3. Citizen Petition for Specific Amendments (RSA 49-B:5, II)
 - a. Any petition signed by at least 10% of registered voters may place a charter amendment on the ballot.
 - b. The proposed amendment must be reviewed for legal compliance before appearing on the ballot.
 - c. The amendment is adopted if approved by a 3/5 majority vote of voters at Town Meeting.

4. Legislative Mandates and Judicial Orders

- a. If required by new state or federal laws, the town must update its Charter to remain in compliance.
- b. The NH courts may also mandate revisions in cases where the Charter conflicts with established law.

Section 3: Periodic Review of the Charter

1. The town shall conduct a comprehensive review of the Charter every 10 years to evaluate its effectiveness and alignment with state law.
2. The Board of Selectmen shall:
 - a. Appoint a Charter Review Committee composed of residents, legal experts, and town officials.
 - b. Hold at least two public hearings to gather input from the community.
 - c. Submit a recommendation report on whether revisions are necessary.
3. If revisions are recommended, they must follow the amendment process outlined in Section 2.

Section 4: Public Hearing and Voter Approval

1. Before any proposed charter amendment is placed on the ballot, at least one public hearing must be held to allow residents to provide feedback.
2. Proposed amendments must be:
 - a. Posted in two public locations and on the town website at least 30 days before Town Meeting.
 - b. Published in a local newspaper to inform residents of upcoming votes.
3. Amendments are adopted only if approved by a 3/5 majority of voters at Town Meeting.

Section 5: Submission to the NH Secretary of State for Official Recognition

1. Once approved by voters, any amendment or revision to the Charter must be:
 - a. Certified by the Town Clerk.
 - b. Submitted to the NH Secretary of State's Office for official recognition.
 - c. Reviewed by the NH Attorney General to ensure compliance with state law.
2. The amendment shall take legal effect upon approval by the Secretary of State, unless a different effective date is specified in the amendment language.

Section 6: Publication and Public Access

1. Charter Accessibility
 - a. The Town of Rindge shall maintain an official copy of the Charter and all approved amendments at:

- i. Town Clerk's Office – Available for public inspection during business hours.
- ii. Town Website – A digital version shall be publicly accessible and regularly updated.
- iii. Public Library – A reference copy shall be available for residents who do not have internet access.

2. Public Notification of Amendments

- a. The town shall ensure that all charter amendments are:
 - i. Published in a local newspaper.
 - ii. Distributed through the town's official email list and social media channels.
 - iii. Included in an Annual Municipal Report, summarizing any changes to the Charter.

3. Right to Know Compliance (RSA 91-A)

All meetings, public hearings, and records related to charter amendments shall comply with NH's Right-to-Know Law (RSA 91-A), ensuring full transparency and accessibility.

4. Historical Archive of Amendments

- a. The town shall maintain a historical record of all Charter amendments, including:
 - i. The date of adoption.
 - ii. The language of the amendment.
 - iii. The voting results from Town Meeting.
- b. This archive shall be available for public review upon request.

ARTICLE XXX: TRANSITION PROVISIONS

Section 1: Purpose and Authority

1. This article establishes the transition framework for implementing this Charter and any future amendments, ensuring continuity of governance and compliance with state law.
2. Transition provisions shall be carried out in accordance with:
 - a. RSA 49-B:6-9 – Procedures for Implementing a New Charter or Charter Amendments.
 - b. RSA 49-D – Forms of Government and Transition Provisions.
 - c. RSA 31:39 – Powers of Towns to Maintain Existing Regulations.
 - d. NH Secretary of State Certification Requirements – Official validation of Charter implementation.
 - e. NH Attorney General Review – Legal compliance with state governance laws.

Section 2: Effective Date of the Charter and Amendments

1. The Charter, or any amendments to it, shall take effect on the date specified within the document itself or, if no date is provided, upon:
 - a. Certification of adoption by the Town Clerk.
 - b. Approval and filing with the NH Secretary of State and NH Attorney General per RSA 49-B:8.
 - c. Affirmation by a 3/5 majority vote at Town Meeting, as required under RSA 49-B:5.
2. If structural changes to town government are enacted, a transition period may be necessary to allow for proper implementation.

Section 3: Continuation of Governmental Functions

1. Existing town operations, laws, and regulations shall remain in effect until revised or repealed to comply with the new Charter.
2. All elected and appointed officials shall continue in their roles until the completion of their term or as specified by transition provisions.
3. Any contracts, financial obligations, or agreements in place at the time of Charter adoption shall remain valid unless otherwise modified through due process.

Section 4: Transition of Elected and Appointed Officials

1. Retention of Existing Officials
 - a. All officials serving at the time of Charter adoption shall retain their positions unless the new Charter eliminates or modifies their roles.
 - b. If a role is eliminated or merged with another position, the Board of Selectmen shall establish a transition plan to address the change.
2. Newly Created Offices

- a. If the Charter establishes new boards, commissions, or administrative roles, appointments and elections for those positions shall follow the procedures outlined in the Charter.
 - b. The Board of Selectmen may appoint interim officials to fill new positions until a formal selection occurs.
3. Election Adjustments

If Charter provisions affect the number, term length, or duties of elected officials, such changes shall not take effect until the next scheduled election to ensure fairness and stability.

Section 5: Administrative Transition and Implementation

1. The Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen shall oversee the administrative transition process, ensuring that all departments, employees, and boards are properly informed of Charter changes.
2. Implementation Schedule
 - a. Within 90 days of Charter adoption, a Transition Plan shall be published, detailing steps for full implementation.
 - b. The plan shall include timelines for revising policies, updating financial procedures, and integrating new governance structures.
3. Ordinance and Policy Reconciliation
 - a. Within one year of adoption, all existing ordinances, bylaws, and policies shall be reviewed for consistency with the Charter.
 - b. The Board of Selectmen shall recommend amendments or repeals where conflicts exist.

Section 6: Public Awareness and Education

1. The town shall conduct a public education campaign to ensure residents are informed about:
 - a. The new Charter provisions and their impacts.
 - b. Changes to government structure, voting processes, and town meetings.
 - c. Opportunities for community engagement in the transition process.
2. Methods of public outreach shall include:
 - a. Public forums and town hall meetings to explain Charter changes.
 - b. Publication of a Transition Guide available on the town website and in print.
 - c. Regular updates in local newspapers, email notifications, and social media.

Section 7: Legal and Financial Protections

1. Continuity of Town Services
 - a. All essential municipal services shall continue without disruption during the transition period.

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- b. Any disputes regarding the interpretation of the Charter shall be resolved by the Board of Selectmen in consultation with town counsel.
- 2. Financial Stability
 - a. The adoption of the Charter shall not alter existing tax rates, appropriations, or debt obligations unless explicitly stated.
 - b. The town shall maintain all state and federal funding agreements to ensure continued financial stability.
- 3. State and Legal Compliance
 - a. All actions taken to implement the Charter shall comply with state laws and regulatory requirements.
 - b. The town may seek guidance from the NH Secretary of State, NH Municipal Association, and legal counsel to ensure a legally sound transition.

Section 8: Certification and Finalization of the Charter

- 1. Upon completion of the transition process, the Town Clerk shall certify that all required steps have been taken to fully implement the Charter.
- 2. A final report on the transition process shall be presented at Town Meeting within one year of adoption.
- 3. The Board of Selectmen shall submit the finalized Charter to the NH Secretary of State for permanent record-keeping.

ARTICLE XXXI: MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

Section 1: Official Town Seal and Symbols

1. The Town of Rindge shall maintain an official town seal, which shall be used on all official documents, proclamations, and certificates.
2. The Board of Selectmen shall oversee the design, usage, and protection of the town seal to prevent unauthorized or misleading use.
3. The town may adopt official insignia, flags, or other symbols that represent Rindge's history, culture, and governance.

Section 2: Town Holidays and Observances

1. The town shall recognize state and federal holidays as well as local observances, including:
 - a. Town Meeting Day (as per RSA 39:1).
 - b. Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Veterans Day observances.
 - c. Local historical celebrations as approved by the Board of Selectmen.
2. The Board of Selectmen may designate additional town holidays by resolution or proclamation.

Section 3: Legal Protections and Municipal Immunity

1. The town, its elected officials, and employees shall be protected from liability while acting within their lawful duties, in accordance with:
 - a. RSA 31:105-107 (Municipal Immunity and Indemnification).
 - b. RSA 507-B (Tort Liability for Governmental Units).
2. The town shall defend and indemnify officials, employees, and volunteers against claims arising from their public service, provided they acted in good faith and within their legal authority.
3. Any lawsuit filed against the town shall follow proper legal channels and shall be handled by designated legal counsel.

Section 4: Preservation of Existing Rights and Obligations

1. The adoption of this Charter shall not invalidate existing contracts, agreements, or obligations lawfully entered into by the town prior to its adoption.
2. The town shall continue to recognize all vested property rights, easements, and land use approvals issued under previous governance structures.
3. Any conflict between prior ordinances and this Charter shall be resolved in favor of the Charter's provisions.

Section 5: Compensation of Elected Officials and Employees

1. Compensation for elected officials shall be determined by:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen, subject to budget approval at Town Meeting.

- b. Applicable provisions of RSA 31:9 and RSA 41:9-b (Compensation of Town Officials).
2. No elected official shall receive additional compensation beyond what is authorized at Town Meeting, except for:
 - a. Reimbursement for travel and official expenses.
 - b. Stipends or allowances as defined by town policy.
3. Salaries for town employees shall be set in accordance with the annual budget process and in compliance with NH labor laws.

Section 6: Review and Revision of Policies

1. The Board of Selectmen shall conduct a comprehensive review of town policies every five years to ensure alignment with the Charter, state law, and evolving community needs.
2. Policy revisions shall be made publicly available and subject to public comment.
3. The town shall maintain a Policy Handbook that consolidates all municipal regulations, employment policies, and administrative procedures.

Section 7: Oath of Office

1. All elected and appointed officials shall take an oath of office before assuming their duties, in accordance with RSA 42:1.
2. The oath shall be administered by the Town Clerk, Moderator, or a Justice of the Peace.
3. Failure to take the oath within 30 days of appointment or election shall result in forfeiture of the office.

Section 8: Official Town Documents and Records

1. The town shall maintain an official archive of municipal records, including:
 - a. Town Meeting minutes and votes.
 - b. Board of Selectmen records.
 - c. Financial reports, budgets, and audits.
 - d. Approved ordinances and policies.
2. Public records shall be accessible in accordance with RSA 91-A (Right to Know Law), ensuring transparency and public engagement.
3. The Town Clerk shall be responsible for record retention, archiving, and disposal of records in accordance with state law.

Section 9: Rules of Procedure

1. The Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting, and all town boards and commissions shall adopt and follow rules of procedure in accordance with:
 - a. RSA 91-A (Open Meetings Law).

- b. Robert's Rules of Order or other locally adopted procedures.
2. All procedural rules must be publicly available and reviewed periodically to ensure efficiency and fairness in governance.

Section 10: Severability Clause

1. If any provision of this Charter is found to be unconstitutional or invalid, the remainder of the Charter shall remain in full force and effect.
2. Any necessary modifications shall be made in compliance with NH law and through the amendment process established in this Charter.

Section 11: Conflict of Laws

1. If a conflict arises between this Charter and state or federal law, the higher authority shall prevail.
2. In cases where the Charter is silent on an issue, the town shall follow the applicable provisions of New Hampshire law.

Section 12: Public Notice and Accessibility

1. All official town documents, policies, and amendments to this Charter shall be:
 - a. Published in a publicly accessible format online and in print.
 - b. Available at the Town Clerk's office and public library.
 - c. Presented in an Annual Report to residents.
2. The town shall maintain a system for public notifications, ensuring timely dissemination of:
 - a. Town Meeting agendas and warrant articles.
 - b. Changes in ordinances or policies.
 - c. Emergency orders and public safety notices.

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CHAPTER 9

CLOSING COMMITMENT

ARTICLE XXXII: A COMMITMENT TO THE PEOPLE OF RINDGE

Section 1: The People as the Foundation of Governance

1. The Town of Rindge is governed by the people, for the people. This Charter reaffirms the principle of self-governance, ensuring that the will of the residents remains the guiding force in municipal decision-making.
2. Town Meetings, public forums, and citizen initiatives provide the foundation for collective decision-making, allowing residents to shape policies, budgets, and the future of the Town.
3. The Town pledges to uphold the rights, values, and aspirations of its people through open governance, responsible leadership, and a commitment to the common good.

Section 2: Community Involvement and Volunteerism

1. The success of Rindge depends on the active participation of its residents.
2. The Town shall promote civic engagement and volunteerism by:
 - a. Encouraging residents to serve on boards, committees, and commissions.
 - b. Supporting community initiatives and local events that strengthen public bonds.
 - c. Providing educational resources and leadership opportunities to inspire future generations.
3. Every resident has a role in shaping the future of Rindge, and the Town remains committed to fostering a culture of collaboration, service, and public involvement.

Section 3: Town Meetings and Elections

1. Town Meetings serve as the cornerstone of democracy in Rindge, ensuring that every eligible resident has a voice in municipal affairs.
2. The Town shall protect the integrity of its elections, voting procedures, and public deliberations by maintaining fairness, transparency, and accessibility for all.
3. Voter participation is vital, and the Town shall take proactive measures to encourage and facilitate robust turnout in local elections and civic matters.

Section 4: The Role of Local Government

1. The Town's government exists to serve, support, and empower its residents.
2. The Town's leadership pledges to:
 - a. Act in the best interests of the community and future generations.
 - b. Operate with transparency, fiscal responsibility, and ethical integrity.
 - c. Ensure that public policies reflect the needs and aspirations of residents.
3. The Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, and all municipal departments shall be held accountable to the people through regular reviews, public feedback, and open governance.

Section 5: A Vision for the Future

1. Rindge is a community built on tradition, resilience, and shared values. As the Town grows and evolves, it shall remain committed to preserving its rural character, protecting its natural resources, and fostering economic and social prosperity.
2. The Town envisions a future where:
 - a. Sustainability and environmental stewardship guide local policies.
 - b. Economic growth and opportunity align with community values.
 - c. Strong schools, public services, and infrastructure ensure a high quality of life.
 - d. Residents work together to address challenges and create lasting solutions.
3. This Charter represents a living commitment to the people of Rindge, affirming the Town's dedication to good governance, public service, and an engaged citizenry.

FINAL STATEMENT

The Town of Rindge is more than just a place—it is a living, thriving community built on the collective efforts, values, and aspirations of its people. This Charter is not merely a set of rules; it is a testament to our shared commitment to democracy, accountability, and the well-being of every resident. It enshrines the principles of fairness, participation, and stewardship that define who we are and what we stand for as a town.

As we move forward, we reaffirm that the government exists to serve, not to rule—to listen, not to dictate. We pledge to uphold transparency, promote civic engagement, and cultivate an inclusive environment where every voice is valued. With this Charter, we honor our past, empower our present, and lay the foundation for a bright and prosperous future.

The success of Rindge lies not only in policies and procedures but in the unwavering spirit of its people. Together, with respect, collaboration, and a steadfast dedication to progress, we will ensure that our town remains a place where families flourish, businesses thrive, and future generations inherit a community they can be proud of. This is our promise, our duty, and our enduring commitment to the people of Rindge.

SUMMARY OF THE TOWN OF RINDGE CHARTER

Overview

The Town of Rindge Charter establishes the legal and operational framework for local government. It defines roles and responsibilities, ensures financial accountability, and promotes public participation and transparency in town affairs.

Key Provisions

- **Governance Structure** – Rindge operates under a Town Meeting-Selectmen system, allowing residents to directly participate in decision-making, while the Board of Selectmen manages municipal administration.
- **Financial Management** – Establishes clear budgeting, financial oversight, and auditing procedures to ensure fiscal responsibility and efficient use of public funds.
- **Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness** – Outlines policies for law enforcement, fire protection, and emergency response, ensuring the safety and well-being of residents.
- **Land Use & Environmental Stewardship** – Regulates zoning, planning, and sustainability efforts to balance responsible growth with environmental preservation.
- **Digital Governance & Transparency** – Integrates modern technology, cybersecurity protocols, and accessible communication methods to improve town operations and public engagement.
- **Regional & Intergovernmental Cooperation** – Encourages collaboration with neighboring municipalities and state agencies to enhance shared services, infrastructure, and economic development.

Public Involvement & Review

To ensure its continued relevance, the Charter includes mechanisms for periodic review and amendment. Residents are encouraged to actively participate in town governance through elections, public meetings, citizen initiatives, and referenda.

Conclusion

The Town of Rindge Charter embodies a commitment to democratic governance, fiscal integrity, and long-term community sustainability. It provides a structured yet adaptable foundation to meet the evolving needs of the town and its residents.

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This Charter is enacted and adopted by the people of the Town of Rindge, New Hampshire, this _____ day of _____, 2025.

Signed:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

REQUIRED REPORTS, RESPONSIBLE PARTIES, AND SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

1. Financial & Budgetary Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
Annual Budget Report	Town Administrator, Finance Director	December 31 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen, Budget Advisory Committee, Public Hearing	Public
Quarterly Financial Reports	Finance Director	March 31, June 30, September 30, December 31	Board of Selectmen	Archived
Annual Financial Audit Report	Independent Auditor, Finance Director	June 30 (Annually)	NH Department of Revenue Administration (DRA), Board of Selectmen	Public
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Report	Planning Board, CIP Committee	October 1 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting	Public
Property Tax Rate Certification	Town Assessor, NH DRA	October 15 (Annually)	NH Department of Revenue Administration	Public
Annual Treasurer's Report	Town Treasurer	March 1 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen	Public
Annual Investment & Fund Balance Report	Finance Director	March 31 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen, NH DRA	Archived
Public Deposit Investment Pool Report	Finance Director	June 30 (Annually)	NH Treasury	Archived
Disaster Relief Fund Application	Emergency Management Director	As needed (Post-Emergency)	NH Governor & Executive Council	Archived

2. Elections & Governance Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
Annual Town Meeting Minutes	Town Clerk, Town Moderator	Within 30 days post-meeting	Board of Selectmen, NH Secretary of State	Public
Election Results Certification	Town Clerk	Within 24 hours post-election	NH Secretary of State	Public
Voter Registration & Ballot Use Report	Supervisors of the Checklist	February 1, June 1, October 1	NH Secretary of State	Archived
Warrant Articles for Town Meeting	Board of Selectmen, Town Clerk	Posted by February 1	Board of Selectmen, Public Hearing	Public
Ethics & Conflict of Interest Compliance Report	Ethics Committee	December 31 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen	Public

3. Land Use & Zoning Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
Master Plan Update	Planning Board	Every 5 years	Board of Selectmen, Town Meeting	Public
Zoning Ordinance Amendments Report	Zoning Board of Adjustment	January 15 (Annually)	Town Clerk for Town Meeting Warrant	Public
Building Permit & Code Enforcement Report	Code Enforcement Officer	Quarterly	Board of Selectmen	Archived
Blasting & Excavation Report	Public Works Director	Annually	NH Department of Environmental Services	Archived

4. Public Safety & Health Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
Annual Police Department Report	Police Chief	February 15 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen	Public
Annual Fire Department Report	Fire Chief	February 15 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen	Public
Emergency Management Plan Update	Emergency Management Director	Annually	Board of Selectmen	Archived
Mutual Aid Agreements Review	Emergency Management Director	Annually	Regional Response Teams, Board of Selectmen	Archived
Public Health & Safety Inspection Report	Health Officer	Quarterly	NH Department of Health & Human Services	Archived
Stormwater Management & Environmental Compliance Report	Public Works Director	April 1 (Annually)	NH Department of Environmental Services	Archived

5. Education & School District Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
School Budget Report	Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School Board	February 15 (Annually)	NH Department of Education, Public Hearing	Public
School Enrollment & Demographic Report	Jaffrey-Rindge School Superintendent	October 1 (Annually)	NH Department of Education	Archived
Franklin Pierce University Partnership Report	Town Administrator	Annually	Board of Selectmen, University Administration	Archived

6. Environmental & Energy Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
Annual Renewable Energy Report	Energy Committee	December 1 (Annually)	Board of Selectmen	Public
Wetlands & Conservation Report	Conservation Commission	April 1 (Annually)	NH Department of Environmental Services	Archived
Public Water Quality Report	Public Works Director	June 1 (Annually)	NH Department of Environmental Services	Public

7. Regional & State Collaboration Reports

Report Name	Responsible Party	Due Date / Frequency	Submitted To / Action Required	Public or Archived?
Intergovernmental & Regional Cooperation Report	Board of Selectmen	December 31 (Annually)	NH Municipal Association, Public	Public
Legislative Advocacy Report	Board of Selectmen	January 15 (Annually)	NH General Court, Public Hearing	Public

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APPENDIX B

ANNUAL MUNICIPAL CALENDAR & KEY DEADLINES

JANUARY

Date	Event	Responsible Party
First Business Day	First day to accept Town Meeting warrant petition articles	Town Clerk
January 1	Start of the Fiscal Year	Town Administrator, Board of Selectmen
Second Tuesday in January	Deadline for zoning ordinance amendments submission for Town Meeting vote	Planning Board
Mid-January	Deadline to submit petitioned warrant articles for Town Meeting (RSA 39:3)	Town Clerk
January 15	Annual Legislative Advocacy Report submission deadline	Board of Selectmen
Last Tuesday in January	Last day for Budget Advisory Committee public hearing	Budget Advisory Committee
January 31	Deadline for first budget public hearing (per RSA 32:5)	Budget Advisory Committee, Board of Selectmen

FEBRUARY

Date	Event	Responsible Party
February 1	Last day to post the final Town Warrant and Budget	Board of Selectmen, Town Clerk
First Week	Town Clerk finalizes Voter Checklist updates before Town Election	Town Clerk
Second Tuesday in February	Deadline to file candidacy for town elected positions (varies)	Town Clerk
February 15	Annual Public Safety Reports due (Police, Fire, Emergency Management)	Police Chief, Fire Chief, Emergency Management Director

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Date	Event	Responsible Party
Last Business Day	Final day to make budget changes before the deliberative session	Board of Selectmen

MARCH

Date	Event	Responsible Party
Second Tuesday in March	Town Election Day (SB2 Ballot Voting)	Town Clerk, Supervisors of the Checklist
Second Week of March	Annual Town Meeting – Deliberative Session	Town Moderator, Board of Selectmen
March 1	Annual Financial Reports due	Town Treasurer, Finance Director
March 1	Annual Town Report released	Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator
March 31	First Quarterly Financial Review	Finance Director, Board of Selectmen

APRIL

Date	Event	Responsible Party
April 1	Annual Property Assessments due	Assessing Department
April 1	Stormwater Management Report due	Public Works Director
April 15	Taxpayer Appeals Deadline for Property Assessments	Board of Assessors

MAY

Date	Event	Responsible Party
May 1	Annual School District Meeting	Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School Board
Mid-May	First Tax Bill Issued	Tax Collector

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Date	Event	Responsible Party
May 31	Second Quarterly Financial Review	Finance Director, Board of Selectmen

JUNE

Date	Event	Responsible Party
June 1	Annual Water Quality Reports Due	Health Officer, Public Works
June 15	Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Project Submissions Begin	Department Heads
June 30	Annual Audit Report due	Independent Auditor, Finance Director

JULY

Date	Event	Responsible Party
July 1	Start of Fiscal Year Appropriations	Finance Director
July 15	Mid-Year Budget Review	Board of Selectmen, Budget Advisory Committee
July 31	Third Quarterly Financial Review	Finance Director, Board of Selectmen

AUGUST

Date	Event	Responsible Party
August 1	Planning Board Review of Master Plan Updates	Planning Board
Mid-August	Deadline to file warrant petition articles for Special Town Meeting (if held)	Town Clerk

SEPTEMBER

DRAFT

Date	Event	Responsible Party
September 1	Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) due for final review	CIP Committee, Planning Board
Mid-September	Public Hearing on Proposed CIP	Planning Board
September 30	Fourth Quarterly Financial Review	Finance Director, Board of Selectmen

OCTOBER

Date	Event	Responsible Party
October 1	Final CIP Approved by Board of Selectmen	Board of Selectmen
October 15	Property Tax Rate Set	NH Department of Revenue Administration
October 30	Second Tax Bill Issued	Tax Collector

NOVEMBER

Date	Event	Responsible Party
November 1	Annual Review of Local Ordinances	Planning Board, Board of Selectmen
November 15	First Draft of Town Budget Due	Town Administrator
Mid-November	Legislative Bulletins & Updates Reviewed	Board of Selectmen
November 30	Budget Advisory Committee Finalizes Budget Recommendations	Budget Advisory Committee

DECEMBER

Date	Event	Responsible Party
December 1	Board of Selectmen Reviews Budget Proposal	Board of Selectmen

DRAFT

Date	Event	Responsible Party
December 15	Public Hearing on Proposed Budget	Board of Selectmen, Budget Advisory Committee
December 31	Final Budget Submission	Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator
December 31	Close of Fiscal Year	Town Administrator, Finance Director

Ongoing & Periodic Deadlines

Event	Responsible Party	Frequency
Selectmen's Meetings	Board of Selectmen	Bi-weekly
Planning Board Meetings	Planning Board	Monthly
Zoning Board of Adjustment Hearings	ZBA	As needed
Code Enforcement & Building Inspections	Code Enforcement Officer	Ongoing
Public Safety Training & Drills	Fire, Police, Emergency Management	Quarterly
Mutual Aid Review & Agreements	Emergency Management, Regional Partners	Annually

APPENDIX C

2024 LEGISLATIVE CHANGES INCORPORATED INTO THE CHARTER

1. Municipal Finance & Budgeting Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
SB 383 – Local Option Tax Cap (RSA 32:5-b)	Allows municipalities to adopt a property tax cap through Town Meeting vote. Can be fixed, percentage-based, or adjusted for inflation/population growth.	Article XII – Section 3.4
HB 1241 – Public Deposit Investment Pool (RSA 6:45, II)	Encourages municipalities to prioritize investments in NH-based financial institutions.	Article XII – Section 4.4
SB 499 – Disaster Relief Funding (RSA 4:47, 21-P:46)	Towns can request up to \$25,000 in state emergency funds per declared disaster.	Article XII – Section 6.2

2. Elections & Voting Procedure Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
SB 70 – Voter Verification for Absentee Ballots (RSA 657:22)	Strengthens verification process for absentee ballots by requiring signature matching.	Article X – Section 5.3
HB 463 – Election Official Training Requirements (RSA 652:14)	Mandates annual training for election officials on ballot handling and voter verification.	Article X – Section 7.4

3. Land Use, Zoning & Development Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
SB 400 – Housing & Growth Management Act (RSA 674:58-61)	Requires municipalities to provide reasonable opportunities for workforce housing and prohibits exclusionary zoning practices.	Article XIX – Section 5.2
HB 312 – Planning Board Review Timelines (RSA 676:4)	Shortens deadline for Planning Board review of completed applications to 30 days.	Article XIX – Section 3.1
SB 145 – Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) Expansion (RSA 674:72)	Requires zoning ordinances to allow at least two ADUs per lot in residential zones.	Article XIX – Section 2.4

4. Public Safety & Emergency Management Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
HB 278 – Mutual Aid Agreements (RSA 154:30-a)	Streamlines process for intermunicipal emergency service agreements.	Article XVI – Section 6.1
SB 415 – Public Health Emergency Preparedness (RSA 21-P:47)	Strengthens local response to public health crises, including mandatory pandemic planning.	Article XVII – Section 5.1

5. Digital Governance & Cybersecurity Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
HB 215 – Municipal Cybersecurity Requirements (RSA 91-A:10)	Requires towns to implement cybersecurity protocols for protecting municipal data and digital records.	Article XXIV – Section 3.2
SB 219 – Remote Access to Public Meetings (RSA 91-A:2, III)	Mandates remote public access to municipal meetings when feasible.	Article III – Section 3.4

6. Environmental Stewardship & Sustainability Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
SB 267 – Renewable Energy Incentives (RSA 362-F:6)	Expands municipal eligibility for state grants supporting renewable energy projects.	Article XXII – Section 4.3
HB 524 – Wetlands Protection Act (RSA 482-A:3)	Requires stricter oversight on wetland impact for new developments.	Article XXII – Section 2.2

7. State Legislation Advocacy & Intergovernmental Cooperation Updates

Legislation	Summary of Change	Charter Article & Section
HB 510 – Municipal Advocacy Guidelines (RSA 15:5-6)	Clarifies rules for municipalities engaging in advocacy efforts at the state level.	Article XXVII – Section 4.1
SB 301 – Regional Infrastructure Coordination (RSA 36:45)	Encourages inter-municipal agreements for shared infrastructure projects.	Article XXVI – Section 3.1

APPENDIX D

TOWN ORGANIZATIONAL CHART & DEPARTMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Organizational Structure Overview

The Town of Rindge operates under a Town Meeting-Selectmen-Town Administrator form of government, where:

1. The Legislative Body is the Town Meeting, where registered voters approve budgets, ordinances, and policies.
2. The Executive Body is the Board of Selectmen, responsible for town governance, financial oversight, and policy implementation.
3. The Administrative Leadership is provided by the Town Administrator, who serves as the chief facilitator of town operations but does not have direct authority over departments or personnel.
4. Elected and Appointed Officials manage specific town functions, including financial operations, land use planning, public safety, and community services.

2. Organizational Chart (Text-Based Representation)

A. Legislative Branch

1. **Town Meeting (Registered Voters of Rindge)**
 - a. Approves town budgets and expenditures
 - b. Votes on warrant articles and town policies
 - c. Elects Selectmen and other officials

B. Executive Branch

1. **Board of Selectmen (3 Members, Elected by Residents)**
 - a. Implements policies and oversees municipal operations
 - b. Serves as the town's chief financial authority (RSA 41:9)
 - c. Appoints the Town Administrator and various officials
 - d. Approves town expenditures, contracts, and agreements
 - e. Represents the town in regional, state, and intergovernmental matters
2. **Town Administrator (Appointed by Selectmen)**
 - a. Coordinates town operations and administrative processes
 - b. Facilitates budget preparation with the Selectmen and Finance Department
 - c. Supports the Board of Selectmen by researching policy issues and implementing board directives

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- d. Assists in the execution of town projects and initiatives

C. Administrative Departments & Officials

Department / Office	Key Responsibilities	Appointed/Elected By
Town Clerk	Maintains town records, oversees elections, issues licenses	Elected
Town Treasurer	Manages town funds, disbursements, and financial reporting	Elected
Tax Collector	Collects property taxes, maintains tax records	Elected
Finance Director	Manages financial planning, accounting, and audits	Appointed by Selectmen
Public Works Department	Road maintenance, stormwater management, waste collection, facility maintenance	Appointed
Police Department (Chief of Police)	Law enforcement, public safety, emergency response	Appointed
Fire & EMS Department (Fire Chief)	Fire suppression, emergency medical response, disaster preparedness	Internally Appointed
Code Enforcement Officer	Enforces building, zoning, and safety codes	Appointed
Planning & Zoning Department	Reviews land use applications, zoning compliance, site plan review	Appointed
Health Officer	Public health compliance, inspections, disease prevention	Appointed by Selectmen
Recreation Department	Parks and recreation programs, community events	Appointed
Library Director	Manages library operations, programs, and collections	Appointed by Library Trustees
Cemetery Trustees	Maintains public cemeteries and burial plots	Elected
Supervisors of the Checklist	Maintains voter registration records	Elected

D. Boards, Committees, and Commissions

Board / Commission	Function	Appointment / Election
Planning Board	Oversees land use planning and zoning regulations	Elected
Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)	Reviews zoning appeals and variances	Appointed
Conservation Commission	Manages natural resource conservation and environmental protection	Appointed
Budget Advisory Committee	Advises on town budgeting and fiscal policies	Appointed
Energy Committee	Promotes sustainable energy initiatives	Appointed
Library Trustees	Oversees public library policies and budgeting	Elected
Ethics Committee	Investigates ethics and conflict of interest concerns	Appointed
Economic Development Committee	Advises on business development and economic growth	Appointed

3. Detailed Responsibilities by Department & Office

A. Board of Selectmen

1. Serves as the town's executive body and policy-setting authority
2. Approves municipal budgets, expenditures, and financial planning
3. Hires and appoints the Town Administrator, department heads, and certain committee members
4. Represents the town in legal matters and intergovernmental relations
5. Implements and enforces town ordinances and policies

B. Town Administrator

1. Works at the direction of the Selectmen to implement policies and coordinate town operations
2. Develops the annual budget with input from department heads
3. Researches municipal policy issues and provides recommendations to the Selectmen
4. Manages town contracts and grant administration
5. Facilitates interdepartmental communication and efficiency

C. Public Safety Departments

1. **Police Department:** Provides law enforcement services, traffic enforcement, and public safety initiatives
2. **Fire & EMS Department:** Responds to fire emergencies, medical incidents, and disaster situations

D. Land Use & Code Enforcement

1. **Planning & Zoning:** Regulates land use, site development, and zoning compliance
2. **Code Enforcement Officer:** Enforces town zoning laws, building codes, and property maintenance regulations

E. Public Works & Infrastructure

1. **Highway & Roads:** Maintains town roads, bridges, and drainage systems
2. **Waste & Recycling:** Oversees municipal trash collection and recycling programs
3. **Facilities Maintenance:** Manages town-owned buildings and public spaces

F. Financial & Administrative Offices

1. **Finance Director:** Manages town accounting, budgeting, and financial audits
2. **Town Clerk:** Maintains town records, issues official licenses, and oversees elections
3. **Tax Collector:** Collects and processes property taxes and assessments
4. **Treasurer:** Oversees municipal investments and financial disbursements

G. Community & Social Services

1. **Recreation Department:** Plans and manages recreational programs and events
2. **Library Services:** Provides public access to books, resources, and community programs
3. **Health Officer:** Ensures public health compliance, including inspections and disease control

H. Boards & Commissions

1. **Planning Board:** Develops and oversees the Master Plan and land use regulations
2. **Conservation Commission:** Promotes environmental stewardship and natural resource protection
3. **Budget Advisory Committee:** Reviews and provides recommendations on the municipal budget

APPENDIX E

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AND REGIONAL COOPERATION AGREEMENTS

1. Purpose

This appendix outlines the formal intergovernmental agreements, regional partnerships, and cooperative initiatives in which the Town of Rindge participates. These agreements enhance municipal services, promote shared resources, and ensure compliance with state and federal cooperative policies.

2. Key Intergovernmental Agreements & Regional Partnerships

Agreement / Partnership	Participating Entities	Purpose / Benefit to Rindge	Governing RSA / Regulation
Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District Agreement	Town of Rindge, Town of Jaffrey, NH Dept. of Education	Joint administration and funding of public schools, shared education services	RSA 195:1 (School Districts)
Mutual Aid Agreement for Fire & Emergency Services	Rindge Fire Dept., Jaffrey Fire Dept., Troy Fire Dept., Cheshire County Emergency Services	Shared fire, EMS, and hazardous materials response capabilities	RSA 154:24 (Fire Mutual Aid)
Regional Police Assistance Compact	Rindge Police Dept., Cheshire County Sheriff's Office, Jaffrey, Fitzwilliam, Troy	Interagency law enforcement support, emergency response collaboration	RSA 105:13 (Police Mutual Aid)
Monadnock Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) Membership	Town of Rindge, Cheshire & Hillsborough County municipalities	Regional land use planning, infrastructure coordination, environmental protection	RSA 36:45 (Regional Planning Commissions)
Public Works & Road Maintenance Shared Services	Rindge Public Works Dept., Jaffrey DPW, Fitzwilliam DPW	Equipment sharing, joint road maintenance, winter plowing agreements	RSA 231:81-a (Intermunicipal Highway Cooperation)
Regional Solid Waste Disposal & Recycling Agreement	Rindge Transfer Station, Monadnock Regional Waste Management District	Shared landfill access, recycling, hazardous waste disposal	RSA 53-B (Solid Waste Districts)

Agreement / Partnership	Participating Entities	Purpose / Benefit to Rindge	Governing RSA / Regulation
Broadband Expansion & Telecommunications Partnership	Town of Rindge, NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC), private internet providers	Broadband access expansion, rural internet service development	RSA 33:3-g (Municipal Broadband Bonds)
Water Resource Protection & Conservation Partnership	Rindge Conservation Commission, NH DES, local watershed groups	Groundwater and surface water protection initiatives, stormwater management	RSA 482-A (Wetlands Protection)
Emergency Management & Disaster Response Coordination	Rindge Emergency Management, NH HSEM, FEMA, Cheshire County Emergency Ops	Disaster response planning, mutual aid, emergency funding access	RSA 21-P:39 (Emergency Management)

3. Oversight & Compliance

1. The Board of Selectmen shall review and update intergovernmental agreements annually and ensure compliance with state and federal regulations.
2. The Town Administrator shall facilitate communication between Rindge and regional/state agencies regarding cooperative agreements.
3. Any new agreements or amendments to existing agreements must be approved by the Board of Selectmen and, when necessary, voted on at Town Meeting.
4. Any financial commitments under these agreements must be incorporated into the annual municipal budget (Article XII).

4. Public Access to Agreements

1. Copies of intergovernmental agreements shall be made available to the public upon request at the Town Clerk's Office.
2. A summary of these agreements shall be published annually in the Town Report.

APPENDIX E

MUNICIPAL POLICIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

1. Purpose

This appendix provides an organized reference to the formal policies, administrative procedures, and operational guidelines governing the Town of Rindge. These policies ensure transparency, efficiency, and compliance with state and federal laws while supporting the effective administration of municipal services.

2. Comprehensive List of Municipal Policies & Procedures

Policy / Procedure	Governing Authority	Purpose / Description	Public Access
Board of Selectmen Rules of Procedure	RSA 41:8, RSA 91-A	Establishes meeting procedures, voting rules, public participation guidelines	Available at Town Clerk's Office & Town Website
Town Administrator Administrative Procedures	RSA 37:6	Defines duties, reporting structure, and operational authority of the Town Administrator	Internal Document, Available upon Request
Financial Management & Budget Policies	RSA 32, RSA 41:9	Establishes financial reporting, expenditure approvals, and procurement policies	Included in Annual Budget Report
Right-to-Know Law (Public Records Access Policy)	RSA 91-A	Outlines procedures for public access to town records and meeting minutes	Publicly Available at Town Clerk's Office & Website
Ethics & Conflict of Interest Policy	RSA 31:39-a	Defines ethical standards, disclosure requirements, and conflict resolution procedures	Public Document, Town Website
Personnel & Employment Policies	NH Labor Laws, RSA 273	Establishes hiring, termination, benefits, and employee conduct standards	Internal HR Document, Available Upon Request
Code Enforcement & Zoning Compliance Procedures	RSA 676	Details enforcement of zoning ordinances, land use regulations, and penalties	Available at Town Hall, Planning Office
Emergency Management Plan	RSA 21-P:39	Establishes town-wide disaster response, coordination with state & federal agencies	Available at Town Hall, Emergency Management Office

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Policy / Procedure	Governing Authority	Purpose / Description	Public Access
Procurement & Purchasing Policy	RSA 31:3	Outlines procedures for municipal purchasing, bidding, and contract approvals	Internal Finance Document, Available Upon Request
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Guidelines	RSA 674:5-8	Defines long-term planning and funding for major town infrastructure projects	Available in Planning Department
Public Works & Road Maintenance Policy	RSA 231	Establishes procedures for road repairs, snow removal, and municipal infrastructure maintenance	Publicly Available at DPW Office
Town Social Media & Digital Communications Policy	RSA 91-A, RSA 33-A	Defines acceptable use of town digital platforms, public information sharing rules	Available at Town Clerk's Office & Website
Municipal Energy & Sustainability Policies	RSA 53-E	Outlines community energy aggregation programs and sustainability initiatives	Available in Town Report & Website
Law Enforcement & Public Safety Procedures	RSA 105, RSA 154	Establishes police and fire department operational policies, mutual aid agreements	Internal Departmental Policy, Available Upon Request
Waste Management & Recycling Policies	RSA 149-M	Defines guidelines for solid waste disposal, recycling, and hazardous waste management	Available at Town Transfer Station & Website
Water & Sewer Regulations	RSA 485	Governs municipal water service, conservation measures, and wastewater treatment	Available at Town Clerk's Office
Public Meeting & Hearing Procedures	RSA 40, RSA 675	Defines notification requirements, quorum rules, and procedures for public hearings	Available on Town Website & Clerk's Office

3. Compliance & Updates

1. The Board of Selectmen shall ensure all policies remain current, legally compliant, and publicly accessible.
2. The Town Administrator shall oversee administrative compliance and coordinate updates with department heads.

3. Annual Review Process:
 - a. Each municipal department must review and update applicable policies annually.
 - b. Any policy amendments must be reviewed and approved by the Board of Selectmen.
4. The most recent versions of all public policies shall be available at:
 - a. Town Clerk's Office
 - b. Municipal Website
 - c. Annual Town Report (where applicable)

APPENDIX F

MUNICIPAL FORMS, APPLICATIONS, AND PERMITS

1. Purpose

This appendix provides a comprehensive list of municipal forms, applications, and permits required for town services, zoning compliance, licensing, and regulatory approvals. It ensures that residents and businesses have easy access to necessary documents for conducting official transactions with the town.

2. Comprehensive List of Municipal Forms & Applications

Form / Permit	Purpose / Description	Department Responsible	Public Access Location
Building Permit Application	Required for construction, renovation, and structural modifications	Code Enforcement / Building Inspector	Town Hall, Website
Driveway Permit	Required for new driveway installations and modifications	Public Works Department	DPW Office, Website
Zoning Variance & Special Exception Application	Requests for relief from zoning ordinances	Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)	Planning & Zoning Office, Website
Site Plan Review Application	Required for new commercial and major residential developments	Planning Board	Planning Department, Website
Subdivision Application	Required for dividing land into multiple lots	Planning Board	Planning Department, Website
Sign Permit	Required for new business signage	Code Enforcement	Town Hall, Website
Business Registration Form	Required for local business licensing and compliance	Town Clerk's Office	Town Hall, Website
Dog License Application	Mandatory for pet registration	Town Clerk's Office	Town Hall, Website
Marriage License Application	Official license for marriages performed in Rindge	Town Clerk's Office	Town Hall
Birth/Death Certificate Request	Provides certified copies of vital records	Town Clerk's Office	Town Hall, Website

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Form / Permit	Purpose / Description	Department Responsible	Public Access Location
Voter Registration Form	Required for new voter registration	Supervisors of the Checklist	Town Clerk's Office, Website
Absentee Ballot Request	Allows voters to request an absentee ballot	Town Clerk's Office	Town Hall, Website
Property Tax Abatement Application	Requests for tax relief due to assessment errors	Board of Selectmen / Assessing Department	Town Hall, Website
Current Use & Land Use Change Tax Application	Landowners apply for current use tax status or changes	Assessing Department	Town Hall, Website
Excavation Permit	Required for large-scale excavation and earth-moving activities	Public Works & Code Enforcement	DPW Office, Website
Blasting Permit	Required for any blasting operations within town limits	Fire Department	Fire Department, Website
Alcohol Permit for Public Events	Required for serving alcohol at town-permitted events	Board of Selectmen	Town Hall, Website
Hawkers & Peddlers License	Required for street vendors and mobile businesses	Town Clerk's Office	Town Hall, Website
Public Assembly Permit	Required for large public gatherings and events	Police Department	Town Hall, Website
Fireworks Display Permit	Required for fireworks shows and special events	Fire Department	Fire Department, Website
Demolition Permit	Required before demolishing any structures	Code Enforcement	Town Hall, Website
Burn Permit	Required for outdoor burning activities	Fire Department	Fire Station, Website
Recreation Program Registration Forms	Required for town-sponsored recreational programs	Recreation Department	Rec Office, Website
Facility Use & Rental Agreement	Required for renting town-owned buildings and spaces	Board of Selectmen / Town Office	Town Hall, Website

3. Compliance & Updates

1. The Town Clerk's Office shall maintain and update all public forms annually.
2. All municipal departments are responsible for ensuring their respective forms comply with state laws and town regulations.
3. Public Access & Availability:
 - a. Most forms are available online on the Town Website.
 - b. Paper copies may be obtained at Town Hall or the relevant department office.
 - c. Forms that require in-person submission shall be clearly labeled with instructions.
4. Electronic Submission & Processing:
 - a. The town shall continue to implement digital form submission where feasible to improve efficiency.
 - b. Forms that require original signatures or notarization will continue to require in-person submission.

APPENDIX G

PUBLIC MEETING AND HEARING SCHEDULE

1. Purpose

This appendix provides a structured schedule of required public meetings and hearings that must be held by the Town of Rindge's governing bodies, boards, and commissions. It ensures compliance with state laws (RSA 91-A:2, Open Meetings Law) and enhances public awareness and participation in local governance.

2. Annual Public Meeting & Hearing Schedule

Meeting / Hearing	Governing Body	Frequency / Date	Legal Reference	Public Notice Requirement
Town Meeting (Deliberative Session - SB2)	Legislative Body (Voters)	1st Session: Early February	RSA 40, RSA 39, RSA 49-D	14-day public notice
Town Meeting (Official Ballot Voting - SB2)	Legislative Body (Voters)	2nd Tuesday in March	RSA 40:13	14-day public notice
Board of Selectmen Regular Meetings	Board of Selectmen	Bi-weekly (1st & 3rd Wednesdays)	RSA 41:8, RSA 91-A	24-hour public posting
Planning Board Meetings	Planning Board	Monthly (3rd Monday)	RSA 673:1, RSA 674	10-day notice for hearings
Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) Hearings	ZBA	Monthly (as needed)	RSA 676:7	10-day notice, abutter notification
Budget Advisory Committee Meetings	Budget Committee	Oct - Dec (Weekly), Additional As Needed	RSA 32	24-hour notice
Public Budget Hearing	Board of Selectmen, Budget Committee	January (before deliberative session)	RSA 32:5	7-day public notice
Public Hearing on Bonded Debt	Board of Selectmen	Before issuing municipal bonds	RSA 33:3	7-day notice, published notice
Public Hearing for Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)	Planning Board	Annually in Fall	RSA 674:5	7-day notice

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Meeting / Hearing	Governing Body	Frequency / Date	Legal Reference	Public Notice Requirement
School Budget & Annual Meeting (Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District)	School Board / Voters	Deliberative Session: February, Ballot Vote: March	RSA 195	14-day public notice
Police & Fire Department Public Safety Forums	Public Safety Departments	Annually in Fall	Internal Policy	7-day notice
Public Hearing on Land Use Ordinances & Zoning Amendments	Planning Board	Annually (before March vote)	RSA 675:7	10-day notice
Public Hearing on Utility & Road Projects	Public Works Department	As needed before major projects	RSA 231:158	10-day notice
Public Hearing on Conservation & Environmental Policies	Conservation Commission	Annually in Spring	RSA 36-A	10-day notice
Public Hearing on Town Fees & Licensing Updates	Board of Selectmen	As needed	RSA 41:9-a	7-day notice
Public Hearing for Property Tax Abatements	Board of Selectmen / Assessing Department	Annually in Spring	RSA 76:16	7-day notice
Public Hearings for State & Federal Grant Applications	Board of Selectmen	As required by grant guidelines	RSA 31:95-b	10-day notice
Annual Review of Town Ordinances & Policies	Board of Selectmen	Annually in December	RSA 41	7-day notice
Emergency Management & Preparedness Public Forum	Emergency Management Team	Annually in Fall	RSA 21-P:39	7-day notice

3. Public Notice & Accessibility Requirements

1. Meeting Notices & Agenda Posting:

- a. All public meeting notices must be posted at least 24 hours in advance, except emergency meetings (RSA 91-A:2).

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- b. Notices must be posted at Town Hall, the Town Website, and other publicly accessible locations.
- 2. Public Hearings:
 - a. Require written notice to abutters when applicable (RSA 676:7).
 - b. Must be published in a newspaper of general circulation when required by law.
- 3. Meeting Records & Minutes:
 - a. Meeting minutes must be available to the public within 5 business days (RSA 91-A:4).
 - b. All public hearing records must be kept on file and accessible for at least 5 years.

APPENDIX I

OFFICIAL TOWN POSITIONS, TERMS, AND APPOINTMENT AUTHORITIES

1. Purpose

This appendix provides a comprehensive reference for all elected and appointed town positions, their respective terms of office, and appointment authorities. It ensures clarity in municipal governance, enhances public awareness, and ensures compliance with RSA 41 (Selectmen), RSA 673 (Land Use Boards), and RSA 91-A (Transparency Laws).

2. Elected & Appointed Officials of the Town of Rindge

A. Elected Positions

Position	Number of Seats	Term Length	Elected By	Legal Reference
Board of Selectmen	3 Members	3 Years (staggered)	Town Voters	RSA 41:8
Town Clerk / Tax Collector	1	3 Years	Town Voters	RSA 41:16
Moderator	1	2 Years	Town Voters	RSA 40:4
Treasurer	1	3 Years	Town Voters	RSA 41:29
Supervisors of the Checklist	3	6 Years (staggered)	Town Voters	RSA 654:12
Library Trustees	3	3 Years (staggered)	Town Voters	RSA 202-A:6
Budget Advisory Committee	6	3 Years (staggered)	Town Voters	RSA 32:15
Cemetery Trustees	3	3 Years (staggered)	Town Voters	RSA 289:6
Trustees of the Trust Fund	3	3 Years (staggered)	Town Voters	RSA 31:22

B. Appointed Positions & Boards

Position / Board	Number of Seats	Term Length	Appointing Authority	Legal Reference
Town Administrator	1	Indefinite (Contract-Based)	Board of Selectmen	RSA 37
Police Chief	1	Indefinite (Per Contract)	Board of Selectmen	RSA 41:47
Fire Chief	1	Indefinite (Per Internal Selection & Contract)	Fire Department / BOS (Budget Oversight)	RSA 154:1

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Position / Board	Number of Seats	Term Length	Appointing Authority	Legal Reference
Emergency Management Director	1	Indefinite	Board of Selectmen	RSA 21-P:39
Public Works Director	1	Indefinite	Board of Selectmen	RSA 231
Finance Director	1	Indefinite	Board of Selectmen	Internal Policy
Code Enforcement Officer	1	Indefinite	Board of Selectmen	RSA 676
Health Officer	1	3 Years	Appointed by BOS & Confirmed by State	RSA 128:1
Planning Board	5 Members	3 Years (staggered)	Appointed by BOS	RSA 673:1
Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA)	5 Members	3 Years (staggered)	Appointed by BOS	RSA 673:3
Conservation Commission	5 Members	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	RSA 36-A
Heritage Commission	5 Members	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	RSA 673:4-a
Recreation Committee	5 Members	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	RSA 35-B
Economic Development Committee	Variable	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	Internal Policy
Energy Committee	Variable	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	Internal Policy
Ethics Committee	Variable	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	RSA 31:39-a
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Committee	Variable	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	RSA 674:5
Safety Committee	Variable	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	RSA 281-A
Digital Governance & Cybersecurity Committee	Variable	3 Years	Appointed by BOS	Internal Policy

3. Appointment & Removal Process

1. Elected Officials: Serve for their full terms unless removed for cause under RSA provisions (e.g., malfeasance, resignation).

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2. Appointed Officials:
 - a. Serve at the discretion of the Board of Selectmen, unless otherwise specified by law.
 - b. The Board may remove appointed officials for cause (RSA 41:48).
 - c. The Fire Chief & Library Director operate independently per RSA 154:2 & RSA 202-A:6 but remain financially accountable to the Selectmen.
3. Board Vacancies: If a vacancy occurs, the Board of Selectmen shall appoint a replacement until the next regular election (RSA 669:61).

APPENDIX J

MUNICIPAL POLICIES, ORDINANCES, AND REGULATIONS

1. Purpose

This appendix provides a comprehensive reference to all municipal policies, ordinances, and regulations that govern the Town of Rindge. It ensures transparency, compliance with state and federal law, and easy access to governing documents for residents, businesses, and town officials.

2. Comprehensive List of Municipal Policies & Regulations

A. General Town Policies

Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Code of Ethics Policy	Establishes ethical standards for town officials and employees	RSA 31:39-a
Conflict of Interest Policy	Requires disclosure and recusal for financial conflicts	RSA 31:39-a
Public Meeting Rules & Procedures	Defines conduct and protocol for public meetings	RSA 91-A
Civility Policy	Establishes rules for respectful engagement in town affairs	Internal Policy
Records Retention & Public Access Policy	Ensures public access to town records and archives	RSA 91-A:4
Digital Governance & Cybersecurity Policy	Outlines protocols for online services and data security	Internal Policy
Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)	Town's official emergency response framework	RSA 21-P:39

B. Financial & Budgetary Policies

Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Municipal Budget Policy	Establishes the process for annual budgeting	RSA 32
Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Policy	Guides long-term municipal infrastructure planning	RSA 674:5

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Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Debt Management & Bonding Policy	Regulates borrowing and municipal bonds	RSA 33
Reserve & Emergency Fund Policy	Outlines conditions for accessing reserve funds	RSA 31:98-a
Procurement & Purchasing Policy	Sets procedures for municipal purchases	RSA 31:39
Tax Abatement & Assessment Policy	Defines property tax assessment and appeal processes	RSA 76:16
Investment & Trust Fund Policy	Governs municipal investment of funds	RSA 31:22

C. Land Use, Zoning, & Development Regulations

Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Zoning Ordinance	Establishes land use districts and permitted uses	RSA 674
Subdivision Regulations	Governs land subdivision and lot creation	RSA 674:35
Site Plan Review Regulations	Establishes requirements for commercial development	RSA 674:43
Wetlands & Environmental Protection Ordinance	Regulates development in environmentally sensitive areas	RSA 482-A
Blasting & Heavy Construction Regulations	Sets safety requirements for excavation and blasting	RSA 155-E
Excavation & Earth Removal Regulations	Governs sand, gravel, and mineral excavation	RSA 155-E
Driveway & Road Access Regulations	Defines construction standards for driveways and roads	RSA 236:13

D. Public Safety & Health Policies

Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Law Enforcement Policy	Defines police authority and community policing	RSA 105

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Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Fire Safety & Emergency Response Regulations	Establishes fire safety and emergency response protocols	RSA 154
Building & Property Maintenance Codes	Governs safety standards for buildings and properties	RSA 155-A
Health & Sanitation Ordinances	Regulates public health concerns, septic systems, and waste disposal	RSA 147
Noise & Nuisance Ordinance	Establishes noise limits and nuisance abatement procedures	RSA 31:39
Animal Control Ordinance	Regulates pet licensing, leash laws, and animal control	RSA 466
Traffic & Parking Regulations	Defines road safety, traffic enforcement, and parking rules	RSA 41:11
Hazard Mitigation Plan	Framework for reducing risk from natural disasters	RSA 21-P

E. Community Services & Governance Policies

Policy / Ordinance	Description	Legal Reference
Recreation & Parks Policy	Governs public use of parks and recreational facilities	RSA 35-B
Cemetery Rules & Regulations	Defines operation and maintenance of town cemeteries	RSA 289
Library Governance Policy	Establishes policies for the town library	RSA 202-A
Economic Development Policy	Guides town efforts to support local businesses	Internal Policy
Energy & Sustainability Policy	Outlines strategies for renewable energy and conservation	RSA 38
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy	Ensures fair treatment and equal access to town services	RSA 354-A

3. Compliance & Review

1. Ordinance Amendments & Updates:
 - a. The Planning Board and Board of Selectmen shall review municipal ordinances annually and recommend updates as needed.
 - b. Any amendments must follow the public hearing and approval process (RSA 675:6).
2. Public Access to Policies:
 - a. All policies and ordinances shall be available online and in hard copy at Town Hall.
 - b. The town shall maintain a Municipal Codebook containing all active ordinances.
3. Enforcement & Penalties:
 - a. Violations of town ordinances shall be enforced by designated officials and may be subject to fines or penalties as outlined in RSA 31:39.

APPENDIX K**MUNICIPAL CONTRACTS, AGREEMENTS, AND MEMORANDUMS OF UNDERSTANDING****1. Purpose**

This appendix provides a detailed reference to all active municipal contracts, agreements, and memorandums of understanding (MOUs) involving the Town of Rindge. It ensures transparency, accountability, and compliance with applicable laws, including RSA 31:39 (Municipal Agreements), RSA 53-A (Intergovernmental Agreements), and RSA 33 (Municipal Finance Act).

2. Municipal Contracts & Agreements**A. Intermunicipal & Regional Agreements**

Agreement / Contract	Parties Involved	Purpose	Legal Reference	Renewal Date
Mutual Aid Agreement (Police, Fire, EMS)	Neighboring Towns, NH State	Provides shared emergency services	RSA 154:24, RSA 105:13	Ongoing
Regional Emergency Management Plan	Cheshire County, NH HSEM	Disaster response coordination	RSA 21-P:39	Reviewed Annually
Jaffrey-Rindge Cooperative School District Agreement	Jaffrey, NH	Governs joint school district operations	RSA 195:1	Reviewed Annually
Franklin Pierce University MOU	Franklin Pierce University	Collaboration on civic engagement, public safety, and town resources	Internal MOU	2025
Regional Waste Management Agreement	Monadnock Region Towns	Joint solid waste & recycling services	RSA 53-A	2026
Broadband Infrastructure Expansion Agreement	Private ISPs, Cheshire County	Expands rural broadband access	RSA 38:22	2027
Shared Public Works & Snow Removal Services	Neighboring Towns	Coordinates winter road maintenance	RSA 231	2026

B. State & Federal Agreements

Agreement / Contract	Agency	Purpose	Legal Reference	Renewal Date
NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT) Road Maintenance Contract	NHDOT	Provides state-funded road maintenance	RSA 231	2026
NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Water Management Permit	NHDES	Regulates town water use & quality	RSA 485-A	2027
FEMA Emergency Preparedness Grant	FEMA	Federal funding for disaster preparedness	RSA 21-P:39	Ongoing
NH Department of Safety (Homeland Security Grants)	NH DOS	Supports town emergency response infrastructure	RSA 21-P	Ongoing
State Aid Highway Program	NHDOT	Funding for town roads & bridges	RSA 235:23	2028

C. Local Vendor & Service Contracts

Vendor / Contractor	Service Provided	Contract Term	Renewal Date
Municipal Auditing Firm	Annual financial audit	3 Years	2025
Solid Waste Disposal Company	Trash & recycling collection	5 Years	2027
IT & Cybersecurity Provider	Digital security & town website	3 Years	2026
Town Hall Cleaning Services	Janitorial services	2 Years	2025
Local Snow Plowing Contractor	Winter road clearing	Seasonal	2025

3. Compliance & Review

1. Contract & MOU Renewal Process:
 - a. The Board of Selectmen shall review all agreements annually and authorize renewals or renegotiations as needed.

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- b. Any contract exceeding \$50,000 in value must be publicly posted before approval (RSA 31:39-c).
- 2. Public Access & Record-Keeping:
 - a. All active MOUs and contracts shall be stored in the Town Clerk's Office and available for public review per RSA 91-A (Right-to-Know Law).
 - b. The town shall publish a summary of key agreements on its website to enhance public awareness.

APPENDIX L

MUNICIPAL FEES, FINES, AND PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

1. Purpose

This appendix provides a detailed breakdown of municipal fees, fines, and permit requirements to ensure transparency, consistency, and compliance with applicable town ordinances and state laws. It serves as a quick reference for residents, businesses, and officials regarding the costs associated with municipal services and regulatory compliance.

2. Schedule of Fees

A. General Administrative Fees

Service / Document	Fee	Legal Reference
Certified Copies (Birth, Death, Marriage)	\$15 for first copy, \$10 for additional	RSA 5-C:9
Notary Public Services	\$5 per document	Internal Policy
Returned Check Fee	\$25 per occurrence	RSA 80:56
Photocopies of Public Records	\$0.50 per page	RSA 91-A

B. Building, Zoning, and Land Use Fees

Permit / Service	Fee	Legal Reference
Building Permit (Residential)	\$100 + \$0.30 per sq. ft.	RSA 676:13
Building Permit (Commercial)	\$250 + \$0.50 per sq. ft.	RSA 676:13
Driveway Permit	\$50	RSA 236:13
Excavation Permit	\$200	RSA 155-E
Septic System Permit Review	\$75	RSA 485-A
Sign Permit	\$25	Internal Policy
Variance / Special Exception	\$150	RSA 676:5

C. Public Safety Fees

Service	Fee	Legal Reference
Fire Inspection (New Construction)	\$100	RSA 153:10-a
Fireworks Display Permit	\$50	RSA 160-B
Police Report Copy	\$25	RSA 91-A
Accident Report Copy	\$15	Internal Policy
Concealed Carry Permit	\$10	RSA 159:6

D. Recreation and Facility Use Fees

Facility / Service	Fee	Legal Reference
Pavilion Rental (Resident)	\$50 per day	Internal Policy
Pavilion Rental (Non-Resident)	\$100 per day	Internal Policy
Sports Field Use Fee	\$25 per event	Internal Policy
Recreation Program Fee	Varies by Program	Internal Policy

3. Schedule of Fines & Penalties

A. Property Maintenance & Zoning Violations

Violation	Fine	Legal Reference
Failure to Obtain Building Permit	\$250 per offense	RSA 676:17
Zoning Ordinance Violation	\$275 per day	RSA 676:17-a
Illegal Dumping	\$500 per offense	RSA 147:1

B. Public Safety & Traffic Violations

Violation	Fine	Legal Reference
Fire Code Violation	\$100 - \$500	RSA 153:10-a
Illegal Fireworks Use	\$200	RSA 160-B

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Violation	Fine	Legal Reference
Speeding (Town Road)	\$50 - \$300 (Based on MPH Over Limit)	RSA 265:60
Parking Violation	\$25 - \$50	Internal Policy
Noise Ordinance Violation	\$100 per offense	Internal Policy

4. Permit & Fee Adjustment Process

1. Annual Review of Fees & Fines
 - a. The Board of Selectmen shall review the town's fee structure annually and adjust amounts as necessary to reflect municipal costs and inflation.
 - b. Any adjustments require a public hearing and majority vote of the Selectmen.
2. Public Notice & Accessibility
 - a. All fees, fines, and permits shall be posted on the town website and made available at Town Hall.

APPENDIX M

MUNICIPAL PROCUREMENT AND PURCHASING POLICY

1. Purpose

This appendix establishes procurement and purchasing procedures to ensure that the Town of Rindge follows ethical, efficient, and legally compliant purchasing practices. The policy applies to all municipal departments, boards, and officials involved in acquiring goods, services, and contracts.

This policy follows RSA 31:39 (Selectmen's Authority), RSA 33 (Municipal Finance Act), and RSA 95 (Ethical Standards in Government Contracting).

2. Procurement Thresholds and Approval Requirements

Procurement Level	Requirement	Approval Authority	Legal Reference
Purchases under \$5,000	Department discretion; quotes recommended	Department Head	Internal Policy
Purchases \$5,000 - \$25,000	Three written quotes required	Town Administrator	RSA 31:39
Purchases over \$25,000	Formal bid process (RFP/RFQ) required	Board of Selectmen	RSA 31:39-b
Emergency Purchases	Selectmen may approve bypassing bid process for urgent needs	Board of Selectmen	RSA 32:11

1. Local Vendor Preference: Whenever possible, the town will prioritize using local businesses and suppliers.
2. Ethical Purchasing Standards: No town official shall have a personal financial interest in any contract per RSA 95:1.

3. Competitive Bidding & Request for Proposals (RFPs)

1. Bidding Process
 - a. Purchases over \$25,000 require a competitive bidding process, with bids publicly advertised for at least two weeks.
 - b. Bids must be submitted in writing and reviewed by the Town Administrator and Board of Selectmen.
2. Bid Evaluation Criteria
 - a. Cost-effectiveness and total lifecycle cost.
 - b. Compliance with town requirements and specifications.
 - c. Vendor qualifications and past performance.

- d. Ability to meet the town's schedule.
- 3. Contract Awarding
 - a. The Board of Selectmen has final approval over bid awards.
 - b. The town is not required to select the lowest bid if another vendor is deemed more suitable.

4. Exceptions & Special Procurement Rules

- 1. Sole Source Procurement (*RSA 31:39-e*)
 - a. If only one qualified vendor exists, a contract may be awarded without bidding.
 - b. The Board of Selectmen must approve sole-source contracts and justify them in writing.
- 2. State & Federal Cooperative Purchasing

The town may use state contracts or cooperative purchasing agreements with other municipalities to secure bulk pricing.

- 3. Grants & Special Funding Procurement

Purchases using state/federal grants must comply with applicable grant procurement guidelines.

5. Conflict of Interest & Ethical Standards

- 1. Prohibited Conflicts of Interest
 - a. No municipal official or employee may have a financial interest in any town contract (*RSA 95:1*).
 - b. Officials with a potential conflict must recuse themselves from contract decisions.
- 2. Disclosure of Relationships
 - a. Any personal or business relationships between vendors and town officials must be disclosed in writing.

6. Contract Management & Oversight

Contract Type	Oversight Responsibility	Reporting Requirements
Public Works & Infrastructure	Public Works Director	Quarterly Reports to Selectmen
Professional Services	Town Administrator	Annual Contract Review
IT & Cybersecurity	IT Manager / Selectmen	Security Compliance Reports
Emergency Services Contracts	Fire Chief / Police Chief	Annual Performance Review

- 1. Renewal & Review Process:
 - a. Multi-year contracts require an annual review and performance assessment before renewal.

- b. Contracts over \$50,000 must be publicly posted before approval.

7. Record-Keeping & Public Transparency

1. All procurement records must be retained for at least 7 years per RSA 33-A (Municipal Records Retention).
2. All awarded contracts and bids shall be posted on the town website for transparency.

