

**RHINECLIFF
VOLUNTEER FIRE
COMPANY INC.**

BY-LAWS

**APRIL 1997
Revised 2001,12/2009,9/2011
Latest Revision 02/2021**

ARTICLE 1. Name

The name of this organization shall be: The Rhinecliff Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.

ARTICLE 2. Objectives

The objectives of this organization shall be:

- A. To provide a full measure of protection of life and property against fire and/or other public emergencies.
- B. To train its members in matters pertaining to firefighting and firefighting equipment,.
- C. To require all new members to complete within two (2) years of joining, or when classes are available, the Firefighter I course and/or Basic Exterior Fire Operations course offered by New York State. Any new member, who has previously completed FFI or the equivalent, will not be required to take FFI again. Members that participate exclusively in the rescue squad and have not taken the course will be prohibited from firefighting.
- D. To require all of its members to complete on an annual basis, O.S.H.A. requirements for safety. Annual physicals shall be offered and taken based on the OSHA required time frames.
- E. To bring the aims of this organization to the attention of the community.
- F. To educate the community in the need for the prevention of fire.
- G. To cooperate with other organizations and individuals in their efforts to improve firefighting or the handling of firematic matters.
- H. The Fire Company's fiscal year shall run from January to December.

ARTICLE 3. Types of membership: Associate member, Active member, Junior member, Active life member, Life member and Exempt member.

Section 1. Active and Associate Members

- A. Membership shall be open to any citizen of the United States over 16 years of age and of good moral character. Newly elected members must attend at least six (6) regular meetings and twelve drills (12) during the probationary period to remain an active member. An exception may be made to accommodate work or school obligations, but only by recommendation of the line officers and approval at a meeting by vote of the membership.
- B. A member in good-standing shall be defined as a person who has paid their dues and has attended at least six (6) meetings in a year. All members shall enjoy the privileges of this organization.
- C. Any member in good standing who leaves the Company having given written notice shall be entitled on his or her return to reinstatement as a member of the district, provided he/she again gives the Company notice. The member shall retain time served prior to leaving the Company. If a member is a continuous member of another fire company after leaving the Rhinecliff Fire Company, he/she may retain up to five (5) years of the other company with written confirmation from the other company if they rejoin the Rhinecliff Fire Company.
- D. Active Fire Company membership & Rescue Squad membership is defined as a member who attends at least six (6) Company meetings and twelve (12) drills and 15% of total calls of the Fire Company, Rescue Squad, or a combination of fire and rescue squad calls.
- E. Active life member is a life member that attends at least 6 meetings a year.
- F. Associate members are defined as members not meeting the requirements of section D.

Section 2. Junior member

- A. Junior membership shall be open to anyone of good moral character 16 or 17 years of age.
- B. Upon the junior member reaching his/her 18th birthday he/she shall become a regular member.
- C. Junior members must submit a signed junior firefighter program form signed by a parent/guardian with their Company application.
- D. No person shall be a junior member without the written consent of a parent/guardian. Such consent shall continue until withdrawn. If withdrawn, membership shall immediately be terminated.

- E. Junior members shall attend three (3) Fire Company meetings and at least two (2) community events/fundraising events. Junior members are also encouraged to attend at least two (2) Fire Company drills or two Rescue Squad drills (or one of each) where he or she simply observes the activities taking place. Any junior member who does not meet these basic requirements within the year they join could result in termination from the Fire Company due to lack of interest/engagement in the Fire Company.

Section 3. Life and Exempt member

- A. A member must remain active for a period of five (5) years to become eligible for an exempt certificate.
- B. Life membership shall be open to any member of 25 years of cumulative service in good standing in the Rhinecliff Fire Company, including Rescue Squad and/or Ladies Auxiliary, or to any member who shall become disabled. Life membership shall be granted at any regular meeting by a majority vote of the members present.
- C. Life members shall remain on the membership list and enjoy the same privileges as members, and can be excused from participation in emergency operations and drills. They also shall be exempt from paying dues.

ARTICLE 4. Dues

- A. Members shall be required to pay dues of \$10.00/year, in advance of the annual December meeting.
- B. Failure to pay dues prior to the annual December meeting shall cause the member to automatically be terminated from the Company, and he/she shall be notified of the termination via certified, return-receipt mail by the Secretary. Once an individual is terminated, he or she must re-apply to the Fire Company as a non-member if he or she wishes to gain membership in the Fire Company again.
- C. Members enlisting in the U.S. military are excused from paying dues while enlisted, their membership shall continue. The member must submit a letter stating their enlistment to the fire company secretary for this section to become valid for that member. Upon the member's termination from the military the member must start to pay his/her dues at the following annual December meeting or the member's membership shall be terminated automatically.
- D. Dues must be paid prior to the call to order of the annual Dec. meeting, and dues are to be paid by the individual member, no exceptions. Each and every member can send in dues prior to the annual December meeting. It is expected that every member will have paid dues prior to the call to order. Payment after call to order will not be accepted.

ARTICLE 5. Election to Membership

- A. Applications for membership must be submitted in writing at a regular meeting with \$10.00 dues. If denied membership dues will be refunded.
- B. Following a satisfactory report by The Membership and Qualifications Committee, the candidate shall be elected by secret ballot to membership at the same regular meeting by a majority vote of the members present.
- C. All candidates shall be approved by the Fire Commissioners within 30 days after election to membership. If membership denied by the Fire Commissioners they shall notify the Fire Company Secretary and applicant of the denial.

ARTICLE 6. Officers

Section 1. Executive Officers shall be President, Vice Pres., Treasurer, Secretary and Board of Directors.

- A. To be eligible for an Executive Office a member must have attended at least six (6) meetings during the previous year. A member may be excused from this requirement due to sickness, work or school provided written notice is given to the membership and qualifications committee on a quarterly basis following the Fire Company's fiscal year.
- B. With the exception of the Treasurer and the Board of Directors, officers shall be elected for one year term.
- C. The Treasurer shall be elected for a term of three years.
- D. The Board of Directors shall each serve a term of three years; one Director shall be elected each year to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of the senior member of the board.
- E. No member shall hold more than one executive office at any one time. A company line officer may hold an executive office.

Section 2. Line officers shall be Chief, 1st Assistant Chief, 2nd Assistant Chief, Captain, 1st Lieutenant and 2nd Lieutenant

- A. To be eligible for a line office a member must meet the following requirements: the Chief must reside in Rhinecliff, the Town of Rhinebeck, or Red Hook. Other officers must reside in Rhinecliff, the Town of Rhinebeck, or Red Hook.
- B. Any member seeking a line office must be a member of the Fire Company for at least two (2) years, have completed NYS FireFighter I course or equivalent, and pump operator.

- C. Members seeking line office must also attend at least ONE (1) class offered by the Dutchess County 911 Center in the previous year. They shall be qualified through a physical for interior fire attack (annual OSHA physical). The rank of Captain must be obtained before seeking the office of Chief or Assistant Chief. The member must be an active member in the previous year.
- D. A member may be excused from meetings due to work, school or sickness by writing a letter to the membership and qualifications committee on a quarterly basis.
- E. Members who hold a line office may be excused from meetings with given circumstances above, however members holding a line office must still meet the required drill count on a yearly basis, as defined in Article 3 subsection D. Line officers must meet the drill requirement by substitution via online training coursework which is provided by the Fire Company. A member wishing to run or hold a line office must attend, if not 12 drills in person, then a minimum of 8 online training courses which shall include Hazmat via Target Solutions, and a minimum of 4 in person drills attended in the previous year.

Section 3. The Rescue Squad Officers shall be Rescue Captain, First Lieutenant, and Second Lieutenant

- A. To be an officer of the Rescue Squad a member must: be a resident of the following: Rhinecliff, Rhinebeck, or Red Hook.
- B. To hold a Rescue Squad officer position, a member must hold at a minimum a current NYS Emergency Medical Technician card, and be at least 20 years of age by time of appointment.
- C. Must be an active rescue squad member and have at least a 15% response rate.
- D. Have attended at least six (6) rescue meetings and six (6) rescue drills during the previous year.
- E. To be eligible for the Rescue Captain officer position, a member must be a member of the Fire Company for two (2) years.
- F. To be eligible for the Rescue Lieutenant positions, a member must be a member of the Fire Company for one (1) year.
- G. All Rescue Squad officers will maintain CPR/AED, EMT courses as required by NYS to keep EMT certifications. Any officer who does not stay up to date with such required training will be removed from office.

Section 4. Office exclusions

A. Any member may hold only one office except, those line officers and rescue officers are eligible to hold a Company Executive Office.

B. A Line Officer of the Fire Company may not be an Officer of the Rescue Squad.

ARTICLE 7. Election of Officers

A. Nominations for all officers shall be made from the floor at the December meeting in the following order; Chief, 1st Assistant Chief, 2nd Assistant Chief, Captain, Lieutenant, 2nd Lieutenant, President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, Director(s), Rescue Captain, 1st Lieutenant, and 2nd Lieutenant. Prior to the December meeting, the investigating committee will prepare a list of all eligible members.

B. Voting shall be by secret ballot, except when only one nomination is made for an office. In such cases, nominations may be closed and one ballot cast by the Secretary. The nominee receiving the greatest number of votes shall be considered elected to the office.

C. Newly elected Executive Officers shall take office at the Jan. meeting following their elections. Line Officers shall take office at the District organizational meeting.

D. In case of vacancy in any office, except the office of Treasurer, the office must be filled by election in the regular manner at the next regular meeting.

E. In case of vacancy in the office of Treasurer, the President shall appoint a member to fill the office until the next annual election.

F. In the Treasurer's absence, the President or other presiding officer shall appoint a member to carry out the bookkeeping duties of the office until the return of the elected Treasurer.

G. In the event of a vacancy of any line office and there are no members qualified to fulfill said office, the Commissioners will assume the responsibility to fill the office with a member on the recommendation of the Chief unless the vacancy is for the Chief; then on the recommendation of the Assistant Chiefs. Otherwise the Commissioners may allow the vacancy to exist until either an acceptable member meets the requirements or until the next election.

H. Any member in good-standing shall be allowed to vote for Fire/Rescue Officers and Executive Officers. The annual election of Officers will be held on the first Thursday after the first Tuesday in the month of December.

ARTICLE 8. Duties of Executive officers

Section 1. President and Vice-president

- A. The President shall preside at all meetings and call special meetings when the President deems it necessary. In his absence the Vice-President shall be in charge. The President shall appoint all committees. In the absence of both President and Vice-President, a temporary Chairman may be chosen from the floor to conduct the meeting. He/she shall have the same power to appoint a temporary committee as would the President or Vice-President.
- B. The President shall be authorized to carry out the duties of the Treasurer in the Treasurer's absence. Therefore:
 - 1. The signatures of the President and the Treasurer will be recorded by the bank.
 - 2. Checks may be drawn and withdrawals made by either the President or Treasurer.
- C. The President shall appoint a Membership and Qualifications Committee, consisting of the Vice President and three other members.
- D. The President shall always be Chairperson of the annual dinner unless delegated by the President to another member.
- E. The president will be a member of all committees.

Section 2. Treasurer

- A. The Treasurer shall keep a record of all financial transactions of the Fire Company.
- B. The Treasurer shall receive all dues and monies owed to the Fire Company.
- C. The books of the treasurer shall be audited biyearly by the Board of Directors & President.

Section 3. Secretary

- A. The Secretary shall keep a correct list of all members of the Fire Company and shall ascertain the names of all members present at a meeting.
- B. The Secretary shall keep a record of all proceedings of all Fire Company meetings in a book provided for that purpose.
- C. The Secretary shall reply to all correspondences that require answers, and file same.
- D. The Secretary shall maintain a dedicated hard drive or thumb drive for records of the Fire Company that are within their scope of their supervision.

Section 4. Board of Directors

- A. The Board of Directors shall have the custody of all property owned by the Fire Company. They shall keep an inventory of all equipment and make a report at the annual meeting. They shall audit all bills and constitute a permanent finance committee.

ARTICLE 9 Duties of Membership and Qualifications Committee

Section 1. The Membership and Qualifications Committee shall:

- A. Receive and review all applications for presentation at a regular meeting.
- B. Investigate all new members and determine whether they are qualified to become members.
- C. Keep a training file on each member. Each file will contain the number of drills attended, meetings attended, the completion of the Firefighter 1 course, and any other classes taken, with the assistance of the secretary, chief and rescue squad captain.
- D. Report all members eligible to hold office and members eligible for life membership. Review all nominations for office and provide ballots for election of officers at the December meeting.
- E. Shall make copies of all training certificates for all members and put them in each members file.

ARTICLE 10. Definition of Drills

- A. Any regularly scheduled Fire Company or Rescue Squad drill.
- B. Any regularly scheduled EMS and/or instruction.
- C. Any regularly scheduled instruction pertaining to the duties of Fire Police.
- D. Any instruction approved by the Chief of this Fire Company shall be defined as a drill.
- E. The minimum Fire Company and Rescue Squad drill requirement for active members and their respective officers, shall be waived in reasonable circumstances that otherwise directly impact the Fire Company's ability to conduct drills, or when an individual has temporary health issues or disease and such activity raises concern for said individual's health, or claims to be on leave for paternal/maternal reasons.

ARTICLE 11. Order of Business

1. Salute to the Flag

2. Prayer
3. Roll call
4. Reading and approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
5. Communications
6. All bills referred to the Board of Directors for approval
7. Reports of standing committees:
 bylaws, welfare, parade and uniform, fundraising, membership and qualifications,
 annual dinner,etc.
8. Reports of special committees
9. Bills voted on for acceptance
10. Applications for balloting for membership
11. Unfinished business
12. Chief's Report
13. Rescue Squad report
14. New business
15. Treasurer's report
16. Adjournment

ARTICLE 12. Meetings

- A. Regular meetings shall be held at the Company Firehouse at 7:00pm local time on the 1st Monday of each month. Should the said Monday fall on a bank holiday, the regular meeting shall be held at the same place and time on the following Monday. The exception to this rule is the December meeting, which shall be held on the first Thursday following the first Tuesday.
- B. Special meetings shall be called by the President or Vice-President by written notice or electronic notification approved by company membership to each member through the Secretary, or by a petition of Eight (8) members handed to the Secretary, who shall notify each of the remaining members at least 10 days prior to the date of the special meeting.
- C. At a special meeting, the only business that shall be acted upon will be that stated in the notice.
- D. Meetings shall be called to order by the President or Vice-President or by any member in good standing. In the absence of the President and the Vice-President, a temporary Chairman will be elected.
- E. Order shall be maintained at all times by the presiding officer, and it shall be his/her privilege to have ejected anyone who causes a disturbance.
- F. A quorum at any meeting shall consist of eight (8) members.
- G. Any member wishing to speak shall address the Chair. Should two (2) or more members

speaking at the same time, the presiding Officer shall recognize the one entitled to the floor.

H. All motions that have been second shall be decided by a majority vote of the members present, either by a show of hands or by secret ballot.

I. Monthly meetings may be accompanied by online communication services, video services, when it is in the best interest of the membership to do so.

ARTICLE 13. Uniforms

All matters pertaining to uniforms shall be handled by the Committee appointed by the President. All members wanting to march shall be issued a uniform for which they sign and date a uniform log upon receipt of the uniform. Upon the return of any part of or all of the uniform the log shall be updated and signed by the member and a committee member. Each member shall be responsible for any damages to the uniform and shall be charged the current replacement cost of the uniform or the part of the uniform. The uniforms can be kept at the member's residence.

ARTICLE 14. By-laws of the Rescue Squad

Section 1. Eligibility

A. To belong to the Rescue Squad, a person must become a member of the Fire Company.

Section 2. Requirements for all new members

A. A newly-elected member must attend at least six (6) regular Rescue Squad meetings and twelve (12) drills during a probationary period of one year. Each Certified First Responder, Emergency Medical Technician, or CPR, class may be counted as one drill.

B. A new member must be enrolled in a NYS Certified First Responder or Emergency Medical Technician course within two (2) years and a CPR class within one year. The Rescue Squad Captain may extend this time if no classes were held in the area.

Section 3. Duties of Officers

A. The Rescue Squad Captain shall have exclusive control of the rescue squad and its members during calls. He/she shall also have supervision of the ambulance, equipment and other property used to perform Rescue Squad duties and of all Officers and members. The Rescue Squad Captain shall see that the rules of the Fire Company are duly executed and shall, whenever required by the Fire Company *and* Chief, report the condition of Rescue

Squad property and such other information as may be required. The Rescue Squad Captain shall hold the officers and members of the Rescue Squad strictly to account for the safety and welfare of their patients and may, for neglect of duty or improper conduct, make a written request for suspension at the discretion of the Chief.

- B. The 1st and 2nd Lieutenants shall aid and assist the Captain and shall, in numerical order, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Captain when that officer is absent.
- C. The 1st Lieutenant will run all meetings and drills when the captain is not present. He/she shall attend QA/QI meetings and other meetings as needed to ensure adequate representation. He/she will also serve on the Rescue Squad's QA/QI Committee.
- D. The 2nd Lieutenant will perform the monthly equipment checks. He/she will also serve on the Rescue Squad's QA/QI Committee. He/she may also be required to attend various meetings if the other officers are unable to attend.

Section 3. Meetings

- A. The dates and times of the Rescue Squad meetings shall be determined by the Rescue Squad Officers.

Section 4. Rules and Duties for all members

- A. At least one Rescue Squad member with a current Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) card in addition to the driver shall be on the ambulance and must attend the patient at all times.
- B. Each member driving the ambulance is required to be the holder of a valid NYS Driver's License and to be approved by the Rescue Squad Captain, the Chief, and Board of Commissioners.
- C. Each member driving the ambulance must at all times observe the state and local motor vehicle laws as well as ordinances affecting the operation of a motor vehicle. All personnel driving the ambulance shall comply with the Officer in charge or the person in charge of the patient care concerning speed.
- D. The Rescue Squad member in charge shall see that the prehospital care report is filled out correctly and signed in accordance with established procedure at the completion of each call.
- E. All members are required to conform with Section 800.15 and 800.16 of the NYS Emergency Medical Services Code. A copy of which will be given to each member by the Rescue Squad Captain or other Rescue Squad Officer.

- F. All Members will be given a copy of the Policy and Procedure Manual by the Rescue Squad Captain or other Rescue Squad Officer. Every member shall comply with the manual and the By-Laws.
- G. The ambulance shall respond to all first alarm fires and shall be placed so that it does not interfere with firefighting operations but shall be close enough for it's facilities to be utilized.
- H. All Rescue Squad members must renew their CPR cards every two years.
- I. All Rescue Squad members must attend at least 2 QA/QI meetings every year.
- J. All Rescue Squad members must attend two (2) CPR/defibrillator drills per year.
- K. Any Rescue Squad member wanting to hold a line office must submit a letter every four (4) months, following the Fire Company's fiscal year, stating the meetings missed due to work, school, or sickness. Any member not submitting a letter will not be excused from the missed meetings and will not receive credit for the missed meetings. The letter is to be submitted to the Rescue Squad Captain.

Section 9. Purchases

- A. Purchases of new equipment and uniforms will be recommended by the Rescue Squad and approved by the Rhinecliff Fire Company and/or the Board of Fire Commissioners.

ARTICLE 15. By-law Amendments

- A. Any amendment to these By-Laws shall be submitted in writing to the President for consideration and are to be read at this same meeting, and shall lay over until the next meeting, at which time a vote will be taken. All amendments or changes to these By-Laws will require a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members present at any regular meeting to adopt the proposed amendment. All members are to receive written notice or electronic notification ci.e. email of the proposed amendment no less than fifteen (15) days before the meeting at which the amendment is to be voted upon.

Article 16. Repossession of Fire Company Property And/Or Gear

- A. Fire Company/District property is defined as any of the following: District pagers, district radios, district gear (pants, helmet, gloves, jacket, boots, etc.), company books, or any other property that was otherwise bought by the Fire Company or District.
- B. The Fire Company only has the power to repossess the aforementioned items when working in conjunction with the Board of Commissioners and the Chief of the Company.
- C. The Fire Company has the sole power to repossess such gear and property under circumstances such as a member has left the department, or been terminated from the company, and possess Fire Department/Company property. Or a member does not meet the “active status” membership found in Article 3, subsection D, and is therefore considered an Associate member of the Fire Company.
- D. The Fire Company Executive and/or Chief will notify the member in question via USPS return receipt mail, and a two month window will be given to return the items that have been listed specifically by the Fire Company Executive and Chief.
 - a. Failure to comply with the extended sixty(60) day return period following the two month period, will result in the Fire Company as a whole proceeding further with police intervention.
- E. In the event that a member has Fire Company property repossessed, and wishes to possess such property again, he or she has to meet active status, as defined in Article 3 Subsection D.
 - a. In the event that the meeting and drill or % of calls requirements cannot be met, the individual must at a minimum attend two (2) Fire Company meetings, four (4) drills, and at least five (5) calls.
 - b. In the event that during the two month return period, such a member has become more active. The Fire Company Executive and Chief shall use discretion in determining if property still needs to be returned at that point in time.

Article 17. Complaints

- A. Any complaints or concerns regarding the use of the ambulance or equipment, or concerning personnel, should be reported immediately to the Captain of the Rescue Squad and the Chief of the Fire Company.
- B. Any complaints or concerns regarding use of fire apparatuses, fire equipment or personnel should be reported immediately to the Chief
- C. Any complaints or concerns with a particular member, regarding derogatory terms, offensive language, or other types of misconduct should directly be brought to the attention

of the Chief, the President of the Fire Company, or a Fire Commissioner.