

Welcome to Rocky Hill Cohousing!

Welcome to Rocky Hill Cohousing. We are so glad that you have joined (or are thinking about joining) our community!

This is an information booklet designed as part of an orientation to our community. You may be considering purchasing a unit, or renting space in one, or joining us as an Offsite Associate Member, or you may have already made the commitment to join us and are trying to figure out how things work around here. The Membership Committee has compiled this information to assist you in learning about Rocky Hill.

It has taken a long time to put this together, in part because we are a human community and as such are in a constant state of flux. Our life as a community is inevitably changing and growing with the coming and going of members, seasons, issues, and life challenges. In addition, each of us naturally views the community through a personal lens. So please consider what is written here as a snapshot of the community at a particular moment from a particular point of view. Supplement this information with your own conversations with community members, observations, and experiences. Ask questions!! All of us are friendly people who will be happy to share our sense of the community, as well as answer specific questions about how things are done.

The spirit of Rocky Hill is connection. We encourage you to meet neighbors, get involved in committees, start new traditions, and contribute in ways large and small. We are only as strong and viable as our members make us. Welcome!



Rocky Hill CoHousing

Rocky Hill members

The community consists of 28 units in the main part of the community and 5 front lot houses on Black Birch Trail. The 28 units are considered Owner Members and the front lot households are considered Front Lot Associate Members. Two of the inner units and one of the front lots have rental apartments and a number of households also include renters, who are considered Associate Members. We also have a number of people who either lived here in the past or have connections here and have joined us as Off Site Associate Members.

Front Lot Residents own their own houses and lots, and as such are not covered by the RHC replacement reserve or insurance. They don't pay condo fees, but a monthly associate member fee is billed to cover costs of shared services with RHC such as trash removal, snow plowing, and use of the Common House.

Renters do not pay condo fees; however, the unit owner pays condo fees for the square footage occupied by the renter and may consider this among the expenses they charge rent to cover. Renters may need to have their own renter's insurance – please consult the unit owner and your insurance company.

All categories of members are welcomed and encouraged to participate in Community Meetings, Social Activities and Events, Committee Work, Clubs, and Community Work Days.

Legal Documents

The legal documents that define the organization and policies of Rocky Hill Cohousing are the By-Laws (Declaration of Trust) and the Rules and Regulations. These documents can be found on our website rockyhillcohousing.org on the **Joining** page. These documents were developed at the start of the community and can be changed through a defined process. Be sure to read and understand them if you plan to live here.

Mission and Values Statement

As a community we have adopted the following mission and values statement:

The Mission of Rocky Hill Co-Housing is to be thriving community of neighbors, whose life together fosters connectedness, learning from each other, and living lightly on the earth.

We value and strive toward:

1. Supporting and nurturing each community member, from infant to elder, and treating each other with kindness, compassion and respect.
2. Welcoming people of diverse identities, including race, ethnicity, spirituality, age, ability, sexual orientation, gender identity, family composition and socio-economic status.
3. Building relationships and connections through daily interactions, community meals, activities, celebrations, rituals, work and helping one another.
4. Raising children together in community.
5. A decision-making process that builds consensus by soliciting and valuing input from all, ensuring that everyone is heard and resulting in decisions that everyone can agree to live by.
6. Resolving conflicts through honest, direct and respectful communication.

7. Giving our care, time and work to ourselves, our families and homes, our community at Rocky Hill, the wider community and the world.
8. Improving our collective and individual stewardship of the earth and minimizing our impact on the planet.
9. Creating and maintaining an emotional and physical environment that encourages and supports mutual concern and well-being.

Approved January 9, 2010

Decision Making

Our community makes decisions using a consensus model. We hold Community Meetings at least once a month throughout the year. There is also an annual Budget Meeting and occasional special meetings scheduled as the need arises. Issues and proposals are brought before the community (usually by committees) at community meetings. Decisions are made using a consensus model, where we seek agreement by the largest possible number of members. If we do not reach agreement on a proposal, we continue to make revisions until the community as a whole can agree — all members must either support the proposal or be willing to “live with” (i.e. stand aside on) the final decision.

We strive to have a collaborative, inclusive decision making process in which all voices are heard and all positions considered in choosing a course of action that is in the best interest of the community.

Consensus decision making works best when there is a commitment to the process and a commitment to encourage and respect all points of view. Trust and respect among members is essential. It can, at times, be a lengthy and frustrating way to make decisions, but it is based on the belief that the process of incorporating all points of view is worth it and will lead to outcomes that are in the best interest of the community.

As you consider joining us, we encourage you to observe and participate in our community meeting to become part our process.

Community Meetings

Community meetings are scheduled roughly once a month, on Saturday mornings, for 2 to 2 1/2 hours. There is usually time for announcements, some personal sharing, reports from committees, presentation and discussions of proposals, exploration of community issues, and decision making. Active participation of members in meetings is important for the vitality of the community, for an inclusive decision making process, and as a way to support and foster interpersonal connections. Meetings are open to all Rocky Hill members, as well as people interested in learning about our community.

Communication /E-mail

Communication among members frequently takes place through one of our three Listservs: RockyHillGeneral, RockyHillPrivate and RockyHillChat.

People living here will be added to RockyHillPrivate and RockyHillGeneral when they move in and Chat if they choose. People exploring the community may request to join RockyHillGeneral and RockyHillChat.

Rocky Hill Private: is exclusively for Owners and renters in the community and Front Lot Owners and their renters. This list is for emergency situations — information relevant only

to people who live here, or information the sender wants to keep private among only people who live here.

Rocky Hill General: includes all Rocky Hill residents, former residents who choose to remain on the listserv, people who are exploring membership in the community, and off-site associate members. This is the main listserv and is used to post announcements about events in the Rocky Hill community, proposals for consideration, agenda items for community meetings, work that needs to be done, site issues, appreciations, request for help of various kinds etc.

Rocky Hill Chat: this is an optional listserv for residents, associate members, people exploring membership and friends of the community. This is the place for non Rocky Hill announcements, political discussion, outside community events, nature sightings, etc.

Guidelines for the use of listservs:

- Try not to post too many messages
- Do not post anything offensive or defamatory
- “Reply to sender” only — unless there is a real need for the message to go to everyone.
- Refrain from emailing when there is negative content
- Post to only one Listserv

Website and RHC Documents

There is information available only to Rocky Hill Members on the **For Members** page of the www.rockyhillcohousing.org website. Once you are given the password, you can login to this page and you'll see a sheet for common meals signup, lists of committee members, a link to an RHC Wiki, and much more.

Organization / Committees

The community is organized around a committee structure. Everyone is asked to participate in one or more committees. Most community work is done through committees. Committees develop proposals and frame the issues that are brought to the Community Meetings. Committees have some discretionary responsibility and a budget that is under their control. Each committee has a chairperson, and committees report on their goals and activities at community meetings and through email.

The following is a list of our current operating committees and a brief statement of their purpose and activities. We encourage you to talk to members about committees, attend their meetings, and join in! Committee Meetings are always open to visitors.

Board of Trustees: is five- to seven-member committee, which includes the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary of the Rocky Hill Condominium Association. Community members volunteer to serve on the BoT and are approved by the community.

The BoT keeps track of issues that need to be addressed by the community and organizes and sets the agenda for community meetings. BoT members serve as liaisons to committees and keep track of committee needs and agendas. The BoT functions to keep lines of communication open and to assure issues are addressed and the work of the community is accomplished.

Building and Grounds Committee: manages work days, building issues, landscape issues, mowing, raking, snow removal, sewer pump etc.

- Snow Management subcommittee
(includes plowing, shoveling, and ice melt spreading)
- Sewer Pump subcommittee
- Work Days subcommittee

Common House Committee: manages maintenance and cleaning of Common House, improvements, use policies, guest rooms, laundry and basement etc.

- Common House Cleaning subcommittee

Community Life Committee: manages community and social events, celebrations, holidays, retreats, consultants, fun activities etc.

- Common Meals subcommittee
- Retreat Planning subcommittee

Children's Committee: plan activities for children and teens and creates policy around children's' issues. Coordinates summer Camp Rocky Hill.

Design Review Committee*: manages approval process for additions to houses, shed, fences, outdoor structures, use of land, landscaping, what to (or not to) plant, etc.

*Please see the binder in the Common House for policies implemented by the Design Review Committee.

Finance Committee: manages community finances, annual operating budget, condo fees and reserve funds, capital fund, insurance, reimbursements to committees etc.

Membership Committee: recruits and orients potential community members and associate members, answers inquiries to website, assists with sale of houses, welcomes and orients new members, creates policy around membership categories, etc.

Process Committee: works collaboratively with BoT to plan agendas and facilitate community meetings.

Sustainability / Environment Committee: coordinates trash removal and recycling efforts, education about sustainability issues, composting, garden, carts, trails, etc.

- Garden subcommittee
- Compost subcommittee

Community Work

Community members share responsibility for the tasks associated with common ownership of the property. The community cannot function, be maintained, and thrive unless community members perform the work of the community. We contract out only the most technical of tasks, for example maintaining the sewer system, and certain financial accounting functions. Otherwise our members do the community work.

In making the decision to join our community, it is important that you be prepared to devote several hours of your time to community work on a regular basis!

Associate members may also participate in community work as appropriate to their participation in community life or their use of community facilities.

With that being said, the community has yet to agree on a specific number of hours or tasks required of each member, and there is no system of enforcement. Six hours per month has been mentioned as a standard of participation. We realize that at different times, given life's demands, members will have more or less time to contribute to the community.

Some tasks are needed for the governance, financial functioning, or physical maintenance of the community. Other tasks are directed toward the enrichment of community life. The community values work in all of these areas. Each member decides how he/she will contribute, based on their own understanding of their responsibilities, life situation, abilities and preferences. However, in order to sustain a functional and vibrant community, we depend on one another to contribute regularly to the work of the community

Common House Cleaning / Work Days / Snow Shoveling

These are tasks in which everyone is expected to participate as well as they can. A sign-up sheet for Common House Cleaning is posted periodically; we assume that all members will sign up for a cleaning task with each cleaning cycle.

We hold four Community Work Days each year; tasks for those days are posted, with an expectation that everyone will do something.

Snow shoveling of common areas also requires everyone's participation.

Clubs and Informal Groups

In addition to committees, Rocky Hill has groups or clubs that have formed around shared interests. Membership in these clubs is voluntary and generally open. Find out what the requirements for membership are by talking with a current member and feel free to think of a new club to create.

- Sunday Suppers (more info ahead)
- Chicken Club
- Hot Tub Club
- Aging Gracefully Group
- Men's Group
- Take-Out eating group
- Games Group
- Friday Night Movie Series

Common House

Our Common House is owned by the community and used by members and invited guests. The Common House contains a large dining/event room; a fully-equipped kitchen; two bathrooms (one handicapped-accessible); a guest room; a (very) small meeting room; a family room; a fireplace; and a fireplace room; the unfinished basement has laundry facilities, as well as a sauna, a pool table, and a ping pong table.

Any RHC resident may reserve the Common House for an event or reserve the Guest Room for an overnight guest. A binder in the Common House contains sign-up sheets for reserving a room; and another binder holds the latest policies regarding reservations and use.

The Common House has free WiFi.

All members are encouraged to informally use any of the Common House space when it is not reserved.

Laundry

In the basement of the Common House we have a clothes washer and dryer.

*Anyone may use them.

PLEASE

- Use only unscented laundry products
- Use your own laundry basket
- Clean filter after every use
- *You are expected to make a monetary donation in the box provided.

Kids in the Common House (an agreement between RHC children and the community)

March 2011

We the children of Rocky Hill agree to:

- Clean up after ourselves in the Common House.
- Use indoor voices and walking feet when other people are gathered.
- Have an adult with us if we are younger than 8 years old.
- Make sure our parents know when we are in the Common House unsupervised. We will call from the Common House if our parents don't know already that we are here.
- Ask our parents to do a quick sweep of the Common House after we have been playing here.

Sunday Suppers and Community Meals

A community meal takes place almost every Sunday at 6:00 in the Common House. Members who want to participate sign up to cook or clean up several times in a three-month cycle. There is a small fee for each meal; and dietary restrictions are honored.

We also have frequent potluck dinners, lunches, or breakfasts; a group that shares takeout meals; and occasional "Dinner by Sixes," where members are organized into groups to share meals in members' homes. Notices in the Common House and email messages announce such activities. We welcome your involvement in organizing new get-togethers around food!

Rocky Hill Finances

The following information pertains primarily to Owner Members. If you have questions about, or need clarification of, any of these sections, please talk with a member of the Finance Committee.

Condo fees

Condo fees fund our ongoing operating costs and add to our Replacement Reserve fund for infrastructure maintenance and repair. Fees are mandatory and are collected on the first of each month. The Finance Committee will help you set up automatic withdrawal when you move in. (Withdrawal ends when you move out).

The fee for your unit is based on the *adjusted* square footage of your house. Your house's main living space is counted at 100% of its square footage, and spaces such as screened porches, basements, decks, attics, etc. are counted at some fraction of their full square footage*

Common Costs

NOTE: If you are purchasing a house in the community and have plans to remodel or expand, be sure to read this to understand the additional cost you will incur if you add to the total square footage of your home.

When you add permanent living space to your unit, either by an addition, or by finishing a basement or attic space, you incur "common costs" payable to the community. These are one-time charges of \$43/square foot — the same price paid by incoming residents per square foot at the time of construction to fund the construction of the common portions of the community. In essence, when you expand your livable space, you now own a greater proportion of a now-larger community, and your common cost contribution helps us fund the maintenance and improvement of our property. (When your new space is completed, you will also start paying an increased monthly condo fee based on your new adjusted square footage.)

Finished space in attics, lofts, and basements is defined as space that has insulation, ceiling material, sheetrock walls, and one or more of the following: heat, windows beyond utility grade, finished flooring, or finish taped sheetrock joints.

*In calculating common costs, the main part of your house is charged \$43 per square foot. Attic space is charged 50% of the PSF common cost. Basements are charged 30%, lofts, 30%, screened porches 20% and Decks 10%.

** See the Design Review binder in the Common House for additional information.

Replacement Reserve Fund

We set aside over one third of our condo fees into a capital replacement reserve fund. This fund is saved for replacing physical parts of our property (road, roofs, siding, exterior paint, Common House appliances, etc.) or performing major preventive maintenance such as asphalt crack sealing. By putting adequate money into this on a regular basis we avoid having to make large special assessments. The money in this fund is invested in CDs.

We examine the state of our reserve plan internally every year and plan for a professional review every five years. The replacement reserve fund covers repair and replacement of all units' siding, roofing, front porches, and gutters. The reserve fund does *not* cover repair and replacement of windows and back steps; individual unit owners are responsible for these.

Special Assessments

We endeavor to put away enough money into our reserve fund that we will not need to make special assessments. Should something unforeseen arise, the bylaws do provide for making special assessments of the unit owners.

Insurance

The largest single line item in our budget is our master condo insurance policy premium — and it provides very comprehensive coverage. We are covered for the guaranteed replacement cost of the units, including even things that you own that would typically be left in the house upon moving, such as major appliances, flooring (including carpet), and light fixtures. Each unit owner should carry *HO-6 homeowner's insurance*, as is

appropriate for condo owners, and this should insure the personal contents of your house and liability within the house.

Budget

Our fiscal year is the calendar year. The annual budget for the upcoming year is approved by consensus toward the end of each year (typically in late October or early November). It is developed over the several preceding months, using requests from the committees and input from community members. Committee chairs are responsible for reviewing and authorizing all expenditures from their committee's budget.

Capital Projects

Capital projects are physical additions to our community such as the tree house, or the garden shed. Money to fund these has come from the common costs contributed by households who have increased their usable space. The Finance Committee endeavors to facilitate a community process for funding these projects in the early part of the year, so that projects can be completed during good weather and before winter.

The Physical Community

Trash / recycling / compost

- We encourage recycling whenever possible.
- The cost of trash/recycling pickup is included in our monthly condo fee.
- Trash goes into the large dumpster; after placing your trash inside, please close the top.
- Paper, cans and glass recyclables go into the single stream recycling dumpster. See posting in Common House for specifics on what is recyclable and what isn't.
- There are specialized bins for other types of recycling in the Common House basement. Volunteers under the auspices of the Sustainability Committee take these to recycling events and centers as needed. Help with this would be welcomed.

Compost

- We encourage composting of food waste from homes and from the Common House.
- Near our garden shed is an active compost pile. A list of compostable items is posted in the shed.

Mowing

Each household is responsible for mowing the lawn around its house. Everyone is encouraged to help mow common areas such as the inner pods, around the Common House, along Black Birch Trail, etc.

Snow Removal

The Snow Removal subcommittee organizes plow teams for snow clearing in winter.

Plow Team

The plow team plows the parking lots, Black Birch Trail, the Common House circle, and, if necessary, the inner loop roads. We welcome new members who are able to use the truck to plow to join the team. The designated plow driver will plow Black Birch Trail first. A telephone voice mail and text message will be sent to all residents with information about when to move cars from the parking lot to Black Birch Trail (so the parking lots can be plowed) and when cars can be returned to the lots.

We also use snow blowers to clear inner loop roads and paths to parking lots and the Common House.

Shoveling / De-icing

Each household is responsible for shoveling the walk up to their house and the loop road in front of their house. Everyone is expected to help shovel common walkways, and everyone should help spread ice melt on walkways.

Cars / Speed limit / Parking / Inner loop driving

Parking

Parking for residents is allowed in parking lots. (As of this writing) we do not have assigned parking spaces. If you're hosting an event, please ask your guests to park along Black Birch Trail at the Event Parking sign.

Speed

For the safety of us all, we've posted a speed limit on Black Birch Trail. Please remind visitors and delivery people to obey that limit.

Inner Loops (Drive no faster than walking speed, please)

RHC is a pedestrian community, so inner roads are not for general driving; they must be kept clear for Emergency vehicles, with the following exceptions:

- More than a cart-load of stuff, or an unusually awkward load
- Packing the car for vacation
- Large item delivery/drop-off
- Trades people/house repair contractor only if they need their vehicle
- Moving in/out
- Aged/ailing relative, friends or community member drop-off
- Sleeping children in back seat
- Handicap vehicle (parked, if short-term and not drivable by anyone else)
- Snow removal
- Foul weather – heavy rain or snow – creating a safety risk

When you find it necessary to drive on the inner loops, please remember

- Speed Limit inside pods is 5 MPH.
- Use your parking lights
- No horn honking
- Turn down car radios
- Encourage delivery trucks not to drive in unless they have heavy items
- Try to use loop roads as little as possible.
- Ask / remind guests before they arrive

Rocky Hill Truck (aka Big Red)

- We own a truck in common. It's known affectionately as Big Red. Its main use is for snow plowing, but we also use it to pick up compost, mulch, lawnmowers, and other heavy items.
- Rocky Hill Residents may drive the truck for personal use, too. You must be added to the insurance policy before using the truck

- Each time you use the truck, note the before and after mileage in the binder on the seat. Also note what you used the truck for. If it's a personal errand, we charge 50 cents per mile. You can put gas in the truck to equal (or exceed) the amount used. Or you can write a check to Rocky Hill Condominium Association for the correct amount; checks go to a member of the Finance Committee.
- Please park the truck near the big shed, rear end in.

Carts

We have community carts you may use to carry in groceries or other supplies from the parking lot. Please return carts to the parking lot the next time you go to your car.

Helmets

We have agreed that we want children and adults to wear helmets when riding bikes, skateboards, scooters, roller blades, etc.

Pet Policy

Rocky Hill pet policy aims to be a set of guidelines based on the assumption that pet owners will be able to enjoy their pets and that we will all be considerate of each other. Pet owners assume full responsibility for their pets' behavior, noise, damage and droppings.

- It is strongly recommended that owners leash their dogs in common areas at all times. Unleashed dogs must be under the immediate physical control of their owners.
- Pet owners shall clean up after their pets in all common areas, including walking paths in the woods.
- Community members shall not bring in pets with aggressive behavior.
- In the case of dogs, Members shall take steps to prevent excessive barking.
- If a community member has a problem with an animal's behavior, that person should speak directly with the animal's owner to reach a workable agreement.
- Rocky Hill recommends the neutering or spaying of dogs and cats to discourage aggressiveness, spraying, noisy displays, and attraction of other animals.
- Members are encouraged to keep cats indoors, but if this is not acceptable, shall attempt to minimize the amount of time cats spend outdoors, especially during peak bird feeding times, to reduce the risk to wildlife. Outdoor cats shall wear bells or bibs.
- No pets shall be allowed in the Common House with the exception of service animals.

Bird feeders

We have agreed to not allow bird feeders at Rocky Hill, since the food attracts bears.

Conflict resolution / Grievance procedure (Summary from Rules and Regulations)

Kindness, compassion, and respect are the foundation for our interactions. We are committed to engaging in honest, direct, and respectful communication with each other.

We aspire to adhere to the following mutually held assumptions:

- We all matter to each other
- We all have good intent
- We intend to be generous and forgiving; however, we recognize that in any given conflict it may take time for an individual to be able to completely honor the guidelines.
- Conflict is inevitable and the process of conflict resolution benefits the entire community; it enhances the growth of individuals and is critical to the well being of the community.
- Our individual points of view are based on our unique life experiences and all therefore are worthwhile
- We each are responsible for our own emotions and behaviors.
- We respond to others directly, rather than criticize others without bringing our concerns to them.
- We are all working on greater understanding of our selves and others and we intend to support one another in this process.

When conflict arises, we will draw on the following methods:

Step One: Handle directly in a one-on-one meeting as close as possible to the time of the difficult encounter, assuming and asking for a reflective listening attitude if at all possible.

Step Two: If the one-on-one meeting is not satisfactory, request the presence of a third party. This committed listener might be:

- A mutually trusted member of the community;
- A person from within the community who has listed him/herself as a trained mediator who is willing to contribute in this way;
- An outside mediator, engaged at the expense of the individuals involved.

Step Three: If the attempt to resolve with the support of a committed listener is not successful, ask for a meeting with a subgroup of the community, such as:

- The Trustees;
- A committee whose mission is relevant to the issue;
- The Community Support Committee

In Closing

We have included quite a bit of information here but you may have additional questions. Please seek out a neighbor, committee representative, or someone on the membership committee to help you. You can always post questions on the Rocky Hill General listserv. Every few months you will receive a contact list with the names and contact information of all our community members. We have not included the names of Committee members and chairs, or coordinators for different activities, as those change over time. There are several binders with information in the Common House, and one of those includes an up to date list of committee chair people and members.

And once again, **WELCOME TO ROCKY HILL!**