

TOWN COMMITTEE TRAINING MANUAL

I - Intro

So you want to start a local party committee! This guide has been written to serve as a tool to help you to develop and hone party building skills, avoid pitfalls, and give you pointers if you need them. In addition to this guide, you also have the support of the Maine Green Independent Party. If you ever get stuck with a problem that you can't find an answer for here in this guide, don't hesitate to contact the MGIP state office at 207-699-1321 and by email at info@mainegreens.org.

Also, be sure to fill out this Local Committee Registration form: [Local Committee Registration \(PDF\)](#)

SO FIRST THE BASICS:

So there are certain legal things you'll need to do in order to officially become a town party. You will need to file a brief registration with the MGIP State Steering Committee. Our only requirement is that you meet at least 4 times a year. Also we recommend that you elect three members: a chair, a treasurer, and a secretary. Just like a candidate, your town committee will need to keep track of their income and expenses, and if you raise or spend more than \$1500 in a calendar year your Treasurer will need to file a report with the state. Be sure to read the rules, and if you have any questions, just contact the state ethics board (207- 287-4179). You can download the 2008 Party Booklet with lots of useful information from the ethics board here: http://www.maine.gov/ethics/pdf/publications/2008_party_booklet.pdf

Why form a Town Committee? Human beings are social creatures who are more powerful when we work together than when we work as individuals. Creating an organization at the town level will allow you to focus the energy of citizens in your community around candidates and issues that you feel strongly about, and will allow you to win concrete improvements in people's lives, and show your community their power as citizens. Just as the Green Party is a vehicle for the issues you care about, issues are also a vehicle to build the party. Running for office gives you an opportunity to talk with the people in your community about issues you feel need to be addressed. It also allows you to build support for the party. If you run your campaign well, you will build a database of voter and volunteer information that you can draw on to multiply your efforts from that of a single person, to that of a community working in concert toward common goals. But what happens once the election season is over? This is where the Town Committee is so important. The function of the Town Committee is to give a continuing life beyond any one election season to the social movement built by campaigns. By maintaining voter and volunteer information, and keeping this membership involved in growing the party's base of support, you help grow the Green Party as an institution, maintain and grow membership, and build the foundation for future electoral victories!

A. How to be a Good organizer:

Motivation -This is key! Even people who believe in the Green Party's values may need some encouragement from time to time. Remember: leaders develop because they give positive feedback. Always let someone know when they are doing a good job, and what they did well. Delegate -No one person can do everything on his or her own. It's crucial to give everyone in the your organization some form of manageable responsibility. It makes it easier for you, and more engaging for everyone else! Build Community -People tend to come back because they feel as if they're a part of something. Giving everyone responsibility along with outlining consistent goals and expectations will go a long way in securing people for the long haul. Training - With regard to a special skill like phone banking, canvassing, fundraising, etc, make sure people know what the activity is, and why the party is doing it. Entrust your members with the motivation behind everything you ask them to do. If people are given the opportunity to understand why you ask them to do something, chances are the specific event or project will go that much more smoothly. Constantly Develop New Leadership - There will come a time that you are too busy to stay on top of everything you need to in order to keep your town party running as well as it could. It's vital that you are constantly cultivating new leadership in your organization to take the helm and learn the ropes, so that your organization can continue Decentralize: Decentralizing does not mean that nobody is in charge. What it does mean, is that anybody can join in the process and get involved. Far too often in organizations, leadership will always try to do everything themselves without sharing responsibilities with other members of the group. While there is something to be said for the philosophy of "If you want something done right, do it yourself" it's also no wonder that these people burn out rather quickly! Social change is not made by loners nor superstars, but by the coordinated efforts of many people working in concert. Be Flexible: report to your membership what work is being done, what work needs to be done, and how it's being done. Be open to criticism and suggestions of how to do it better (they might be right). If somebody says they can do something better, invite them to try it. If they can, that's good for everybody. Be Dependable: Follow through with projects, show up on time for meetings and events. If people find that they cannot count on you, they will lose interest quickly.

II - Make a Plan of Action

It's important to have your game plan laid out fully before you get on the phone and try organizing your first meeting. Be sure to read this training manual fully, and use it to develop a basic plan of action for what your first steps should be. Checklist:

III - Recruiting

How to do it: The first and most obvious step in forming a town committee is to talk to people you already know who are Green Party supporters. Easy enough, right? But let's say that you don't know anybody else who is a Green Party supporter. Well, thankfully, towns keep a list of everybody who is registered to vote and what their party affiliations are to help people like you out. Go to your town office, talk with a town clerk, and request a copy of the voter list for your

town. Depending on how technologically advanced your town office is, you may be able to get an electronic list of only the voters who are registered with the Maine Green Independent Party. Set a time and place for your first meeting. You can request the use of public space in your town hall, in a church or community center, or at someone's home. From there simply grab a phone book, look up their numbers, and call through your list. Since these voter lists are not always accurate, and since many people can be registered with different parties in one household, you will want to make sure you get the person on your list on the line. Introduce yourself, and inform them that you are starting a Green Party Town Committee for your town. Ask the person on the line if they are interested in coming to the first meeting, and if they are, give them the date and location you've already selected. Don't worry too much about setting a date that works for everybody. You only need a recommended minimum of three people to start a Town Party. Even if you don't get three people the first time, you will be building contacts within your community and eventually you will be able to get your requisite number to best start a Town Committee.

Other Ways to Recruit:

Events Organizing! Do Something fun- Running a town committee doesn't have to be all hard work and no fun! Throw a party! Organize a kickball tournament! Go Bowling! Invite people to go out and sing Karaoke! Tabling- Tabling can be a good opportunity to meet new people, and an excuse to talk to folks you wouldn't normally talk to otherwise. It's also fundamental work to growing volunteer and voting lists that absolutely MUST be done. After a long day of collecting people's information, take your sheets and enter them all into your database. The Maine Green Party always has upcoming tabling events. Contact our office to sign up for one!

IV - First Meeting

Meetings should always be as short as possible, with tight, well-defined agendas, and your first one should be no exception. If you've not gotten official party status yet, discuss with your attendees what needs to be done to form one. Always be sure to circulate an attendance sheet so that you can collect information from new volunteers so that you can contact them in the future.

V - Becoming an official town party

There are a couple different requirements that you'll have to fulfill to be an official town party. Some of them are from the State of Maine, and some of them are from the Maine Green Independent Party. If you're a small group of volunteers without a budget, you won't need to worry about reporting your budget or campaign expenditures to the State. If you DO have a budget and taxable income and such as a group, you can find the proper paperwork over at Maine.gov. The Requirements that the MGIP has for you: We ask that you hold a caucus in your town every even year. This helps the state party fulfill its legal, biennial obligation, but it also allows your local committee to give input to the state and national committees. To hold a caucus, you need to advertise that you're having one. This can be as simple as putting an announcement in the local paper, and/or putting up fliers around town. More specific details are made available on the state party's website in early January every even-year. www.mainegreens.org It's also important to get the names of those who are in attendance. You should probably use this meeting as an opportunity elect members of your town committee (ie chair, vice chair, secretary.) You only need three people to form a caucus. Once you've held your caucus, send a copy of your advertisements and your attendance list to:

MGIP Portland Office PO BOX 10345, Portland, ME 04104

VI - Meetings

Introductory meetings vs Working meetings vs Socials For every meeting that you have, you are going to want to have some sort of Agenda to keep the group focused, and to make sure you get everything done that you need to. You don't need to know Robert's Rules of Order or anything, it's just nice to be able to keep everybody focused. So there are different kinds of meetings. Your first meeting is going to be more of an introduction to your new members. You should try to figure out what everybody has in common, and build a sense of community. Suggested topics for your first meeting: * The Ten Key Values-- what do they mean to you? * Why are you with the Green Party? * What sorts of issues are your community facing that can be addressed with legislation?

VIII - Connecting with state and national party

You can keep up to date with the Maine Green Independent Party's state structure by signing on to our email list by going to <http://www.mainegreens.org/> and clicking "subscribe." Be sure to sign up for the Action Alerts for activism opportunities that you can carry out in your own community with your town committee. Questions? The MGIP Steering Committee has answers! Feel free to keep in communication with us at info@mainegreens.org with any problems or challenges you face, as well as the successes you've had!