

Writing for . . .
The Hinesburg Record

A Booklet for New Writers and Volunteers

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The Hinesburg Record, Inc.
Hinesburg, Vermont 05461

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Welcome!

If you are new to *The Hinesburg Record*, welcome and thanks for your interest and support. *The Hinesburg Record* is a community newspaper providing news coverage of town, school and community events in Hinesburg and neighboring towns. It is a totally volunteer effort, supported by faithful advertisers, volunteer photographers, writers and correspondents, graphic artists, production and layout volunteers, advertising assistants, billing and bookkeeping assistants. It is Hinesburg's paper, devoted to covering items of interest to its residents.

The Hinesburg Record is published ten times a year and is mailed free of charge to all residents, approximately 3,000 households. Its production costs are covered by advertising fees. The rest — the articles, photographs, calendars, typesetting, proofreading, production — all comes from the good will of many Hinesburg residents.

So, if you are interested in working on *The Record*, welcome aboard. Your help is always needed.

What This Booklet Covers

This booklet is written to help you become familiar with *The Hinesburg Record* and to provide some guidelines for writing articles or submitting photographs. It also contains general information about the newspaper, the “regular” staff, and advertising procedures.

A list of current volunteers and contributors appears at the end of the booklet so that you may contact others if the need arises.

Writing Tips for Correspondents

Whereas *The Record* is always looking for feature articles on items of interest to Hinesburg, the majority of our reporters cover regularly-scheduled meetings — the Select board, the school boards, planning commission, the library board, etc. Your job as a correspondent covering a meeting is twofold. First, you must attend the meeting, and second, you must write an article about it.

Attending Meetings

The first time you attend a meeting on behalf of *The Hinesburg Record*, be sure to introduce yourself and inform the board members that you will be coming to the meetings as a representative of *The Record*. Most meetings, such as the school board meetings, allow some time when people in the audience may speak. This is an appropriate time for your introduction. You may prefer to arrive a little early for the first meeting and introduce yourself to the board chair before the meeting begins. From then on, your presence will be known and understood by the members of the board.

Most boards prepare agendas for their meetings. Check with the chair or board secretary to see if you can receive a complete copy of the agenda packet, either at the meeting or prior to it. This will help you to follow the discussion more easily and can provide you with names and information that may be important. Agenda packets usually contain the minutes of the previous meeting.

You should take notes during the meeting so that you will recall certain points for your article. The most important thing to remember, however, is that you are not expected to write about everything that is discussed at the meeting. You should look for the items of discussion that are the most interesting and important. Don't feel that every item is crucial for your report. Do try to get the correct spelling of a person's name if you plan to use it in your article.

If a discussion becomes technical or refers to incidents you don't understand or recognize, don't worry. You can always contact a board member after the meeting to clarify certain points, if this part of the meeting is included in your article.

Enjoy the meeting. You are there as a reporter and a resident. Look for the focus or intent of the discussion rather than every tidbit or item covered. The more meetings you attend, the easier this will become.

Writing Your Article

Turning your notes of a two to three hour meeting into a concise and interesting article is a challenging assignment. As you review your notes, pick out the most important topic covered during the meeting. Use this as your

starting point. If you remember that your article is not meant to summarize the meeting (from start to finish), you'll be fine.

Newspaper Style

Writing in newspaper style is different from composing an article for a professional journal. Refer to the following tips as you prepare to draft your article:

1. Always write in “inverted pyramid” form. Start with the most important event, then proceed to the next most important, the next, etc. Or start with your general conclusion, then proceed with supporting evidence, in order of importance. If space limitations require the layout staff to shorten your article, the pyramid form insures that the most important material will be included.
2. Write short sentences. Don't string sentences together with commas or semicolons. Never, under any circumstances, write a sentence that is longer than three typewritten lines. If you can make two sentences out of one long one, do it.
3. Always identify people who are quoted or paraphrased. Never use phrases such as “It was said that . . .” If the quote is important, but you don't know the name of the speaker, say “A member of the audience said . . .” or “One board member commented . . .” If for any reason you cannot identify the source, it's still important to be as specific as possible: e.g., “A high government official who is close to the situation commented that . . .”
4. If a subject comes up that you don't understand, don't fake it. If it's highly technical and interests only the people at the meeting, then leave it out of the article. If it's discussed in technical language but is of interest to the general public, then describe it in plain language that lay people can understand.
5. Don't confuse singular and plural agreements. A student is “he” or “she.” Students are “they.” A board is singular and referred to as “it.” Board members are plural and may be referred to as “they.”

6. In a list, use the same grammatical construction for each item on the list. If one item is a complete sentence, then each item should be a complete sentence. If one item ends with a period, each item should end with a period. If the list begins with a verb, all items in the list should begin with a verb.
7. Avoid sexist language. “Selectboard” is better than “Selectmen.” “Firefighters” is a preferred term to “Firemen.” One way to avoid “his/her” usage is to make the sentence plural. “Students . . . they . . .” rather than “A student . . . his/her . . .”
8. Always identify people completely on first reference. For example, “Board Chairman Robert Bast . . .” On second and succeeding references, he should become “Bast.” Err on the side of identifying people in a formal way. You may know some persons well, and always use their nicknames in conversation, but nicknames should be used only sparingly in a newspaper — in situations where there is a particular reason for it.
9. In a calendar item or church listing, there may be times when incomplete sentences (“All welcome” or “Registration required”) are acceptable, but in the text of an article, always use complete sentences. “All Hinesburg residents are welcome to attend.” “Advance registration is required.”
10. A common mistake is expressing an opinion or personal comment in a short article with no by-line. “The students did a great job.” “Thanks for your support.” If there is no by-line, comments such as this must be attributed. “Members of the PTO felt that the students did a great job.” “The Fire Department thanks Hinesburg residents for their support.”
11. Avoid unnecessary capital letters. The words “town” and “state,” for example, are often capitalized. In a newspaper article, they should be capitalized *only* if they are used as part of a proper noun: “Town Hall,” “Town Meeting,” or “State House.” If you're not sure whether a word should be capitalized, it probably shouldn't.
12. Please follow *The Record's* conventions for time and date notations. Dates should be written out fully (not abbreviated) and in standard U.S. convention (mm/dd/yy). For example: “On November 7, 2000 Bill Lippert was re-elected as Hinesburg's representative.” All references to time should be the hour and minutes, followed by a.m. or p.m. For

example, “The meeting will begin at 2:30 p.m.” or “The polls will open at 7:00 a.m. sharp.”

Purpose and Tone

Unlike most news media, *The Hinesburg Record* serves two roles. One role is that of booster for our community. Whenever possible, try to include notices of awards or achievements attained. We make no secret of the fact that this newspaper supports our town, its residents, and its businesses. When people in our town deserve recognition, we like to give it to them. However, we are not *just* a town booster. We are also the *only* news medium covering Hinesburg on a routine basis. People depend of *The Record* to learn about the issues that affect their lives.

If a town board or town official makes a mistake, that *must* be reported. Perhaps the mistake was innocent or inconsequential. If so, that can be reported, along with the claims of those who feel otherwise. It's fine to give local officials space for the “official” explanation of controversial events, but efforts should also be made to report those events fully and objectively, with opposing points of view. This is not an easy mission with an all-volunteer staff — we don't have teams of investigative reporters to call upon. Nonetheless, we cannot afford to create an impression of covering up, or sanitizing, the news.

Other difficult questions arise because we are a local paper, covering activities of ordinary people. Sometimes a dispute between neighbors goes before a local board and becomes news. The argument may include unfair allegations. In reporting the news, *The Record* should not disguise the fact that there were angry exchanges. However, caution is required to be sure that the news article itself is objective and fair. Direct quotes that might be libelous or invade one's rights to privacy must be avoided.

Expressions of opinion on matters of interest to Hinesburg residents are published as letters to the editor and not as news articles. All letters must be signed.

Deadlines and Submissions

The monthly deadlines for “news” items are listed at the end of this booklet. Make a note of these deadlines in your personal calendars. All material must be received by *The Hinesburg Record* on or before the deadline date. If you are able to submit an article before the deadline, please do so. This is a great help in

planning the next month's issue. If complications arise with meeting the deadline, please contact June Giroux at 482-2350.

Addresses for Submissions

Submissions to *The Record* may be handled in a number of ways, as noted below:

1. You may place it in the drop box at June Giroux's home on Charlotte Road (first house on left after Ben's Sandwiches).
2. You may mail it to: The Hinesburg Record, 327 Charlotte Road, Hinesburg, VT 05461.
3. You may send an article via electronic mail to: therecord@gmavt.net.

To keep editing tasks to a minimum, *The Record* requests that all submissions adhere to the following guidelines.

Guidelines/Conventions for Submissions

We prefer to receive articles via electronic mail or on computer disk whenever possible. If this is not possible, the article should be typed or legibly handwritten. Regardless of how the article is submitted, it should contain the following information —

Headline

Byline

Content

Dates to be inserted in calendars highlighted

Photograph with caption (optional)

Phone Number of author or contact person

Computer Generated Articles

If you write your article using a word processing program, please use the following conventions when typing the article:

1. Use Times New Roman font at 12 point.

write your name and phone number. Also, use a highlighter or red pen to indicate any text in the article that you want treated in a special way — columns, underlined, bold, italicized, etc. Any dates that should be included in our calendars should be highlighted. We will read any notes you write on the printed copy and try to follow them, if possible. If more than one printed page is submitted, handwrite the page number at the top of the page (use the convention: “1 of 2,” “2 of 2,” etc.).

10. Save your file in the following format: Word 6.0/Windows 95. This should create a file with a .doc extension. For example: hesnews.doc. Also, try to keep the name of the file short (within 8 characters).

Copying the File to a Diskette

Copy the text file to a diskette. Double check the disk directory to be sure the file was copied correctly. We prefer 1.4 MB diskettes formatted by Windows 95/98 but we can accept other formats.

Label your diskette carefully, however. Write the following information on the label:

- the type of computer you have used (i.e., Windows or Apple)
- your name
- your phone number
- the month and year

Electronic Mail Submissions

Articles submitted via electronic mail are preferred and gratefully accepted. With the variety of mail programs on the market, however, formatting issues can readily arise with email submissions. To keep these to a minimum, please adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Prepare the article using the guidelines described under “Computer Generated Articles” above.
2. Save the article in Word 6.0/Windows 95 format.
3. Send an email to therecord@gmavt.net.
4. Attach the Word 6.0 file to this email message.

5. If you are unable to attach a file to the message, you may include the article in the body of the email message. However, please copy and paste the article from your word processing program and be sure that the article does not contain hidden formatting codes (such as Hypertext Markup Language).

Submitting Photographs

If you are able to send a photograph that illustrates an event or happening, please do, even if you don't have an article to accompany it. Photographs enhance the newspaper and we are eager to publish them.

1. Deadlines for photographs are the same as the deadline for news articles and should be mailed or delivered to *The Hinesburg Record* on or before the deadline.
2. Developed photographs may be submitted in either color or black and white. Please be sure to write your name and phone number on the back of the photograph.
3. A caption should accompany the photograph. The caption should list the names of people in the photograph, if known, or describe the event or occasion.
4. Electronic submissions of photographs are encouraged. You may send a photograph via electronic mail to therecord@gmavt.net. Please send a .JPG version of the image and attach it to a message that includes the caption.

Ask For Help If You Need It!

If reading the above instructions leaves you in a cold sweat, don't panic. Help is available. If you are unsure of the procedures for creating the file, saving it as a Word 6.0, or copying the file onto a computer disk, or converting an image to .JPG, PLEASE CALL Sandy Lathem at 482-2714.

We are very willing to teach people how to use computers. Receiving information on disk saves our volunteers a tremendous amount of time and effort, so we will be more than willing to teach you how — just call!

A Word About Advertising

The Hinesburg Record is funded entirely by advertising fees. We are fortunate to receive the support of many local businesses which advertise regularly. However, to insure its continued success, we can all help by urging people we know to advertise in *The Record*. Our advertising rates are very reasonable, and *The Hinesburg Record* is a publication that people read, cover-to-cover. It's a good deal for the advertiser and a good deal for us.

If you are interested in helping with advertising or know of someone who might be willing to place an ad, please contact Lisa Beliveau at 482-3404.

Volunteer Staff

Many volunteers help to make our newspaper possible. Below is a list of those people currently volunteering in specific roles:

Mary Jo Brace	482-2182	Treasurer
Jen Bradford	482-5528	Copy Editor
June T. Giroux	482-2350	Managing Editor
Mona Giroux	482-2179	Subscriptions
Sandy Lathem	482-2714	News Editor/President
Kevin Lewis	482-4705	Graphic Design/Layout/ School Daze/Vice President
Pat Mainer	482-3134	Circulation Coordinator
Sue Maguire		Photography
Bill Piper	482-3419	Mailing Coordinator
Lisa Beliveau	482-3404	Advertising Coordinator
Jane Sheldon	482-3153	Copy Editor
Ginny Roberts		Proofreader

Hinesburg Record Board of Directors and Officers

Office		Term Expires
President	Sandy Lathem	2008
Vice President	Kevin Lewis	2005
Treasurer	Mary Jo Brace	2005
Secretary	Lisa Beliveau	2008
Editor	June Giroux	

The Hinesburg Record, Inc. was incorporated in 1988.

Charter members of the organization are –

Frances Birdsall

Stephen Carlson

June T. Giroux

