

## ASK THE LEAGUE

*What is a special police officer?*

The term “special police officer” is found in 24 V.S.A. § 1936 and refers to “temporary police officers” appointed by a legislative body or town manager. 24 V.S.A. §1931(a). The appointing official or body must also outline the term, duties, and compensation for the office in its appointment. In a town without a police department, a special police officer is under the direction and control of the legislative body and may work alongside a town constable to provide law enforcement for the municipality. Before engaging in law enforcement, all special police officers (and, as of July 1, 2012, all town constables) must have appropriate training in accordance with Chapter 151 of Title 20. 24 V.S.A. §§ 1936(b), 1936a.

Special police officers may be appointed by the legislative body or a town manager when a municipality has a police department “as additional police officers when necessary[.]” A special police officer serves at the direction of a police chief when one exists. 24 V.S.A. §§ 1936(a), 1931(b). All special police officers must take an oath and will hold office for the length of the designated term. All appointments, oaths, and removals must be recorded in the municipal clerk’s office. 24 V.S.A. § 1931(a).

Stephanie Smith, AICP, Senior Associate  
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