

GUIDE TO BECOMING A MEMBER OF A BOARD OR COMMISSION



5/24/2018

CITY OF WYANDOTTE, MICHIGAN

INTRODUCTION

Involvement in local affairs is essential in keeping our city and government officials aware of the needs of our citizens. If you do not wish to run for office but do want to participate in governing our city, consider serving on a city Board or Commission. The City of Wyandotte has a number of governmental boards and commissions which provide an opportunity for citizens to participate in their local government. These groups also help to ensure that Mayor and City Council receives a broad spectrum of public input. Citizens that sit on these boards are volunteers who take great pride in their civic service.



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BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Specific information and term limits for the following City of Wyandotte Boards and Commissions is found in Chapter VII (Administrative Departments – Appointive Officers) of the City Ordinance and at the following links to our website:

Beautification Commission

The Commission shall be comprised of not less than seven (7) members and not more than eleven (11), each of whom shall be residents of the city. The term of each member shall be three (3) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/BeautificationCommission.asp>

Board of Examiners of Electricians

The board shall be comprised of the electrical inspector, a licensed journeyman electrician of at least (4) years' experience, a representative of the department of municipal service who holds a journeyman's license for at least 4 years, a licensed electrical contractor having their own master license and a person connected to the electrical industry, but not engaged in the installation of electrical equipment. The term of each member shall be one (1) year.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/BoardOfExaminersOfElectricians.asp>

Board of Examiners of Plumbers

Of the five (5) members initially appointed by the chief appointing authority as follows: one for 5 years, one for 4 years, one for 3 years, one for 2 years and one for 1 year. Thereafter, each new member shall serve for 5 years or until a successor has been appointed. The board of members who are qualified in accordance with the act and are not employees of the governmental subdivision or the agency enforcing the code.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/BoardOfExaminersOfPlumbers.asp>

Building Authority

The Wyandotte Building Authority is a Commission that oversees construction of public buildings. This includes coordinating the issuance of bonds to finance these projects. The Building Authority has a term limit of six (6) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/BuildingAuthority.asp>

Building Code Board of Appeals

The board shall be comprised of seven (7) members. One must be a registered design professional with structural or architectural experience. The others must be registered design professional, construction superintendents or contractors with experience in various areas of building construction. These requirements are important in that technical people rule on technical matters. The board of appeals is not the place for policy or political deliberations. It is intended that these matters be decided purely on their technical merits, with due regard for state-of-the-art construction technology. The board of appeals shall consist of members who are qualified in accordance with the act and are not employees of the governmental subdivision or the agency enforcing the code. The term of each member shall be four (4) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/BuildingCodeBoardOfAppeals.asp>

Cultural and Historical Commission

The Cultural and Historical Commission shall consist of no more than eleven (11) members, each of whom shall be residents of the city. The term of each member shall be four (4) years, appointed by the mayor and subject to confirmation by the council.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/CulturalHistoricalCommission.asp>

Design Review Committee

The board shall consist of not less than five (5) members. The committee shall consist of one (1) member from each of the following commissions or departments: Planning commission, Cultural and Historical Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Engineering and Building Department and a resident-at-large. The term of each member shall be three (3) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/DesignBoardReview.asp>

Downtown Development Authority

The board shall consist of eight (8) members. At least five (5) of the members shall be persons having interest in property located in the downtown district. At least one (1) of the members shall be a resident of the downtown district. The term of each member shall be four (4) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/DowntownDevelopmentAuthority.asp>

EDC - TIFA - Brownfield Redevelopment

The board is comprised of nine (9) members. These members also serve as the board for the Brownfield Redevelopment Authority. The term of each member shall be six (6) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/TaxIncrementFinancingAuthority.asp>

Firefighters Civil Service

The commission shall consist of three (3) members, each of whom shall be residents of the city. The term of each member shall be six (6) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/FirefightersCivilServiceCommission.asp>

Municipal Service Commission

The commission shall consist of five (5) members, each of whom shall be residents of the city. The term of each member shall be five (5) years, appointed by mayor, confirmed by council.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/MunicipalServiceCommission.asp>

Planning Commission

The commission shall consist of nine (9) members, each of whom shall represent different professions and occupations. The term of each member shall be three (3) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/PlanningCommission.asp>

Police and Fire Commission

The commission shall consist of three (3) members, each of whom shall be residents of the city. The term of each member shall be three (3) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/PoliceFireCommission.asp>

Recreation Commission

The commission shall consist of five (5) members, each of whom shall be residents of the city. The term of each member shall be five (5) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/RecreationCommission.asp>

Retirement Commission

The *retirement commission* shall consist of seven (7) commissioners, as follows:

1. A member appointed by the municipal service commission. (2 year term)
2. A member appointed by the city council. (2 year term)

3. A member of the *retirement* system to be elected by the general members. (4 year term)
4. A member of the *retirement* system to be elected by the policeman members. (4 year term)
5. A member of the *retirement* system to be elected by the fireman members. (4 year term)
6. A member of the *retirement* system to be elected by municipal service members. (4 year term)
7. City Treasurer

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/RetirementCommission.asp>

Zoning Board of Appeals and Adjustment

The board shall consist of nine (9) members. One member of the board of appeals must also be a member of the planning commission. The term of each member shall be three (3) years.

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/Boards/ZoningBoardOfAppealsAndAdjustments.asp>



APPLICATION AND APPOINTMENT

Boards and Commissions play an important role in City governance by creating a diversified citizen-based focus into the planning process to maintain strong public interest, assisting City Council in addressing specific issues, lending professional expertise and facilitating community decision-making.

Before you begin serving on a board or Commission become familiar with:

1. The duties of the board or commission you are serving with.
2. The duties of each board or commission as outlined in Chapter VII: Administrative Departments – Appointive Officers of the Wyandotte, Michigan Code of Ordinances:

https://www.municode.com/library/mi/wyandotte/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=10070

BOARD AND COMMISSION APPLICATION

Those interested in applying for membership to any of the following boards, commissions or committees should complete the application for Boards and Commissions located at the following link:

<http://www.wyandotte.net/FrontDesk/Forms/CommissionerApplication.pdf>

The application is then forwarded to the Mayor's office for review and appointment, subject to the approval of City Council. Specific information and term limits for the City of Wyandotte Boards and Commissions is found on our website at the following link:

<http://www.wyandotte.net/Government/BoardsAndCommissions.asp>

APPOINTMENT

Appointment to a commission requires a majority vote of the City Council. Most commissioners are appointed to four-year terms and may also be eligible for subsequent terms. If a commissioner finds it difficult to meet the expectations of their assignment he or she can resign at any time. A resignation does not, however, prohibit an individual from being appointed again at a future date. Commissioners must also notify staff or the board chair if they are unable to attend a meeting. This is critically important when staff is determining if there will be a quorum of the members required to conduct business. A quorum is determined as follows: a majority of the members of each commission appointed and serving shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. A commissioner fulfilling the remaining time on an unexpired term is still eligible for reappointment to subsequent terms on the same commission.

SERVING ON A BOARD OR COMMISSION

Citizens who serve on City of Wyandotte Boards and Commissions are among the most respected and appreciated volunteers in the community. Board and Commission members perform a variety of tasks and are responsible for staying informed, complying with established policies and regulations and providing high-quality service to the community.

BENEFITS

The benefits of service on a Community Board or Commission are many and include:

- Making a difference in your community
- Developing and enhancing leadership capabilities
- Having a voice
- Expanding networks
- Learning new skills
- Meeting like-minded individuals

DUTIES

Some of the duties you will be expected to perform as a member of a Board or Commission include:

- Attending meetings regularly.
- Understanding the function of the commission on which you serve.
- Acting responsibly and efficiently when using City assets, including personnel, time, property, equipment and funds.
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards.
- Respecting the voice and spirit of your Board or Commission peers and the citizens of the City of Wyandotte.

Other duties vary dependent upon the needs of the specific board or commission. City staff should provide each member of the board or commissions with the information necessary for members to fulfill their specific duties.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are Boards and Commissions?

Boards and Commissions are organizations of knowledgeable local residents who study a specific area of concern. Some committees are mandated by State statute and some are established by City Charter, ordinance or resolution. These Committees vary in legal status; some have advisory capacity, and some make legally binding decisions. While some advisory groups provide advice to the Mayor and City Council others provided advice to City Department Heads or other Non-Advisory Boards.

What Are the Requirements for Service?

In most cases, residency in the City of Wyandotte is the sole requirement for service on most City Boards and Commissions. City employees are permitted to serve as liaisons on certain boards and commissions provided there is no conflict of interest. Once appointed, a member may serve on one Board or Commission at a time. This is to ensure broad participation. An exception is made when the work of one Board or Commission may impact the work of another. For instance, a member of the Downtown Development Authority may also serve as a liaison with the Building Authority.

What Are the Appointment Procedures?

Mayor appoints and reappoints (with City Council approval) all members of committees that advise the City Council. City Charter requires this vote at a public meeting. Board or Commission members serve without compensation.

How Long Can I Serve on a Board or Commission?

Term limits vary for commissions and may be found on pages 4 through 6. Members whose terms have expired may continue to serve until they are re-appointed or the Mayor appoints a replacement.

CITY COUNCIL, STAFF AND MEDIA RELATIONS

City Council

Generally speaking, City Council members do not become actively involved in the general conduct of the work of a commission. Typically, the commission chairperson and/or city staff will keep the Council liaison informed of important activities of the commission. The purpose of the commission is to arrive at a decision, recommendation or set of recommendations based on consensus. The outcome of commission deliberations should be based on the vote of the body rather than the preferences of a single member. The responsibility of a commission is not to control the outcome of decisions that will ultimately be undertaken by City Council, but to provide the best possible advice based on public input, analysis and review of the issue(s). As a guide to decision-making, commissions are provided with the City Council's Strategic Plan. The Strategic Plan reflects the City of Wyandotte's overall priorities and vision for the community. Each commission has its own set of tasks to accomplish based on mission. Some activities are prescribed by local ordinance and/or State of Michigan statute; while other activities are established by interests and expertise of commission members. The Mayor is automatically a non-voting member of all commissions.

City Staff

Commissions are assigned a staff representative with expertise in the area falling under its purview. The staff member attends all meetings but is not a voting member of the group. In some cases, they are active participants during the discussion phase and, in other cases, they are not. Staff for some commissions, such as the Planning Commission is expected to make a formal recommendation on the course of action, based on the law, policy and professional expertise. In all cases, the role of staff is to support the work of commissioners by providing information and background, keeping minutes and agendas, helping to plan and organize commission activities and in general, acting as facilitator. Staff is expected to have an in-depth understanding of the community and its history. Once a commission has taken action, it is the role of staff to make a formal presentation to Mayor and City Council and to prepare any associated support materials needed. Staff is required to provide a complete overview of the commission's proceedings and to ensure that all relevant points are included in the final packet of information that City Council will use for deliberation and decision-making. When commissioners differ on an issue, the role of staff is to remain neutral. Staff will look to the chairperson to speak for the commission as a whole. While staff is actively involved in the commission's work, they also have other duties and assignments. Sometimes commissioners will want to direct the work of staff or take it on personally; however, neither course of action is appropriate. If commissioners have concerns about staff activities and work, they should be discussed directly by the individuals involved. Often, this type of discussion provides insight to commissioners about the types of constraints under which staff operate.

Media

Local government is a major source of news for the local print, radio and television media. Each outlet assigns a specific reporter to cover the City. The City of Wyandotte works closely with the media to insure accurate and thorough coverage of its issues. Generally, reporters will seek information directly from the City Administrator, City Councilmembers or City Department Heads.

If approached by a reporter, direct all inquiries to the Mayor or City Administrator's Office.

BOARD AND COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON

The board or committee chairperson is the key to the effectiveness of the group decision-making process. The chairperson provides direction and sets the tone for the meeting with the other commissioners and with the public. The chairperson must strike a balance between moving the meeting along and allowing for an inclusive and democratic process. To be effective, the chairperson needs the support and trust of the other members. In the chairperson's absence, the vice-chairperson will assume the duty of presiding over the meeting.

An effective chairperson:

- Uses parliamentary procedure at all times
- Expects courteous behavior from all commissioners and models such behavior
- Treats the public with courtesy and diplomacy
- Listens attentively to all speakers
- Solicits opinions, ideas and perspectives from all members and avoids letting a few dominate the discussion
- Protects new ideas from rejection prior to fair evaluation
- Keeps the discussion focused on the topic at hand and redirects the group when it digresses
- Delays decision-making until all of the ideas have been articulated and given consideration
- Attempts to gain consensus
- Balances discussion and meeting time constraints
- Assures formal decorum is observed at all times
- Keeps the audience apprised of process and procedure being used by the group
- Always restates the motion prior to calling for a vote
- Applies time limits to all speakers consistently.
- Does not have a personal agenda

Commissions elect their chairperson and vice-chairperson annually. A commission may also appoint sub-committees and members to chair them as needed.

MEETINGS

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

All board and commission meetings are open to the public. As the presiding member, the chairperson is responsible for calling the meeting to order on time and adjourning at a reasonable hour. If meetings are canceled or rescheduled, notification must be posted. People who come to participate in a public hearing or come to express their views on an issue may be doing so for the first time. The experience can be intimidating and emotional. Sometimes their behavior is nervous, forgetful or even aggressive; however, most people will relax when they perceive that they are treated well and that their concerns are given thoughtful consideration.

MEETING COURTESY

- A copy of the agenda should always be available for members of the audience
- Commissioners should treat the members of the public with dignity and respect
- Commissioners should refrain from displaying negative gestures or sounds with they disagree with a member of the public or another commissioner
- Side conversations should be avoided
- The chairperson should inform the audience of the time limits for speakers and should adhere to those limits
- The chairperson should explain the purpose of the meeting and the appropriate time to ask questions
- The chairperson should explain technical terms or jargon that might otherwise make it difficult for the audience to follow the deliberations

AGENDA

Meetings are governed by the agenda and the agenda constitutes the body's agreed-upon road map. Each agenda item can be handled by the chair in the following basic format:

1. The chair should clearly announce the agenda item number and should clearly state the subject. The chair should then announce the agenda format that will be followed.
2. The chair should invite the appropriate people to report on the item, including any recommendation they might have. The appropriate person may be the chair, a member of the governing body, a staff person, or a committee chair charged with providing information about the agenda item.

3. The chair should ask members of the body if they have any technical questions for clarification. At this point, members of the governing body may ask clarifying questions to the people who reported on the item, and they should be given time to respond.
4. The chair should invite public comments or, if appropriate at a formal meeting, open the meeting to public input. If numerous members of the public indicate a desire to speak to the subject, the chair may limit the time of each public speaker. At the conclusion of the public comments, the chair should announce that public input has concluded (or that the public hearing, as the case may be, is closed).
5. The chair should invite a motion from the governing body members. The chair should announce the name of the member who makes the motion.
6. The chair should determine if any member of the body wishes to second the motion. The chair should announce the name of the member who seconds the motion.
7. If the motion is made and seconded, the chair should make sure everyone understands the motion. This is done in one of three ways:
 - a. The chair can ask the maker of the motion to repeat it
 - b. The chair can repeat the motion
 - c. The chair can ask the secretary or the clerk of the body to repeat the motion
8. The chair should now invite discussion of the motion by the members of the governing body. If there is no desired discussion or the discussion has ended, the chair should announce that the body will vote on the motion. If there has been no discussion or a very brief discussion, the vote should proceed immediately, and there is no need to repeat the motion. If there has been substantial discussion, it is normally best to make sure everyone understands the motion by repeating it.
9. The chair takes a vote. Simply asking for the “yea” and then the “nays” is normally sufficient. If members of the body do not vote, then they “abstain.” Unless the rules of the body provide otherwise or unless a super-majority is required (as delineated later in these rules), a simple majority determines whether the motion passes or is defeated.
10. The chair should announce the result of the vote and should announce what action (if any) the body has taken. In announcing the result, the chair should indicate the names of the members, if any, who voted in the minority on the motion.

MOTIONS

1. Motions are the vehicles for decision-making. It is usually best to have a motion before the governing body prior to discussing an agenda item, to help everyone focus on the motion before them. Motions are made in two steps. First, the chair recognizes the member. Second, the member makes a motion by preceding the member's desired approach with the words: "I move..." A typical motion might be: "I move that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings." The chair usually initiates the motion by:
 - a. Inviting the members to make a motion: "A motion at this time would be in order."
 - b. Suggesting a motion to the members: "A motion would be in order that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings."
 - c. Making the motion. As noted, the chair has every right as a member of the body to make motion, but normally should do so only if he or she wishes a motion to be made but no other member seems willing to do so.

MEETINGS

Boards and Commissions are subject to certain legal requirements that are based on the public's right to know how decisions are made. These include the Open Meetings Act, and the Public Records Act. The Open Meetings Act applies to all Boards and Commissions. All members must adhere to the provisions and requirements of the Open Meeting Act.

What Is a Meeting?

Meeting means the convening of a public body at which a quorum is present for the purpose of deliberating toward or rendering a decision on a public policy.

What Is Not a Meeting?

- Individual contacts between board members and another person.
- Majority of board at conferences that are open to public (as long as majority does not discuss board business).
- Majority of board at social or ceremonial occasions (as long as majority does not discuss board business).

Notification Requirements

- Regular meeting – Notice posted within ten days after the first meeting in each calendar or fiscal year.
- Special/emergency meeting—Notice posted 18 hours in advance. In a prominent and conspicuous space accessible to the public and on the city website.
- A body may meet in closed session if and only if a resolution is passed in open meeting for purposes specifically outlined in the Open Meetings Act.

Rights of the Public

- Right to attend without identifying oneself.
- Right to see Board agenda materials.
- A commission or board may enact a fee structure for requests require printing and mailing of materials.
- Right to record the meeting.
- Right to say anything, even if unrelated
- Right to speak before or during consideration to agency business of an item.

Under limited circumstances members of Boards and Commissions may speak to an item not on the Agenda:

- When briefly responding to statements
- When clarifying questions asked or questions.
- When referring to staff for information.
- When briefly announcing or reporting on own activities.

Permissible Closed Meetings

It is extremely rare for Boards and Commissions to be involved in the types of activities that would justify a closed session. Therefore, we advise that Boards and Commissions check with the City Clerk when considering whether to conduct a closed session.

Standing and Ad Hoc Committees of a Board or Commission

If a Board or Commission wishes to establish a standing or ad hoc committee of certain members, check with the City Clerk as to establishing such a sub-committee and the applicability of the Open Meetings Act.

More information about the Open Meetings Act may be found at the following link:

https://www.mml.org/resources/information/oma_foia.htm

PUBLIC RECORD

What Is a Public Record?

Reports include any writings containing information relating to the conduct of the public's business that are prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics.

- Board reports and files of boards or commissions are open to the public under Public Records Act.
- Materials distributed to the Board or Commissions are public records and must be made available for inspection and copying.
- Assume that e-mail sent among members of the Board or Commission and/or staff is public information. (Don't send anything you don't want to read in the newspaper.)
Information on a Phone, PDA or "Smart Phone"
- Information kept on a home computer or PDA or "smart phone" related to government business is subject to disclosure unless exempt. This includes e-mail and appointment calendars.
- Personal information is not subject to disclosure and may be redacted to protect privacy interests.
- If the City pays for the device, it is subject to City computer policy.
- Requests for public records must be made in writing.
- Public records shall be open for public inspection.

What Is Not a Public Record?

Section 13 of the Freedom of Information Act provides a listing of records that are not required to be disclosed. You should consult with the City Clerk's Office about any questions on what is a public record.

If a Board or Commission receives a public records request from the City Clerk it should:

- Respond to the request in writing within 10 days.
- Assist the member of the public in making a focused and effective request, if the request is unclear.
- Turn over copies of documents within a reasonable time.
- If the public record is in an electronic format, the agency may be required to turn the record over in an electronic format.

ETHICS & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Boards and Commissions should have three ethical goals:

1. Encouraging high standards of behavior by public officials
2. Increasing public confidence in the institutions that serve the public
3. Assisting public officials with decision-making.

Conflict of Interest:

A conflict of interest arises when the personal interest of the public official places him/her in a position where he/she cannot execute his public duties without affecting his/her private interest, which then denies the public a fair, impartial and objective judgment (attorney general opinion).

The city has a standard of conduct ordinance for elected officials, appointees and department heads which you should review (Section 2-300 to 2-313).