

# BOARD PROCESS & POLICY

*Recommendations to City Commission*



Barbara Pitcher, City Clerk  
City of Buchanan  
May 24, 2021

## Overview

---

Nearly 100 citizen volunteers serve the City of Buchanan on the City's various boards, commissions, councils committees and subcommittees (hereafter referred to as "boards") which have major responsibilities in assisting the City Commission and staff in public policy development and implementation. These boards and commissions play a vital role in shaping the community's future and maintaining and improving its quality of life. By serving on these various groups, city residents have the opportunity to truly make a difference in their community.

In further development of the Board Application and Appointment Process in alignment with MEDC's Redevelopment Ready Communities initiative, the Clerk has been on a mission to compile and understand the complex maze of boards and subcommittees, when and how they were established, their bylaws, and current rosters. During this process, whether due to turnover in the Clerk's office, practices of the past City Hall administration, the chaos of a pandemic, or other factors, we have uncovered some inconsistencies regarding board roles, responsibilities, and relationship to the City's strategic initiatives.

In addition to a lack of clarity, consistency, and oversight on the part of the City, we have a wide disparity in the productivity and effectiveness of boards and subcommittees. This should be reviewed to uncover best practices of those boards who add considerable value to the City and consider remediation or removal of underperforming or misaligned boards. Many boards are currently out of compliance with City policies, their own bylaws and the Open Meetings Act (OMA). Few provide either agendas or minutes to the Clerk's office on a timely basis – if at all – and do not keep the City apprised of vacancies and/or appointments to their board.

## Recommendations

---

The following are recommended changes to process and policy governing the various boards of the City of Buchanan.

### Regain Compliance

- Hold a required meeting of board officers in June as a reorientation to the board policies and procedures, ensuring all boards and subcommittees will act on behalf of the best interests of the City of Buchanan and operate under the financial, legal and regulatory requirements and duties of the City of Buchanan which include but are not limited to:
  - Adherence to the Open Meetings Act
    - Appropriately noticing and holding public meetings
    - Publication of Agenda and Minutes
  - Use of Robert's Rules of Order to conduct meetings
- Hold an annual meeting thereafter early in the year to review policies and procedures and prepare boards for the annual strategic reporting and board reappointment process.
- Develop or contract periodic training and refreshers on:
  - Open Meetings Act
  - Robert's Rules of Order
  - Municode Meeting Management

## Establish Consistency

- Unless reasonably precluded in a board's bylaws by a higher authority, verify or revise all board bylaws to reflect that:
  - All board terms run in conjunction with the City's fiscal year, July 1 through June 30.
  - All board reappointments for expiring terms are made annually by a vote of the board followed by a recommendation from that board to the City Commission by May 31 for ratification in June.
  - All new board appointments are made as necessary by a vote of the board followed by a recommendation from the board to the City Commission for ratification.

## Ensure Effectiveness

- Foster development of objectives and strategic plans presented to the City Commission annually. Such objectives and strategies should demonstrate alignment with the City's objectives and maintain or improve the quality of life within our community.
- Establish regular progress reporting to the City Commission, both in writing and appearance before the Commission.
- Refer to Resolution 2004.01/011, establishing policy for the formation of board subcommittees. Key aspects include:
  - Subcommittees can be formed at the recommendation of a board or the City Commission and must be adopted through resolution by the City Commission.
  - Ad hoc committees established by the City Commission are a suitable alternative to board subcommittees.
  - In all cases, the board will appoint a member of its own to serve on the subcommittee to provide ongoing updates to the supervising board.
  - An official subcommittee will require an annual resolution of continuation to ensure productivity and effectiveness.
- Facilitate the dissolution or transition to volunteer or nonprofit status of boards or subcommittees no longer aligned with the City's objectives, providing value, or complying with the financial, legal and regulatory requirements and duties of the City.

## Realign

- Elevate high performing subcommittees to board level. Currently the following subcommittees fall under the oversight of the Buchanan Area Recreation Board but operate quite independently of the B.A.R.B. Given the strategic value to the City, each could easily operate as a stand-alone board:
  - Buchanan Tree Friends
  - Friends of McCoy's Creek Trail
- The Common Committee is also a subcommittee of the Buchanan Area Recreation Board and is primarily concerned with the Thursday Concert Series and Stop, Lunch and Listen programming at the Common. As the City expands programming and events at the Common, restructuring the Common Committee as a stand-alone board with appropriate subcommittees and representation from adjacent boards, such as the Buchanan Area Performing Arts Council, should be considered in order to facilitate a broader strategy for community development.
- The Buchanan Farmer's Market is currently formed under the now dissolved Downtown Development Authority. Given its function and vital role to the community, it could either operate as a stand-alone board or under the auspices of the restructured Common Committee.

## Ongoing Development & Refinement

- In preparation for the Board Portal on the City’s new website, launching this Fall, fully document board rosters, terms, bylaws and the date and means by which each board was established and provide access to recent archived minutes.
- Utilize the Municode Meeting Management platform to establish consistent templates and train designated board members to create and publish their own meeting agendas, packets and minutes.
- Further enhance the board application and appointment process to include:
  - Converting the application to a fillable form
  - Establishing desired board member skills, interest, experience and criteria for each board and subcommittee to facilitate a mutual good fit for the board and applicant
  - Instituting communication templates and workflows so all prospective board applicants and the board(s) to which they applied are kept apprised of where their application is in the process

The goal and challenge is to reestablish a mutually productive relationship and a level of professionalism with our boards while preserving the tremendous pride and passion many of our volunteer board members have in the City of Buchanan. In many ways, they are the reasons *Life is Better Here*.

## Current Boards of the City of Buchanan

At this time, this is the best accounting the Clerk’s office has regarding current boards. Additional research and verification of highlighted items are necessary.

BOARD	PURPOSE	ESTABLISHED	STRUCTURE
Board of Review	Charged with considering, correcting, and approving the assessment roll. It shall hear the complaints of all persons considering themselves aggrieved by assessments. If it appears that any person or property has been wrongfully assessed, or omitted from the roll, the Board shall correct the roll in such a manner as it deems just.	Charter, Section 10.6	5-member board 4-year terms
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority	Organized to operate exclusively for the City of Buchanan, Michigan pursuant to powers granted by the Brownfield Redevelopment Financing Act, Public Act 381 of 1996, as amended.	Resolution #1999.(03)/005 on March 22, 1999 with an effective date of operation of May 21, 1999.	5-member board 4-year terms
Buchanan Area Performing Arts Council	Charged with encouraging participation among citizens of the Buchanan area in all areas of fine arts to be accomplished through soliciting and selecting fine arts programs for citizen participation and enjoyment, planning	Comm. Res. 9305 Res. 2002.10/20 Res. 2000.11/31	15-member board 4-year terms

BOARD	PURPOSE	ESTABLISHED	STRUCTURE
	exhibitions, concerts, demonstrations, and any other programs that might allow citizens of the Buchanan area to experience and appreciate the fine arts.		
Buchanan Area Recreation Board (B.A.R.B.)	Charged with the development and implementation of the City's Park and Recreation Master Plan, and in recent years has been furnished with City funds for capital improvements at park facilities throughout the community. Parks and recreation programs are an important component of Buchanan's quality of life, and both the City Commission and the Recreation Board have committed themselves to upgrading and beautifying Buchanan's park facilities.	Ordinance 204 Comp. Ords. Rev. 1991 12.361	7-member board 3-year terms
Buchanan Farmer's Market Board (subcommittee of the now dissolved DDA)	Direct the function of the Farmer's Market in accordance with the recommendations of the City Commission of the City of Buchanan.	2006	9-member board 3-year terms
Buchanan Tree Friends (subcommittee of the B.A.R.B.)	To improve the beauty of our city's streets by maintaining and planting trees that will provide shade and environmental health benefits to all inhabitants of Buchanan. The board will also help the City of Buchanan to retain its Tree City USA designation.	2018	Up to 9-members 3-year terms
Buchanan Youth Softball Baseball Association (BYBSA) (subcommittee of the B.A.R.B.)			
Common Committee (subcommittee of the B.A.R.B.)	Charged with programming arts-related events at the Common. In order to ease the logistics of co-promotion, the Common Committee will finalize its programming schedule for the summer of a given year by February of that same year, commensurate with the Buchanan Fine Arts Council. The aim of programming efforts by the Common Committee should be to seek diverse schedule reflecting a	Res. 2013.04/84 Res. 2003.07/21	9-member board 4-year terms

BOARD	PURPOSE	ESTABLISHED	STRUCTURE
	broad base of interests in the community.		
Compensation Committee		Charter Ord. 357.12/02	5-member board 5-year terms
Construction Board of Appeals		2009	5-member board 3-year terms
Design Review Committee <i>(subcommittee of the Planning Commission)</i>	To review and determine compliance with the approved Downtown Design Standards as referred to in the City of Buchanan Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance Amendment for the Central Business District and determine if the applicant's plan conforms to the approved Downtown Design Standards.	Ord. 2005.03/363  Ord. 154 Section 22.07	4-member board 3-year terms
Dog Park Committee	To design and develop a dog park facility within the city limits of Buchanan.	Res. 2001.05/46	
Friends of McCoy's Creek Trail	Friends of McCoy's Creek Trail have gathered in unity to develop and pursue a trail through the City of Buchanan. They have developed pathways through E. B. Clark Woods on the south side of McCoy's Creek and have continued the trail to downtown Buchanan along the Creek. They host events such as a 5k Extreme held in August and Trek-or-Treat for Halloween. Public can walk, run or just enjoy a stroll through the woods.	Resolution, April 2004  2004.04/14 2004.04/11	7-member board 4-year terms
Friends of Oakridge Cemetery			Up to 7 members 2-year terms
Friends of the Ducks Committee <i>(subcommittee of the B.A.R.B)</i>	To provide and advocate for the ducks in Buchanan parks.		
Joint Water-Sewer Board	A joint City/Township body, which makes policy recommendations regarding operation of the city's water and sewer system, and oversees the cooperative agreement between the City and Township for provision of city water and sewer services to adjacent township areas.	4/23/1984 8/8/2011	5-member board 3-year terms
OneBuchanan	Promotes a welcoming and inclusive community and intends to host	January 11, 2021 Commission	

BOARD	PURPOSE	ESTABLISHED	STRUCTURE
	forums on topics such as Mental Health, Black History, LGBTQ issues, etc.	Meeting (Swem/Weedon)	
Planning Commission	Charged with the development and adoption of a City Master Plan, and advising the City Commission on zoning and land use ordinances related to the implementation of that plan. The Plan Commission also has the responsibility for conducting public hearings on rezoning requests, and for conducting site plan reviews for proposed commercial, industrial, and multi-family residential developments.	Ord. 2006/01.368 Ord. 2015.06/392	7-member board 3-year terms
Watershed Quality Support Board		Res 2012.04/069	11-member board 3-year terms
Zoning Board of Appeals	Hears appeals of requirements, decisions or determinations made by the Zoning Administrator, interprets zoning district boundaries, issues variances from the strict terms of the ordinance, issues variances from the strict terms of the yard setback requirements and hears appeals concerning decisions made by the Planning Commission. All decisions of the ZBA are subject to review by the City Commission.		6-member board 3-year terms

### Unconfirmed Subcommittees of the B.A.R.B.:

- Community Gardens
- Have Fun at Buchanan Parks
- North End Park
- Rocket Football

### Peripheral Boards

The following are not recognized as official boards of the City of Buchanan, although City Staff and/or Commissioners may serve in an official capacity on such boards:

- Buchanan Chamber of Commerce
- Buchanan District Library Board of Trustees
- Southeast Berrien County Landfill Authority
- Southwestern Michigan Community Ambulance Service (SMCAS)