City of Madison Heights
Boards and Commissions Handbook
Revised October 2026

Member Acknowledgment

The Boards and Commissions Handbook is a reference guide for advisory and regulatory bodies. It provides an overview of basic laws and procedures during a member's term and to clarify the role and responsibilities of Board and Commission members in relation to the City Council, City staff, and the public.

I, _____, confirm that:

- I was provided with a copy of the Board and Commissions Handbook.
- I have read the Handbook, including any updates in effect as of the date of signing.
- I agree to follow the guidelines and requirements in this Handbook and all applicable State of Michigan law, the Madison Heights Code of Ordinances, resolutions, bylaws and other applicable City policies.
- I understand that this Handbook is intended to provide guidance on processes and procedures and to identify the primary rules and expectations for service on a City Board or Commission.
- No legal advice is intended through this Handbook.
- I am responsible for reviewing this Handbook during my term and following current protocols and requirements.
- I may consult the Staff Liaison or City Clerk when I have questions or concerns about these guidelines or my service.

If a conflict exists between this Handbook and applicable law, the City Charter, City Code of Ordinances, resolutions, or other controlling authority, the controlling authority governs.

_____ _____

Signature Date

I serve on the following Boards and/or Commissions _____

This acknowledgement is due to the City Clerk's Department within 60-days of appointment.

1. Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking an interest in your local government and helping Madison Heights work toward a strong, connected community. Appointment to a city Board or Commission requires no prior experience in public service. This handbook is designed to help members understand their role, the City's Council-Manager form of government, and the expectations for productive public service.

The City of Madison Heights appoints more than 135 people to 24 Boards and Commissions. These bodies provide community knowledge, technical expertise, research, recommendations, and public input that help inform City policy, activities, decisions and operations.

Madison Heights operates under a Council-Manager form of government. City Council establishes policy and City-wide priorities. The City Manager is the chief executive responsible for implementing Council policy and managing daily City operations. Most Boards and Commissions are advisory bodies. Some bodies have specific decision-making authority established by ordinance, charter, or State law.

Boards and Commissions are an important part of City government, but they are not separate governing bodies. Their work must remain within their legal charge, approved workplan, and authority granted by Council or other controlling law.

2. Roles and Authority

City Council

- Sets City policy and Citywide priorities.
- Approves annual Board and Commission workplans.
- Approves matters requiring Council action.
- Receives recommendations and annual reports.
- Establishes expectations for City-wide coordination.

Boards and Commissions

- Work from Council-approved priorities and the Board or Commission's legal/ordinance charge.
- Research issues and develop informed recommendations.
- Implement work specifically assigned and approved through the appropriate City process.
- Use subcommittees for defined, time-limited assignments.
- Measure results and report accomplishments, challenges, and recommendations.

Staff Liaison

- Handles administrative requirements such as scheduling meetings dates, times, locations, prepares minutes of meetings and agenda
- Coordinates City support
- Advice on event and program feasibility, budget, timing, staffing and city processes.

3. General Duties and Responsibilities of Appointees

Members are expected to attend meetings regularly, arrive prepared, and participate in the work of the body.

Attendance Standard

A member who misses three (3) meetings during any rolling twelve-month period, whether the absences are excused or unexcused, shall be removed from the Board or Commission, subject to any different process required by applicable law, ordinance, charter, or other controlling authority. A vacancy may then be filled through the City's appointment process.

Members should notify the Chair and Staff Liaison as soon as possible when they cannot attend. An absence may be recorded as excused or unexcused for meeting records, but the three-meeting removal standard applies to both unless controlling law provides otherwise.

- Members should understand attendance expectations before appointment.
- Unexpected absences can cause a meeting to lack quorum and prevent the body from conducting business.
- Boards that repeatedly fail to achieve quorum or conduct limited substantive business may be subject to review by Council and the City Administration to evaluate their continued necessity, effectiveness, and relevance to the City's current needs and priorities.
- Inactive Boards may be paused, converted to a focused task force, or phased out when their purpose or workload no longer justified continued operation.

Responsibilities

- Treat fellow members, the public, and City staff with respect and civility.
- Come prepared by reviewing agendas, minutes, reports, and supporting materials.
- Participate constructively and focus on issues rather than personal differences.
- Follow applicable parliamentary procedures, Open Meetings Act requirements, and Board bylaws.
- Remain within the Board or Commission's legal charge and approved workplan.
- Do not present a personal opinion as the official position of the Board or Commission unless the Board has authorized that position by vote.
- Communicate with the Staff Liaison regarding questions, absences, operational needs, and City processes.

Chair, Vice-Chair, Alternates, Staff and Council Liaisons

The Chair facilities productive meetings and does not have greater decision-making authority than other members. The Chair should:

- Preside at meetings and maintain orderly proceedings.
- Ensure motions are properly made, seconded, discussed and voted upon.
- Keep discussion focused on the agenda and allow appropriate public comment.

- Work with the Staff Liaison to keep Board activities aligned with approved priorities.
- Confirm that event and project work does not begin until required approvals are in place.

Alternate Members

Alternate members should attend meetings when possible to remain informed. When formally serving in place of an absent voting member, an alternate had the rights and responsibilities of the member they are replacing. When not filling a vacancy, an alternate may participate as permitted by the governing documents but may not vote or make motions.

Staff Liaison

The City Manager assigns a Staff Liaison to each Board or Commission. The Staff Liaison supports meeting administration, agendas, notices, records, City processes, operational coordination, and communication with City departments. The Staff Liaison is not the Board's project manager and does not replace the Board's responsibility to deliberate and make recommendations.

City Council Liaison

The Council liaison connects the board or commission to Council policy, priorities, discussions, and actions. The liaison should provide context and information without directing the Board's deliberations or substituting Council-member preference for the Board's independent discussion.

4. Subcommittees

Subcommittees are a tool for focused work, not a second governing body. They should be used judiciously and for defined assignments, typically with a clear start and end date.

A subcommittee may:

- Gather information.
- Develop options and recommendations.
- Plan details within an approved assignment, project, or event.
- Return recommendations to the full Board and Commission.

A subcommittee may not:

- Expand the Board's legal charge.
- Commit City resources beyond approved authority.
- Make commitments on behalf of the City.
- Approve an unapproved event or projects.
- Replace full-Board accountability.

Before creating a subcommittee, the Board should confirm its membership, assignment, scope, reporting expectation, and anticipated end date with the Staff Liaison.

5. Communication with City Council

- Boards and Commissions serve in an advisory capacity to City Council unless otherwise authorized by ordinance, charter, or State law.
- Recommendations to Council should be approved by a majority vote of the Board or Commission at a properly noticed public meeting before being forwarded.
- Formal recommendations, annual workplans, annual reports, and requests for Council consideration shall be transmitted through the Staff Liaison and City Manager. The City Manager determines appropriate timing and placement on a Council agenda.
- Individual members, including the Chair, shall not present personal opinions as the official position of the Board or Commission unless the Board or Commission has formally authorized that position.
- New projects, studies, policy reviews, events, or initiatives outside the approved workplan must be submitted through the Staff Liaison and City Manager for review before substantial City resources are committed.

6. Annual Workplan and Performance Expectations

Each active Board or Commission, unless designated as advisory only or required by the City Manager, shall prepare an annual workplan for Council approval. The workplan is the Board's operating plan for the year and is not blanket authorization to implement every idea discussed by the Board.

Boards that need to submit a Workplan and Performance Expectations are as follows: Art's Board, Crime Commission, Environmental Citizens Commission, Human Relations and Equity Commission.

The annual workplan shall be sufficiently specific for Council and City staff to understand what the Board intends to accomplish, why it matters, who will lead it, what resources may be required, where and when the work will occur, and how success will be measured.

Every workplan priority should answer:

- WHAT will be done?
- WHY is it a City priority?
- WHO will lead and who must be involved?
- WHERE will it occur?
- WHEN will activity occur?
- HOW is it anticipated will it be planned, coordinated, funded, and measured?

Required annual workplan components

- Board/Commission mission and legal charge.
- Connection to Council priorities, the Master Plan, a departmental priority, or another approved City direction.
- Specific projects, actions, deliverables, and anticipated outcomes.
- An annual calendar/list of planned events, including proposed dates, locations, purpose, anticipated attendance, budget/funding, and City resources.
- Resources required, including staff time, facilities, equipment, funding, vendors, or volunteers.
- Measures of success and reporting method.
- Items from the prior year that remain unfinished and the reason they remain unfinished.

Council approval of a workplan does not authorize expenditures, facility use, permits, contracts, road closures, staffing commitments, or event execution unless those approvals are separately obtained through the applicable City process.

7. Events and Special Programs

Events organized or sponsored by a Board or Commission must be coordinated through the Staff Liaison and adhere to the deadlines as outlined in the Boards and Commission Event Guide. Boards should strengthen City programming rather than compete with or duplicate existing City events.

Before proposing a new event, the Board should ask:

- Is there already a similar City event?
- Can the idea be incorporated into or used to enhance an existing event?
- Does another City department already have the audience, infrastructure, expertise, or calendar position?
- Would combining efforts produce a better event and better use of staff and volunteer time?

Event approval and deadlines

An event is not approved merely because it appears on an annual workplan or because the Board or a subcommittee votes to pursue it. Required operational approvals, permits, facility reservations, budgets, vendor arrangements, safety requirements, insurance, staffing, site plans, accessibility needs, and other details must be completed through the City's event process.

The Staff liaison will establish the required submission deadlines for each event based on its size and complexity. If required event details, applications, permits, approvals, or supporting information are not submitted and completed by the applicable deadlines. The City Manager is authorized to cancel the event or determine that it may not proceed if deadlines are not met.

8. Event Summary Report

A completed Event Summary Report is required after each Board or Commission sponsored event or significant project. The report should document attendance/participation, actual costs and funding, accomplishments, problems or compliance issues, lessons learned, and follow-up requested. The template is provided as Attachment B.

9. Annual Board/Commission Report to Council

Each active Board or Commission required to submit a workplan, shall submit an annual report to City Council. The report is intended to show what the Board accomplished, what it did not accomplish, what outcomes resulted, and what it recommends for the coming year.

The annual report shall include:

- Workplan priorities and completion status.
- Recommendations made to Council or City staff.
- Projects and events delivered.
- Participation and measurable outcomes.
- Actual use of resources where applicable.
- Unfinished work and reasons for non-completion.
- Challenges, compliance issues, or operational concerns.
- Priorities requested for the upcoming year.

The annual report shall be transmitted through the Staff Liaison and City Manager to City Council. The year-end report may be presented together with the proposed workplan for the upcoming year.