



# **COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE HANDBOOK**

Approved by Resolution No. 1681



### **Message from the Mayor**

Congratulations on your appointment! Thank you for your willingness to serve the Snoqualmie community on a commission or committee.

As a member, you will be part of an advisory body that will provide input on important decisions that will ultimately be reviewed by City Council.

Your appointment carries a great deal of responsibility. You will be expected to maintain the highest level of ethical standards and avoid the appearance of conflicts of interest. Your preparation for and regular attendance at meetings are vital to the success of your term. Your level of participation will directly correlate to the satisfaction you derive from your experience.

As you put your time and considerable talents to work, it is critical that you keep the public interest in mind. You are not only a representative; you are an ambassador for your community.

Again, I deeply appreciate your commitment to public service and improving the quality of life in Snoqualmie. I know you will do a great job!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Katherine Ross". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

## **THE ROLE OF A VOLUNTEER COMMISSIONER OR COMMITTEE MEMBER AND RESOURCES AVAILABLE**

### **Resident Participation through Commissions and Committees:**

Snoqualmie's system of Commissions and Committees is fundamental to encouraging the use of resident talent and interest in the affairs of the city, keeping our local government innovative and responsive.

Our residents have enjoyed a long tradition of participation in city government. Through representation on Commissions and Committees, residents are offered an important avenue to help create effective and equitable policies. Resident involvement contributes to the success of government and the quality of life enjoyed by our families and community.

In selecting Members, the Mayor strives to create Commissions and Committees that work well together and have some knowledge in the field. Citizen's Academy participants are preferred.

### **Types of Commissions and Committees:**

Commissions and Committees are created by City laws and rules and, sometimes, executive orders.

Each Commission and Committee is unique in its purpose, mission, and role. It is especially important that members be familiar with the governing statutes, city codes, and other administrative directives so they understand the framework within which the Commission or Committee must operate. The following are the Commissions and Committees currently existing in the city of Snoqualmie, together with the specific Snoqualmie Municipal Code (SMC) and Revised Code of Washington (RCW) chapters or sections that establish and govern each one:

- Arts Commission (SMC Ch. 2.06)
- Civil Service Commission (SMC Chs. 2.16 and 2.32; RCW Chs. 41.12 and 41.08)
- Parks and Events Commission (SMC Ch. 2.08)
- Planning Commission (SMC Ch. 2.12; RCW Ch. 35A.63)
- Lodging Tax Advisory Committee (SMC Ch. 2.11; RCW 67.28.1817)
- Economic Development Commission (SMC Ch. 2.22)
- Human Services Advisory Committee
- Salary Commission (SMC Ch. 2.36, RCW 35.21.015)

You are encouraged to read and familiarize yourself with the SMC and RCW chapters that apply to the Commission or Committee on which you serve. As provided in the City code, each of these Commissions and Committees has a distinct scope of influence and authority within the City government. However, the Civil Service Commission, Planning Commission, Lodging Tax Advisory Committee, and Salary Commission are situated somewhat differently from the other

City Commissions and Committees because they derive some of their powers and responsibilities from relevant state laws.

**Being an Effective Member:**

Despite the different sizes and types of Snoqualmie Commissions and Committees, it is imperative that members recognize they are in a critical position to shape and influence decisions and actions. It is important that each member stays informed and current on issues, legislative activity, and statutes affecting their Commission or Committee.

**Attendance:**

Regular attendance is essential and expected so that decisions will represent the body as a whole. In addition, regular attendance enables members to keep abreast of concerns and helps ensure that issues are examined from a variety of perspectives. Three consecutive unexcused absences may result in the member being removed from their Commission or Committee position. A member's absence will be considered unexcused if the member fails to notify the staff liaison in advance of the meeting and fails to get approval from the Chair (or a majority of members, as applicable) of the Commission or Committee. In addition, the Mayor may remove a member from office in accordance with applicable laws after consultation with the Chair and/or relevant Department Director. [Note, however, that a member of the Civil Service Commission or Planning Commission cannot be removed for cause without being given written notice and an opportunity for a public hearing on the grounds for removal.]

**Preparation:**

Adequate preparation is another requisite for effective Commission and Committee membership. The staff liaison will provide reports, proposals, and other information to help you make informed decisions. Do not hesitate to request additional information you need to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions.

In summary, effective Commission and Committee members must:

- Attend all meetings, unless excused (see above).
- Be prepared for meetings.
- Recognize that serving the public interest is the top priority.
- Recognize that the Commission and Committee must operate in an open and public manner.
- Be knowledgeable about the legislative process and issues affecting the Commission and Committee.
- Examine all available evidence before making a decision or recommendation.
- Communicate well and participate in group discussions.
- Be aware that authority to act or make recommendations is granted to the Commission and Committee as a whole, not to individual members.
- Exhibit a willingness to work with the group in making decisions.
- Recognize that compromise may be necessary to reach consensus.
- Not let personal feelings toward other members or staff interfere with their judgment.

### **Election of Chair and Vice Chair:**

Unless otherwise specified, at the first regular meeting of each calendar year, the Commission or Committee shall elect one of its members as Chair and another member to serve as Vice Chair for a term of one year. Should a Chair and/or Vice Chair resign or be removed from the position prior to the expiration of their term, the Commission or Committee shall proceed to the election of a new Chair and/or Vice Chair. No member shall serve more than two consecutive terms as Chair. In the event no member volunteers, the Mayor has the authority to appoint a Chair and/or Vice Chair for that year.

### **Resignations:**

If you are unable to complete your term, it is important to inform the Mayor's Office, City Clerk, and the appropriate staff liaison. A letter of resignation should be sent to the Mayor indicating the date your resignation is effective and whether you are able to serve until a replacement is named.

### **Commission and Committee Staff Members:**

Some Commission and Committee staff liaisons assist with daily administrative tasks. Members must keep in mind that staff have other job responsibilities and those individual members do not direct staff.

### **Staff Functions:**

The primary function of the staff is to carry out the rules, policies and programs developed by the Commission or Committee. In addition, staff members notify members of pertinent issues and legislative activity. They may also arrange meetings, prepare meeting materials, compile background information, and conduct research.

### **Legal Counsel:**

The City Attorney advises and represents the City in fulfilling official duties, issues legal opinions, and defends officials and employees for actions performed in their official capacities and in good faith. The City Attorney is available to provide legal guidance to Commissions and Committees, when coordinated through the staff liaison, and subject to any budgetary limits established by the Department Director or Mayor. It is important to bear in mind that communications to and from the City Attorney for the purpose of requesting or receiving legal advice are privileged and must be kept confidential for the City's benefit.

Members may request, via their staff liaison, the following services from the City Attorney:

- Assurance that decisions and actions fall within statutory authority.
- Questions about conflict of interest.
- Review of proposed regulations and revisions, and the drafting of such documents.
- General legal advice about actions and activities.

It is also important to bear in mind that the City Attorney represents the City as an entity and does not represent individual members of a Commission or Committee. The City Attorney may not provide personal legal advice to Commission or Committee members.

## **LAWS AFFECTING COMMISSION AND COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES**

### **Restrictions and Requirements:**

As a Mayor's appointee, you must be aware of certain restrictions and requirements that may affect you during your tenure:

- Members must be familiar with and operate at all times within the governing state statutes, City code, and federal laws.
- To ensure accountability, all applicable policies and procedures adopted by the Commission or Committee should be in written form.
- No member may make unilateral decisions or take action without the consent of the Commission or Committee as a whole.
- At professional or industry gatherings, or in other settings where appearance may be construed as representing the Commission or Committee, individual members must use discretion to avoid the appearance of speaking for the Commission or Committee unless specifically authorized to do so.
- Members must keep in mind that their mission is to serve the public, and that it is inappropriate to use membership to create a personal platform.
- Members are restricted by the City's ethics policy from accepting or soliciting anything of economic value as a gift, gratuity, or favor if it is given only because the member holds a responsible position with the City.
- Questions about issues should be directed to the staff support personnel, who will see that all members receive full information by the next regular meeting.
- Details of investigations, personnel files or business discussed at closed executive sessions should not be disclosed unless they are part of the public record.

### **Open Public Meetings Act:**

The City expects that all Commissions and Committees will operate to the fullest extent possible in an open and transparent manner, consistent with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 42.30 RCW. Regardless of whether the Act strictly applies to all Commission or Committee meetings, all Commissions and Committees should comply with open meeting requirements to the extent they can do so.

### **Notification of Meetings:**

The Open Public Meetings Act requires that all meetings of the governing body of a public agency be open to the public, including any commissions or committees thereof when such commissions or committees act on behalf of the governing body, conduct hearings, or take testimony. In addition, the public must be notified of such meetings in a timely manner. All meetings governed by the OPMA must be in-person and may have a remote option but cannot be completely remote unless a Federal, State, or Local emergency has been declared.

### **Public Disclosure:**

The minutes of all regular meetings must be recorded, uploaded to the city website, and made available for public inspection.

### **Accessibility Requirements:**

To afford members of the public who have disabilities an equal opportunity to participate, meetings subject to the Open Public Meetings Act are to be held in facilities which are wheelchair accessible.

### **Reasonable Accommodation of Persons with Disabilities:**

In addition to the Open Public Meetings Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) sets criteria for accessibility and accommodation. Under the ADA, people who have disabilities have a right to an equal opportunity for effective participation in the activities of Commissions and Committees, whether as appointed members or as members of the public.

### **Accessible Locations and Communications:**

Qualified sign language interpreters, materials in accessible formats such as Braille, large print and tape, and other forms of auxiliary aids for effective communications should be provided upon request.

Reasonable modifications should be made to policies or procedures, including travel reimbursement policies for members, whenever such a policy or procedure creates a barrier to the full and equal participation of a person who has a disability.

### **Ethics and the Appearance of Fairness:**

As a member, you are expected to uphold a high ethical standard. It is extremely important that members avoid conflicts of interest or even the appearance of conflicts of interest. Commission and Committee members should familiarize themselves with the state Code of Ethics for Municipal Officers, located at Chapter 42.23 RCW, as well as the City's ethic code, located at Chapter 2.80 SMC, and seek advice whenever they have questions or concerns about financial conflicts or other ethical issues related to their role as members.

**Using a public position for private gain is improper and illegal.** Similarly, actions benefiting close relatives are prohibited. There are penalties for violations of state ethics statutes. All members should familiarize themselves with the Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, as well as Snoqualmie's own ethics policy below.

The following are examples of conflicts of interest:

- Using confidential information for private investments.
- Accepting gifts or favors in exchange for certain rulings or recommendations.
- Accepting gifts or favors in exchange for making certain purchases.
- Obtaining personal favors from employees.
- Accepting favors for disclosure of confidential information.

- Making decisions or recommendations on matters that directly benefit the member financially.
- Members can avoid conflict of interest issues by being aware of and adhering to statutory restrictions, using good judgment, and being fair and equitable in decision-making.

## **Chapter 2.80 CODE OF ETHICS**

2.80.010 Purpose.

2.80.020 Definitions.

2.80.030 Prohibited conduct.

2.80.040 Disclosure of interest in legislative action.

2.80.050 Ethics hearing officer – Position created.

2.80.060 Ethics hearing officer – Powers and duties.

2.80.070 Hearings.

2.80.080 Recommendations of the ethics hearing officer.

2.80.090 Criminal violations – Prosecuting authority – Penalties.

2.80.100 Relation of chapter to Chapter 42.23 RCW.

### **Quorum:**

A quorum is the number of members who must be present to conduct official business. A quorum consists of a majority of the full membership of the Commission or Committee. If a quorum is not present, any business transaction is null and void. The quorum protects against unrepresentative actions by a small number of individuals. [Note: per RCW 41.12.030, quorum for the Civil Service Commission shall be two members.]

At meetings where a quorum is not present, the only actions that may be legally taken are to fix a time for adjournment, adjourn, recess, or take measures to obtain a quorum (such as contacting absent members).

### **Prohibition on Elections or Ballot Measures Using Public Resources:**

RCW 42.17A.555 strictly forbids the use of public or agency facilities for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion or opposition to any ballot proposition unless they are activities which are a part of the normal and regular conduct of the office or agency.

### **Testifying at Hearings:**

Members often have an opportunity to testify at hearings conducted by other legislative bodies, local government agencies, or community organizations. When providing testimony in such venues on behalf of the Commission or Committee, members should refrain from expressing personal opinions.

- Be prepared to answer questions and comments by members. If you are unable to answer a question, offer to provide a written response later and always follow through.



- If you must give a personal opinion, make sure that the audience understands that you are not speaking for the Commission or Committee, but for yourself.
- Legislative staff members find it helpful to receive copies of written testimony prior to the hearing.

**Order of Business:**

After the Chair has called the meeting to order, a Commission or Committee generally follows the procedure below:

1. Approval of the Agenda
2. Public Comment (Planning Commission)
3. Approval of minutes of previous meeting(s).
4. Reports of Council Liaisons.
5. Reports of special (select or ad hoc) committees.
6. Special orders (matters previously assigned a special priority).
7. Unfinished business and general orders (matters introduced in previous meetings).
8. New business (matters initiated in present meeting).

**The Chair and Voting:**

If the chair is a member of the Commission or Committee, they may vote just as any other member. Voting by secret ballot or proxy is prohibited by the open meetings law.

**Public Disclosure:**

State agencies and commissions/committees are required to have available for public inspection and copying their public records, such as procedural rules and statements of general policy, and other records, written or electronic, pertaining to the Commission or Committee’s business. Exemptions to disclosure are limited and identified in statute.

Records relating to the conduct of official business, including text messages and emails, are subject to disclosure even if they are on a personal computer or phone.

For additional information on disclosure requirements and exemptions from disclosure, refer to Chapter 42.56 RCW or consult the City’s Public Records Officer.

**Required Training:**

Whether you are a newly appointed Committee or Commission member or you have been serving for several years, Washington State law requires basic open government training. The Open Government Trainings Act (OGTA) states that every member of the governing body of a public agency must complete Open Public Meetings Act training every four years (see RCW 42.30). The Open Public Meetings Act defines a “public agency” to include “Any subagency of a public agency which is created by or pursuant to statute, ordinance, or other legislative act, including but not limited to planning commissions, library or park boards, commissions, and agencies.” Additionally, “governing body” is defined to include not just city councils, but “any committee thereof when the committee acts on behalf of the governing body, conducts hearings, or takes testimony or public comment.”

Because Snoqualmie’s volunteer commissions were all created by ordinance or act of the City Council, they fall within the definition of “subagency” of a public agency, and therefore the OGTA and OPMA requirement apply to the members of the Planning, Parks and Events, Arts, Economic Development, Civil Service, Human Services, and Salary Commission, as well as the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee whenever they act on behalf of the City Council, conduct hearings, or take public testimony or comment.

Therefore, the City requires that you complete the [Open Public Meetings Act \(OPMA\) Lesson 3](#) of the Open Government Training Act. The training video can also be found on the Attorney General’s [website](#).

Once you have completed watching the video, please send an email to the [City Clerk](#), stating the date on which you completed the training, so that your training can be logged in our records.

If you are a Planning Commissioner, you are required to watch the [Snoqualmie Short Course on Local Planning](#) which is designed especially for Snoqualmie and includes: an overview of the complex mix of land use planning laws that work together to support land-use decision-making in Washington state, an introduction to comprehensive planning and plan implementation under the Growth Management Act, a review of the roles in planning and best practices for public participation.

**Appointed officials must take the training and provide documentation to the City Clerk within 90 days of appointment.**