



STAFF REPORT

Meeting Date: May 20, 2026
Author: Kathy Payne, HR Coord/City Recorder
Department: Administration
Division: City Recorder/HR
Subject: Proposed Guides for City Boards/Commissions
Type of Item: Action
CC: City Administrator John Walsh

Introduction:

Guidance for boards and commissions.

Background:

Recently, concerns were expressed by a board/commission member that there was some disorder happening at their meetings. This was causing some problems and this member asked me for some advice. I gave them some general guidance on the specific matters.

Staff Analysis:

The concerns expressed are not new. Therefore, I thought it appropriate to set some guidelines and expectations on how board/commission members can conduct business respectfully and efficiently. With the assistance of AI, I created a Member Guide and a Chair Support Guide.

Budget Impact:

No impact to the budget.

Alternatives:

- Option 1: Approve both guides at the May 20 Regular Session.
- Option 2: Amend the proposed guides and bring back for June 17 approval.
- Option 3: Disregard requested action.

Requested Action:

Move to approve the City Boards & Commissions Member Guide and Chair Support Guide.

Attachments:

- DRAFT City Board/Commission Member Guide
- DRAFT City Board/Commission Chair Support Guide

CITY BOARD/COMMISSION MEMBER GUIDE

Purpose. This document outlines shared expectations that help the board function respectfully, efficiently, and in the best interest of the community. These expectations are not legal requirements; they are norms the group voluntarily follows to support productive service.

1. Commitment to the Public

- Act in the best interest of the community and the board's mission.
- Come prepared, having reviewed materials in advance.
- Maintain an open mind and base decisions on facts, policy, and community benefit.

2. Respectful Conduct

- Treat fellow members, staff, and the public with courtesy.
- Focus on issues, not personalities.
- Allow others to speak without interruption.
- Disagree respectfully and avoid personal attacks.

3. Meeting Participation

- Attend meetings consistently and arrive on time.
- Participate actively but concisely.
- Follow the agenda and support the chair's efforts to keep the meeting on track.
- Bring up new ideas through appropriate agenda-setting channels.

4. Communication

- Ask clarifying questions early, ideally before meetings if possible.
- Communicate concerns directly and respectfully.
- Use email, phone, or staff communication appropriately and professionally.

5. Support for the Chair

- Allow the chair to facilitate discussion without challenging their authority.
- Follow established ground rules and meeting procedures.
- Help maintain an environment where everyone can contribute.

6. Constructive Problem-Solving

- Assume good intent from fellow members.
- Work toward consensus where possible.
- When conflict occurs, focus on solutions and shared goals.

7. Relationship With Staff

- Respect staff roles and workloads.
- Use staff as a resource—not as an advocate for an individual viewpoint.
- Direct requests for information through the appropriate staff contact.

8. Accountability

- Accept responsibility for one's actions and words.
- Be open to feedback from fellow members and staff.
- Uphold the board's mission and agreed-upon norms.



CITY BOARD/COMMISSION CHAIR SUPPORT GUIDE

Purpose. This guide provides practical tools and reminders to help chairs run smooth, respectful, and efficient meetings. Chairs do not have to manage challenges alone — staff and fellow members are partners in maintaining a healthy environment.

1. Before the Meeting

- Review the agenda with staff; identify any sensitive or complex items.
- Clarify time limits or discussion structure for items likely to generate debate.
- Ask staff about any anticipated issues, questions, or special requests from members.
- Have a plan for public comment (time limits, order, expectations).

2. Starting the Meeting Strong

- Open with a clear, calm tone.
- Briefly review ground rules (e.g., one person speaks at a time, stay on topic).
- State the purpose of the meeting and expectations for respectful conduct.

3. Facilitating Discussion

- Call on speakers in order and ensure everyone has a chance to speak.
- Paraphrase or summarize when discussion drifts or becomes heated.
- Gently steer members back to the agenda when off topic.
- Remind members of time limits with a neutral tone.
- Encourage quieter members to contribute.

4. Managing Conflict

- Keep comments focused on issues, not individuals.
- Intervene early if discussion becomes personal or disrespectful.
- Use tools such as pausing discussion, offering a cooling-off moment, or asking staff for factual clarification.
- Remember: You are facilitating, not expecting to solve every disagreement yourself.

5. Working With Staff

- Lean on staff for procedural guidance and background information.
- Ask staff to help set the agenda, explain policies, or clarify past decisions.
- Communicate concerns or anticipated challenges before meetings.

6. Ending the Meeting Well

- Recap decisions and next steps.
- Thank members for their contributions.
- Touch base with staff afterward about anything that needs follow-up.

7. You Are Not Alone

If discussions become routinely difficult or unproductive:

- Ask staff for facilitation support.
- Consider requesting a brief board “norms refresh” session.
- Bring concerns to the City Administrator or appropriate staff early.

