

City of Madison Heights

Boards and Commission Handbook

New Member Review

The Boards and Commission Handbook is a reference guide for advisory and regulatory bodies. It is intended to provide an overview of basic laws and procedures during a member's term and to clarify the role and responsibilities of the 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 Commission Handbook.
- I have read the entire Handbook, including any updates as of signing these documents.
- I agree to follow the guidelines and regulations provided in this Handbook and as required by the State of Michigan or Madison Heights Code and any other policies needed/statutes. However, if there is a conflict between this Handbook and any procedures a single Board or Commission shall adopt, this Handbook shall govern.
- I understand this Handbook is intended as a tool to provide guidance on processes and procedures and to draw my attention to the primary rules of serving on a Board or Commission under the guidance of the City Council.
- No legal advice is intended through this Handbook.
- I am responsible for re-visiting this Handbook through my term to review protocol and regulations and for guidance.
- I am invited to consult with the Staff Liaison or City Clerk anytime I have questions or concerns about these guidelines and my services on a Board or Commission.

Signature

Date

I serve on the following Boards and/or Commissions _____

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

Thank you for your attention to this important information and for volunteering to serve as a Board or Commission member.

Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking an interest in your local government and helping us work to achieve great things in the City of Madison Heights. Your appointment to a city board or commission requires no prior experience in public service; we have put together this outline to help you navigate your new role. In addition, this document will introduce you to some of the key information you will need to serve on your board or commission.

The City of Madison Heights appoints over 135 people to 24 boards and commissions that advise and assist in carrying out local government functions. These boards and commissions provide a critical reservoir of knowledge and community input that inform City policy, activities, decisions, and operations.

The City of Madison Heights is a Council-Manager form of government. Under this system, the City Council (including the Mayor) sets policy, while the City Manager is the chief executive who implements the policies and manages the daily operations of the City. This is somewhat analogous to a corporation governed by a board of directors but managed by a CEO. Over 160 full-time and 148 part-time City employees work to deliver exceptional services to the residents.

Most boards and commissions are created by City resolution or ordinance and serve as advisory bodies to the City Council or City Manager. They provide information, analysis, and recommendations to inform the City Council's and City Manager's decisions on matters pertaining to the board or commission's specialized knowledge. A few boards and commissions have specific authority to make binding decisions in certain areas, such as the Zoning Board of Appeals. These bodies generally derive their decision-making authority from state laws.

Regardless of the specific duties, each board and commission plays an integral part in City Government. Appointees to boards and commissions perform a public service to their community and have both an obligation and an opportunity to provide useful and appropriate input to help shape their government. This requires a thorough understanding of their board or commission's role and a willingness to engage constructively with other board members and staff.

Although much of learning how to do this will happen while serving the board or commission, it is hoped that this document will provide useful introductory guidance.

Application Submission

While applicants are not required to interview nor appear before City Council before an appointment, the submission of a complete application is required either on the [City Website](#) or to the Clerk's Office located at 300 W 13 Mile Rd, Madison Heights, MI 48326. Applicants are presented to Council for consideration twice a year for re-appointment and appointment to vacancies. Applications are kept on file for one year after submittal. We request that a separate application be submitted for each board you wish to serve.

Applicant Selection

Appointees to the Crime Commission, Elected Officials Compensation Commission, Downtown Development Authority/Brownfield Redevelopment Authority, Planning Commission, and Parks & Recreation Advisory Board are the Mayor's nominations confirmed by a majority vote of the City Council. All other boards and commissions are appointed by City Council but do not require nomination from the Mayor. City Council tries to appoint members to boards or commissions that have the interest and/or background in the boards/commission the applicant is seeking. Preference is usually given to renewing members; however, attendance is considered a factor before re-appointment.

Process for New Appointments

Appointees who have been confirmed will receive a letter/email from the City Clerk's Office notifying them of their appointment and including contact information for the staff liaison to the board or commission and the term starts and end date. In addition, the staff liaison to your board/commission will contact you regarding any upcoming meetings and provide you with any information you may need pertaining to your appointment.

Before your first meeting, you should familiarize yourself with the bylaws of your board or commission and review the upcoming agenda materials. You may also wish to review materials or videos from prior meetings. See the Online Resources section below for links to access these materials. Your staff liaison should also be able to provide you with a schedule of meetings and any other pertinent information.

General Duties and Responsibilities of Appointees

In the broadest sense, the role of an individual appointee is to bring their experience and wisdom to the body and deliberate with other members to reach decisions that fulfill the purpose of the particular board or commission. Here are some general tips and expectations for appointees:

- Act courteously during meetings and treat other members of the body, the public, and City staff with respect. Disagreements are inevitable, but appointees should remain civil and focus on issues rather than personal differences.
- Observe good parliamentary practice. The Chair's role is to run an efficient meeting while allowing all points of view to be heard and a full discussion to occur orderly. Assist the Chair by being concise in making your points and not interrupting others. The City follows Roberts Rules as such a quorum is required to have a formal meeting, while motions must be made before discussion on a topic and discussion must be related to the motion at a Council Meeting, the point of the board or committee is often to plan and takes on a more "workshop/discussion role". In these cases, an agenda must be adhered to, and discussion must be related to the agenda topic.

- Arrive to meetings on time and let your staff liaison and Chair know if you will be absent. Unexpected absences can cause a meeting to be canceled if not enough members are present to establish a quorum. If a quorum is not present, the commission will be unable to conduct regular business, so as a courtesy to your fellow commissioners and the public, please provide advanced notice of any absences. Three or more unexcused absences in a calendar year shall be grounds for the removal of a board member for neglect of duty.
- Come prepared. Review proposed minutes, agenda packets, and other information ahead of time to allow for informed deliberation and discussion.
- Represent your board or commission appropriately. As an appointee, people may perceive you to speak on behalf of the City or your board or commission outside of regular meetings. Do not speak for your board or commission unless appropriately authorized to do so. Make clear when speaking in your personal capacity if there is any doubt.

Duties of Specific Members and Information about Member Types

Enabling legislation and bylaws are important documents that delineate member types, below are short descriptions of the various attendees who regularly participate in meetings other than general members.

Chair and Vice-Chair

Boards and commissions often elect members to offices such as the Chair, secretary, or vice-chair to carry out specific functions to serve the rest of the board or commission. Major systems of parliamentary procedure define some of these functions, such as the Chair's duty to preside over and keep decorum during meetings.

The Chair position exists to structure productive meetings, encourage the input of ideas, promote inclusiveness, and facilitate the overall decision-making process. They do not have greater power than other members. They should:

- Preside at all meetings, submit motions to vote, and generally do all things ordinarily required of a Chair, such as call a meeting to order, and ensure compliance with the Open Meetings Act and Robert Rules of Order.
- Ensures that consideration of items on the agenda moves along without delay and makes sure that public comment is received but not allowed to disrupt the meeting; this includes setting an acceptable time limit, if necessary.
- Clarifies all ideas as they are discussed, and repeats motions made in a way so all members understand the motion they will be asked to vote on and ensures that actions are properly moved, seconded, and voted upon by only voting members.
- In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall act as presiding officer and shall have the same responsibilities.

Alternate Members

Most boards and commissions have alternate members who serve on the boards or commissions in the absence of regular voting members. Alternate members are encouraged to attend all the meetings to stay up to date on issues; they are not voting members and, in the event of a full board or commission could not make motions or vote on issues but may be involved throughout the meeting in the full discussion.

When acting in place of an absent board or commission member, the alternate shall have all the rights and responsibilities of a regular voting member. When attending in an alternate capacity without filling a vacancy, the alternate board member may participate in agenda item discussions but shall not make motions, second motions, or vote.

Staff Liaison(s)

The staff liaison is the link between City staff and the Board and Commission members. The City Manager shall assign a staff liaison to each Board and Commission to provide support, coordination, and guidance. The Staff Liaison ensures that required Board and Commission meetings occur and prepares the meeting agendas. The staff liaison is also responsible for coordinating, distributing, and posting all committee agendas in pursuance to the Open Meetings Act. Staff liaisons will provide direction, guidance, and clerical, organizational, and administrative support to commissions as needed. The staff liaison also facilitates the transmission of boards and commission interests, concerns, and recommendations to the City Manager. Staff Liaisons will ensure there is a quorum before the Chair calls a board or commission meeting to order and adjourn a board or commission meeting in the event there is a lack of a quorum

City Council Liaison(s)

The City Council relies upon the expertise and recommendations of the Boards and Commissions in advising the Council as it sets City policy. The Council liaison function serves to facilitate and enhance this work. Their principal function is to provide a wide range of information to the advisory body, such as information about Council discussions, policies, and actions. This helps provide a historical perspective and place the board and commission work in context. However, the boards and commissions should act independently in formulating recommendations for the City Council to consider. Therefore, it is inconsistent for liaisons to direct, guide, or unduly influence the policy-making work of the City's advisory bodies. Historically, Boards and Commission members have valued consistent participation by Council liaisons.

Use of Subcommittees

Boards and Commissions may consider dividing into subcommittees to address specific issues when needed. These subcommittees should only be utilized short-term for specific topics or priorities. Sub-committees should be used judiciously as the entire Board and Commission should participate in most agenda topics. Sub-committees work independently and bring a report and recommendations back to the board or commission. The subcommittee must be composed of less than a quorum of the body and typically disband when the work on a single item is finished. Subcommittee meetings need not be noticed or open to the public. The Board and Commission usually vote on assignments to subcommittees and clarify the topic or event to be discussed.

The subcommittees are not subject to the notice and posting requirements of the Open Meetings Act so long as the committee:

- Consists of less than the number of members which would constitute a quorum;
- Is advisory such as the committee has not been delegated any decision-making power and will be returning to the entire board on its recommendation

Governing Rules

A few key resources provide structure for operating a healthy board and commission. It is important to be knowledgeable about the legislation surrounding boards and commissions.

Open Meetings Act

City boards and commissions are expected to conduct themselves according to the procedures contained in the Michigan Open Meetings Act ("OMA"). This means that City boards and commissions deliberate and make all their decisions during a public meeting, potentially including a full discussion of the reasons for those decisions. Commissioners should avoid emailing, talking, or otherwise communicating with a majority of other members outside of a public meeting about how they will vote reasons for voting a particular way, or the pros and cons of an issue that may come before the commission.

Sometimes, a discussion between commissioners outside of a public meeting may be necessary (for example, when developing draft policy /idea recommendations for presentation to the full commission). In such cases, the discussions should involve as few commissioners as possible and never involve a quorum. If the matter warrants substantial discussion with multiple commissioners outside of the regular meeting schedule, a subcommittee may be appropriate, the meetings of which would be posted and open to the public.

Basic Rights of the Public during a meeting governed by the *Open Meeting Act*:

- The public can attend without a requirement to sign in or identify themselves
- The public can address the assembly under the rules prescribed for public comment
- The public can get a full picture of the decision-making process; assemblies avoid exchanging written notes, secret ballots, electronic messages, and telephone calls during meetings

Freedom of Information Act

In general, records of the City are subject to disclosure under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Email communications about board or commission business are generally considered to be public records subject to disclosure under FOIA. For this reason, email correspondence regarding the board or commission's business should generally copy the staff liaison so that the City has a record of the correspondence. Commissioners are otherwise responsible for retaining and producing emails and other records, including text messages related to board or commission business, that they have in their possession upon request by the City's FOIA Coordinator or the City Attorney's Office.

Local Rules Relating to Meeting Documents

Meeting Notices

Advanced Public Notice of meetings is provided, at a minimum, by physically posting a notice or and listing the meeting on the City Website. Posting is typically required to be made no less than 18 hours before a meeting.

There are two types of meetings: regular meetings and special meetings. Boards and commissions schedule regular meetings at the start of each year, if applicable. When necessary, commissions may reschedule regular meeting dates by vote at a meeting throughout the year. Special meetings supplement the regular meeting schedule and often focus on specific topics. Scheduling either type of meeting includes many common key points.

Key Points for Scheduling Meetings:

- Avoid scheduling meetings for dates identified as Regular City Council meeting days, City holidays and /or other recommended holiday observances.
- Advanced notice of meetings is required for all meetings: regular meetings and special meetings. Work with your staff liaison to make sure these are published and distributed appropriately.

Agendas & Agenda Packets

Agendas are critical documents for keeping meetings on topic and progressing in an orderly manner. With the exception of subcommittee meetings, agendas are required to be posted online for all meetings at least 18 hours ahead of each meeting. Staff liaisons help boards and commissions publish agendas online ahead of meetings.

Agenda packets are the supporting documents relating to items on the agenda and encompass any materials distributed to members for review and action. Under record retention rules, the City keeps all agendas and agenda packets created as a part of the permanent record of each meeting.

Meeting Minutes

Staff liaisons prepare minutes and the proposed minutes will be available for public inspection and for review by members of boards and commissions as well as the general public within 8 business days after the meeting to which the minutes refer. Boards, commissions, and committees review, correct, and approve proposed minutes at the next regular meeting.

Both regular and special meetings are documented by minutes, whenever a meeting is held. Minutes provide a record of the date, time, place and attendance of members at a meeting along with a record of any decisions made or roll call votes conducted at a meeting. Minutes are not a transcription or a set of notes recording discussions leading up to decisions. For convenience, minutes are typically available on the City Website.

ANNUAL WORK PLAN AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Unless the Board or Commission is deemed "as needed by staff" each Board or Commission should prepare an annual work plan proposal for the upcoming year, to be submitted to the Council. The annual report should include the results of the prior year's activities. When applicable, the City Council would like to see metrics of community involvement and participation in meetings and activities included in the work plan. Council expects boards and commission to work on items in the approved work plan. In addition, Council may refer additional items to the boards and commissions in response to new developments.

Boards and Commissions should refrain from expending their time and that of the staff liaison on items that the City Council has not approved. If the board and commission would like to add an issue for review after an annual work plan has been approved the City Council, a prompt request by the board and commission Chair or staff liaison to the City Manager is required and the item will then be submitted to the City Council as a whole.

An annual work plan template is attached as Attachment A.

Conclusion

Hopefully, the information contained in this document will assist you in preparing to serve on a City board or commission. If you have additional questions, there are many people who can help, including your staff liaison, the City Clerk's Office, the Chair, and other members of your board or commission.

Online Resources

The City post meetings publicly available on the website calendar www.madison-heights.org

Additional information is available on the Boards and Commissions Page. <https://www.madison-heights.org/581/Boards-Commissions>

Attachment A

Board and Commission Work plan Guidelines and Process

The City Council will vote on the board and commission work plans annually. Work plans are due by January each year and should consist of up to three priorities. The City Council will ask the Board or Commission Chair to present the work plan to the City Council. Work plans should include if there is intent to use subcommittees or additional City staff to assist in the Board or Commission work for the year ahead.

To guide the work of developing the board or commission annual work plan, a short checklist is provided below:

- Review purpose of the Board or Commission
- Discuss any City Council priorities for the Board or Commission
- Discuss existing and possible projects, priorities and goals
 - Order from high priority to low priorities
- Finalize draft work plan for City Council review
- Use approved work plan as a guide to focus the board and commission work throughout the term of the work plan. (Initially 1 year for 2023 and 2 years after that with updates after the first year.)
- Present report to the City Council annually and include:
 - List of priorities, projects and goals
 - Status updates
 - If items are not complete, include why and any other additional details to share with the Council.

Sample Format:

Boards or Commission Name

Name of Project, Goal	Benefit if completed	Timeline for Completion	Resources needed (staff support, subcommittee, fundraising)	Measure of Success	Priority