

City of Madison Heights Boards and Commission Handbook

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. This document will introduce you to some of the key information that 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 the functions of local government. 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, which is 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 important 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 that will help shape their government. This requires a thorough understanding of their board or commission's role as well as 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 prior to 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 on.

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 Mayor's nominations that are confirmed by a majority vote of 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 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 as a factor prior to 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 start and end date. 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.

Prior to 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 take place in an orderly fashion. 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 cancelled 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 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 you are 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.

Officers

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

Ex-Officio Members

There are ex-officio voting and non-voting members. Ex-officio members are typically staff or council and as non-voting roles are usually in attendance to facilitate the meeting, answer questions and assist in planning or discussion. Ex-Officio voting members retain all rights of membership, including the right to make motions and join in deliberation.

Being a non-voting member restricts certain other privileges of membership inherently. However, these restrictions stem from the lack of ability to vote and are consistent for voting members and non-voting members under certain circumstances. For example, a non-voting member can never make a motion to reconsider, as a non-voting member cannot vote on the prevailing side during a motion. However, the lack of authority to make a motion to reconsider is equally restricted from voting members who do not vote with the prevailing side.

Governing Rules

A few key resources provide structure for operating a healthy board and commission. It is important to be knowledgeable about 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"). Essentially, 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, 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 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.

Role of City Staff

Staff Liaisons

Each board and commission has a staff liaison that provides professional and administrative support. Staff liaisons are the primary conduit for members of boards and commissions to communicate with the City. Your staff liaison should be your first contact if you have any questions related to your board or commission. Staff liaisons perform a variety of roles, including:

- Serving as a channel of communication between the board/commission and other City staff
- Creating meeting notices, preparing minutes, and creating agendas
- Scheduling meetings and booking meeting locations
- Maintaining board/commission records
- Coordinating the collection and distribution of information requested by the board commission

City Clerk's Office

The City Clerk's Office provides a wide range of support and oversight to ensure meetings and records relating to boards and commissions are accurate and meet applicable requirements, including:

- Maintaining rosters by updating as needed with appointments and resignations
- Reviewing and posting meeting notices prepared by staff liaisons
- Arranging accessibility accommodations requested for accessibility at public meetings
- Notifying the City Council of terms set to expire boards and commissions
- Emailing all new appointees; the expiration date of the appointee's term; and other information the City Clerk deems appropriate

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, and the chair and other members of your board or commission.

Online Resources

The City post meetings publically 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>

