

Resident Advisory Boards and Commissions Handbook

Our Vision: Thurston County is a vibrant community ensuring the health, safety, and wellbeing of generations to live, work, and play



Our Mission: To create a community that promotes health, commerce, and environmental protection with transparency and accountability.

Welcome

Thank you for serving on a Thurston County resident advisory board or commission! This handbook is here to provide you, the resident, with the foundation and guiding principles you need to be a successful member. Please note, this handbook is here to guide you and does not take place of bylaws or other governing rules of the board or commission you are appointed to.

As a committee member, you are part of a team. Many of the groups are advisory in nature and will advise the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and staff on the needs, obligations, and responsibilities of the county as seen by the advisory board or commission. The Board of County Commissioners, with few exceptions, has the ultimate authority and responsibility for final policy decisions. Committee members serve as a vital link in providing resident input towards decisions.

Being a member of a resident advisory board or commission takes time and effort. We recognize the work you put in to provide your input and welcome your ideas and suggestions. You are an important part of local government's ability to maintain and improve programs and services. We wish you success in your appointment and hope this information will be helpful to you.

Boards and Commissions

Agritourism Advisory Committee	Medic Once Emergency Medical Services Council
Agricultural Advisory Committee	
Appeals Board	Noxious Weed Control Board
Area Agency on Aging	Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council
Board of Equalization	Pest and Vegetation Management Advisory Committee
Boundary Review Board	Planning Commission
Citizen's Commission on Salaries for Elected Officials	Public Facilities District
Civil Service Commission	Solid Waste Advisory Committee
Current Use Advisory Committee (Agriculture)	Storm and Surface Water Advisory Board
Fair Board	Timberland Regional Library Board of Trustees
Historic Commission	Treatment Sales Tax Advisory Committee
Housing Authority	Veterans Advisory Board
Lodging Tax Advisory Committee	Racial Equity Council

Guide to Being an Effective Member

Those appointed to resident advisory boards and commissions play a vital role by representing the public at large and bringing residents' perspectives to local government. Each member brings an important point of view, often representing a geographic interest, area of expertise, or professional association. If each appointee strives to be an effective member, it creates a greater opportunity to have a profound impact on county policies and legislation, and lead to improved processes and services.

Honesty and integrity shall be the primary value in all instances. All individuals and items discussed must be treated with fairness, impartiality, and respect. Each group will consist of diverse perspectives; it is important members work together to accomplish common goals.

To be an effective member, please observe the following:

- Attend each meeting and arrive on time.
- Notify the chair or staff liaison if you are unable to attend. Excessive absences may result in removal.
- Prepare for meetings by reviewing the agenda and other documents to be discussed.
- Understand your role and scope of responsibility.
- Be present and actively participate in meetings.
- Respectfully engage with staff and other members.
- Contribute your ideas for proposals and recommendations.
- Interpret community needs and opinions.
- Examine evidence and analyze materials distributed by staff, the board or commission, or the Board of County Commissioners.
- Share information about topics your board or commission are discussing, policies, programs, and budgets with members of the public.

When an advisory board or commission present recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, it is expected they will:

- Provide all recommendations in written form and in a timely manner.
- Propose viable and cost-effective solutions.
- Reflect a consensus of a majority of members.

Open Public Meetings Act

The Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) expects each resident advisory board or commission to comply with the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), RCW 42.30. While some boards or commissions act on behalf of the BOCC and others only advise the BOCC, all boards or commissions exist as a sub-agency of the Board and, therefore, each should deliberate and act in an open public setting. If a board or commission offers a hybrid or virtual-only option when holding meetings, members are encouraged to participate with their camera on whenever possible.

The general guidance on orderly meetings, compliance with the OPMA/Public Records Act, and maintaining meeting documentation is critically important to help ensure good governance. Members are required to complete an Open Public Meetings Act training. A link to the training is below and is included in appointment letters as well. You must watch the online video and sign the attached acknowledgement form. Return the form to the staff liaison of the board or commission you are appointed to for record-keeping. The second link below the Public Meeting Act link, provides a basic overview of the Open Public Records Act. It is strongly encouraged for all advisory board and committee members to review.

OPMA Training: <https://wacities.org/data-resources/open-public-meetings-act-elearning>

Open Public Records Act Training: <https://www.atg.wa.gov/lesson-2-open-public-records-act-basics-rcw-4256>

Robert's Rules of Order

Each board or commission is strongly encouraged to follow Robert's Rules of Order (RRO), or a friendly version of RRO. This parliamentary procedure provides the process for proposing, approving, defeating, and amending legislative motions. It ensures meetings are conducted in a fair, efficient, and orderly manner. The BOCC may take future legislative action to require each Board or Commission to conduct meetings in this manner. A digital format will be made available by the Clerk of the Board upon request. Contact your staff liaison to obtain a copy.

Bylaws

Each board or commission is encouraged to have approved bylaws. Bylaws establish main characteristics such as the title, purpose, mission, officers and duties, parliamentary authority (such as RRO), meeting schedule and notice requirements, conflicts of interest, and procedures for further amending the bylaws. To learn if your board or commission currently has bylaws, inquire with the staff liaison. The BOCC may take future legislative action to require each board or commission to implement bylaws. If your advisory board of commission doesn't already have bylaws established and would like some examples, contact your staff liaison to request them from the Clerk of the Board.

Appointments

The BOCC encourages all Thurston County residents interested in serving on a board or commission to apply. Members serve at the pleasure of the Board of County Commissioners.

To be considered for appointment a vacancy must occur and a completed application must be submitted to the board or commission, or Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners. Boards or commissions may review applications and provide a recommendation if asked to do so by the BOCC. The BOCC has the authority to make appointments and remove members without cause with a majority vote. Midterm vacancies may be filled in the same manner and the appointed member shall first finish the remainder of the term. Members appointed or removed by the

BOCC shall be so notified by the BOCC office. Members who wish to be considered for reappointment must reapply prior to the end of their term.

Should a member need to resign from their position before their term expires, written notification must be sent to the staff liaison and the Clerk of the Board.

Appointments to multiple committee assignments is not preferred but may be approved by the BOCC.

Role of the Chair and Vice Chair

- Preside at all official meetings.
- Consult with the staff liaison in creating each meeting agenda.
- Keep discussions orderly, focused, efficient, impersonal, and fair.
- Find common ground among members and achieve a compromise, if needed.

Staff Liaisons

A County staff member(s) will be assigned to each board or commission. The primary role of staff is to represent the interests and needs of the County and facilitate two-way communications between the Board or Commission and the BOCC or other County departments. Staff coordinates the administrative functions, such as:

- Meeting arrangements and logistics.
- Communications with members.
- Creating, in coordination with the board or commission Chair, and posting the meeting agenda.
- Storing minutes.
- Sending information or recommendations to the BOCC.
- Assisting with parliamentary procedures as needed.
- Ensuring compliance with other information outlined in this handbook.

Staff liaisons are obligated to inform the BOCC if they disagree with a recommendation of a board or commission. Members may not direct staff liaisons to conduct major study or establish official policy without approval of the BOCC; the board or commission is responsible for its work. Members should feel free to contact the staff liaisons for inquiries or support.

Other Rules

- A quorum (majority of members) will not discuss or deliberate board or commission business in any form in unnoticed meetings.
- Members may not use their position to secure special privileges, gifts or things of value, or exemptions for themselves or others.

- Members shall not use their position to influence board or commission decisions in which they have a financial interest, organizational responsibility, or a personal relationship that presents a conflict of interest. Members will disclose the various groups they are associated with so the board or commission can identify if there is a potential conflict of interest when an agenda item might arise. If there is a conflict of interest regarding a particular agenda item, the member will refrain from discussion, decision, and voting.
- Members will communicate respectfully with fellow board or commission members, the BOCC, County staff, and the public.
- Members shall not speak or act on behalf of the BOCC or board or commission except when formally given authority to do so for a specific purpose.
- When speaking to the public or media, members shall explicitly state they are solely representing their personal opinions, and not representing Thurston County, the BOCC, or advisory board or commission they are appointed to.
- Members shall use public resources appropriately.
- Members will create, foster, and maintain an atmosphere of non-discrimination in all personnel and volunteer-related matters. This will include, but is not limited to, antiracist language in all position descriptions and application forms for all County employment/volunteer opportunities.
- Boards and commissions are encouraged to provide the opportunity for public comment at all regularly scheduled meetings.