



# Analysis of Council-Appointed Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees

# Agenda

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1. Purpose
2. Primary Mission
3. Workplan and Meeting Structure
4. Recruitment
5. What We're Hearing and Experiencing
6. Discussion and Next Steps

# Why This? Why Now?

1. An evaluation of the Council-Appointed Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees has not been performed – requested by Staff Liaisons and Advisory Bodies
2. Methods for engaging and communicating with the public has evolved
3. Staff and volunteers report difficulty achieving a quorum, the need to cancel meetings, and confusion regarding purpose and impact
4. Need to evaluate use of resources for public engagement

# What do we want to know?

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1. Is Council receiving public input in a way that is effective, meaningful, and inclusive?
2. Are the advisory bodies effectively achieving their purpose?
3. Is the meeting format and frequency effective?

# Purpose

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# Council's Purpose for Advisory Bodies

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## Council Guidebook

- Assist Council when formulating public policy and transforming policy decisions into action.
  - Standing committees
  - Special Purpose Committees
  - Ad Hoc Task Forces

# How a Body is Established

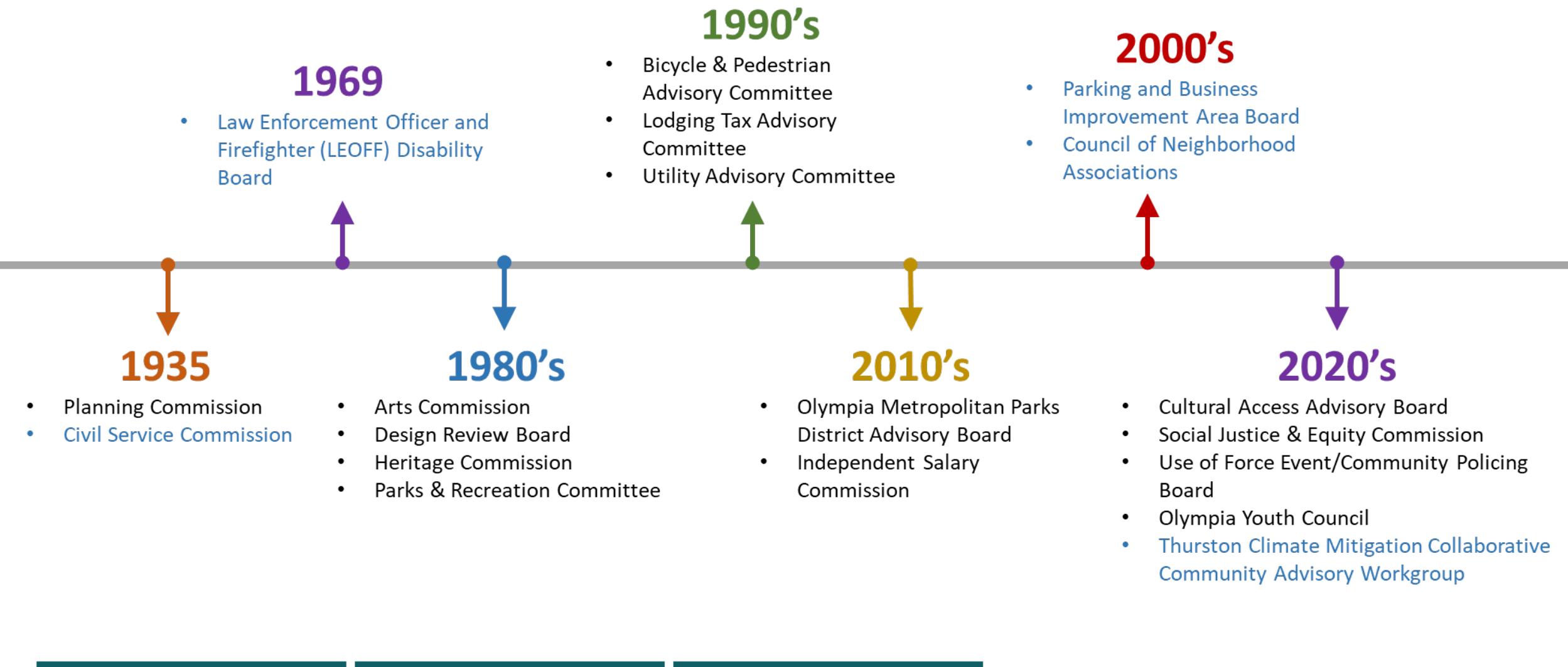
## Standing Committees

- Action by the full Council through Ordinance
- Volunteer members recommended to full Council by Community Livability and Public Safety Committee following interviews

## Ad Hoc Committee

- Simple majority vote of Council regarding Scope and Term

# Appointed Body and Year Established



# Board

*A group of persons having **managerial, supervisory, investigatory, or advisory powers**.*

1. Cultural Access Advisory Board
2. Design Review Board
3. Community Policing Board
4. *LEOFF Disability Board*
5. *Parking & Business Improvement Area Board*

# Committee

*A group of people entrusted by a government or other official body with **authority to take on a task or mission.***

1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
2. Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
3. Olympia Metropolitan Park District Advisory Committee
4. Park and Recreation Advisory Committee
5. Utility Advisory Committee

# Commission

*A body of persons **delegated** to consider, investigate, take action on, or report on some matters.*

1. Arts Commission
2. Heritage Commission
3. Planning Commission
4. Salary Commission
5. Social Justice & Equity Commission
6. *Civil Service Commission*

# Current Boards, Committees, & Commissions

1. Arts Commission
2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
3. Community Policing Board
4. Cultural Access Program Advisory Board
5. Design Review Board
6. Heritage Commission
7. Independent Salary Commission
8. Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
9. Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board
10. Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
11. Planning Commission
12. Social Justice and Equity Commission
13. Utility Advisory Committee
14. Youth Council

# Other Boards, Committees, and Commissions Supported by City Staff

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1. Civil Service Commission
2. Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter (LEOFF) Disability Board
3. Parking and Business Improvement Area Board
4. Council of Neighborhood Associations
5. Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Community Advisory Workgroup
6. *Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Executive Committee*
7. *Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Collaborative Executive Committee*

# Primary Mission by Body

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## INPUT ON POLICY, RATES & SERVICES

- Arts Commission
- Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
- Social Justice & Equity Commission
- Olympia Youth Council
- Utility Advisory Committee
- Council of Neighborhood Associations
- Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Community Advisory Group



## LAND USE DECISIONS

- Planning Commission
- Design Review Board
- Heritage Commission



## FUNDING

- Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
- Cultural Access Advisory Committee
- [Parking and Business Improvement Area Board](#)



## COMPENSATION

- Independent Salary Commission
- [Civil Service Commission](#)
- [Law Enforcement Office and Firefighter Disability Board](#)



## ACCOUNTABILITY

- Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board
- Community Policing Board

# Mandated by State or Interlocal Agreement

## Required

1. Community Policing Board
2. Design Review Board\*
3. Heritage Commission\*
4. Planning Commission
5. Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
6. Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board

## Not Required

1. Arts Commission
2. Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
3. Cultural Access Advisory Board
4. Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
5. Independent Salary Commission
6. Social Justice and Equity Commission
7. Utility Advisory Committee
8. Youth Council

# Workplan & Meeting Frequency

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# Setting the Annual Work Plan

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## **Work Plan Items Proposed**

1. Required
2. Council requested
3. Staff Initiated
4. Requested by the Advisory Body
4. Housekeeping

# 2024 Work Plan Content

Council Request	4
Staff Initiated	33
Advisory Body Request	21

## Observations

- Most work plan items are briefings by staff related to programs, services, and regulatory updates
- Two of the four Council requested items were related to the Comprehensive Plan
- The items requested by the bodies are interest-based regarding other City Programs and Services

# Work Plan Approval Process

1. Drafted by Staff
2. Developed with Committee
3. Reviewed by Community Livability and Public Safety Committee  
then forward to Council
4. Approved by Council

Council-Appointed Body	Planned Meetings	Canceled (2023)	Canceled (2024)
Design Review	24	11	16
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory	6	0	0
Heritage Commission	12	5	5
Planning Commission	24	4	3
Lodging Tax Advisory	3	1	2
Parks & Rec Advisory	8	2	1
Arts Commission	12	2	1
Social Justice and Equity Commission	12	2	0
Metropolitan Park District Advisory Committee	2	0	0
Utility Advisory	8	+2	0
Youth Advisory Council	12	0	0
Cultural Access Advisory Board	As Needed		
Salary Commission	As Needed		
Use of Force Board	As Needed		

## Meeting Frequency & Attendance

- Number of planned meetings is not required in OMC with exception of Salary Commission; however, expectation is that they meet monthly
- Heritage Commission canceled half of their meetings in 2023 and 2024
- Design Review Committee canceled 70% of their meetings in 2024
- Social Justice and Equity Commission 4 people absent at 50% of meetings; 6 commissioners resigned since inception (2021)

# What We're Hearing & Experiencing

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# What We're Hearing

## **Advisory Committees**

- 78% agree their workplan is meaningful
- 74-75% agrees that the Council values their work, and it advances the Council's priorities
- 2% agree they meet too frequently
- 93% enjoy serving on the Committee; 89% are satisfied with the committee's work
- Desire to regularly connect with Council regarding their impact and purpose

## **Staff**

- 38% agree their workplan is meaningful
- 54% agrees that the Council values their work, and it advances the Council's priorities
- 16% believe they meet too frequently (50% were neutral)

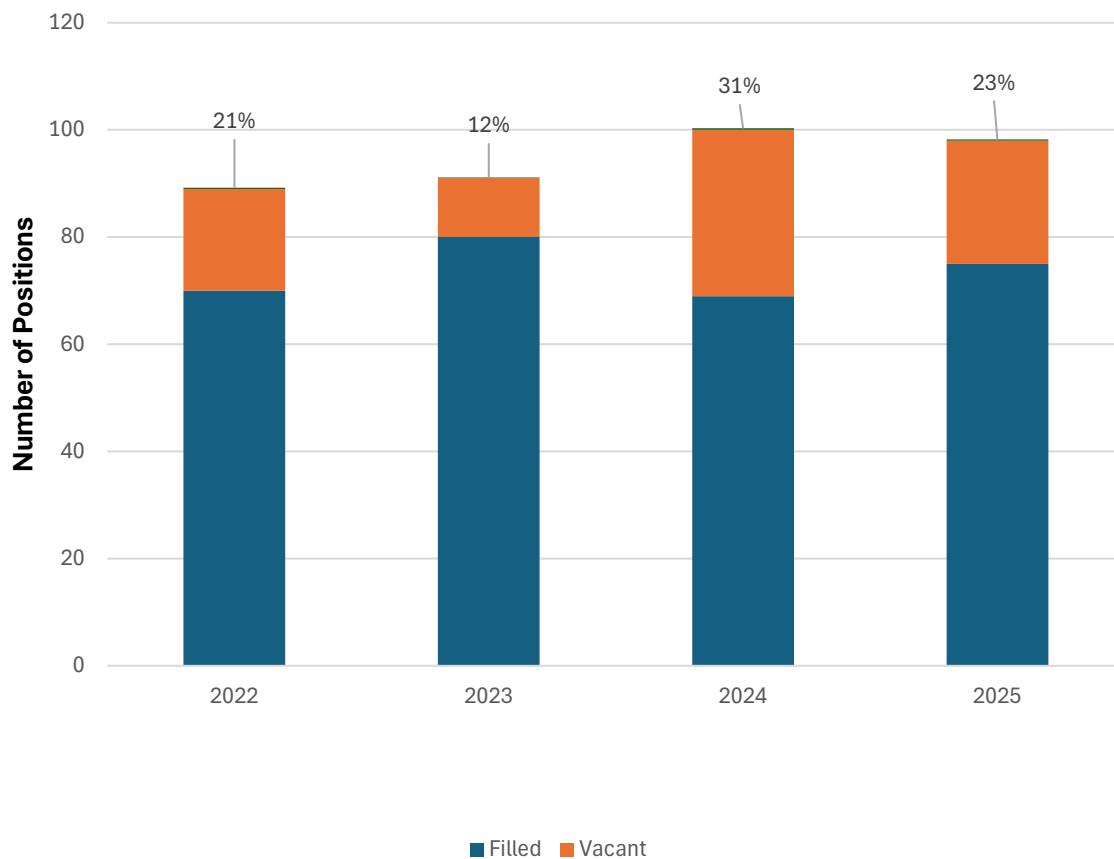
# What We are Experiencing

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- Over-represented with residents who are familiar with government policy and processes
- High turnover on some bodies
- Challenge meeting quorum
- Staff is implementing new engagement techniques on major, complex policy work
- Maintaining Advisory Bodies is resource intensive

# Annual Recruitment

## Filled vs. Vacant Positions by Year



- In 2024 and 2025, 4 out of 12 bodies had 3 or more vacancies
- In 2024 and 2025, the number of people seeking an additional term was far less than the number of vacancies
- Bodies with the highest turnover:
  - Heritage Commission
  - Social Justice and Equity Commission
  - Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
- Bodies with the least turnover:
  - Use of Force
  - Cultural Access
  - Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
  - Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board

# What the Experts are saying

Public engagement is premised on the belief that everyone has the right to be involved in decisions that will affect their life. For some, the logistics of engagement may conflict with responsibilities.

- *Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement*  
*Simon Fraser University*

"It is a simple but sobering fact of life that most experiences with Advisory Committees – after an initial two-to-three-years' honeymoon – are bad experiences both for the agency and for the potentially affected interests."

- *Hans Bleiker,*  
*Institute for Participatory Management and Planning*

# City Approach: Meaningful and Inclusive Engagement

- Elevate diverse and inclusive engagement
- Involve people who are most impacted by the policy, issue, or plan being considered
- Establish respectful, authentic, and trusting relationships that can be sustained over time
- Co-create with communities to address barriers to participation
- Adapt engagement strategies as needed based on experience

# City Efforts to Improve Equitable & Inclusive Engagement on Public Policy

## Examples:

1. Transportation Master Plan
2. Social Justice and Equity – Founding Members Work Group
3. Reimagining Public Safety – Work Group
4. Community Oversight of Law Enforcement – Commission AND Community Work Group
5. Olympia Strong
6. Youth Council Establishment

Tools & Techniques: Engage Olympia, Story Map, social media, temporary work groups, partner with historically under-represented communities, tailored engagement, prioritize accessibility

# Who Participates on Advisory Bodies

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- Open to residents
- Each body is 9 to 11 members with 3-year terms (total of 9 years)
- Individuals choose to apply

# Why This? Why Now?

1. An evaluation of the Community-Member Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees has not been performed – requested by Staff Liaisons and Advisory Bodies
2. Methods for engaging and communicating with the public have evolved
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4. Need to evaluate use of resources for meaningful public engagement

# Discussion

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1. Affirm Public Engagement Goals
2. Reflect on Research
3. Identify Key Take Aways
4. Develop Options

# Discussion Prompts

## Affirm Engagement Goals:

1. Meaningful input to guide policy and decision-making
2. Equitable and inclusive engagement
3. Impactful participation and experiences for members
4. Sustainable use of resources (staff and funding)

## Discussion:

**Question #1:** *What are the key takeaways from the information shared and/or your experience?*

**Question #2:** *What's most important to you in how we achieve these outcomes?*