

City Council Handbook Section 4

Section 4: Advisory Boards and Committees




For more information about Advisory Bodies, see the City's website olympiawa.gov. Also, see Appendix A for the Board and Commission Membership & Qualification Matrix.

Boards, commissions and citizen committees provide a great deal of assistance to the Olympia City Council when formulating public policy and transforming policy decisions into action. The City has the following standing boards and commissions which are appointed by Council:

- Arts Commission
- Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Design Review Board
- Heritage Commission
- Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
- Planning Commission
- Utility Advisory Committee

In addition, special purpose committees and task forces are appointed from time-to-time by the City Council to address issues of interest or to conduct background work on technical or politically sensitive issues. Special or ad hoc committees will be dissolved upon completion of the intended task.

While membership on most committees is by Council appointment, the following exceptions apply:

- [Civil Service Commission](#)  (appointed by the City Manager)
- [LEOFF Disability Board](#)  (elected and member appointed)
- [Parking and Business Improvement Area Board/PBIA](#)  (elected by ratepayers)

The City Council appoints one (1) citizen member to each of this community boards:

- [Thurston Community Television Board](#)  (TCTV)

4.1 Establishment of Advisory Committees/Commissions/ Boards Appointed by the City Council

Council appointed Committees/Commissions/Boards are established by action of the entire Council, usually by ordinance. Short term or Ad Hoc Committees may not necessitate an ordinance and may be established by majority Council approval of the scope for the committee and the term of its appointment.

The City Council annually reviews and approves work plans for each advisory committee, except for the Design Review Board (primarily a quasi-judicial group).

The General Government Committee is the Council's liaison with advisory committees for membership, procedural and general oversight purposes.

For communication and policy development purposes, the City Council's Land Use and Environment Committee is liaison with the Design Review Board and the Olympia Planning Commission. A Councilmember serves as the Chair of the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee as required by State law. By City ordinance, the Council may appoint a liaison with the Parking and Business Improvement Area Advisory Board. The General Government Committee is liaison with the other Council-appointed committees.

Each year, the General Government Committee shall facilitate the identification of a Councilmember to serve as liaisons to the Arts Commission, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Heritage Commission, Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, and the Utility Advisory Committee. The purpose of the liaison role is to serve as a communication contact with the committee(s) on behalf of the City Council. The liaison shall not attempt to influence the committee(s) to endorse or validate their personal point of view on an issue. The liaisons shall briefly report their contacts with committees at City Council meetings, as appropriate.

Unless required by State law (such as with the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee) Olympia Councilmembers do not serve on Council-appointed committees. It is expected that any newly elected Councilmember who is serving on a City advisory board or committee at the time of election will resign from their committee appointment at the time of assuming Council office.

In general, individual Councilmembers may attend advisory committee meetings to observe the committee's discussion and action, and should refrain from any comments or actions intended to influence the committee.

If an advisory committee chair requests the presence of a Councilmember at a committee meeting, the Councilmember shall inform the full Council of the request. If requested by the committee or committee chair to express an opinion on a policy topic being discussed by the committee, the Councilmember shall make it clear that the opinion they express is their own and should not be construed as reflecting the opinions of other Councilmembers or of the full Council.

4.6 Work Plans and Referrals to Advisory Bodies

Each year, advisory boards and committees form a work plan for the year. If an item is referred during the year, the staff liaison will notify the Committee Chair of the referral. The Committee Chair will usually report back to the Council regarding their ability to absorb the referral into their current work plan.

It is expected the chair of the advisory committee or their designee, rather than a staff person, report the findings of the committee to the Council. Accordingly, committee chairs should attend the Council meeting when the recommendation is presented and be available for questions or clarifications on the committee recommendation.

Typically, items of a policy nature are presented to Council in written form. Accordingly, committee chairs should review staff materials representing the committee recommendation to assure they accurately convey the committee's intent prior to completion of the council packet.