



**City of Lake Forest Park**

# **Commissioner's Manual**

Spring 2001

# Table of Contents

Letter from the Mayor .....5

## Section I: Lake Forest Park Commission System

1. OVERVIEW OF CITY GOVERNMENT .....7

Structure of Lake Forest Park Government

Mayor

City Council

Ordinances

Resolutions

City Administrator

Comprehensive Plan

2. LAKE FOREST PARK COMMISSION SYSTEM.....8

The Commissions

Requirements for Commissioners

Annual Appointment Schedule

Terms and Nominations

Staggered Terms

Confirmation Process

Resignations

Commission Deadlines

3. THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMISSIONS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES.....11

Advisory Commissions

Planning and Civil Service Commissions

4. THE DUTIES OF A COMMISSIONER.....13

Restrictions and Requirements

Opportunities and Challenges of Commission Membership

5. ROLE OF THE CHAIR..... 14

Selection of Chair

Voting and Agenda Setting

Quarterly Meetings with the Mayor

## Section II: Being an Effective Commissioner

<b>6. THE KEYS TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE COMMISSION MEMBER .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Attendance	
Preparation	
<b>7. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Public Policy	
Making Recommendations to the Council	
<b>8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: THE BUDGET PROCESS.....</b>	<b>21</b>
The Budget Process	
Raising Money through Grants	
<b>9. CONDUCTING COMMISSION BUSINESS .....</b>	<b>21</b>
Public Disclosure	
Ethics and the Appearance of Fairness	
Quorum	
Order of Business	
Lobbying	
Ballot Measures	
Legal Counsel	
Testimony at Hearings and Before Council	
<i>Effective Testimony</i>	
<i>Testimony and Lobbying</i>	
<b>10. THE MEDIA: MANAGING THEIR MESSAGE .....</b>	<b>24</b>
The Press	
Town Crier	
Government Access and the Website	
<b>11. STAFFING THE COMMISSION .....</b>	<b>25</b>

## Section III: Resources/Appendices

Municipal Code and Comprehensive Plan are available on line at [www.cityofflp.com](http://www.cityofflp.com)

## **APPENDICES**

LFPMC Chapter 2.22  
Description of Commissions  
Section of Comp Plan  
“I Am Interested in Serving on a Commission” Form  
Managing Difficult People  
Roles in a Meeting  
Liability for Boards and Volunteers



Spring 2001

Dear Volunteer Commissioners,

In Lake Forest Park we have enjoyed a long tradition of citizen participation in City government. The first commission, the Water Quality Commission, was established almost as soon as the City was incorporated. It evolved into the Environmental Quality Commission and over the next 40 years additional commissions have been added to focus attention, resources and policy direction on specific areas.

Through representation on commissions, Lake Forest Park residents have an important avenue to help create effective and equitable laws and policies. Citizen involvement contributes not only to the success of City government, but to their overall quality of life as well.

We also have task forces and committees. A task force or a committee focuses on a specific topic or issue. We have had task forces or committees on Capital Facilities, Economic Development, Transportation, the Web Team and Urban Forestry.

In selecting commission and task force members, I try to bring a mix of geography, age, gender, and ethnic diversity. This helps ensure decisions and services reflect the diversity in Lake Forest Park. Our commissioners ought to be able to listen to their neighbors. It is important to have all of our voices heard and our ideas listened to as we discuss issues. When we work together on the difficult issues we craft more inclusive and respectful solutions. And we strengthen our City.

The Lake Forest Park system of commissions and task forces is fundamental to encouraging the use of citizen talent and interest in affairs of the City, keeping government innovative and responsive, and improving the overall performance of the City.

Thank you for serving.

Sincerely,

David R. Hutchinson  
Mayor

# Section I

# Lake Forest Park Commission System



# Section I: Lake Forest Park Commission System

## 1. OVERVIEW OF THE CITY GOVERNMENT

The Comprehensive Plan begins with a vision of the City. It describes Lake Forest Park like this:

“Lake Forest Park is located landward of the northwest tip of Lake Washington. It is characterized by ravines, stream corridors, and rolling hills. The community has a forested feeling, with mature Douglas firs, hemlocks, and maples. The City is predominantly single-family, but it does have a small number of multi-family dwellings.

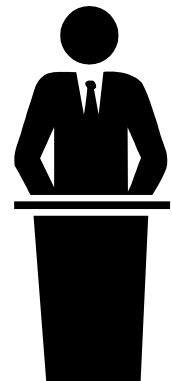
The original City of Lake Forest Park was conceived as a unique residential community in 1909 when it was nothing more than a remote area whose surroundings had recently been logged. It was developed as a country bedroom community for merchants and professionals who worked in downtown Seattle. The original lots were laid out as large, irregularly shaped parcels, following the contours of the land. This arrangement was in contrast to the rigid grids of the communities closer to downtown. The "Park" was designed to attract a diversity and breadth of people.”<sup>1</sup>

The City incorporated in 1961 as a result of the filling in of a wetland and the construction of the Lake Forest Park Towne Centre Mall. The City grew very slowly between incorporation and the 1980's, then in the mid-1990's a series of annexations occurred. The last annexation was in 1999. This annexation established the City's current boundaries. The presence of Third Place has transformed the mall into a vital community center.

### Structure of Lake Forest Park City Government

**Mayor.** In the City of Lake Forest Park the Mayor is the chief executive officer. The Mayor is elected and serves for four years. The Mayor presides at Council meetings, administers ordinances and policies and appoints employees, officials and volunteers to commissions. The Mayor proposes policy and programs to the Council for consideration. The Mayor can veto ordinances passed by the Council. The Mayor is responsible for carrying out the policies adopted by the City Council.

**City Council.** The City Council is the legislative body of our City. The Council formulates and adopts City policies; they approve the budget, confirm appointments and grant franchises. They can override a mayor's veto. The seven non-partisan members are all elected at large for four-year staggered terms. Regularly scheduled meetings are held in the evenings on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursdays of each month. After each election the Council prepares rules for its



---

<sup>1</sup> From the 1994 Comprehensive Plan  
City of Lake Forest Park  
Commissioner's Manual

operation.

**Ordinances.** The Council passes all ordinances that together make up the municipal code. Proposed ordinances can come before the City Council in a number of ways. The Mayor can propose ordinances as she/he does with the budget document. The Council can ask a commission to prepare an ordinance for consideration. The Council can develop draft ordinances themselves, as can the executive department. After an ordinance is placed on the agenda it generally has three readings, first, second and final. Usually the first reading is the introduction; the second reading is when the Council makes amendments. An item can remain on second reading while it is being perfected. The final reading is when the revised ordinance is presented for final passage. Ordinances must pass by a majority of the Council.

**Resolutions.** The Council can also pass resolutions, these represent the opinion or thinking of the Council. They are generally temporary in nature. A resolution is not law—it is a guiding principle.

**City Administrator.** The City Administrator serves under and assists the Mayor. The City Administrator is the Chief Administrative Officer of the city. The Administrator is selected by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council. The Administrator manages municipal affairs and supervises staff.

**Comprehensive Plan.** The fundamental policy document for the City is the Comprehensive Plan. Our latest Comprehensive Plan was written in 1994. The Growth Management Act requires we revise the Comprehensive plan and it is being revised in 2001. It describes the vision of the City and outlines policies for development. The Comprehensive Plan policies provide guidance and direction for all types of programs the City will support. On the basis of the policies developed in the Comprehensive Plan, the City adopts a zoning ordinance and maps. The zoning is the specific land use policy for each particular piece of land.

## 2. LAKE FOREST PARK COMMISSION SYSTEM

### The Commissions

The Volunteer Commission System is described in Chapter 2.22. of the Lake Forest Park Municipal Code. It names the commissions and their responsibilities.

- A. Planning Commission.** Develops the city's comprehensive plan and updates for recommendation to the mayor and city council and perform other duties as required by law.
- B. Human Services Commission.** Social and health services and related programs.
- C. Public Safety Commission.** Criminal justice, police and emergency services.
- D. Parks and Recreation Commission.** Active and passive parks, recreational programs, arts and other cultural activities and recreational facilities.

- E. Environmental Quality Commission.** Waters and wetlands, open space, riparian zones and other environmentally sensitive areas and other issues affecting the ecosystem of the city.
- F. Transportation Commission.** Roads, multi-modal transportation and transit.
- G. Economic Development Commission.** Business development and economic sustainability.
- H. Civil Service Commission.** Police personnel as required by state law. The additional duties of this commission shall be defined in the civil service code of the city.

**Residency Requirements for Commissioners**

Members of the Planning and Civil Service Commissions must be residents. However, on all of the other commissions, business owners or employees of businesses located in Lake Forest Park may serve in one position. The Economic Development Commission may have three non-residents who own or work for local businesses. If a commissioner moves out of the City and/or is no longer employed in the City, the commissioner must resign.

**Annual Commission Appointment Schedule**

**Nomination Process.** Commissioners are nominated by the Mayor and confirmed by the Council.

The Mayor solicits people who are interested in serving from a number of sources, including the Town Crier, other commission members, and word of mouth. Generally, the Mayor will request a resume or a letter of interest from an interested individual. Typically the mayor and the chair of the commission meet with a prospective commissioner.



The Mayor may then proceed with a formal nomination. The letter or resume is included by the city clerk in the Council packet and submitted to the City Council.

**Confirmation Process.** The Council must confirm the appointments, with the exception of Civil Service Commissioners. The City Council interviews the candidate. These interviews usually take place at a Council workshop, which is less formal than a regular Council meeting. Nominees should be prepared to answer questions from the Councilmembers. In the past, Councilmembers have been interested in why the nominee wants to serve, as well as his or her interest and/or experience with the issues addressed by the commission. The Council members may ask any questions they wish.

The nomination process is continued to the next Council meeting for final action. After confirmation, the City Clerk's office sends a letter to the individual notifying him/ her of the appointment.

**Terms.** Commissioners serve for three years, except for Civil Service commissioners who serve for six years. All commissions have nine members, except the Civil Service Commission, which has three members. New Commissioners are appointed starting April 1 of each year. Vacancies are filled throughout the year.

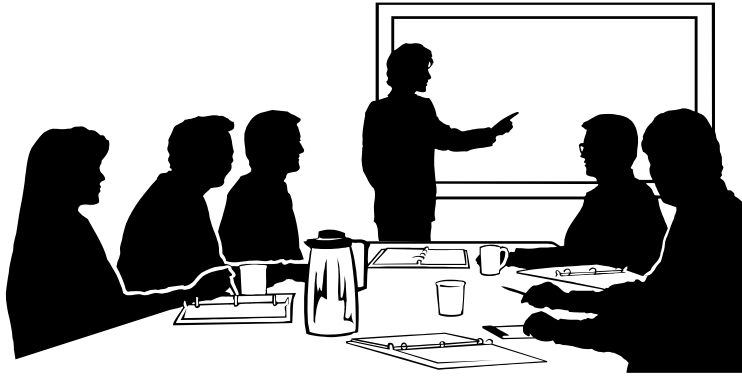
An individual may be re-appointed to a commission. The re-appointment process is the same as the appointment process. The nominations must come before the City Council for confirmation. Commissioners may serve for two consecutive three-year terms on the same commission. However, they may be appointed to serve on the same commission after a one-year break in service.

**Staggered Terms.** The terms of members are staggered. Beginning in April 2001, positions 1,2,3 will begin a three-year term; in 2002, positions 4,5,6 will begin new terms, and in 2003, positions 7,8,9 will begin new terms. The appointment of new commissioners will continue in this pattern. The Mayor may fill vacancies at any time.

**Resignations.** If a commissioner is unable to complete the term, it is important to advise the Mayor and the appropriate staff. A letter of resignation must be sent to the Mayor indicating the date the resignation is effective or whether the commissioner is able to serve until a replacement is named and confirmed.

### **Commission Deadlines**

February 1	Annual Report due to Council
During February	The chair presents the report to Council in person. This is a report on the past calendar year's activities.
February-March	Candidates for commissioners are presented to Council for confirmation.
April 1	New commissioners begin their terms of office.
May 10	Commission Chair appointment. Mayor reports list of chairs to Council at the next Council meeting.
July	Annual Work Plan due to Mayor for the next year. This initiates the budget process.
August	Commissions present their proposed work plans to the Council either in person or in writing.



### **3. THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMISSIONS AND THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES**

Each commission is unique in its purpose, mission, and role. It is especially important that members be familiar with the governing ordinance so they understand the framework within which the commission must operate. The section of the Lake Forest Park Municipal Code is attached.

Some of the commissions established by the Council have responsibilities established by state law. All commissions have the following duties as established in City code. In both cases, the commissions make recommendations to the Mayor and Council.

#### **Advisory Commissions**

The Mayor and the City Council may create commissions which relate to comprehensive plan elements requiring longer than five years of planning. The commissioners serve as advisors on policy matters to the Mayor and/or Council. Commissions may study existing policy and its implementation and make recommendations for changes.

Members of all commissions provide an important link between and among the public and City departments, the Council and the Mayor. The information that members provide about community needs and opinions can have a profound effect on local policies and lead to improved service. Advisory commission members play a very special role in creating recommendations on important societal and governmental issues.

Appointed members of an advisory commission are expected to:

- Listen carefully to community opinions, attitudes, and needs and report to the Mayor and the Council.
- Study programs and services, and analyze problems and needs.
- Offer new proposals and recommend changes in programs, policies, and standards.
- Provide the public with information and interpretation of policies, programs, and budgets.

Commissions make important recommendations about policy. Commissions, however, do not create or administer policy, programs, or services. Advisory commissions do not have authority to enforce policy or create rules, but their analysis and recommendations can play an important role in furthering the effective operation of City government.

The Mayor and the Council may from time to time establish committees. These committees are created on a temporary basis to deal with a specific policy area or issues.

### **The Planning and the Civil Service Commissions**

The Planning Commission and the Civil Service Commission receive their authority by State statute and City ordinance. Policies are created through careful analysis and interpretation of legislative intent, as set forth in state statute.

In Washington State, a **planning commission** is an advisory body nominated by the Mayor and appointed by the City Council to provide advice on land use. Members of the Planning Commission make recommendations to the Mayor and the Council. After review by the executive and legal departments the Mayor and the Planning Commission may make recommendations to the Council for changes and updates in the comprehensive plan and the zoning code and related land use policies. The Planning Commission examines area-wide rezones. Most decisions made by the Planning Commission are advisory. The City Council amends, approves or denies the recommendations of the Planning Commission.

The Council has the ability to appoint alternative groups to evaluate specific legislation and prepare drafts for the Council. For example, the Environmental Quality Commission drafted the sensitive area ordinance for Council consideration. Commissions give their draft recommendations to the Mayor for review. The recommendations are then forwarded to the City Council.

The Hearing Examiner is a professional hired to review individual applications for variances, conditional use permits, and site plans and subdivisions. These decisions are final and not reviewed by the City Council. The decisions are appealable to Superior Court.

The **Civil Service Commission** has jurisdiction on police personnel issues, as required by state law. They are responsible for establishing a police hiring list. The additional duties of this commission are defined in the civil service code of the City.



#### **4. THE DUTIES OF A COMMISSIONER**

In general the commissions are charged with taking the pulse of the community and reporting back to the Mayor and/or the Council. This could, for example, take the form of surveys or interviews. Then the commission recommends a specific course of action to take. This could be eliminating or adding a new program or initiative.

The Commission reviews and recommends policy. The City Council may request a commission to review a specific piece of proposed legislation or policy. At other times the commission recommends policy, via the Mayor, to the Council for Council review.

The Commission provides program evaluation. For example, the Human Services Commission did a needs analysis and recommended program initiatives. The Commission provides community-based input for specific programs. The commission could conduct public meetings, or surveys to get a sense of the position of the City's population on a number of issues. It is responsible to reflect not just its own opinion, but outreach to the community as well. The Commission provides input into the budget process. This includes identifying funding sources and developing budget proposals that are presented to the Mayor, who presents them to the Council when the work plans are proposed.

The Commission may assist and evaluate the implementation of programs. It may, with permission of the Mayor, assist in projects that do not have adequate staff. For example, work parties sponsored by the Parks and Recreation Commission have the added benefit of providing an opportunity for community building through working together.

#### **Restrictions and Requirements**

The Commissioner should be aware of certain restrictions and requirements that may affect a commissioner's tenure.

- Commission members must be familiar with and operate within the governing ordinance.
- To ensure accountability, all applicable policies and procedures adopted by the Commission should be in written form.
- No commission member may make unilateral decisions on behalf of the Commission or take action without the consent of the Commission.
- Individual commission members must use discretion to avoid the appearance of speaking for the Commission or the City, unless specifically authorized to do so.
- Questions about commission issues should be directed to the Commission's staff, the City Administrator or the Mayor who will see that all commission members receive information by the next regular meeting.
- The Commission does not direct the activities of the staff. The Mayor and the City Administrator are responsible for the staffing of the Commissions and the daily work priorities of City staff.

## **The Opportunities and Challenges of Commission Membership**

Public participation on commissions, committees and task forces has its opportunities and challenges. When anyone is thinking about joining or remaining on a commission, he or she needs to consider the following:

### **Opportunities**

1. Commission members have access to information about proposed plans and decisions and official channels for early participation in their development.
2. Commission involvement also permits the exercise of influence well before positions are hardened.
3. There is some satisfaction in fulfilling civic responsibilities.
4. Commission membership provides members with an opportunity to learn about broader aspects of government.
5. Being on a commission is an opportunity to meet new people and work on behalf of the betterment of the community.
6. Being on a commission is an opportunity to give back to the community and make the City a better place in which to live.

### **Challenges**

1. Commissioners may be asked to get on top of huge amounts of technical information. The Environmental Quality Commission, for example, is working to understand the complexities of the Endangered Species Act and how it applies to our City. The Planning Commission needs to become familiar with the zoning issues in the city; the Parks and Recreation Commission need to evaluate the competing interests around park use.
2. In a public environment there are never sufficient resources to do all of the activities that need to be done. Commissions will have to compete with all of the other important ways to spend the public resources.
3. The staff assigned to the Commission has additional responsibilities besides the Commission. The staff may not be able to respond quickly to newly identified needs. Commission members may think they are not responding quickly or adequately.

## **5. ROLE OF THE CHAIR**

The Mayor selects the chair of the Commission. The chair serves for one year and may be re-appointed twice for up to a total of three consecutive years. The chair is responsible for developing agendas, running the meeting and providing leadership to the Commission. The Mayor reports annually to the City Council on the appointments of the chairs by May 17th. The members of the Commission elect their own vice-chair.

There will be different types of meetings, some are problem-solving meetings. In these meetings participants are focused on a situation they want to change. Some meetings require decision-

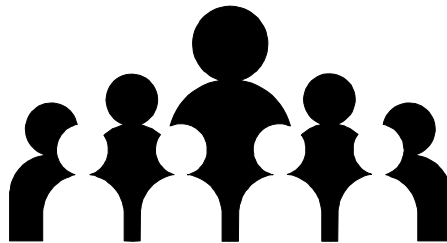
making; others are informational meetings or community input meetings. Often the meetings are a combination. In any case, the chair is responsible for setting the agenda.

### **Selection of the Chair**

During the month of April, each commission nominates a commissioner to be appointed by the Mayor as chair. The Mayor may appoint the nominee or meet with the Commission to discuss other nominees. If after meeting with the Commission, the Mayor and the Commission are unable to reach an agreement on the selection of a chair, then the Mayor shall select and appoint the chair from any commissioner serving on the Commission. The chair may be re-appointed and serve for 36 out of 48 months.

The appointment shall be completed by May 10th of each year. The Civil Service Commission's nomination does not require the Mayor's approval in accordance with state law.

The commission selects the vice-chair by majority of the members present at an official meeting.



### **Voting and Setting the Agenda**

The chair is a member of the Commission and must vote. Voting by secret ballot is prohibited. The chair works with the staff to develop the meeting agendas. These should be prepared in advance and written. It is helpful to allocate time estimates to each item. Members should communicate with the chair any item they wish placed on the agenda. A majority of the members may place an item on the agenda.

In addition to setting the agenda, the chair

- Keeps the discussion on the topic
- Clarifies and rephrases if people are not understood
- Assures that commissioners are heard on any given topic
- Manages the pacing of the meeting
- Separates areas of agreement from areas of disagreement
- Summarizes
- Manages conflict
- Tests for agreement
- Gets feedback
- Makes sure everyone know the decisions that are being made

Members of the public may attend commission meetings. It is at the discretion of the commission via the chair when the Commission wants to hear from them. If there is a tight agenda, it may be best to have participation at the end of the meeting. If the public is to comment on a particular item it may be most appropriate to have comments first or when the specific item comes up. Guests may not understand the procedures of the meeting. It is helpful to make it clear how the meeting will proceed. The chair can also establish reasonable time limits for each speaker.

Sometimes there will be difficult behavior at the meeting; it is the responsibility of the chair to manage the behavior. See the appendix for more information on the Roles People Play in Meetings and Dealing with Difficult Behavior in a Meeting. If there are ongoing problems, contact the Mayor for assistance.

When volunteers work on a project, please create a list of these volunteers and turn the list into the City after the event. This allows the City some liability coverage.

The City will schedule Commission training opportunities and seek to identify other training sources that may assist commissioners.

### **Quarterly Meetings with the Mayor**

Each quarter the chairs of the Commissions meet with the Mayor. The purpose of these meetings is to share major issues with the other commissions and to provide an opportunity for joint planning.

# Section II

# Being an Effective Commissioner



## Section II. Being an Effective Commissioner

### 6. THE KEYS TO BEING AN EFFECTIVE COMMISSION MEMBER

Lake Forest Park commissions vary in complexity and operation. Because commission members are in a critical position to shape and influence commission decisions and actions, it is important that each member keeps informed and up-to-date on issues, council activity, and ordinances affecting their commission. Individuals who accept an appointment to a commission are committing to attending meetings and becoming involved in deliberations.



#### Attendance

It is critical that commissioners attend commission meetings. It is important for the work of the commission and the decisions and deliberations the Commissions make. Regular attendance is essential so that decisions may more truly represent the opinions of the Commission as a whole. In addition, regular attendance enables commission members to keep abreast of commission concerns and helps ensure that issues are examined from a variety of perspectives.

The ordinance is specific regarding the attendance requirements. If a commissioner misses the majority of the meetings in any two six-month periods during the term of office, the Mayor may assume the position is vacant and appoint someone to the position. In April and October, the Mayor will get a report on attendance from the City Clerk. If a member is absent 50 percent of the time in a six-month period, the Mayor will contact the Commissioner to discuss his or her participation. If in an additional six-month period the Commissioner is again absent for more than 50 percent of the meetings, the Mayor may assume the position is vacant and fill the position.

It is the intent of the Mayor to be in contact with commissioners absent from a significant number of meetings to discuss their participation. The City understands the need to balance the family and work obligations with the needs of the commission. The Mayor will take into consideration if a commissioner has occasional family obligations, is required to travel because of their work, or is ill.

Absences may be excused if the Commission chair is notified in advance and the Commission members vote to excuse the member. The ordinance requires the Mayor to monitor attendance whether it is excused or not.

Generally the Commissions meet once or twice a month. Attendance must be taken at each meeting. The Clerk of the Commission will make sure the City Clerk has the attendance lists. The City Clerk will make the attendance records available to the Mayor twice a year.

A commission member can be removed from office for malfeasance, neglect of duty, inefficiency, or criminal conviction while in office. The chair of the Commission and/or the

Mayor may make recommendations for removal of a commissioner. The removal of a commissioner is finalized when the City Council votes to approve the removal of a commissioner.

## **Meeting Preparation**

Adequate preparation is another requisite for effective membership on the Commission. The Commission's staff members will provide reports, proposals, and other information to help make informed decisions. Do not hesitate to request any additional information needed in order to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions.

Effective commission members:

- Attend all regularly scheduled and special commission meetings.
- Arrive well prepared and on time for meetings.
- Recognize that serving the public interest is the top priority.
- Recognize that the Commission must operate in an open and public manner.
- Become knowledgeable about the legislative process and issues affecting the Commission.
- Examine all available evidence before making a judgment.
- Communicate effectively and actively participate in group discussions.
- Are aware that authority to act is granted to the Commission as a whole, not to individual members.
- Possess a willingness to work with the group in making decisions.
- Recognize that compromise may be necessary in order to reach group consensus.
- Commission members are expected to work with all of the other members of the Commission. If one member has personal problems with other members or staff, please contact the City Administrator or Mayor.



## 7. POLICY-MAKING RECOMMENDATIONS

### Public Policy

Commission members should be knowledgeable about commission policies. It is important that commissioners understand the fundamental meaning and characteristics of policy.

- Policy is a written statement.
- It is intended to be a guiding principle defining an organization's intent and direction. Policy should be set forth in broad terms so that it may remain applicable and usable for a long period of time.
- It should not be so detailed that it dictates how, when, or where things must be done.
- Policy may be amended, rewritten or abolished.
- Policy should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it remains relevant.
- Policy should be stated clearly and concisely.

Recommendations should be submitted to the Mayor for review, who will submit them to the Council.

The commissions also have a role in making program recommendations. For example, the decision to provide teen programs is a policy decision. The activities at Aldercrest are a program. Commissioners have a role in determining both the policy recommendations and suggestions about how programs might work more effectively.

### Making Recommendations to Council

The Mayor or the Council may request a commission to make a recommendation on a specific item. When presenting recommendations to the Council, it is essential that commission members keep the following in mind:

- All recommendations should be in written form. The Staff can assist in the preparation of the needed documents.
- All ideas should be expressed in clear and concise language.
- Proposed solutions should be viable and cost-effective.
- Recommendations should identify the reasons for the changes suggested.
- The advice should reflect *a consensus or a majority* of the commission members.



The primary policy document for the City is the Comprehensive Plan. In addition, the Parks and Recreation Commission has a Comprehensive Parks Plan, there is a Shoreline Master Plan that is the City's policy on shoreline management, various park master plans, and a Human Services needs assessment. A commission drafts each of these documents. The draft documents are presented to the Mayor for Council approval. The City Council is the final policy making authority.

## **8. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION: THE BUDGET PROCESS**

### **City Budget Process**

Local governments in Washington are required to have a budget passed by December 31 of each year. The budgets are required to be in balance. In order to meet this deadline, the Mayor prepares a budget in October and presents it to the Council. The Council is responsible for passing the final budget.

In order to meet the schedule for the budget process, in June of each year the commissions complete their work plans, including requests for money to support these plans. The requests for funding are considered for inclusion in the Mayor's executive budget. Requests for new programs mid-year must be authorized by the Mayor and Council and can be made through a budget amendment.

### **Raising Money through Grants**

In addition to the City budget, funds are available from other sources. The County, the State and the federal government, and other groups and foundations provide funds for particular projects.



The Mayor must approve the application for grants. If the Commission becomes aware of a funding source, it should work with the assigned commission staff to determine if the City should apply for a grant and, if so, who will write the grant. Grant writing takes a great deal of time and will require staff to put aside current work in order to write the grant. The request to refocus staff work needs to be done through the City Administrator.

## **9. CONDUCTING COMMISSION BUSINESS**

### **Public Disclosure**

All commission meetings are open to the public. A majority of the membership of a commission constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. Any action taken by the majority of those present, when those present constitute a quorum at any regular or special meeting of a commission, shall be deemed and taken as the action of the Commission.

Commissions are required by city ordinance to make a record of meetings. When the Commission approves the record, the record is filed with the City Clerk who is responsible for distribution. (See attached template.) All votes taken by the Commission shall be recorded including the names of commissioners who vote yes and those voting no on split votes.

The City is working toward having all the meeting records available on the City web site at [www.cityofflp.com](http://www.cityofflp.com).

## **Ethics and the Appearance of Fairness**

Commission members are expected to uphold a high standard of ethics. It is extremely important that commission members avoid conflicts of interest, or even the appearance of conflicts of interest. Commission members can avoid conflict of interest problems using good judgment, and being fair and equitable in policy development and decision-making.

Every commission should have a copy of LFPMC Chapter 2.22 and the Commissioner's Manual. The Commission may adopt rules of procedure consistent with state law, the Municipal Code and City Council rules. In the absence of a set of rules, Robert's Rules of Order should be used.

## **Quorum**

A majority of the membership of a commission constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business. If a quorum is not present, no official business can take place.



## **Order of Business**

After the Chair, or in the absence of the Chair the Vice-Chair, has called the meeting to order, the procedure below is generally followed:

1. Reading and Approving of Meeting Records of Previous Meeting(s).
2. Correspondence
3. Reports from Staff.
4. Reports of Task Forces or Subcommittees.
5. Unfinished Business
6. New Business.
7. Review Assignments
8. Adjourn

The format for the agenda is included in the appendices.

## **Lobbying**

There exists a very fine line between lobbying and advising --individuals lobby, the commissions advise. It is important that commission members be aware of this distinction. Commission members are in a unique position that allows them to provide information and make educated recommendations on issues. However, a commission member becomes a lobbyist when he or she attempts to influence the passage or defeat of any legislation by the Council. It is important to remember that the commission works through the Mayor. Any commissioner may testify before the Council as an individual.

All lobbying done must be accomplished within the established channels of the Council, e.g. testifying at hearings, contacting Council members and Mayor, etc. The commission may request to make a presentation to the Council. It is up to the Council whether such requests will be placed on the agenda.

## **Ballot Measures**

Commission members may not use any public facilities for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office. Commission members can not promote or oppose, any ballot proposition unless they are activities which are a part of the normal and regular conduct of the office or agency. This includes calling staff to ask them advice, or discussing activities regarding the ballot measure on public property.

## **Legal Counsel**

The City has legal representation. If the Commission needs to have any legal questions answered, request the commission staff to request clarification from the City Attorney.

## **Testifying at Council and at Hearings**

Commission members often have an opportunity to testify at legislative, local government, or community hearings. When providing testimony on behalf of the Commission, members should refrain from expressing personal opinions. It can be helpful if legislative staff members receive copies of written testimony prior to the hearing.

## **Effective Testimony**

To provide effective testimony, members should keep the following guidelines in mind:

- All testimony should be brief, concise, and honest.
- Avoid reading lengthy written testimony; instead, orally highlight important points in the written report.
- If others are offering similar testimony, try to coordinate information to avoid repetition.

- Avoid being too technical.
- Be prepared to answer questions. If you are unable to answer a question, offer to provide a written response later and always follow through.
- If you absolutely must give a personal opinion, make sure it is understood that you are not speaking for the Commission, but for yourself.
- When lobbying as an individual, do not identify yourself as a commissioner.

## 10. THE MEDIA: MANAGING THE MESSAGE

Newspapers have the important function of informing the public about city government operations. In doing so, they provide a valuable communications link with the community. It is important to maintain a cooperative and open relationship with the media without violating privacy and other citizen rights. The following are suggested guidelines for working with the media:



- If you are making contact with the media, you are encouraged to work with the Mayor and appropriate city staff. If members of the media are at a commission meeting, it is the responsibility of the chair to be sure questions are answered or the media is directed to a city source for an answer.
- Remember it is OK to say, “I don’t know. I will find out for you.”
- Designate a spokesperson that will speak for the Commission as a whole.
- Establish policies for media relations and designate staff as media contact whenever possible.
- Be as open as possible, and keep your focus on the business of the Commission. Personal opinions, especially those regarding other people, are inappropriate. The news media is not the place to air dissatisfactions or carry on conflicts among commission members or agency employees.
- If you do not know the answer to a question or are unsure about an issue, refer the matter to the City Administrator.
- If you believe it is important that the public have specific information, please notify the Mayor, who is responsible for all executive functions including media relations.
- A “wise” commission anticipates when an event in the community will stir the interest of the media. It provides materials that are responsive and informative, but which do not violate individual privacy or undermine the dignity and authority of the Commission.
- Keep in mind that the comments you make in public may also have to be made in a court of law. Do not risk your personal integrity or that of another by thoughtless or unwarranted remarks.
- Please let the Mayor or City Administrator know if you have spoken to the press.

## The Town Crier

The City has developed several ways of getting information out to citizens. The Town Crier is the publication the City uses to communicate with its citizens. It is not the official publication. The Town Crier goes to all residents of the City. It is a monthly publication and can be used to inform citizens. The Town Crier is usually at the printer's two weeks prior to publication. The City Administrator is the editor of the Town Crier.



## Government Access and the Website

In addition, every home that has cable receives a Lake Forest Park government channel. This channel lists information, such as agendas for meetings, public notices and information about the City.

In 1999, the City launched a web site [www.cityofflp.com](http://www.cityofflp.com). Almost 75 percent of city households have Internet access. This is an expanding source of information for our citizens. The City is developing the capacity to use this format as another way to disseminate information to citizens. In conjunction with the web site, the City is developing and maintaining e-mail lists of people interested in specific topics.

If you want to put notices in the Town Crier, Public Access TV or the web please contact the City Administrator.

## 11. STAFFING THE COMMISSIONS

The ordinance says, "At the direction of the mayor, the city administrator shall have oversight for the staffing of the Commissions."

The City is committed to providing commissions with adequate staffing. Staff will provide draft reports and agendas for the meetings. Staff will assist in the preparation of the annual report, and annual work plan including budgets.

- A program staff will be assigned to each commission to provide staff support.
- Commissions that are not required by state law to have minutes will make a record of the meeting using a template. Once there is an approved copy it should be forwarded to the City Clerk for distribution.
- Utilization of the City staff will be in the approved commission work plan. Work requests of designated City staff are to be made by the Commission chair. The Mayor must approve new work requests.

City staff will provide professional support, including writing drafts of findings and recommendations for hearings. The ongoing financial impact of implementing this staffing requirement shall be reviewed by the City Council in the budget process.

Commissions have staff to perform administrative tasks, to write reports of meetings, and send out agenda. The staff to the commissions has significant duties beyond the scope of the commissions.

The primary function of the commission's program staff is to be a liaison between the Commission and the Mayor. In addition, the staff members notify commission members of pertinent issues and legislative activity. They also arrange meetings, prepare meeting materials, and compile background information.

Commission staff serves as an important link and coordinates with other commissions, the Council, City Administrator or other staff and the public. Staff are a valuable resource for commission members. A good staff member can enhance the productivity and effectiveness of a commission. Commission members should not hesitate to ask staff members for help in carrying out their responsibilities. All requests for work assignments in addition to requests made in the annual work plan need to go through the City Administrator.

Commissions may decide to produce their own reports and request program staff on an ad hoc basis.

# Section III

# RESOURCES

-

# APPENDICES



## SECTION III. RESOURCES/APPENDICES

### Resources

The LFP Municipal Code and the Comprehensive Plan are available on line at [www.cityofflp.com](http://www.cityofflp.com)

### Appendices

LFPMC Chapter 2.22  
Descriptions of the Commissions  
“I Am Interested in Serving on a Commission” Form  
Managing Difficult People  
Roles in a Meeting  
Liability for Boards and Volunteers