

WHEN AND WHERE DO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS MEET?

The City Code requires that all boards and commissions comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Boards and commissions must have an agenda for each meeting noting the date, time, location and agenda items to be considered and must be posted at least 72 hours before the meeting. The notices of meetings are posted at City Hall and on the website.

In the meetings, only the subjects listed on the posted agenda can be considered for that meeting. If a member of the public or a member of the board or commission raises a subject that has not been included in the notice for the meeting, any discussion of the subject must be limited to merely providing a factual answer to a question. If the subject needs further discussion, it must be added on a future agenda.

Each board must maintain minutes of every meeting. The liaison may record the events of the meeting using action minutes and include the members in attendance; the subject of each deliberation; and each vote, order, decision, or other action taken.

The City Code prohibits boards and commissions from meeting in closed session unless they have received prior approval from the city attorney.

In summary, there are three central features of the Open Meetings Act.

- 1. The public must be permitted to attend meetings**
- 2. An agenda of the meeting must be posted for the public to see**
- 3. Minutes of the meetings must be kept**

A detailed training module on the Open Meetings Act is included as part of the board member training.

The City of Farmers Branch is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. All boards and commissions will provide reasonable modifications for participation and equal access to communications upon request. Meeting locations must be planned to accommodate wheelchair access. For additional accommodations staff liaisons may need at least 3-5 days before the meeting date to make arrangements.

STAFF SUPPORT

The staff liaison ensures the board complies with deadlines and code provisions, monitors the conflict of interest declarations to ensure the rules are followed and helps the chair keep the board functioning within their mission statement.

Staff liaison helps the board prepare agendas, post meeting notices, maintain minutes and keep attendance records for board members. The board does not supervise or manage staff liaisons and may not direct staff to perform work on behalf of the board. The board may make reasonable requests for information or resources they need by contacting the staff liaison.

CONCLUSION

Think about your actions, how you present yourself and how you represent the city. These things make an impression on your board or commission and its effectiveness. You have been appointed to help the council make good decisions for the citizens of Farmers Branch. As a public official, there are certain responsibilities you must undertake and rules you need to know and abide by. This information has covered the essential aspects of being a member of a board or commission and will help you be an effective member.

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions regarding the information in this brochure please contact the City Secretary's Office at 972.919.2515

Roles & Responsibilities OF BOARD MEMBERS



WHY HAVE BOARDS & COMMISSIONS?

Boards and commissions are an established feature of Farmers Branch municipal government.

- Offers citizens an opportunity to participate
- Assist council set priorities or consider different alternatives
- Influence policy through recommendations

WHO SERVES ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS?

With some exceptions, in order to serve on a board or commission, you must be a resident of Farmers Branch, a registered voter, pass a criminal background check. A majority vote of the council is needed to make an appointment.

Maintain Eligibility:

- Regular Attendance - If a member has unexcused absences for three consecutive regular meetings or one-third of all regular meetings in a twelve month timeframe, he or she may be removed.
- Abide by all of the applicable rules and laws that govern ethical behavior as established by the City's Code of Ethics.
- Sign a written acknowledgment of the oath of office and statement of officer.
- Complete training state required training within 90 days of your appointment or reappointment, comply with the public financial statement, if applicable, and conflict of interest requirements.

WHAT MAKES AN EFFECTIVE BOARD OR COMMISSION?

A successful meeting involves effective communication between individuals or groups. Good meeting planning and good facilitation skills are needed. Here are a few pointers to conducting a successful meeting.

- Conduct meetings in an orderly manner - have a set meeting procedure and explain the procedure to those present at the beginning of the meeting.
- Act promptly. Follow the published agenda and make decisions in a timely manner to ensure due process.
- Stay focused. Do not get bogged down in details or constant requests for more information. Bring issues to a consensus.
- Ensure the board's action is aligned with the goals and objectives of the City. Determine if the issues were clearly defined and fully addressed. Make sure you have enough information to reach a decision. You can do this by keeping an open mind, hearing all the testimony or information before discussing the pros and cons of an item, remaining focused on the facts, listening carefully before making or announcing a decision and avoid making the discussion personal.

- Read and review your agenda and become thoroughly familiar with each matter. If you need more information, ask the staff liaison. The key is to know the facts so you can make an informed decision.
- Think about whether you have a conflict of interest with any item on the agenda. If so, recuse yourself.
- Be professional. Do not mingle with friends, acquaintances, applicants or objectors in the audience before the meeting or during a recess as this can create the impression of bias, dishonesty or conflict.
- Be polite and impartial. Assist those who are not familiar with the protocol.
- Be attentive to those who are presenting their point of view. This is an important issue to them and their voice must be heard.
- Follow the bylaws, policies and procedures for your board or commission and above all, be on time. Arrange your schedule to be at the meeting on time. This will ensure that a quorum is present and the business of the meeting can proceed. As soon as a quorum is in the room, the meeting should be called to order.
- The rules provide that each person and board member attending a meeting should observe decorum.



WHAT MAKES A BOARD?

For a board to meet and conduct business, a quorum must be present. A quorum is a simple majority unless the provision that created the board or commission specifies the number needed for a quorum. Unfilled positions do not change the requirements for a quorum. If a board of seven members has one or two vacant seats, for there to be a quorum, 4 must still be present before any action can be taken. It is important that members be at meetings on time because if there is no quorum within 30 minutes after the starting time, no action can be taken and the meeting must be rescheduled.