

Boards and Commissions

Introduction

The Golden Valley City Council appreciates the many citizens who take time away from their personal and professional lives to serve the community as members on the Council's advisory groups. Golden Valley has a history of extensive citizen involvement. Approximately 60 advisory commission, board, and committee members participate in providing specialized expertise so Council decisions can be made with more complete background and knowledge than would otherwise be possible. The Council and the entire community benefit from this invaluable service.

Golden Valley is a statutory city as established by the state legislature in the early 1970s. According to state statute: "In any such city, there shall be...no administrative board or commission...the Council shall itself perform the duties and exercise the powers and shall govern and administer the functions for which no independent boards are authorized by statute. The Council, may, however, create boards or commissions to advise the Council with respect to any municipal function or activity or to investigate any subject of interest in the City." This Council, and others before it, recognizes the many advantages to be gained from this approach.

The Council is directly responsible for the actions of its advisory boards and commissions and hopes that through these guidelines its expectations will be clearly understood and followed. The Mayor and Council Members welcome any request for discussion or clarification of these guidelines. The goals of the Council are better communication with its advisory commissions and better service to the citizens of Golden Valley.

Current Golden Valley Standing Commissions and Boards

The Golden Valley City Council currently has seven standing advisory boards or commissions:

- Board of Zoning Appeals
- Civil Service Commission
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission (formerly Human Rights Commission)
- Environmental Commission
- Human Services Commission
- Open Space and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Police Employment, Accountability, and Community Engagement Commission

Short term advisory committees are appointed as needed.

These Guidelines For Advisory Boards And Commissions apply to each of these groups as appropriate and as permitted by the laws and ordinances that establish them.

Legal Basis Of Advisory Boards and Commissions

Boards and commissions may be organized in any manner deemed appropriate by the City Council. The Council may create and dissolve them, appoint persons to serve on them, and exercise powers of general supervision over them.

Boards and commissions are authorized to exercise all duties the Council legally assigns them. They are frequently authorized to conduct research and make recommendations, but they may not make decisions on behalf of the Council. The Council may accept an advisory recommendation if the commission has done a thorough and competent job; however, it is the Council's final decision and not a commission recommendation that binds the municipality. No recommendation of any advisory commission takes effect unless it has been adopted by formal action of the City Council.

Open Meeting Law

All meetings of all public bodies in Golden Valley must be open to the public. There can be no such thing as a “closed,” “private,” or “executive” meeting or session. The only exceptions that have been recognized in the past are certain disciplinary actions conducted by the Police Civil Service Commission and some personnel and legal matters before the City Council.

State statute requires that meetings of City Councils, commissions, subcommittees, and other public bodies be open to the public. Any person violating the open meeting requirement is subject to civil penalty.

Commissions and committees are required to hold all meetings in public places and post notices of meeting dates and times at City Hall. Scheduling meetings with the City Manager’s Office will help prevent conflict with other groups over meeting times when public participation is particularly desired. Commission, board, and committee meetings will not be held on designated legal holidays or recognized religious holidays.

Any questions regarding the meaning or application of the Open Meeting Law should be directed to the Staff Liaison, who will seek such advice from the City Manager, in conjunction with the City Attorney, as may be necessary.

Commission Organization and Procedures

Term Of Office

The City Council makes appointments to commissions effective May 1 of each year. The length of each appointment is provided in the governing ordinance or resolution and is designated by the Council at the time of the appointment.

Voluntary resignations from a commission should be communicated by letter or email from to the Staff Liaison.

Each permanent advisory commission should elect officers no later than its second meeting after May 1 each year. Chairpersons of special committees may be appointed by the City Council.

Chair And Vice-Chair

Commission members shall elect a chair and vice-chair at their regular Annual Meeting. Members may only serve two consecutive years as the chair and vice-chair of any board or commission.

Meetings

Meeting times and locations are set according to commission bylaws. Each commission should defer to the Council's meeting policy for meetings that occur on or near recognized holidays. A quorum is made up of a majority of currently appointed members. All meetings will be conducted in accordance with the Minnesota Open Meeting Law and City Code using standard parliamentary procedure.

Attendance

Absences in one year should not exceed three consecutive meetings or more than 25 percent of the total meetings. Members unable to attend a meeting should contact the staff liaison, who will inform the chair if a quorum cannot be attained and the meeting will be cancelled.

For groups meeting once a month, the City Manager’s office will send a standard letter of warning to any member after two consecutive or two total absences. For groups meeting twice a month, the commission chair will send the letter after two consecutive or five total absences. If a member exceeds the allowable number of absences the City Manager’s office will send a standard letter stating the member must step down because of the importance of regular attendance and the number of citizens interested in serving. If the City Manager’s office feels there are extenuating circumstances in a case of a member who has not met the attendance requirements, an exception can be made.

Bylaws Or Rules Of Procedure

Each commission shall follow Bylaws or Rules of Procedure governing its work. Proposed amendments to Bylaws or Rules of Procedure should be submitted to the City Council for review and approval prior to implementation.

Orientation

Staff Liaisons, in conjunction with the City Manager’s Department, will provide orientation for new board and commission members before their first meeting, including information about meetings, expectations, and pertinent issues.

Acting As A Private Citizen

A commission member testifying before the City Council as a private citizen should clearly note before testimony that he/she is testifying as a private citizen.

Expenditures

Each commission is authorized to incur the specific expenditures included in its final budget, as adopted by the City Council. Any other expenditures require specific Council approval before the obligation is incurred. Council approval is necessary before funds can be solicited from outside sources for any purpose.

Minutes

The City will provide a person to take minutes for advisory boards and commissions. Minutes serve as a historical record of commission proceedings and inform the Council of the commission's activities. They should present an accurate report of the sequence of events and names of citizens who appear and are heard. Minutes should include the commission's formal action and a summary of the reasoning underlying such action.

1. Minutes of each board or commission meeting shall be prepared and maintained by the Staff Liaison or other designated representative.
2. Following board or commission approval, minutes shall be forwarded to the City Clerk for placement on a City Council agenda.
3. Meeting agendas and approved minutes are published on the City's website.
4. All board and commission records, including minutes and agendas, must be maintained in accordance with the City's records retention policy. Contact the City Clerk's office if you have questions regarding retention and preferred storage medium.

Staff Liaison

The City assigns a Staff Liaison to each commission to provide direct information to regarding City policy and practices within its area of interest. In general, Staff Liaisons facilitate or assist with meetings, record attendance, provide information and direction as requested by the commission, and serve as a conduit for information and assignments from the City Council and the City Manager. Staff Liaisons communicate all requests from a board or commission to the City Manager, appropriate Department Head, and the Council, as requested. Staff Liaisons are also responsible for informing the City Manager of any problems or issues that may arise.

The City operates under the Plan B City Manager form of government, in which all employees are hired and supervised by the City Manager, who in turn is responsible to the City Council. Neither the Council nor any commission member has the authority to direct staff personnel. Any commission recommendations for modification of City policy and practices should be directed to the Council. The Staff Liaison will periodically inform the chair about members' attendance, particularly when warnings must be sent as outlined under "Attendance," and copy the City Manager to forward to the City Council.

Council Liaison(s)

Each year, at its organizational meeting, the City Council shall assign one or more liaisons to each board or commission. The Council Liaison(s) will meet at least annually with the board or commission to which he or she is assigned. These meetings can serve as an informal means for the exchange of information between the Council and the board or commission, but all formal communication shall follow procedures as outlined in the Section "Communications To And From Commissions."

Subcommittees

From time to time, the City Council may appoint subcommittees of certain commissions in order that special attention be concentrated in specified areas. At the same time, the Council also wants the opinion of the commission regarding each subcommittee's recommendations.

Each subcommittee should submit any report or recommendations intended for the Council first to the commission for review and comment. Such review and comment should take place at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the commission. If it does not, the report or recommendation of the subcommittee shall be forwarded to the Council without commission consent.

The subcommittee report or recommendation, together with the commission's comments, should be submitted to the Council at its next regularly scheduled meeting. As in the case of commission presentations, a spokesperson for the subcommittee should attend the Council meeting and be prepared to make a presentation and answer questions.

The commission is free to appoint subcommittees of its membership as it sees a need.

Communications To and From Commissions

Council Requests To Commissions

From time to time, the City Council will refer items to commissions for recommendation to assist the Council in gathering all pertinent facts and sharpening the issues. The referral will be communicated to the board or commission by the Staff Liaison.

The Council would request a written report from each commission with regard to each such referral. The report should set forth all the pertinent facts and detailed recommendations from the commission. The report should be submitted to the City Manager the Wednesday before the Council meeting so it may be included in the agenda.

Any time a commission report comes before the Council, one representative of the commission should be present to make a presentation and answer questions. In the event there is a difference of opinion on the commission, a minority report may be presented in the same manner.

Commission Requests To Council

Any commission request or recommendation for City Council action or legal opinion should be communicated from the Staff Liaison to the City Manager, giving a full explanation of the background of the matter. Along with the request, the commission should submit or refer to the pertinent portion of its minutes on the subject.

The request should be delivered to the City Manager on the Wednesday before the Council meeting. A presentation should be made by a commission representative. A minority report may also be presented.

Communications With Those Other Than The City Council

Based on past experience, the City Council believes there is some potential for misunderstanding regarding communications with persons and governmental units or agencies other than the City Council of Golden Valley. It is essential that members of commissions understand and observe appropriate policies and practices in this regard.

The City Council alone has the responsibility and authority to adopt the decisions, policies, and recommendations of the City of Golden Valley. The Council values the opinions and advice of its commissions and invites communication of the same to the Council. The Council will take such opinions and advice into account in formulating the City's official position.

This method of proceeding does not preclude a commission from gathering such information as may be pertinent to its activities. Commissions are free, without prior Council approval, to gather information consistent with their annual work plan or other direction given by the Council.

The matter of distributing information to the public is one that is not capable of specific rules of practice. In general, any such communication that purports to communicate, or has the effect of communicating, an official City position or decision should be submitted to the Council for prior approval. Other types of communications, which are purely informational and do not involve unresolved questions of City policy, may be disseminated without prior Council approval.