



Volunteer Boards & Commissions Handbook

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1. Overview

Volunteer Boards & Committees

The City of Astoria has a number of boards and committees that fulfill essential roles within the policy making and governance of the City of Astoria. Members on these boards review and make recommendations on issues related to land use, zoning, social services, parks, library services, and historical matters. These Boards and commissions also serve in an advisory capacity to the Council on specific policies.

As per the City Charter, the Mayor has the responsibility to appoint members to these positions. This handbook is intended as a comprehensive resource guide for Board and Commission members, and those who are interested in wanting to become a member of one of the City's Volunteer Boards & Commissions.

The Point of Contact for the City Manager's Office will be the Assistant to the City Manager (or Executive Assistant to the City Manager). Moving forward in this handbook, when referring to the "City Manager's Office", it is referring to this position.

2. Interpersonal Standards, Protocols and Code of Conduct

- I. **Ethics.** All members shall review and observe the requirements of state ethics law. In addition to complying with state ethics law, all members shall refrain from:
 - A. Disclosing confidential information.
 - B. Taking action which benefits special interest groups or persons at the expense of the city as a whole.
 - C. Expressing an opinion contrary to the official position of the Council without so saying.
 - D. Conducting themselves in a manner so as to bring discredit upon the government of the city.
- II. **Code of Conduct.** The City of Astoria Volunteer Boards & Committees are committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical behavior, transparency and accountability while working amongst itself and with neighboring colleagues, City staff and the public. Towards that end, the Council has adopted a set of



interpersonal standards, principles and expectations to promote a collaborative, respectful and healthy working relationship.

A. Integrity and Accountability

- i. Always conduct oneself in a professional, courteous, and respectful manner.
- ii. Never compromise your personal integrity or the honor and good faith of the City.
- iii. Never allow conflicts of interest to arise between your public duties and your private interests.
- iv. Make decisions on the basis of public policy and be consistent.
- v. Vote Yes or No on motions. As a general practice, members of should exercise their vote and limit the instances of abstention on matters before the body. However, members of a board/committee must abstain due to actual conflicts of interest as defined by the Oregon Revised Statute or if ex parte contacts impairs a members impartiality on a quasi-judicial land use matter.

B. Respect and Civility

- i. Listen attentively. Avoid interrupting. Be respectful, even with those you disagree.
- ii. Always be respectful of one another, the public, and city staff.
- iii. Be respectful of differences. Accept disagreements. Vote and move on.
- iv. Respect the letter and intent of the open meetings law.

C. Public Communication and Transparency

- i. Be open, honest and diplomatic when communicating.
- ii. Be friendly and deal effectively with news media. Make sure what you say is what you mean.
- iii. Avoid engaging in debates with the public or individual citizens.
- iv. Follow state law on communication between members on your board/committee.

D. Professionalism

- i. Do not criticize in public. Issues should be addressed in private when possible.
- ii. Strive for consensus as an operating goal.
- iii. Do not personally criticize other members who vote against or disagree with you.
- iv. Respect and support decisions of the majority of your board/committee and the City Council.



- v. Do not spring surprises on colleagues and staff, especially at formal meetings – notify others of issues and concerns ahead of time.
- vi. Attend meetings regularly.
- vii. Participate in official meetings with the dignity and decorum fitting of those who hold a position of public trust.
- viii. Do not bypass the system. Stick to policy and avoid personal involvement in the day-to-day operations of the City.

III. Decorum.

- A. The presiding officer shall preserve decorum during meetings and shall decide all points of order.
- B. Robert’s Rules of Order shall be observed at all board/committee meetings, but should not hold up the process of a meeting.
- C. Members shall preserve decorum during meetings, and shall not, by conversation or action, delay or interrupt the proceedings or refuse to obey the orders of the presiding officer or these rules.
- D. Members of the city staff and all other persons attending meetings shall observe the Roberts Rules of Order to the same standards of decorum as members of Council.

3. Public Meetings, Quorums, and Communications

Meetings.

Meetings must be held within the city limits of Astoria as listed on the published agenda for that meeting. Virtually all meetings of governing bodies, which include standing and ad-hoc committees, are open to the public in the State of Oregon. “The Oregon form of government requires an informed public aware of the deliberations and decisions of governing bodies and the information upon which such decisions were made. It is the intent of ORS 192.610 to 192.690 that decisions of governing bodies be arrived at openly”. Members of a committee or board are responsible for the content and product of the meetings they attend. Members will follow the code of conduct and interpersonal standards as established within this handbook.

Quorum.

A majority of the members of a Committee shall constitute a quorum. A quorum of members must be present to proceed with a meeting. If a quorum is not obtained within



fifteen minutes of the scheduled start time, the meeting cannot take place, and the meeting room needs to be vacated. The digital recording and/or minutes for the meeting shall dictate that the meeting did not take place for lack of a quorum.

Inadvertent Public Meetings:

Inadvertent public meetings must be avoided. If committee members willfully violate public meetings law, they can be held personally liable for any damages, including attorney fees. Inadvertent public meetings may occur when a quorum of a Committee meets outside of a public meeting. Inadvertent public meetings include but are not limited to:

- **Attending meetings of other public bodies:** If a quorum of a committee were to attend the meeting of another public body (e.g. another City of Astoria committee, City Council, or other governing body) it could give the appearance that the committee is having a public meeting. Therefore, if a quorum of a committee plans to attend the meeting of another governing body, their attendance should be formally noticed.
- **Social Gatherings:** A quorum of a committee may participate in social gatherings. However, even when meeting socially, no official business can be discussed lest the social gathering turn into or give the appearance of a public meeting.

Email, Texting, Instant Messages, and other electronic communication:

Committee members and staff must take care not to participate in non-contemporaneous communications that could turn into a serial communication. The City encourages the use of email as a one-way communication tool. To this end Committee members should not 'reply all' to any emails to avoid an issue of a quorum. Staff should be cautious of being an intermediary in a serial communication that taken as a whole turn into deliberation, and thus, a public meeting.

4. Public Records Law

Government transparency is vital to a healthy democracy. Public scrutiny helps ensure that government spends tax dollars wisely and works for the benefit of the people. Oregon's Public Records and Meetings Laws underscore the state's commitment to transparency. Government records are available to the public, and governing bodies must conduct deliberations and make decisions in the open.



5. Legal Obligations of Committee Members

As a committee/board member it is important to remember that you have legal responsibilities. These include:

Public Bodies

Committees/Boards are considered “public bodies” under Oregon law. As a result you must ensure that the committee operates in compliance with open meeting laws.

Oregon’s open meeting laws essentially require three things:

- Notice must be provided for all meetings.
- Meetings must be open to the public.
- Minutes must be created for each meeting.

City staff will work to ensure that all public bodies are operating within compliance of open meetings law and will be responsible for the notification of meetings, ensuring meetings are open to the public and the development of meeting minutes.

Public Officials

Committee members are considered “public officials” and must act consistently with Oregon’s ethics laws (ORS 244.010). Oregon’s ethics laws prohibit:

- Any public official from gaining financially or avoiding financial detriment as a result of his or her position regardless it is salaried or not.
- Receipt of gifts with a total value of more than \$50.00 from any single source. A gift is defined as something of value given to a public official, for which the official does not pay an equal value. Gifts of entertainment are included in the \$50 gift limit.
- Public officials must declare any conflicts of interest at a public meeting.

A conflict exists if a decision or recommendation potentially could affect the finances of the committee member or the finances of a family member. If a conflict exists, the committee member must declare this fact at a meeting where the issue is discussed and may need to refrain from discussing or voting on the matter. The laws surrounding conflicts of interest are confusing but also contain exemptions that may apply. If you are unsure whether a conflict exists, you should contact the staff person assisting your committee to discuss the matter.

SEI Fillers

Once a year, members on the Council and particular boards/committees need to file with the Oregon Governments Ethics Commission (OGEC) their Statement of Economic Interest (SEI) as required by ORS 244.050. The filing window for this is from March 18 – April 15 ever year. The City Manager’s Office will reach out to members when the filing



window is open and provide instructions and reminders throughout the open window period. Here is a list of the Volunteer Boards/Committees whose members will need to file:

- Design Review Commission
- Historic Landmarks Commission
- Hospital Facilities Authority Board
- Planning Commission.

6. Legal Protection for Volunteers

This City of Astoria is a local public body and is subject to legal action and suit for the torts of its officers, employees and agents, including volunteers (Oregon Tort Claims Act). A tort is any breach of a legal duty which results in injury to a specific person or persons for which the law provides remedy. "Injury" can include such things as financial loss, damage to reputation or emotional injury as well as physical injury.

According to the Act, the action or suit is brought only against the City, not the individual volunteer. The volunteer, upon written request, is entitled to indemnification (protection from the cost of judgement) and legal defense for any tort committed while in the performance of the volunteer's duties. This is true unless the act or omission complained of amounted to malfeasance in office, willful or wanton neglect of duty, or criminal activity.

7. Appointment of new Board/Committee Members

As per Section 5.1 of the City Charter, the Mayor shall appoint all members of committees established by the Council. The City Manager's Office will reach out to the appointee with a letter of appointment, and a copy of this Volunteer Boards & Committees Handbook.

8. Removal of Appointees

As per Section 5.1 of the City Charter, the Mayor may also remove appointees from committees and other appointments at the Mayor's discretion. A letter of removal will be distributed to the removed appointee if an appointee is removed City Council will be notified.



9. Staff Support for Committees and Boards

City staff administer City volunteer committees and boards. The primary role of staff is to carry out the rules, policies and programs developed by the committee. Staff also bring to the committee's attention issues of importance, assist the chair with agenda development, and compile background information for the committee to study. In addition, staff responsibilities include meeting arrangements, preparation of minutes, processing complaints, communication with members and other administrative duties. Staff are available to provide information for and assistance to committee members.

10. Overview of Each Board/Committee

Library Advisory Board

Members: Five (5)

Function: Library Board advises staff and makes recommendations on general library policy. The Board also assists with strategic planning and significant projects.

Term: Four (4) years.

Meeting Date: The first Tuesday of every other month at 5:30 p.m. in the Flag Room at the Astoria Public Library, 450 10th Street. Meetings are Zoomed and recorded.

Administrative Contract: Library Director.

Document Creating Board: Resolution 90-36

City Webpage: https://www.astorialibrary.org/Library_Board.aspx

Budget Committee

Members: Ten (10) total members. The five (5) members of City Council, and five (5) appointed volunteer members.

Function: The Astoria Budget Committee's job is to review the budget submitted by the staff and to set spending policy and the tax rate for the coming year. Members will also take part in subcommittees to review the grant applications the City has received for its Promote Astoria grant program, and Community Organization grant program.

Term: Three (3) years.

Meeting Date: Generally meet during the months of February, March, and April



Administrative Contract: Finance Director

State requirement.

City Webpage:

https://www.astoria.or.us/Budget_Committee.aspx#:~:text=The%20Astoria%20Budget%20Committee's%20job,Council%20members%20and%20five%20others.

Design Review Commission

Members: Five (5). Consists of a builder, a design professional (architect, landscape architect, building designer, or artist), a businessperson, a citizen representative, and a Historic Landmarks Commission representative. Not more than one 1 member may be a nonresident of the City.

Function: Their responsibility is to evaluate the design of proposed projects within the Gateway, Uniontown and Riverfront Overlay Areas based on established design review guidelines.

Term: Four (4) years

Meeting Date: 1st Thursday of each month, as needed, at 5:30 p.m., in the City Hall Council Chambers, 1095 Duane Street. Work sessions are held periodically following Commission meetings. All meetings recorded and streamed via Zoom.

Administrative Contract: City Planner, or Community Development Director

City Code reference: [Astoria Development Code Article 1 Basic Provisions, Section 1.105 Membership.](#)

City Webpage: https://www.astoria.gov/CD_Design_Review_Commission.aspx

SEI Filer

Historic Landmarks Commission

Members: Seven (7)

Function: Their responsibility is to promote the historic, educational, cultural, economic, and general welfare of the public through the preservation, restoration, and protection of historic landmarks, buildings, and sites with the City. The Commission reviews requests for exterior alterations to historic structures, new construction adjacent to historic properties, and other permits in historic areas.

Term: Four (4) years.



Meeting Date: 3rd Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the City Hall, Council Chambers, 1095 Duane Street. All meetings recorded and streamed via Zoom.

Administrative Contract: City Planner, or Community Development Director

City Code reference: [Astoria Development Code Article 1 Basic Provisions, Section 1.105 Membership.](#)

City Webpage: https://www.astoria.gov/Historic_Landmarks_Commission.aspx

SEI Filer.

Hospital Authority Board

Members: Five (5)

Function: Many states, including Oregon, provide by law for the creation of a public authority called hospital facility authorities to allow non-profit health care facilities to finance capital improvements through tax-exempt bonds. While nonprofit organizations such as Columbia Lutheran Charities dba Columbia Memorial Hospital (“CMH”) are tax-exempt organizations, they are not permitted to directly issue tax-exempt bonds. Instead, a governmental body such as The Hospital Facilities Authority of the City of Astoria, Oregon (the “Authority”), issues revenue bonds on their behalf.

Term: Four (4) years (two (2) term limit)

Meeting Date: Meets when needed.

Administrative Contract: Assistant to the City Manager, or Executive Assistant to the City Manager

Document Creating Board: Resolution 76-12

City Webpage: https://www.astoria.gov/Hospital_Facilities_Authority_Board.aspx

SEI Filer.

Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Members: Ten (10). Nine (9) members who shall reside within the City of Astoria; one (1) who may reside outside of Astoria at any given time.

Function: The Board advises the Parks and Recreation Director concerning the management, care and control of public parks and recreation facilities owned by the City of Astoria and Ocean View Cemetery

Term: Three (3) years



Meeting Date: 4th Wednesday of every month at 6:45 a.m. in the Astoria City Hall Council Chambers, 1095 Duane Street. Work Sessions are scheduled when needed. All meetings recorded and streamed via Zoom.

Administrative Contract: Parks & Recreation Director.

City Charter reference: [Astoria Municipal Code, Chapter 1 Government, Section 1.750 – 1.770 Parks and Recreation Board.](#)

City Webpage: https://www.astoriaparks.com/parks/agendas_minutes.aspx

Planning Commission

Members: Seven (7). No more than two (2) members may be nonresidents of the City.

Function: reviews conditional uses, variances, amendments, zone changes, and other land use permits. It is the Commission's duty to maintain the [Comprehensive Plan](#), [Development Code](#), and [Zoning Map](#) of the City, which are required under the State-Wide Planning Goals. In addition, the Commission serves as an advisory board to the City Council concerning the future development of the City.

Term: Four (4) years

Meeting Date: 4th Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. in the Astoria City Hall Council Chambers, 1095 Duane Street. Work Sessions are scheduled when needed. All meetings recorded and streamed via Zoom.

Administrative Contract: City Planner, or Community Development Director

City Code reference: [Astoria Development Code Article 1 Basic Provisions, Section 1.105 Membership.](#)

City Webpage: https://www.astoria.gov/Planning_Commission.aspx

SEI Filer.

