

Guidelines for Civic Agencies



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Purpose of the Guidelines

These guidelines are applicable to all civic agencies, including advisory committees, and their members. They are to be used in conjunction with the [Vancouver Charter](#), [Procedure By-law](#), the [Code of Conduct](#) policy, applicable Council resolutions, and any additional legislation specific to the civic agency. These documents explain the rules on matters such as civic agency roles and responsibilities, code of conduct, meeting procedures and media protocol. Additional information pertaining to each agency is available on the City of Vancouver website at: <http://vancouver.ca/your-government/advisory-boards-and-committees.aspx>.

Civic Agency Role and Responsibilities

A civic agency's role is to provide recommendations, advice and information to City Council and staff on those matters which relate to the mandate of the civic agency and on any matters which may be referred to the agency by Council or staff. Civic agencies are often asked by staff to provide early feedback on specific projects and initiatives. Civic Agencies work within their terms of reference or mandate. Information about each civic agency's terms of reference/mandate is available on the [City of Vancouver website](#).

Code of Conduct

Civic agencies and their members are covered by the City of Vancouver's [Code of Conduct](#) policy, a corporate policy that sets out expected conduct for staff, elected officials and civic agency members. The Code provides important information for civic agency members on general conduct at meetings (section 2), the handling of information (section 3), conflict of interest (section 4), as well as personal gifts and benefits (section 6). The Code of Conduct policy may be accessed online at: <http://vancouver.ca/files/cov/boards-committees-code-of-conduct.pdf>.

Civic Agency Structure

Each civic agency is assigned at least one non-voting City Council liaison and may also be assigned Park and School Boards liaisons, depending on the agency's mandate. Civic agencies are also assigned a staff liaison to provide information and advice on City programs and work that is relevant to the mandate and work plan of the civic agency. Administrative support is provided by the City Clerk's Office for formally convened, official meetings (i.e. regular meetings) and properly convened special meetings. On occasion, administrative support is not provided by the City Clerk's Office but is assigned to another City department.

Roles and Responsibilities – Members, Staff and Councillors

The following tables provide an overview of the roles and responsibilities of key groups involved with civic agencies.

Civic Agencies and their Members
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Elect a Chair and Co-Chair, if applicable, at the first meeting of the year - Make recommendations to City Council or staff in a collective manner; all members have equal voting rights - Represent community interests - Arrange and coordinate external presentations and communications - Be informed - read agenda packages - Follow City policies related to conduct - Participate in administrative support of the civic agency’s regular business, projects or research undertaken by the civic agency that are not part of the Meeting Coordinator’s role - Take any additional notes at meetings that will not be included in the “decision-based” minutes produced by the Meeting Coordinator (or departmental staff member responsible for minute taking) - Manage correspondence, emails and any documentation related to the civic agency - Follow City guidelines for the submission of content for Vancouver.ca committee pages and in the use of social media accounts - Follow guidelines for sending letters to City Council and external agencies including writing the content - Monitor the progress of Council motions (if applicable) - Develop an annual Work Plan at the beginning of each year - Develop an annual Report of Activities at the end of each year - Maintain financial information and bank accounts (if applicable)
Civic Agency Chairs/Co-Chairs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Preside over and maintain order at civic agency meetings - Provide each member with an opportunity to submit individual opinions - Work with Meeting Coordinators and/or staff to draft an agenda prior to each meeting (see Agenda section on page 5 for requirements) - Ensure a member is not present for any part of the meeting where a conflict of interest is declared during which the matter is under consideration - Manage discussion times for agenda items during meetings to keep within the 2 hour time allotment for regular meetings

City Council (and Board) Liaisons:

- Act as non-voting liaisons to agencies and attend meetings as regularly as their schedules permit
- Provide an information and liaison role between City Council and the civic agency
- Ensure that the civic agency's work falls within the mandate of City Council
- Provide advice and information on City Council, Park Board and School Board policies and activities respecting the civic agency
- Carry civic agency ideas and perspectives to the elected bodies for consideration in their deliberations

Staff Liaisons

- Act as non-voting liaisons to the agencies
- Provide civic agencies with information and background on City programs, services and projects
- Seek civic agency input and ideas for proposed programs, services or initiatives
- Do not receive direction from civic agencies or work on behalf of civic agencies

Meeting Coordinator/Departmental Staff Administrative Support:

- Provide documentation and advice regarding relevant legislation and meeting procedures
- Maintain a record of attendance
- Establish a meeting schedule for the year/term, including room and equipment bookings
- Attend official pre-scheduled civic agency meetings (not sub-committee meetings) and special meetings, as needed
- Prepare and distribute meeting agendas and "decision-based" minutes
- Forward correspondence and emails received by the City Clerk's Office to civic agency members for their information or follow-up
- Post the meeting schedule, agendas and minutes as well as a list of members and other relevant material on the City of Vancouver website
- Provide templates for reports and memorandums to City Council and for external correspondence

Meeting Types

There are three meeting types that apply to civic agencies: regular, special and sub-committee or working group sessions, which are described further in this section.

Regular Meetings

An annual regular meeting schedule is prepared by the Meeting Coordinator at the beginning of the year and posted to the civic agency website. Official motions and resolutions of a civic agency can be considered at a regular meeting. Regular meetings are supported by a Meeting Coordinator.

Special Meetings

Civic agencies may request a special meeting in order to address urgent business. A special meeting may be called by the Chair of the civic agency or by a majority of agency members by written notice to the City Clerk briefly describing the nature of the business to be transacted; only the special business described in the notice may be considered at the special meeting. Official motions and resolutions of a civic agency can be considered at a special meeting. Special meetings are supported by a Meeting Coordinator.

Sub-Committees and Working Group Sessions

At the beginning of the year or as needed, the civic agency may establish sub-committees and working groups to help undertake work to achieve agency goals. Sub-committees and working groups can include some or all of the civic agency members. Other volunteers, such as non-civic agency members, may be invited to participate on a sub-committee. Sub-committees and working groups report out to the civic agency and do not make independent decisions or take action that is not agreed upon by the civic agency. Sub-committee meetings and working group sessions are informal and are not supported by a Meeting Coordinator.

Meeting Procedures

The [Vancouver Charter](#) and [Procedure Bylaw](#) are the primary reference documents for meeting procedures. Where the Vancouver Charter or Procedure Bylaw does not answer a question about procedure, the most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order is to apply. The procedures are important for civic agencies to deal with one matter at a time and to give everyone equal speaking and voting rights. This section provides an overview of often used meeting procedures.

Quorum

Quorum is the minimum number of members of a specific group required for that group to conduct business at a meeting. For a civic agency, quorum is usually a majority of appointed voting members. Some civic agencies may have additional rules

regarding quorum as set out in a by-law, a terms of reference, the [Vancouver Charter](#) or other guiding legislation.

The Chair calls the meeting to order when there is a quorum. If, within 30 minutes after the meeting is to start quorum is not met, the Meeting Coordinator takes attendance, records the result in the minutes and declares the meeting cancelled. The civic agency, by consensus, can agree to continue the meeting informally without the presence of a Meeting Coordinator, but motions cannot be passed at these meetings.

The Chair and the Meeting Coordinator can cancel a meeting in advance if quorum will not be met. It is important for civic agency members to let the Chair and Meeting Coordinator know if they are unable to attend a committee meeting as soon as possible.

Attendance

Leave of absence requests for civic agency members must be submitted to the Meeting Coordinator in advance of a regular meeting. It is suggested that such requests be submitted the day before the meeting so that the meeting may be cancelled if the committee will not have quorum. At the meeting, the Chair will ask the committee to consider and vote on the request.

Sick leave is considered an automatic leave; however, civic agency members are required to notify their Meeting Coordinator prior to the meeting of such absences. Notification after the meeting will be recorded as an unapproved leave of absence.

Civic agency members shall be deemed to have resigned their appointments if they are absent from four consecutive official (regular or special) meetings without an approved leave of absence from the civic agency.

Resignations

Civic agency members wishing to resign their appointment mid-term shall submit their resignation in writing to the City Clerk. The City Clerk's Office may then initiate filling the vacancy.

Agendas

An agenda constitutes notice of all business which the civic agency is to conduct at the meeting. Regular meeting agendas are finalized with the Chair or Co-Chair and submitted to the Meeting Coordinator approximately two weeks before the meeting using a standardized agenda template. Approximately one week before the meeting, the Meeting Coordinator uploads the agenda to the City of Vancouver website. The Meeting Coordinator then sends an email with links to the agenda and previous meeting minutes to the civic agency members and Council and staff liaisons.

Following distribution of the agenda, additional agenda items can be submitted at the meeting as "New Business" which takes place at the end of the agenda. Matters that

are not considered urgent by the civic agency shall be listed on the agenda for the next meeting. Adoption of the agenda at the meeting is not necessary.

Sometimes there is a need to vary the order of the agenda at the meeting. The order of the agenda can be varied but requires at least a two-thirds vote of those present (for example, 7 members out of 10 members present). The variation is noted in the minutes which are then recorded either numerically or chronologically, at the discretion of the Meeting Coordinator.

Motions

Decisions of the civic agency are made in the form of a motion after debate by all agency members. Most civic agency motions require a majority vote of voting members present (for example, 6 members out of 10 members present). There are instances where the vote may require a two-thirds majority or a unanimous vote of those present. Rules regarding motions are available in the [Procedure By-law](#).

Motions should be:

- in order, i.e. within the scope of the civic agency's terms of reference;
- stated in the positive, not the negative;
- clear, succinct, actionable and voted on with either 'in favour' or 'opposed';
- clearly stated by the mover (written); and
- clearly restated by the Chair.

Committees can develop motions in sub-committee meetings but they must be passed at an official meeting that is minuted by a Meeting Coordinator. Committee Chairs have the option to request a special meeting with a Meeting Coordinator in order to consider urgent business.

Speaking and Debate

The meeting Chair is responsible for the good conduct of the meeting and for supporting all members to participate in the discussion. All members should share meeting time appropriately and make sure decisions are made fairly. If one member is dominating discussion, the Chair may request input from other members or conduct a roundtable poll of opinion.

All meetings are open to the public unless it is required that a closed (in-camera) meeting be held. Your Meeting Coordinator can advise on the rules pertaining to closed meetings. If a member of the public attends a meeting and would like to speak, they can make a request to the Chair and the civic agency members decide if it is appropriate to hear the speaker.

The City's [Procedure By-law](#) and Robert's Rules of Order provide excellent information on how to conduct and participate effectively in meetings. Your Meeting Coordinator can also provide advice and guidance on meeting procedures.

Voting Procedures

Civic agency members must follow specific voting rules. Information regarding voting procedures is available in the [Procedure By-law](#) and the [Vancouver Charter](#). Below is a summary:

- Motions must be moved and seconded.
- A main motion is used to present new business. Approval generally requires a majority vote which is 50 percent plus one of those who are present. The main motion may be passed, lost (defeated), or amended.
- Amendments are proposed changes to the main motion or another amendment. There may only be one amendment to the main motion and one amendment to the amendment. Amendments only require a majority vote to adopt. If the amendment is adopted, the proposed change becomes part of the pending motion.
- A two-thirds vote requires two-thirds of those present to vote in the affirmative. Examples of scenarios that require a two-thirds vote include varying the order of the agenda, overruling a decision of the Chair, and rescinding a motion approved at a previous meeting.
- Abstaining from the vote is registered as an affirmative vote.
- A tie vote is considered a lost vote.

Minutes

“Decision-based” minutes are produced by the Meeting Coordinator in keeping with City practice for regular and special meetings only. Each agenda item will appear in the minutes with a title, a one or two sentence description of what took place, and any approved motions or actions. Civic agency members are responsible for taking their own detailed notes.

Following the meeting, motions from the meeting are distributed to the City Manager, Council liaison(s), and staff liaison(s). The minutes of the meeting are also provided to the Mayor and City Council. Minutes are posted on the City’s website and the approval of the minutes is recorded at the next official meeting. Only minutes of regular or special meetings are approved and form part of the official record. Minutes or notes taken from working group sessions, sub-committees or other informal meetings shall not be approved at a formal meeting of the civic agency.

Amendments to the minutes are limited to corrections of factual errors or incomplete information only. Amendments should not significantly alter the way the minutes are written or result in minutes that stray from City Clerk’s Office minute-taking standards.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a person or group is involved in different activities, one of which could possibly compromise the motivation for an act in another. Members

must declare a Conflict of Interest when there is a direct or indirect pecuniary interest (financial interest) in the matter or another interest in the matter (typically a personal relationship) that constitutes a conflict of interest. A member who declares a conflict of interest must leave the room and not re-enter until the agenda item has been completed. The Chair must ensure the member is not present for any part of the meeting during which the matter is under consideration. The Meeting Coordinator must record the member's declaration relating to Conflict of Interest, the reasons given for it, the time of the member's departure from the meeting room and, if applicable, the time of the member's return. Please review section 145.2 of the [Vancouver Charter](#) and section 4 of the [Code of Conduct](#) Policy for more information relating to conflict of interest.

Annual Reporting Requirements

Civic agencies are required to produce an annual *Work Plan* and an annual *Report of Activities*. These reports must be submitted to Council in the form of a memorandum no later than April of each year and should be written by the Chair or someone they assign as their designate.

Work Plan: The *Work Plan* must include specific objectives and be completed in consultation with Council and staff liaisons, for distribution to Council and civic departments for information. It is recommended that up to three items be included as objectives for the year.

Report of Activities: The annual *Report of Activities* should describe the civic agency's accomplishments for the year, including reference to each objective set out in the *Work Plan* and note arising issues to which the Committee has responded. Your Meeting Coordinator or staff liaison can provide a *Report of Activities* template. When completed, the report must be signed by the Chair and staff liaison. The report requires approval from the City Manager prior to distribution to Council.

Communications – Internal and External

Communicating with Mayor and Council

Part of a civic agency's role is to provide recommendations, advice and information to Mayor and Council. Civic agencies may submit a letter to Mayor and Council using the following process:

1. Pass a motion at a formal meeting of the civic agency expressing the agency's desire to send correspondence to Mayor and Council including an indication of the content of the letter.

2. The Chair/Co-Chair and/or other agency members draft the letter/memo. The Meeting Coordinator is unable to provide clerical support.
3. The content of the letter is sent via email to the agency's Meeting Coordinator who will insert the content into a City of Vancouver template and distribute the document accordingly. The City Clerk must be copied on all letters to Mayor and Council.

Note: It is important that civic agencies follow this process so that correspondence is saved by City staff in the appropriate file.

Communicating with Members and Other Civic Agencies

Members can use their civic agency's listserv address (managed by your Meeting Coordinator) to send a message to agency members, staff support and the City Clerk's Office. This address is for civic agency work only. Civic agency members will also be provided with individual e-mail addresses and phone numbers for all members and staff and Council liaisons. This list is for member use only and must not be shared. Please let your Meeting Coordinator know of any changes to your contact information.

Civic agencies are encouraged to work together. Committee Chairs are connected to each other through shared contact information and meetings of the Chairs. You are also encouraged to attend other committee meetings, as a member of the public or participate through joint meetings of civic agencies.

Communicating with External Agencies

Civic agencies may write letters to external agencies using the following process:

1. Pass a motion at a formal meeting of the civic agency expressing the agency's desire to send correspondence to an external agency including an indication of the content of the letter.
2. The Chair/Co-Chair and/or other agency members draft the letter/memo. The Meeting Coordinator is unable to provide clerical support.
3. The content of the letter/memo is sent via email to the agency's Meeting Coordinator who will insert the content into a City of Vancouver template and distribute the document accordingly. All correspondence to external agencies must note that the comments being made are not on behalf of the City of Vancouver. The City Clerk must be copied on all letters to external agencies.

Note: It is important that civic agencies follow this process so that correspondence is saved by City staff in the appropriate file.

Communicating with the Public

Members of the public are entitled to attend civic agency meetings, unless the meeting is closed to the public under section 165 of the *Vancouver Charter*. Your

Meeting Coordinator can advise on the process to hold a closed (in-camera) meeting. Members of the public can also keep informed through the City’s website and through a civic agency’s social media page.

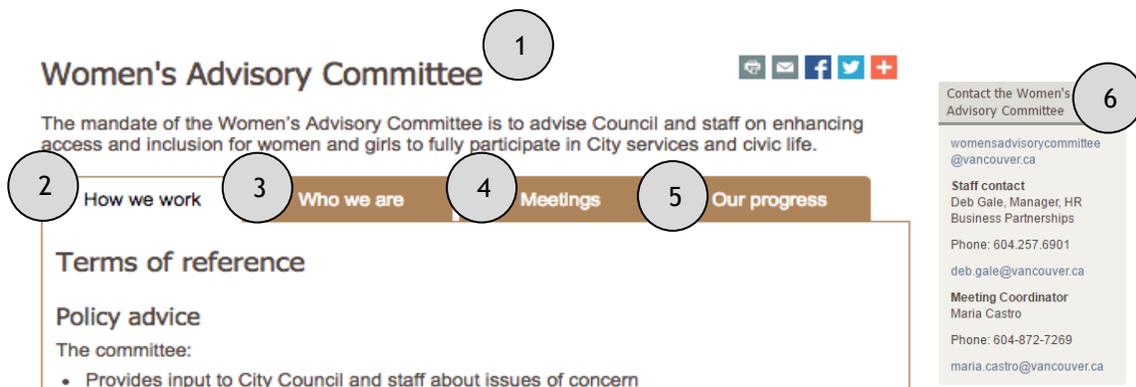
Website and Social Media

City of Vancouver Website

The [City of Vancouver website](#) is the go-to digital source for all City information. City staff are responsible for web and social media content and are available to work with committees to ensure helpful, informative content is available.

[Committee webpages](#) provide the following information (see example below):

1. *Introductory page* - provides an overview of the civic agency
2. *‘How we work’ tab* - provides a brief summary of the agency’s terms of reference
3. *‘Who we are’ tab* - provides membership details and a list of all current members
4. *‘Meetings’ tab* - lists all upcoming and past meeting dates and includes links to agendas and minutes
5. *‘Our progress’ tab* - provides a summary of the agency’s annual Work Plan with links to important agency documents
6. *‘Contact information’ side bar* - lists staff and Meeting Coordinator contact information and may include applicable social media channels



Web Content Responsibilities

City staff and civic agency members are responsible for Vancouver.ca web content as follows:

- The City Clerk's Office is responsible for posting meeting agendas and minutes to the agency websites as well as assisting with general information on civic agency web pages.
- Civic agency members are responsible for providing content to the City Clerk's Office for any updates on the "Our Progress" tab of their web page. It is the responsibility of the agency members to ensure that content is appropriate, accurate and current. The "Our progress" tab is the place to provide an overview of the agency's annual Work Plan and to inform the public about the agency's current activities. These posts should be concise. Committees may submit their Work Plan web content to their Meeting Coordinator or staff liaison who will forward the material for review to the appropriate manager for review.

Social Media

Civic agencies, with the permission of Corporate Communications, may start and manage a City of Vancouver affiliated Facebook or Twitter account. Social media accounts can help your agency engage members of the public on topics within your mandate.

Before setting up a social media account the civic agency must:

1. *Identify the Purpose and Goals for Using a Social Media Channel*

Consider the following questions: what are you going to talk about, who are you trying to reach, who will be posting content and how often, how are you going to promote your channel? A form has been created to help you determine if a social media account is right for your agency:

<http://vancouver.fluidsurveys.com/s/Socialmediaquiz/>

2. *Read the City of Vancouver Social Media Handbook*

Read the Social Media Handbook and sign the *Social Media Practitioner Responsibilities Statement of Acknowledgement* Form, both of which outline what is expected for City of Vancouver social media account users.

3. *Contact the Social Media Strategist*

Book an appointment to discuss account set-up via social.media@vancouver.ca. All social media accounts must be set up through Corporate Communications to maintain administrative access and ensure that account access is transferred when agency members change.

Once your site social media channel is set-up:

1. *Post Information to your Site*

Social media accounts will be set up and promoted on vancouver.ca by the City of Vancouver Corporate Communications team. The Corporate Communications team will not post on behalf of the Committees but will provide initial orientation and guidance, and the “keys” to the account to the designated civic agency members to manage responsibly.

2. *Review and Monitor Posting*

Although civic agency members are not City of Vancouver staff, they are part of the City of Vancouver family, and are therefore expected to follow City standards for posting and managing online channels.

3. *Ask Questions*

If you would like additional information or have questions, please email the Social Media Strategist at social.media@vancouver.ca

Media Relations

Civic agency members may speak publicly on behalf of the committee; however, there are procedures in place depending on whether a member speaks with or without consensus of the civic agency.

With Consensus of the Civic Agency

If the media approaches a member of a civic agency for comment, the member should refer the reporter to the Chair (or Vice-Chair if the Chair is unavailable). Civic agency members may speak publicly on behalf of the civic agency, but must have consensus of the civic agency. Members must let the City’s Corporate Communications group know about the interaction with media. This can be done by email to media@vancouver.ca or by phone 604-871-6336. Please state the topic(s) discussed and the media outlet in your message to Corporate Communications.

Without Consensus of the Civic Agency

If a civic agency member wants to express an opinion publicly *without* consensus, he/she must **not** identify themselves as a member of the civic agency. It must be made clear before any statement is given that the member is not speaking on behalf of the committee.

Issuing a Media Release

Civic agencies may issue a media release using the following process.

To issue a media release:

1. Contact Corporate Communications to advise whether your topic is newsworthy (media@vancouver.ca). The issuing of frequent, non-newsworthy media releases would lead to loss of credibility.
2. Pass a motion to issue a media release, including a brief description of the committee's statement, at a formally convened regular or special meeting.
3. Draft the media release and send to your Meeting Coordinator who will include a disclaimer that the civic agency is not expressing views on behalf of the City. The City emblem may not be used on media releases issued by a civic agency. Include a contact name and telephone number. Corporate Communications staff can provide assistance regarding the distribution of a media release.
4. The Meeting Coordinator will format the media release and send to Corporate Communications (media@vancouver.ca) for distribution, copying the City Manager's Office and the City Clerk's Office.

***Please note: At any time, a view expressed by a civic agency member must be made clear that they are not expressing a view on behalf of the City.*

Confidentiality

Civic agency members' personal contact information is considered confidential. Membership lists containing personal contact information are only accessible by agency members and City staff. If a member of the public wishes to speak to a civic agency member, the Meeting Coordinator provides the inquirer's contact information to the civic agency member for a direct response.

Recruitment

Civic agencies are established by City Council through bylaw or by resolution. The bylaw or resolution sets out various requirements for civic agencies and their members including the length of term, mandate and committee member composition. Appointments to civic agencies are made by City Council for the term specified by Council. Information on the current advisory committee term is available on the City's [website](#) under each committee's "Who we are" tab.

Recruitment Process

The recruitment process occurs at the beginning of each Council term, at the end of the advisory body term, and occasionally as member vacancies arise. Recruitment begins with advertisement of committee vacancies. Advertisements are posted on the City's [website](#) and in local papers. A deadline for applications is included in the

advertisements. Once the deadline has passed, staff review all of the applications to check that applicants meet the eligibility requirements as set out in the advertisement. The applicants that meet the eligibility requirements are forwarded on to the Nomination Sub-Committee which is comprised of Mayor and Council. The Nomination Sub-Committee evaluates each application and makes a recommendation to City Council. City Council will then consider the Nomination Sub-Committee's recommendations and make a final decision on committee member selection.

All current members and any new applicants are welcome to (re)apply to be on an advisory committee. Additional information about the civic agency recruitment process is available on the City's website under ['Join an agency, board, or committee'](#).

Links to Important Civic Agency Resources

- Code of Conduct Policy: http://former.vancouver.ca/policy_pdf/AE02801.pdf
- Procedure By-law: <http://former.vancouver.ca/bylaws/9756c.PDF>
- Vancouver Charter: <http://vancouver.ca/your-government/the-vancouver-charter.aspx>
- Civic Agencies: <http://vancouver.ca/your-government/advisory-boards-and-committees.aspx>