



**CITY OF FAIRFAX**  
**BOARD, COMMISSION, AND**  
**ADVISORY COMMITTEE**  
**HANDBOOK**

Thank you for agreeing to serve your community through an appointment to one of the City of Fairfax's boards, commissions, and advisory committees.

The City Council appoints residents to support the development and oversight of the city through their volunteer service on both City and regional boards, commissions, and committees. The City Council deeply appreciates the many volunteers who generously dedicate their time to help make the city a great place to live, work, and do business. Board members contribute an invaluable service to local government.

The City operates under the Council-Manager form of government, where the City Council sets policies and enacts laws that guide the City Manager and staff. Boards, commissions, and advisory committees are essential tools the City Council uses to carry out its responsibilities and to receive input and guidance from the community. The City Charter empowers the City Council to establish public bodies and delegate responsibilities, enabling thoughtful, informed, and efficient decision-making.

This guide is intended to serve as a helpful reference for current board members and also to provide community members and staff with an overview of the City's public bodies.

By accepting this appointment, you are now in a position to work directly with your local government, on behalf of your fellow residents and other interested stakeholders, to enrich community life on a wide variety of issues. The greater your participation in the work of the group, the greater the effectiveness of the group in carrying out its charge and improving the community.

Your participation is deeply appreciated by all around you—by the City Council, city staff, and by your community.

If you have any questions after reviewing the guide, please don't hesitate to reach out to your board, commission, or committee liaison—or to the City Clerk's Office. We're always happy to assist.

Sincerely,



Melissa Shinaberry  
City Clerk

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## **Purpose of Boards, Commissions, and Committees**

Boards, commissions, and committees are essential partners in the work of the city government. These bodies provide a formal way for residents to participate directly in civic life, lend expertise, and advise elected officials on issues that shape the City's future.

The primary role of these groups is to **gather information, study issues, and make recommendations** to the City Council within their specific areas of responsibility. In doing so, they:

- Promote **public participation** in the development of City policies and programs.
- Serve as a direct link between the community and City government.
- Ensure that a broad range of perspectives and experiences inform Council of decisions.

Some boards and commissions operate in an advisory capacity—offering analysis, proposals, and recommendations—while others have regulatory or administrative authority granted under state or local law. Regardless of their function, all are expected to conduct their work with transparency, inclusiveness, and in compliance with applicable laws such as the Virginia Freedom of Information Act and the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act.

Members of boards and commissions:

- Represent the community's interests with integrity, fairness, and respect.
- Work collaboratively with fellow members, City staff, and the public.
- Serve as ambassadors for the city and advocates for open, accountable governance.

Through their service, board and commission members help ensure that City policies reflect the needs, priorities, and aspirations of City residents, and that local government remains responsive, effective, and rooted in community values.

Advisory committees generally refer to a body that advises a government agency but cannot enforce laws or policies itself. These committees are appointed by the City Council to study issues and make recommendations. While specific duties and structures vary, they are typically appointed to provide input on matters of concern to the locality.

## **Application and Appointments Process**

The City invites interested parties to apply for appointment on the city's website under [Boards and Commissions](#). Applications may be submitted at any time and whenever vacancies occur. Specific eligibility requirements and terms of service vary in accordance with the bylaws and governance documents for each committee, commission, board, or advisory group.

The City Clerk shall notify the Mayor and the City Council, and the applicable court in the case of judicially appointed boards, of all openings on boards, commissions, and advisory committees as soon as practicable. The City Clerk will advertise each vacancy at least once—or until the position is filled—on the city website, through announcement at the next City Council meeting, and in the *Cityscene* newsletter.

All applications will be acknowledged and forwarded to the applicable board, commission, or advisory committee liaison for review. A summary sheet will be prepared for each application and include the applicant's name, address, voter registration status, and a description of relevant qualifications. Applications are reviewed by the City Clerk's Office for completion and to ensure the applicant meets the minimum qualifications for the position prior to submission for City Council consideration.

Interviews may be conducted as determined by the City Council for any appointments to boards, commissions, and advisory committees. The City Council also may choose to interview candidates for appointment to various regional boards, commissions, and advisory committees. Unless otherwise directed by the City Council, incumbents seeking reappointment shall also be re-interviewed. Interviews, reviews, and discussion of applicants takes place during closed session.

In some boards', commissions', and advisory committees' bylaws, certain members may be appointed to serve as representatives to other City boards, commissions, or advisory committees. Some of these representative appointments require confirmation by the City Council, while others may be determined directly by the members of the respective board, commission, or advisory committee.

City Council votes on appointments and reappointments to boards and commissions during a Regular Meeting of the City Council. All applicants are notified of the results. Applicants selected will receive an appointment letter and be contacted by the staff liaison for onboarding and meeting details.

The Fairfax Circuit Court appoints members of the City's Board of Equalization, Board of Zoning Appeals, and Economic Development Authority. When the City Council recommends for consideration of an appointment to either the board or authority, the City

Clerk's office will send a letter to the Circuit Court Judge for consideration of the appointment. The member will be notified when an order has been submitted for them to schedule their oath of office at the Circuit Court for their appointment to the board or authority.

## **Orientation**

The City Clerk's office will send the appointment/reappointment letter to the new member notifying them of their appointment, copying the staff liaison to the board, commission, or advisory committee. Some boards, commissions, and advisory committee, may also receive form(s) that will need to be filled out and returned to the Clerk's office if they are required to fill out a disclosure form.

The staff liaison will receive a copy of your application that includes your contact information for their files and share with the Chair. The liaison will reach out to the new member to schedule a time to review how the meetings run, how they will receive documents, provide information regarding Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VA FOIA), and set up a city email address for them (this only applies to Planning Commission, Board of Architectural Review, and Economic Development Authority).

The chair will meet with the new member prior to the first meeting to provide mission specific member orientation.

Some boards, commissions, and advisory committees may have governing regulations and may require additional training or certification.

## **Removal of a Member**

The City Council may remove members of boards, commissions, and committees for cause by a majority vote. Grounds for removal include, but are not limited to, (and not all will be applicable to every board or commission):

- **Failure to attend meetings** – Any member of a Council-appointed board, commission, or committee who misses **three (3) or more consecutive meetings** will be presumed to have resigned from the position, unless the Council votes to reinstate the member.
- **Excessive absences** – Repeated unexcused absences of scheduled meetings in a calendar year may be considered neglect of duty. The standard for what constitutes an *excused absence* is often defined by the body's chairperson or a similar authority. The standard for what constitutes an excused absence is typically determined by the body's chairperson or a similar authority. Common reasons that

may be approved include illness, medical conditions, family emergencies, or other extenuating circumstances.

- **Loss of eligibility** – No longer meeting the qualifications for the position, such as residency or organizational representation requirements.
- **Employment with the City** – Except where specifically authorized by ordinance, resolution, or state law, City employees may not serve as voting members of a City Council-appointed board, commission, or committee. A member who becomes employed by the city after appointment must immediately notify the City Clerk, and the City Council will determine whether the member may continue to serve.
- **Violation of law or policy** – Including intentional or negligent noncompliance with the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, or other applicable laws and regulations.
- **Misconduct or loss of confidence** – Conduct that undermines the mission of the board, commission, or advisory committee, or is otherwise contrary to the City's best interests.

In all cases, the decision to remove a member rests solely with the City Council. The City Council may also declare a vacancy when a member is deemed to have resigned under the attendance policy or when any other removal ground is met.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

### MEMBERS

Serving on a City Board, Commission, or Advisory Committee is a meaningful way to contribute to the community. These members play a vital role in shaping the policies and initiatives that guide the City's operations.

Members are expected to have a genuine interest in public service, the ability to dedicate their time, and a willingness to make informed, objective recommendations and decisions. Serving in this capacity requires both time and effort, but it is a rewarding opportunity to make a difference in the community. Serving on a board, commission, or committee is unlike participation in other volunteer activities or clubs, the conduct of City business relies on these bodies being able to meet and take actions in a timely manner, so attendance is paramount (particularly for those regulatory boards where applicants have paid a fee, hearings may have been scheduled with advertisements and public notices, and subsequent processes have been determined according to a schedule).

By accepting an appointment, you agree to the following responsibilities:

1. **Review and Understand this Handbook** – Become familiar with the information contained in this guide.
2. **Prepare for Meetings** – Review all meeting materials provided by the staff liaison in advance and come prepared to actively participate.
3. **Understand Your Role** – Know the scope and limitations of your board, commission, or committee and how your work influences policy decisions. This understanding helps manage expectations and ensures productive engagement. Each board, commission, and committee plays a critical role, so adherence to the purview of the respective group is necessary for the consistent implementation of laws, regulations, and policies.
4. **Collaborate Respectfully** – Work constructively with fellow members, listen to diverse viewpoints, seek consensus, and strive for mutual understanding when disagreements arise.
5. **Respect Staff Roles** – Recognize the distinction between the responsibilities of staff and those of the board, commission, or committee. Staff must balance their duties across multiple priorities and report to their supervisors and ultimately, the City Manager.
6. **Support Group Decision-Making** – Understand that decisions and recommendations represent the collective body, not individual members. Actions should reflect group consensus or majority vote.

7. **Comply with Legal Requirements** – Adhere to the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), the Conflict of Interests Act (COIA), and the Records Retention Act.
8. **Attend Meetings Regularly** – Attend scheduled meetings annually to maintain active status.
9. **Engagement** – Serving on a board or commission is a significant commitment of time. Engagement and participation of members is crucial to the success of their group. Members are expected to participate in meetings and take full advantage of materials provided in advance of the meeting.

Each board, commission, and advisory committee shall elect a chair and vice chair on an annual basis. These leaders help guide the group's work and serve as key points of contact for communication.

Boards, commissions, and advisory committees, nor the members, do not have supervisory authority over City staff and may not issue directives to them. While the staff liaison, and other members of the city staff, may work closely with the boards, commissions, and advisory committees, staff remain responsible to their immediate supervisor, and ultimately, the City Manager. All requests for information and support should be submitted by the Chair and processed through staff liaison.

Anyone appointed by the City Council to a board, commission, or advisory committee, who misses three (3) consecutive regular meetings in a calendar year shall be considered to have submitted an implied resignation. In such cases, the Chair will notify the City Clerk, who will inform the City Council. If the City Council appoints a new member to that position, it shall be deemed an acceptance of the implied resignation. If attendance becomes a problem for individual members, the Chair or staff liaison should work with the member. When meetings are missed, members should contact the staff liaison or the Chair for a briefing.

If a member wishes to seek reappointment, they must reapply and be scheduled for an interview with the City Council. If there is a gap between submitting the application and the scheduled interview, [Chapter 13.3](#) of the **City Charter** ("Officers hold over until their successors are appointed and qualified") applies. This section states:

"Whenever, except as otherwise provided in this Charter, any officer of the City, judge, or member of any board or commission is elected or appointed for a fixed term, such officer, judge, or member shall continue to hold office until their successor is appointed and qualified."

Accordingly, a member will continue to hold their position until they resign, or the City Council appoints another applicant to that position.

If a member does not wish to seek reappointment or needs to resign due to conflicts, they must submit a letter of resignation or email to both the City Clerk's Office and the staff liaison.

Although service on a board, commission, or advisory committee demands dedication, it is also deeply impactful and rewarding. As a member, you will help shape public policy, engage with fellow residents and stakeholders, and gain valuable insight into the workings of local government—all while contributing to the betterment of the City.

## **ROLE OF CHAIR**

Each board, commission, and advisory committee has a chair to facilitate the work of the members. The chair is selected by the members on an annual basis.

The role of the chair is as follows:

1. To call meetings, chair meetings, and collaborate with the staff liaison to set agendas.
2. To collaborate with the staff liaison to prepare meeting agendas and receive feedback from members on the proposed agenda.
3. Assist in the orientation of new members and encourage participation.
4. To coordinate with the staff liaison, and through them to other members of the City staff, on matters requiring the attention of staff.
5. To ensure board, commissions, or advisory committee follows its goals and objectives and follows the policies established by the City Council.
6. To foster a cohesive and productive working environment among the members, one of mutual respect and considerate of diverse opinions to ensure an open and deliberate process.
7. Delegate assignments to members recognizing skill, experience and interest of individuals in the group; make sure all members get a chance to participate.
8. Preside over meetings using *Roberts Rules of Order* as a guide and act as a facilitator to keep to the agenda.
9. Prepares and submits recommendations and annual reports to the City Council in collaboration with Staff Liaison.

## Roles and Responsibilities for City of Fairfax Boards

Duties	City Council	City Clerk	Board Chair	Staff Liaison
<b>Maintain/Update Roster</b>		Maintains/Updates		Maintains/Updates
<b>Identify New Members</b>	Consider apps. received	Review apps. For min. qualifications	Recruit interested persons	Recruit interested persons
<b>Appointing New Members</b>	Makes appointments	Provides official appointment notice		
<b>New Member Orientation</b>			Provide mission specific member orientation	Member Orientation
<b>Establish/Revise Mission &amp; Enforce Bylaws</b>			Ensuring work conforms to bylaws and enabling legislation	Ensuring bylaws and enabling legislation are followed
<b>Work Program Planning</b>			Takes lead in developing annual work plan	Provides support for annual work plan development
<b>Set Meeting Agenda and Distribute Materials</b>			Works w/Staff Liaison to set agenda and materials	Ensuring members and the public have notice of meeting and materials
<b>Organize Subcommittees</b>			Where authorized by bylaws or legislation	
<b>Facilitate Meetings</b>			Responsible for facilitating all meetings	Assists as needed to ensure effectiveness
<b>Seek Public Input at Meetings</b>			Facilitates if input is part of order of business	Ensures proper notice of meeting and opportunity for public participation
<b>Manage Meeting Process</b>			Facilitate and has primary responsibility	Assists Chairs as needed
<b>Draft Recommendations and Develop Annual Report</b>			Prepares and submits to City Council in collaboration with Staff Liaison	Works in collaboration with Chair

## ROLE OF THE STAFF LIASION

**Staff liaisons are City of Fairfax employees assigned to support and guide boards, commissions, and advisory committees in carrying out their responsibilities.** They serve as the primary point of contact between these public bodies and the City government, offering subject-matter expertise and ensuring alignment with the group's purpose and legal obligations.

Staff liaisons have two main areas of responsibility: **Guidance** and **Facilitation**.

### GUIDANCE

1. **Clarify Purpose and Goals** - Help the group understand its mission, maintain focus on clear objectives, and work within its authority to accomplish assigned tasks.
2. **Orient New Members** - Introduce new members to the board's work plan, structure, and expectations.
3. **Maintain Communication** - Ensure effective communication within the group and between stakeholders, including the public, City staff, and the City Council.
4. **Support Positive Engagement** - Promote respectful discussion, maintain decorum, and help ensure that all members and members of the public feel welcomed and valued.
5. **Provide Subject-Matter Expertise** - Offer policy guidance and professional insights relevant to the group's area of focus.
6. **Support Reporting Responsibilities** - Assist in the preparation of periodic and annual reports to be submitted to the City Council.

### FACILITATION

1. **Organize Public Meetings** - Coordinate meeting logistics, prepare materials, and guide the meeting process in accordance with legal and procedural requirements.
2. **Reserve Facilities and Provide Access** - Schedule meeting spaces in City facilities and arrange remote participation when requested.
3. **Ensure Legal Compliance** - Assist in complying with the *Code of Virginia* regarding open meetings, posting agendas, recording minutes, and following proper meeting procedures per City policies, bylaws, and *Robert's Rules of Order*.
4. **Perform Administrative Functions** - Handle administrative tasks such as forwarding materials to City Council and tracking completion of annual requirements.
5. **Maintain Records and Continuity** - Preserve complete and accurate records of the group's work and facilitate access to those records for members, City officials, employees, or members of the public upon request.

6. **Development and Post Agendas** - Collaborate with the Chair to prepare meeting agendas and ensure agendas and schedules are posted on the City's website in accordance with public notice requirements.
7. **Liaise with City Leadership** - Keep the City Manager informed of the board's activities and maintain open communication among the board, City staff, and the Mayor and City Council.

## **MEETINGS**

### **Public Open Meetings**

All meetings of City public bodies—including boards, commissions, and advisory committees—are open to the public. A public meeting is any gathering of a public body to discuss City business. These meetings provide a forum for members to deliberate on issues, take official actions, and hear input from the public. Unlike internal staff meetings or informal social gatherings, public meetings are subject to specific legal requirements.

The overarching goal is to ensure transparency: that public bodies act openly and that their records are accessible to the public. While certain exemptions may apply under specific circumstances, each board, commission, or advisory committee should educate its members about any applicable exceptions to open meeting and records requirements.

Open meeting laws, governed by the Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), define what constitutes a public meeting and establish the legal steps that must be taken to conduct one. These laws are designed to ensure public access, transparency, and accountability.

Key Principles for Public Meetings:

1. **Open to the Public** - FOIA requires meetings of a locality's boards, commissions, and advisory boards to be open to the public. (*Virginia Code § 2.2-3700 et seq.*)
2. **Advance Notice** - Notice of a meeting of a public body be posted on the city's website and designated posting boards at least three (3) full business days in advance of the meeting.
3. **Definition of a Meeting** - A meeting may exist when a majority of the members of the public body are physically assembled.
4. **Social or Information Gatherings** - If three (3) or more members of the same public body are assembled, but not for the purpose of conducting City business (i.e. at a dinner or regional informational meeting), a meeting under FOIA is not established provided they do not transact City business.

5. **Electronic Communications** - Real-time communication (such as group emails or text messages) involving three (3) or more members may be considered an unlawful meeting under FOIA if it involves discussion of City business.
6. **Quorum Not Required to Establish a Meeting** - A FOIA-defined meeting can occur even if a quorum is not present.
7. **No Quorum, No Action** - If a quorum is not established, the only action the public body may take is to adjourn the meeting.
8. **Public Accessibility** - Meetings must be accessible to the public, including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
9. **Public Access to Materials** - Any materials distributed to members for discussion at the meeting must also be made available to the public.
10. **Meeting Minutes** - Minutes must be recorded for each meeting. These should document official actions taken and provide a summary of the discussion.

## **Agenda Development**

The purpose of the meeting agenda is to organize materials to be considered and give members an opportunity to review the issues before the meeting. Boards, commissions, and committee agendas are prepared by the staff liaison, chair, or both, based upon the information received from the City Council, staff, and/or members.

All meetings will follow a set order of business and will be specified on the Meeting Agenda Summary. For example:

- **Call to Order:** The chair will begin the meeting at the appointed time with a quorum present.
- **Roll Call:** This may be conducted in writing by the chair or verbally.
- **Adoption of the Agenda:** The agenda will be adopted as is, or with modifications by motion, second, and a vote of the majority.
- **Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:** The minutes will be adopted as is, or with modifications by motion, second, and vote of the majority.
- **Actions and Discussion Items**
- **Old/New Business**
- **Adjournment**

## **Meeting Announcement, Times, Dates**

City Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Committees meet on a regular basis and are open to the public. The calling of a special meeting, or cancellation of any regular meeting, must be coordinated between the Chair and staff liaison, and shall be subject to legal notice

under the Code of Virginia. Members must also be notified in advance of the canceling or scheduling of any meeting.

If the City closes due to a weather event, the board, commission, or advisory committee meeting would be cancelled.

Staff liaisons are responsible for preparing meeting schedules in coordination with the City's calendar to ensure that meeting dates do not fall on City holidays or on religious holidays, recognized by the City and Fairfax County Public Schools as appropriate times to avoid holding public evening meetings. The following religious observances include, but are not limited to:

Passover  
Good Friday  
Easter  
Rosh Hashannah  
Ramadan  
Yom Kippur  
Christmas

This consideration helps ensure accessibility, respect for community observances, and the opportunity for all members and the public to participate fully in City business without conflict.

## **Type of Meetings**

### **Regular Meetings and Work Sessions**

Regular meetings occur on a set schedule and are used to vote on items, hold public hearings, and/or fulfill other legal obligations. Work sessions are information-gathering sessions focused on group discussion. Action is not generally taken during Work Sessions except for in extenuating circumstances.

### **Closed Sessions**

Closed Sessions occur when a public body discusses an issue outside of the view of the public. Closed sessions are subject to strict rules defining when and how they can occur. There is a limited list of subjects that can be discussed in a closed session and proper procedure must be followed when going into and coming out of a closed session. No vote or action can take place during a closed session.

See *Virginia Code § 2.2-3711 to 2.2-3712*

## **Special Meetings**

Special meetings may be scheduled on an ad hoc basis according to circumstances outlined by state code. These meetings are subject to different notice requirements than regular meetings.

See *Virginia Code* § [2.2-3707](#)

## **Remote Participation and Virtual Meetings**

Virginia Code allows public bodies to engage in meetings remotely in several ways. Individual members can participate remotely, and some bodies can host all-virtual meetings. Both of these options are subject to regulations defining when and how often they can occur. Each city board, commission, or advisory committee adopts a Remote Participation Policy annually outlining the procedures they follow for remote participation.

See *Virginia Code* § [2.2-3708.3](#)

## **Retreats, Subcommittee Meetings, Events, etc.**

Boards, commissions, and advisory committees may hold other types of gatherings such as annual retreats, subcommittee meetings, or participation in community events. If City business is discussed during these events, they are considered public meetings and must follow the same legal requirements for notice, public access, and meeting minutes.

## **REMOTE PARTICIPATION POLICY**

In accordance with *Code of Virginia* Section § [2.2-3708.3](#), individual members of a public body may use remote participation instead of attending a public meeting in person if, in advance of the public meeting, the public body has adopted a policy and the member notifies the chair of the public body:

1. The member has a temporary or permanent disability or other medical condition that prevents the member's physical attendance;
2. A medical condition of a member of the member's family requires the member to provide care that prevents the member's physical attendance;
3. The member's principal residence is more than 60 miles from the meeting location identified in the required notice for such meeting; or
4. The member is unable to attend the meeting due to a personal matter and identifies specifically the nature of the personal matter. However, the member may not use remote participation due to personal matters more than two (2) meetings per calendar year or twenty-five percent (25%) of the meetings held per calendar year rounded up to the next whole number, whichever is greater.

It shall be recorded in the minutes the specific nature of the request as well as the remote location of the member making the request. The request can only be granted if a quorum of the body is physically assembled at the primary meeting location. All electronic participation must comply with *Code of Virginia* § [2.2-3708.2](#). At the beginning of the meeting, the following should be read into the record:

“In accordance with (Insert Board, Commission, or Advisory Committee) adopted policy and as permitted by *Virginia Code* Section 2.2-3708.2, I move to approve (Insert Member) request, properly submitted in writing prior to tonight’s meeting, for remote participation, subject to compliance with the requirements outlined in the (Insert Board, Commission, or Advisory Committee) adopted policy and applicable law, in all or portions of the (Insert Board, Commission, or Advisory Committee) meeting of (Insert Meeting Date.)”

The Remote Participation Policy must be adopted by each of the City’s Boards, Commission, and Advisory Committees annually.

## **FOIA, PUBLIC RECORDS, AND COIA**

Members of City boards, commissions, and advisory committees have a responsibility to represent the City of Fairfax ethically and transparently. As such, they are subject to specific Virginia laws that govern public meetings, public records, and conflicts of interest. These laws are designed to ensure that public business is conducted openly and with integrity. Members are required to familiarize themselves with and adhere to these statutes.

### **Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VA FOIA)**

The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (VA FOIA) ensures the people of the Commonwealth have ready access to public records and free entry to public meetings. VA FOIA outlines the steps the government must take to provide this open access as well as circumstances where public records and meetings may be exempted from public access.

See *Virginia Code* § [2.2-3700](#)

### **Virginia Public Records Act (VRPA)**

In 2006, the Virginia General Assembly passed changes to the Virginia Public Records Act (VPRA), *Virginia Code* § [42.1-76 through 42.1-91](#), as amended, standardize how public

records are managed and preserved throughout the Commonwealth. The Act requires that any individual appointed or reappointed to a public body be provided with a copy of the Act within two weeks of their appointment. Members must read and understand their obligations under this law.

Key Provisions:

1. **Electronic Correspondence:** All emails or other electronic communications sent to or from a board, commission, or advisory committee member regarding City business are subject to FOIA and VPRA. Members are responsible for producing records stored on personal devices if requested under these laws and may be held accountable for any failure to comply.
2. **Written Correspondence:** Physical (non-electronic) documents related to public business should be forwarded to the staff liaison for appropriate retention and archiving.
3. **Official Documents:** The staff liaison will be responsible for managing and preserving official records—such as agendas, minutes, and supporting documents—in compliance with VPRA requirements.
4. **Social Media Posts:** Any posts made to social media by a member regarding City business, whether posted to an official City account or a private account, page or group, are subject to FOIA and VPRA. If members post to private accounts, pages or groups, they will be responsible for producing these records during the legal discovery process or with regard to FOIA requests.

### **State and Local Government Conflict of Interest (COIA)**

The State and Local Government Conflict of Interest Act governs the ethical conduct of public officials and employees. It prohibits actions that could result in personal benefit from their official role, defines what constitutes a conflict of interest, and outlines required disclosures and penalties for violations.

See *Virginia Code § 2.2-3100*

Key Points

1. **Prohibited Conduct:** Members may not accept money, gifts, or any form of compensation based on their position. They may not participate in matters where they have a personal financial interest, including contracts or transactions involving the City.

2. **Disclosure Requirements:** Certain board, commission, or advisory committee members may be required to file a Statement of Economic Interests annually. The City Clerk's Office will notify those subject to this requirement.
3. **Conflicts of Interest:** If a member has a personal interest in a matter before the body, they must disclose it before participating in any discussion or vote. For clarification or concerns regarding potential conflicts, members should consult their staff liaison, the City Attorney, or the Virginia Conflicts of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council.

### **Required Disclosure Forms**

The **State and Local Government Conflict of Interest Act** regulates the behavior of public employees and officials to avoid conflicts of interest when conducting public business. It defines and prohibits inappropriate conflicts, requires disclosures of economic interests, and provides criminal penalties for violations of the Act.

Under this law, members of certain public bodies are required to disclose conflicts of interest on a yearly basis. The City Clerk's office will notify those subject to disclosure when these items must be addressed.

- **Annual Filing Requirement** – Certain current members will receive an annual notification from the City Clerk with the appropriate disclosure form and filing deadline.
- **Form Submission** – Completed forms must be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk by the stated deadline each year.
- **Accuracy and Completeness** – Members are responsible for ensuring that all information provided is accurate, complete, and up-to-date at the time of submission.
- **Failure to File** – Failure to file the required disclosure form by the deadline is a violation of state law and City policy, and may result in **removal from the board, commission, or committee** by the City Council or fines per the Virginia Conflicts of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council.
- **Changes During the Year** – If a member's circumstances change during the year in a way that would alter the information on the most recently filed disclosure form, the member must promptly notify the City Clerk and file an updated form.

Members who have questions about the disclosure process, potential conflicts of interest, or completion of the form should contact the Virginia Conflict of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council at 804.698.1810 or via email at [ethics@dls.virginia.gov](mailto:ethics@dls.virginia.gov) before filing.

When conducting public business, each city official considering an item must disclose any personal interest or other form of conflict that may exist with respect to the item. Specific questions about conflicts of interest should be directed to the City Attorney's Office or the Virginia Conflicts of Interest and Ethics Advisory Council. **See Virginia Code § 2.2-3100.**

For all local filers, if you do not file by the filing deadline, your clerk is required to include your name on a list of late filers that is sent to the local Commonwealth's Attorney. The Commonwealth's Attorney is then required to assess and collect a fine of \$250 from you.

## ADA AND ACCOMODATIONS

The City of Fairfax affirms its policy to ensure all individuals have the right to participate in, receive, interact with, and access federal financially assisted services free of discrimination. The city assumes the requirements and impact of the provision of Title VI that states: the 1964 Civil Rights Act that: "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." The city further affirms the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, as amended, and the various non-discrimination authorities that every effort will be made to ensure the legal requirements are met and the spirit and impact of Title VI assure beneficiaries are free of non-discrimination in regard to age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, income status, and religion in all programs and activities, whether federally funded or not. The city will also ensure that all consultants and subrecipients (if any) will be monitored for compliance with Title VI. The city shall not intentionally discriminate (disparate treatment) or unintentionally discriminate (disparate impact).

When engaging in the board, commission, and advisory committee system, staff, community members, and board members have access to accommodations including:

- General Translation and Interpretation
- Virtual Meeting Access
- On-Demand Interpreter Services
- Access to Documents
- Assistive Listening Systems
- Live Captioning
- Mobility Accessibility

The city also utilizes Propio ONE for language translation services if someone needs help translating. Propio ONE provides additional language accessibility options, such as video conferencing support for American sign language (ASL).

If you have questions, require additional information, and to request accommodations, visit <https://www.fairfaxva.gov/Government/Departments/City-Manager/Title-VI>, or contact ADA Coordinator **Walter English** at [titleVI@fairfaxva.gov](mailto:titleVI@fairfaxva.gov) or (703) 385-7800 (TTY 711)

## **GLOSSARY**

**Annual Meeting/Annual Business Meeting/Organizational Meeting:** Organizational meeting that fulfills legal requirements for a public body in advance of a new year.

**Annual Report:** Presented to City Council by a group's Chair, details a board's/commission's progress in the past term year and goals moving forward, among other topics.

**Annual Budget:** A budget adopted by City Council guiding the collection and dispensation of money used to fund the government.

**Appointment:** When City Council votes to approve an applicant to a public body and assigns them to a board/commission position.

**City Code:** The collection of ordinances passed by City government that make up City law.

**City Charter:** A written document, approved by the General Assembly outlining the basic structure and powers of the city government. This is found at the beginning of the City Code.

**Closed Session:** Portion of a public meeting where a public body discusses an issue outside of the view of the public. A closed session can only occur in specific circumstances and requires special procedures to enter into and leave it.

**Council Strategic Priorities or Work Plan:** A guiding document to assist with determining areas of focus for staff, staffing, annual budgets, and projects. Strategic Priorities are reviewed at minimum every two years after a Council election.

**Remote Participation:** The ability to participate in a meeting from a remote location, using electronic means such as video conference or phone call.

**FOIA:** (Virginia Freedom of Information Act) A law that requires all public bodies to retain records of their business and supply those records to the public when requested. Open meeting laws under FOIA dictate how public meetings must be conducted.

**Legislation:** Written laws whether under consideration, rejected, or adopted by a governing body. The legislation overseen and voted on by the City Council includes resolutions and ordinances.

**Meeting Notice:** A publicly accessible message that informs the community when and where a meeting will occur. Strict rules dictate how these notices are posted.

**Minutes:** A summary of attendees, actions taken, and subjects discussed at a meeting. FOIA requires minutes to be recorded for public meetings.

**Ordinance:** A form of legislation that amends the City Code or may be required for adoption of other items such as the annual budget.

**Public Body:** Any entity with legislative or governing authority that is funded in part or whole by public funds. This also includes sub-groups created by larger entities to delegate duties or advise, aka boards and commissions created by City Council or State law.

**Public Business:** Any activity a public body has undertaken or proposes to undertake on behalf of the people it represents.

**Public Meeting:** Occurs when a quorum or 3+ members of a public body meet to discuss public business. Boards/commissions can take action at public meetings when a quorum is present, otherwise the meeting may only be informational.

**Quorum:** The minimum number of members required to be present for a group to take action at meetings. The City of Fairfax operates on a simple majority quorum.

**Resolution:** A form of legislation that records the intention of a body.

**Rules of Procedure:** Rules that govern the structure of public bodies and their meetings. The rules of procedure contain everything from a timeline for when certain events occur (like electing new officers) to requirements for meeting and taking action.

**Staff liaison:** City staff member responsible for guiding and facilitating the work of a board or commission.



## CITY OF FAIRFAX BOARD, COMMISSION, AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

### MEMBER STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the City of Fairfax Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Committees Handbook and have read it carefully. I understand and agree to comply with the policies, procedures, and guidelines set forth in the handbook throughout my tenure as an appointed official of the City of Fairfax.

I further understand that the provisions of this handbook may be amended, revised, or rescinded at any time. It is my responsibility to remain informed of any updates or changes to the handbook and to maintain an up-to-date copy for my reference.

By signing below, I acknowledge receipt of the City of Fairfax Boards, Commissions, and Advisory Committees Handbook and my agreement to abide by its contents.

Appointed Official's Name (Please Print): \_\_\_\_\_

Appointed Official's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_