

# City of Fraser



## Boards & Commissions Handbook

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The City of Fraser has a heritage of involving its citizens in the governmental process. In addition to the opportunities citizens have to express their thoughts and opinions at City Council meetings and public hearings, there is also the opportunity to serve on one of the many Boards and Commissions. The City of Fraser has 17 Boards and Commissions with over 80 residents participating in various capacities.

Appointments to our boards and Commissions are open to all residents. Generally the only requirement is city residency, but some Boards and Commissions may require a certain level of expertise. All Boards and Commission members are appointed by the City Council for specific terms depending on the Board or Commission based on, but not bound by, recommendations from the respective Boards and Commissions.

Applications are available in the City Clerk's office and may also be found on the City's web site. [www.fraser.govoffice.com](http://www.fraser.govoffice.com). You can also look to the City Cable Channel, Channel 5, for information about openings on our Boards & Commissions.

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been designed to provide information that will familiarize you with how our Boards and Commissions function. Having an understanding of the processes involved in fulfilling the duties and responsibilities will make your volunteerism an exciting and enriching experience.

Your volunteerism as a member of one of our Boards and Commissions will afford you with the opportunity to become involved with the operation of municipal government. As a member of a Board and Commission you will be responsible for assisting the City in the decision making process by reviewing and evaluating information and rendering direction and decisions within the context of your Board or Commission.

The sharing of your thoughts and insights add to a process that will ultimately reward the City and its residents with meaningful direction, recommendations and actions. Your influence over policy, direction and approvals makes your role very important. Remembering that as a member of a Board or Commission you are representing the City as a whole, it is important to avoid supporting single issues or pursuing a personal or private agenda.

It must also be remembered that not all of the recommendations made by Boards and Commissions will be popular, accepted, and may be rejected. Rejection of a decision, however, does not imply a lack of confidence or disinterest. It is simply a part of the political process surrounding any given issue where there are different perspectives, thoughts and considerations.

A challenging and meaningful experience awaits you. We, as a City team, look forward to your participation in the democratic process. Good luck and best wishes.

## APPOINTMENT PROCESS

Most appointments to Boards and Commissions will be made by the City Council. Based on, but not bound by, interviews and recommendations from each respective Board or Commission. Some appointments are made by the Mayor subject to the approval of City Council. Sixty days prior to any expiration of a Board or Commission term of office, a notice will be placed on the cable channel, channel 5, the City's web page, [www.fraser.govoffice.com](http://www.fraser.govoffice.com), and posted in the City Hall.

Interested individuals will be directed to complete an Application for Appointment which can be downloaded from the City's web site or obtained from the City Manager's office at 33000 Garfield Road. Those wishing to be reappointed will also be required to complete an Application for Appointment as well.

All applications must be submitted to the City Manager's office by the deadline date specified on each posting. Those submitted after the deadline will not be considered for the current position openings.

All applications received by the manager's office will be disseminated to the respective Board or Commission and interviews will be conducted for each application received. At the completion of the interviewing process each Board and Commission will consider the applicants qualifications and vote on recommendations to be submitted to the City Council. Thereafter the appointment process will be in the hands of the City Council.

In the event a term is vacated due to resignation, the same process will be followed once notification of said resignation has been received.

# OPERATING PROCEDURES

## **By-Laws**

Each Board and Commission shall have established By-laws. For those Boards and Commissions that do not have established By-laws as of the date of the first adoption of the Handbook, By-laws shall be established for submission and approval by the City Council within three meeting dates of the respective Board or Commission.

## **Attendance**

Appointment to a Board or Commission is a privilege freely sought by the applicant. It carries with it the responsibility to participate in Board or Commission activities and represent the residents of the City. Good attendance ensures a steady flow of communication and keeps everyone abreast of current topics under discussions. Therefore each member should make every effort to attend all meetings. It is required that each member arrive at the meeting at least 10 minutes before the starting time.

When a member is unable to attend a meeting, the board or commission contact person should be notified as soon as possible. A member may be removed for absenteeism based on the following policy:

No more than three excused absences within one year, and/or no more than two unexcused absences within one year for boards and commissions that meet once a month. The number of allowable absences is adjusted for those boards and commissions which meet less often.

For boards and commissions that meet quarterly, no more than one excused absence and/or one unexcused absence will be allowed. For boards and commissions that meet on an as needed basis, an annual report as to the attendance of members shall be made to the City Manager's office in January of every year.

If a meeting is rescheduled from its normal meeting date and time and a member cannot attend the rescheduled meeting, it should not be held against them.

### **Regular Meetings**

All meetings of Boards and Commissions shall be properly posted and held in compliance with state statutes, including the Open Meetings Act, 1976 PA 267, as amended. All meetings shall be open to the public.

If it is known in advance that a quorum (more than half the members of the board or commission) cannot be achieved, consideration will be taken to notify all members and persons interested in the business before the body. A notice will be posted indicating that due to a lack of quorum, the meeting is cancelled or rescheduled.

### **Special Meetings**

Boards and/or Commissions may call for a special meeting as circumstances dictate. This may be called by the President/Chairperson or upon written request of three members. No official action shall be transacted at any special meeting of a board or commission unless the item has been stated in the notice of such meeting. Notice stating the time and place of any special meeting and the purpose for which called shall be given to each member of the Board or Commission at least 24 hours prior to the meeting.

### **Quorum**

A majority of the members of any Board or Commission shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at all meetings, but in the absence of a quorum a lesser number may adjourn any meeting to a later date.

It is recommended that each board or commission wait 10 minutes after the start of each meeting before the adjournment when a quorum is not present. This practice will take any question out of the timing of not conducting a meeting and eliminate questions.

## **Posting for Regular and Special Meetings**

Each board and Commission will provide a public notice stating the dates, times and places of the regular meetings which must be posted at City Hall and all other places as may be determined. Notices of Special meetings shall be posted at least 24 hours in advance of said meeting. All postings will be coordinated through the City Clerk's office.

## **Rescheduled or Adjourned Meetings**

For a rescheduled or adjourned regular or special meeting of any Board or Commission, a public notice stating the time and place of the meeting shall be posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting in the City Hall and all other places as may be determined.

## **Meetings to be Public**

All meetings shall be open to the public and shall be held in a place available to the general public. All persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting except as otherwise provided by state law, and all persons shall have a reasonable opportunity to be heard. All decisions of any Board or Commission shall be made at a meeting open to the public. All deliberations of any Board or Commission constituting a quorum of its members shall take place at an open meeting to the public except as otherwise provided for in the Open Meetings Act.

## **Meeting Preparation**

There are various approaches to prepare for meetings. The following are some suggestions.

- Step 1 Prepare by budgeting enough time to thoroughly review the entire agenda packet.

- Step 2 When the packet is delivered; examine the agenda to get an idea of:
- a. The number of items
  - b. Controversial issues
  - c. Difficult procedural items
  - d. Issues you know little about
- Step 3 Thumb through the addenda packet and focus on the unusual items.
- a. You are trying to get a feel for the numbers, types and significance of the items
  - b. Try to identify the items that will require the most preparation
- Step 4 Ask yourself a series of questions.
- a. How do I see this meeting? Is it a hot one?
  - b. What are the volatile items, if any?
  - c. What issues should I focus on?
  - d. What happens if....?
  - e. Who do you expect to be at the meeting?
  - f. What is the history of the item, if any?
  - g. What is the staff perspective on the item, if any?
- Step 5 Begin your study of the individual agenda items. While some people prefer to review the agenda in the listed order, another approach is to study the most important.
- Step 6 Visit any sites or facilities that will help you deal with the issues. Research topic as necessary for a complete understanding of the issues/topics.
- Step 7 After completing your review of the agenda, and your questions, call or meet with the President/Chairperson or staff liaison to go over the various items and questions, if necessary.

Just a note: Nobody likes surprises. Within the public setting surprises are particularly deadly. Being caught unprepared, unaware or by surprise is embarrassing. One of the most important rules is: Never spring surprises on anyone at a public meeting. If you are going to make an earthshaking statement or request make sure that the groundwork has been laid beforehand.

Springing surprises may gain a momentary advantage. But you can be sure that retribution in some form will be forthcoming.

The companion to the no surprise rule is to never be caught by surprise.

If in doubt, meet with staff beforehand so that you are prepared for any meeting surprises that may develop. A rule you might consider is: Never ask the staff a sensitive question at a public meeting to which you do not know the answer.

### **Conduct of Meeting**

The President or Chairperson will preside at all meetings of the council. In the absence of the above, the vice-president or vice-chair will preside. All comments must be directed to the presiding officer.

Members of the public will speak only when recognized by the presiding officer.

### **Agenda Preparation**

Agendas for all meetings shall be prepared by the President or Chairperson or his/her designee. Any agenda item so requested to be placed on an agenda must generally be submitted 8 days prior to the regular meeting, subject to the discretion of the President or Chairperson.

The agenda and supporting materials will be sent at least one week before the meeting date. Each board or Commission shall have the option of deleting or adding any item to or from the agenda or postponing an item on the agenda to a subsequent meeting. Should

an item be postponed but not to a certain date, it shall not appear until it is requested to be considered.

### **Agenda Format**

The following agenda format is recommended for all Boards and Commissions.

- Call meeting to Order.
- Pledge of Allegiance.
- Roll Call of Members.
- Approval of Minutes.
- Citizen Participation on Agenda Items.
- Presentations.
- Public Hearings.
- Considerations/Action Requests.
- Committee Reports.
- Pending Items of Unfinished Business.
- Report of Members/New Business.
- Citizen Participation.
- Adjournment.

### **Minutes**

Written minutes, upon the approval of the board or commission constitute the official action record of its activities. Additions and corrections of the minutes are not verbatim. They are, instead, action minutes, recording the essence of the decisions made and significant action taken.

For the convenience of the recorder, meetings may be recorded in order to facilitate the preparation of minutes. However, any tapes of meetings do not become part of the official City records and are destroyed immediately after the minutes have been approved.

### **Review of Minutes by City Council**

It is a requirement of all boards and commissions to keep record of its actions by minutes. The minutes of meetings are to be prepared and

submitted to the City Council with a copy to be kept on file with the City Clerk. They will be listed on the City Council agenda under the consent agenda and approved by action of the Council. The purpose of the review is to keep the City Council informed about their activities.

### **Rules of Procedure**

All boards and commissions follow a relaxed version of Robert's Rules of Order, latest edition. A copy of the general procedures found in the City Council's Rules and Procedures adopted March 8, 2001 is attached for your information. Each board or commission shall outline their rules and procedures in their by-laws.

### **Annual Reports**

On an annual basis, the President or Chairperson of each board or commission shall provide a written report as to the board's or commission's activities for the past fiscal year period. This report will also include proposed goals and objectives for the upcoming fiscal year as well as any other issue the board or commission wishes to address.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

The following is some general information is designed to provide you with tools and techniques for you to follow as a guide in your role as a board or commission member. Hopefully some of the information provided will be of value as you participate in your various meetings.

### **Public Participation**

People presenting an issue or even speaking at a meeting may have never appeared before a public body. The experience can be intimidating. Therefore, anxiety may be displayed through aggressiveness or forgetfulness. This is not uncommon and you can help these individuals by:

1. Calming and reassuring them.
2. Explaining meeting procedures.

3. Paying attention and not doodling or reading.
4. Actively listening to what they are saying.
5. Avoid using third degree questioning techniques.
6. Don't bait or lecture.

### **Managing Difficult Meetings**

From time to time you may face a controversial issue that will manifest itself in a very difficult meeting environment. This type of meeting will most likely involve representatives from one or more sides of an issue who will try and convince you that their position is the correct and right one. Aggressiveness and hostility may characterize the group demeanor. Keep the following in mind as you prepare for and participate in this meeting environment.

#### **Before the Meeting**

If possible, the President or Chairperson may ask that participants designate one or more spokespersons to represent like viewpoints. This may help reduce redundancy while making sure that all sides of the issue will be heard.

The staff representative or recorder should make sure to have agendas and any backup information available for attendees.

Make certain that adequate seating is available. Consider moving the meeting to a larger room if necessary.

Make certain that the audiovisual equipment is operational.

Establish and announce the rules before the meeting.

#### **During the Meeting**

The President or Chairperson should explain the issues, the possible actions and procedures that will be followed at the meeting.

Don't waste time at the beginning of the meeting on routine items such as correcting the minutes. Consider moving an item up on the agenda that there are many people there to hear.

Have speakers address the board or commission and not the audience. Some speakers are very good at inciting audiences; especially if they are permitted to face the audience.

Stop any clapping or shouting early. If not already covered at the beginning of the meeting, explain the reasons why such actions are disruptive and counterproductive.

Citizen pressure on boards and commissions can be tough. It is important to remember to address an issue with an open mind and weigh all the facts. Your credibility will be greatly diminished if there is a perception that an issue is a “Done Deal.”

### **Hooks and Barbs**

Members of the public may use statements such as the ones listed below to upset or try and sway board or commission members:

- I pay taxes and therefore your salary.
- We know whose pocket you’re in.
- You’re wasting taxpayer money.
- This is done deal and you’ve already decided.
- Does someone have to be killed before you do anything?
- There is no open government here.

Board and commission members need to judge whether to respond to these types of hooks or barbs or simply let it go. Recognize that a response is generally a no-win strategy and simply fuels an emotional issue.

Ask yourself the following before responding:

- Will a direct response divert the meeting from the main issue?
- Does this really need to be responded to at this time?
- What will a response achieve?
- Will any type of response correct the statement?

## **Making Tough Decisions**

When considering decision making on tough issues, here are questions that might help you think through a pending decision. Not all of these apply in all situations.

- Do I have a conflict of interest in this matter and have I disclosed it?
- Do others who are involved have a conflict of interest?
- Are ethical issues involved?
- Is it permitted by law?
- Do I have enough information to make a decision?
- Can I live with the proposed decision?
- Is the fight for or against the issue really worth it?
- Who will be hurt by the proposed action? Who will benefit?
- Is the decision in the best interest of the majority of residents?
- How will the community view the decision?
- How will it look in the newspaper?
- Is the proposed action consistent with my boards or commissions mission?
- What past practices relate to this issue?
- Will it really matter five years from now?
- If the decision is made, and it turns out wrong, can it be reversed?
- If I am hesitating – why?

## **Working With Other Board or Commission Members**

It is important to remember that your fellow members have opinions and thoughts that may not coincide with yours. Divergent opinions are not a bad thing and the democratic process works best when all points of view are able to be expressed freely and openly. Your colleagues deserve your respect and the freedom to express their viewpoints. Here are behaviors or actions that negatively affect your working relationships with fellow members.

- Magnify errors of fellow members.
- Attempts to dominate meetings.

- Appeal directly to the audience.
- Cut off statements of fellow members.
- Make fun of fellow members.
- Tell fellow members they are wrong.
- Amend a motion to soften it and then not vote on it.
- Not show up at scheduled meetings or events.
- Commit to a position before the meeting.
- Take individual credit for group accomplishments.
- Fail to listen to fellow members.
- Pressure fellow members to take a position before the meeting.
- Pack the meeting for pressure purposes.
- Violate a fellow member's confidence.
- Covertly use the media to achieve your agenda.
- Force a vote on a key issue before the group is ready.
- Criticize staff in public.
- Fail to prepare for meetings.

## **GENERAL PARLIAMENTARY RULES**

**Rules of Parliamentary Procedure** - The rules of parliamentary practice as contained in Robert's Rules of Order, most recent edition, shall govern the Council in all cases to which they are applicable, provided they are not in conflict with these Rules, City Code, Charter, or other applicable laws.

**Discussion.** A Council member may speak when no motion is pending upon recognition by the Presiding Officer as provided in these Rules. The Council member's comments should be limited to the next pending item of business on the Agenda, but need not result in a motion relating to that business.

**Precedence of Motions.** When any main motion is upon the floor and the question is under debate, no motions shall be received but the following and they shall have precedence in the following order:

### **Not Debatable**

- Questions of privilege (general/personal)
- Recess.
- Adjourn.
- To lay on the table.
- To call for the previous question.
- To limit debate.

### **Debatable**

- To postpone (limited to same or next meeting)
- To commit or refer the question.
- To amend.

### **Incidental Motions** (Not debatable unless noted)

- Point of Order
- Appeal (Requires a second; debate limited)
- Point of Information
- Parliamentary Inquiry

- Division (Requests verification of a vote)
- Division of a Question (Requires a second)
- Object to Consideration (Requires 2/3 vote)
- Permission to Withdraw

### Restoratory Motions (Least precedence)

- Rescind (Requires a second) (Requires five (5) affirmative votes) (Debatable)
- Reconsider (Requires a second) (Requires five (5) affirmative votes) (Can be made only by member of prevailing side) (Debatable) (Same day only) (The making takes precedence over all; consideration has precedence over none)

**Division of the Question.** A motion for a division of any question may be made when the question will admit of a division so distinct that if one part be taken away, the other will stand as an entire question for decision.

**Withdrawal of a Motion or Support.** A member may withdraw his or her motion or support at any time before it is put to a vote.

**Varying Order of Procedure.** The Mayor may, at any time, by a majority vote of the members of the Council present permit a member to introduce an item of business out of the regular order of business.

### **Points of Order.**

- The Presiding Officer shall be addressed as “Mr. Mayor/Madam Mayor” or “Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairwoman.” The Mayor Pro Tempore, when acting for the Mayor, shall be addressed as “Mayor Pro Tem (surname).”

Members of the Council shall be addressed as “Councilmember (surname).”

- A motion may be made by saying, “Mr. Mayor/Madam Mayor, I move that, etc.” or “Mr. Chairman/Madam Chairwoman, I move that, etc.”
- A speaker is out of order when speaking of matters foreign to the issue.
- Rule violations must receive immediate attention from the Presiding Officer.
- It is the privilege of any member to request a roll call vote. No vote on the request is required.
- On questions that are debatable, the minority has the undeniable right to deliberate.

## **CONCLUSION**

This handbook has been presented as a primer for your anticipated assistance to the City of Fraser. It does not cover all aspects of the board or commission that you may be requesting or have been appointed too. There may be training opportunities for each board or commission that will be afforded to you during your term of office. You will be notified by the staff liaison of any training opportunities available. You are encouraged to take advantage of them as they arise. Also, please do not hesitate to ask any questions of staff that will assist you in the performance of your duties and responsibilities.