

CITY OF EL PASO

# BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS HANDBOOK



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# 1. Welcome

Thank you for your commitment to the City of El Paso! Your service on our Boards and Commissions plays a vital role in shaping our community by providing valuable recommendations to the City Council. We appreciate the skills and knowledge you bring to this important endeavor. This handbook is designed to guide you in your role as a board member.

## 2. About the City of El Paso

The City Of El Paso was incorporated in 1873 and operates under a municipal charter. It has been operating under a council-manager form of government since 2004. This system is comprised of an elected City Council with an appointed City Manager. All power is concentrated in the elected council, which hires a professionally trained manager to carry out its directives and oversee the delivery of public services.

## 3. Boards and Commissions in General

Chapter 2.04 of the El Paso Municipal Code (Boards, Commissions and Committees Generally) Section 2.04.010 Uniform bylaws outlines general standards unless otherwise specified in the ordinance or resolution establishing a particular Board or Commission.

Most of the City of El Paso's boards and commissions serve in an advisory capacity, though some are established by state law.

An advisory committee is most effective when all members are engaged in the full discussion and development of recommendations. Subcommittees create barriers to that goal. By maintaining all deliberations and discussions within the full committee, the process remains transparent, efficient, inclusive, and accountable—which ultimately better serves the public interest. Subcommittees are strongly discouraged and can only be established within the framework of the board's enabling resolution.

### Board Composition

The City of El Paso has 46 boards and commissions, 13 external and 33 internal. In contrast to internal boards, external boards are those on which the city appoints members to represent the City's interest; however, they are not managed by City staff.

Boards and commissions are generally established to serve in an advisory capacity and develop specific recommendations within a defined intent and purpose. The Mayor and Council actively seek individuals such as yourself who are willing to dedicate their knowledge and time. The majority of members are appointed by the Mayor and Council. Regular meeting attendance and a clear understanding of responsibilities are essential, and city staff offer necessary administrative support.

The City of El Paso has adopted an Ordinance to establish uniform standards and procedures for all Boards and Commissions to ensure consistency.

[Ordinance 019766 – Uniform Bylaws](#)

## 4. Role of an Advisory Board

### Primary Function

Unless specifically granted by the City Charter or a separate ordinance, all City of El Paso Boards and Commissions serve in an advisory capacity only. Their primary function is to provide recommendations, expertise, and community input to the City.

### Limitation on Authority

Boards and commissions of the City of El Paso serve in an **advisory capacity only**, unless otherwise expressly authorized by the City Charter, ordinance, or resolution.

Pursuant to **Chapter 2.04 of the El Paso Municipal Code** (Boards, Commissions and Committees Generally), Section 2.04.010 Uniform bylaws, boards generally will have no executive, administrative, judicial, or operational functions.

Accordingly, boards, commissions, and individual members **shall not**:

- Be empowered with authority on behalf of the City to decide matters of City policy.
- Oversee or enter into any contract; procure materials or services.
- Recruit, hire, direct, manage, review or terminate staff, or involve themselves in any other way in personnel matters.
- Assign work to staff or require reports outside the established board liaison process.
- Seek, inquire about, or negotiate regarding the purchase, sale or lease of property.
- Use the Board as a vehicle for political activity or to engage in political activity such as lobbying or campaigning on an issue.
- Have any authority to raise funds or solicit revenues, nor incur indebtedness, nor to expend City resources of any type.
- Represent the City to any state, county, city, special district or school district, agency or commission, nor to any other organization or members of the public, on any matter unless specifically authorized to do so by City Council.
- Interfere with the administrative authority of the City Manager or designee.

All authority of the City is vested in the **Mayor and City Council acting collectively**, consistent with the City Charter.

### Communication, Information Requests, and Reporting

All communications from Boards and Commissions should be directed to the City Manager or their designee. The City Manager or their designee will then be responsible for transmitting relevant information and recommendations to the City Council for their consideration, as deemed appropriate.

Boards and Commissions are required to develop an annual report including a summary of activities and any recommendations to the City Council arising from the body's discussions throughout the year (which must be delivered to Council in writing via the Office of the City Manager by the prescribed deadline and can be presented during a Council meeting by the membership if desired).

In accordance with the City's council-manager form of government, all board and commission communications with City staff shall be coordinated through the assigned Board Liaison, under the authority of the City Manager or designee.

1. Requests for information or clarification shall be submitted through the Board Liaison.
2. Requests must relate directly to the board's authorized purpose and scope.
3. Requests requiring substantial staff time, new analysis, or legal review may require City Manager approval.
4. Information provided to individual members that is relevant to board deliberations shall be shared with the full board.

Direct staff contact outside this process may undermine administrative integrity and is discouraged.

### **Ethics and Conflict-of-Interest Guidance (City Code of Ethics [Chapter 2.92 Code of Ethics](#); Texas Local Government Code Ch. 171)**

Board and commission members are subject to the City of El Paso Code of Ethics and applicable state ethics laws, including [Chapter 171 of the Texas Local Government Code](#).

Examples of situations requiring disclosure or recusal include, but are not limited to:

- Participation in matters affecting a member's employer, client, or financial interest.
- Advocacy to City Council on matters previously considered by the board without authorization.
- Use of board title in political, campaign, or lobbying activities.
- Public or social media commentary on pending matters that could compromise impartiality.

Members shall seek guidance from the **City Attorney's Office** or **City Clerk's Office** when questions arise.

### **Professional Conduct and Board Culture (Uniform Bylaws Ordinance; City Code of Ethics)**

Boards and commissions shall conduct their work in a manner that reflects the City's commitment to professionalism, integrity, and respect for the public.

Members are expected to:

- Conduct themselves at all times with appropriate civility, respect, and decorum.
- Focus discussion on agenda items and assigned scope.
- Avoid personal attacks or disruptive conduct.
- Treat staff and the public with courtesy.

The Chair is responsible for maintaining order and enforcing meeting procedures consistent with adopted bylaws.

## Council's Role

The City Council's role is to receive and consider recommendations from boards and commissions. Council has the authority to accept, reject, or make amendments to recommendations based on the City's priorities and available resources, while addressing community needs.

## Role in the Policy Lifecycle

Boards and commissions provide advice and recommendations to City Council. Recommendations are non-binding and advisory in nature.

City Council retains sole authority to:

- Accept, modify, or reject recommendations.
- Balance board input with fiscal, legal, and policy considerations.

## Establishment and Dissolution

The establishment of new Boards and Commissions, as well as the modification of their purpose, responsibilities, or dissolution, shall be accomplished by ordinance/resolution adopted by the City Council.

# 5. Board Application Process

## How to Apply

If you are interested in serving on a Board or Commission:

1. Complete the online [Board Interest Form](#) available on the City of El Paso City Clerk's website and submit it to the Office of the City Clerk.
2. Board Interest Forms remain on file for one year.
3. Forms are reviewed by the respective board liaison and forwarded to the Mayor and Council for consideration. Appointments are made based on qualifications and eligibility. The Council seeks to have diverse representation to capture the needs of the community.
4. Mayor and Council place appointments on the City Council agenda for approval.
5. Visit [City of El Paso: Boards](#) for more information on boards and committees.

## Appointment

Once you are appointed:

1. A board liaison will contact you for an orientation outlining your role and responsibilities and to provide you with meeting information.
2. The City Clerk's Office will send you a welcome letter detailing mandatory training and the required documents you need to submit prior to attending your first meeting. These include:
  - A Notarized Oath of Office is required to participate in the first meeting.

- A financial disclosure - the City's Ethics Ordinance stipulates that board appointees must complete this form. [The Financial Disclosure Statement](#) must be completed online and returned within ten (10) business days to the City Clerk's Office to validate your appointment to the board. Failure to promptly submit the Financial Disclosure Form may result in removal from the Board.
- A [Public Access Disclosure Form](#) must be completed online.
- A [Demographics Disclosure Form](#) is optional and may be completed online.
- A Code of Conduct agreement.

For any questions, please contact the City Clerk's Office at (915) 212-0049 or via email at [cityclerk@elpasotexas.gov](mailto:cityclerk@elpasotexas.gov).

## **New Board Member Orientation and Training Requirements (Uniform Bylaws Ordinance)**

All newly appointed members shall:

- Review this handbook and applicable bylaws.
- Complete mandatory training within required timelines.
- Meet with the assigned Board Liaison.
- Review recent agendas and minutes.

Failure to complete required training may result in suspension or removal, as permitted by ordinance.

To ensure you are well-informed of your obligations and contribute effectively, the City requires the completion of the following on-demand training courses available at our Learning Portal. An [EP Public Learn Job Aid](#) is available to assist you in accessing these courses within the "The Volunteers Course Catalog".

1. Ethics in City Government for Board & Committee Appointed Officials training must be completed within 60 days after taking the Oath of Office for the first time and a subsequent refresher course every three years.
2. Code of Conduct for Appointed Officials – complete training and sign your commitment to the Code of Conduct agreement.
3. Rules of Order for the City Of El Paso's Boards and Commissions.
4. Public Information Act by the Attorney General of Texas must be completed within 90 days after taking office.
5. Texas Open Meetings Act by the Attorney General of Texas must be completed within 90 days after taking office.

## 6. Board and Commission Guidelines

### General Eligibility

Unless otherwise specified in the ordinance or resolution establishing a particular Board or Commission, all members must:

- Be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
- Be residents of the City of El Paso.
- Demonstrate an interest in and knowledge of the subject matter relevant to the specific Board or Commission.
- Not be involved in litigation against the City of El Paso
- Not be in any financial obligation to the City of El Paso.
- Not be an employee of the City of El Paso.

### Specific Expertise

Individual Board or Commission ordinances and resolutions may include additional membership requirements based on specific expertise, professional background, or community representation.

### Quorum

- A quorum of the board or commission must be present to conduct a meeting.
- A quorum consists of a majority of the currently appointed regular board members.
- A Chair is elected by the board/commission members and has a vote on all matters.
- A Vice Chair is also elected by the board/commission to serve in the Chair's absence and has a vote on all matters.
- The Secretary position is filled by an assigned City staff member (board liaison) to provide administrative duties but does not vote and is not counted towards quorum.

### Attendance (Uniform Bylaws Ordinance)

A member who cannot attend a Board will notify the Board Liaison or Chair prior to the meeting, or as soon as practicable. The Board Liaison will report any member who is absent from three consecutive meetings to the Mayor and City Council. The Chair will attach an attendance record to the Committee's annual report to the Mayor and City Council.

### Grounds for Removal / Replacement

Members serve at the discretion of Mayor and Council and may be removed without cause or under these conditions:

- Failure to attend a significant number of meetings without reasonable excuse (as defined in the uniform bylaws).
- Misconduct or unethical behavior.
- Failure to meet eligibility requirements.
- Actions contrary to the best interests of the City.

## **Term Length**

The length of a board member's service runs for two years, as specified in the uniform ordinance, unless otherwise specified by applicable law, regulation, or resolution.

## **Term Limitations (El Paso Municipal Code Chapter 2.04, Section 2.04.050)**

Unless otherwise specified in the ordinance establishing a particular Board or Commission, no person who has been appointed to two consecutive terms as a regular member of any board created by ordinance shall be eligible for reappointment as a regular member to the same board for the next consecutive term. No person who has been appointed to two consecutive terms as an alternate member of any board created by ordinance shall be eligible for reappointment as an alternate member to the same board for the next consecutive term. No person who has served four consecutive terms as regular and alternate members shall be eligible for reappointment to the same board for the next consecutive term.

## **Holding Over Prohibition (El Paso Municipal Code Chapter 2.04, Section 2.04.054)**

Unless otherwise specified in the ordinance establishing a particular Board or Commission, when the term of office of any member of any city board or commission expires, the member shall continue to serve until his successor is appointed and qualified, or until thirty days have passed following the expiration of the term, whichever event occurs first. Any holding over past the thirty-day period is prohibited, and after that time a vacancy in the board shall exist and the former member shall have no power to vote or participate in board proceedings; but such vacancy shall not serve to reduce the number of members required for a quorum. This section shall not apply to boards or commissions created by Charter, joint agreement with other political subdivisions, or pursuant to state statute; or to officers, where state law would prohibit such disqualification.

## **End-of-Term and Post-Service Obligations**

Upon completion of service, members shall:

- Return City-issued materials.
- Continue to comply with confidentiality and ethics requirements.
- Refrain from representing themselves as acting on behalf of the City or board.

Former members may not use prior service to imply ongoing authority or influence.

## **Vacancies**

Vacancies occurring before the expiration of a term shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments, and the appointee shall serve for the remainder of the unexpired term.

## **Texas Open Meetings Act – Compliance Summary ([Texas Government Code Chapter 551](#))**

Boards and commissions must comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act at all times.

Key requirements include:

- A meeting occurs when a quorum discusses public business, regardless of format.
- Serial communications, group texts, or emails involving a quorum may constitute a meeting.
- “Walking quorums” and indirect deliberations are prohibited.
- Discussion is limited to properly posted agenda items.

Violations may result in civil or criminal penalties and removal from office.

### **Rules of Order and Procedure**

Robert's Rules of Orders shall be used as a general guide for the effective conduct of City board and commission meetings.

## **7. Board Members Duties and Responsibilities**

Thank you for your commitment to representing the citizens of El Paso. Agendas are posted 3 business days prior to any meeting in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. As a board member, your responsibilities include:

As a member of a City of El Paso advisory board or commission, your role:

- Offers non-binding advice to help the City grow and achieve its goals.
- Lends your skills, guidance, and knowledge.
- Provides a citizen's view.
- Does not have governance responsibilities.
- Does not make financial decisions on the City's behalf.
- Does not direct staff to conduct work outside of administrative duties related to meeting preparation.

Things to remember

- It's important to understand the responsibilities and limitations of your role.
- Remember, your role is advisory, and you do not have the authority to direct City staff.
- Maintain an open mind before forming opinions on issues.
- Prepare for meetings by thoroughly reviewing all materials provided (agenda packet, staff reports, etc.).
- Attend all board meetings, as excessive absences can lead to removal. Maintain decorum during meetings, focusing on issues rather than personalities.
- Respect and uphold the City's policies, code of conduct, and ethics. Members of all boards and commissions are required to adhere to the City of El Paso's Code of Conduct and Ethics standards.
- Disclose any potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, that may impact your ability to serve impartially on the Board.

## Authority of Individual Board Members

Authority of a board or commission exists only when exercised collectively at a properly posted meeting with a quorum present, in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

Individual board members, including the Chair, possess no independent authority to:

- Bind the board or the City.
- Direct City staff or consultants.
- Speak on behalf of the board, Mayor, or City Council.
- Make commitments or representations on behalf of the City.

Statements or actions taken by individual members outside a posted meeting represent personal views only and shall not be construed as official City positions.

## Selection of Chair and Vice-Chair

The board will annually select a Chair and a Vice-Chair from its members. The Vice-Chair will serve in the Chair's absence.

## Chair Responsibilities and Authority

The Chair is responsible for:

- Being familiar with City policies, rules of order, enabling resolutions, and uniform boards and commissions ordinance.
- Opening and calling meetings to order.
- Recognizing members requesting to speak.
- Maintaining decorum during meetings.

The Chair's authority is limited to procedural functions necessary to conduct meetings in accordance with adopted bylaws and Council-approved ordinances.

## Vice Chair Responsibilities

The Vice-Chair is responsible for presiding in the Chair's absence.

# 8. Board Liaisons Responsibilities

Board Liaisons provide crucial support, including:

- Administrative support and professional judgment.
- Orients board members on their roles and responsibilities.
- Prepares and posts meeting agendas (3 business days prior).
- Provides agenda packets, staff reports, and other relevant materials.
- Prepares and files original minutes with the City Clerk's Office upon approval.
- Maintains a neutral position on all topics.
- Guides the board so they stay on track.
- Communicates and presents board recommendations to the City Manager and City Council (if deemed necessary).
- Communicates with Council regarding board member attendance and vacancies.

- Maintains membership attendance.
- Communicates training requirements and keeps training records.

#### Additional Board Liaison Requirements:

- Complete annual mandatory training.
- Prepare and post all pertinent board documentation:
  - ▶ Post and upload all Agendas and Minutes in Legistar, the City's agenda management software.
  - ▶ Post agendas, both physically and online, must be posted 3 business days in advance of the meeting to comply with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
  - ▶ Compile meeting minutes, submits original copy of the approved minutes to the City Clerk's Office within 48 hours of approval ([Standardized Minutes Format Guide](#)), and uploads a copy online.
  - ▶ Prepare backup documentation.
- Secure a quorum before posting an agenda.
- Secure meeting room and make virtual meeting accommodations if needed.
- Maintain all records such as training and attendance records.
- Communicate pertinent information to board members on board matters via e-mail. NOTE: Advise board members NOT to "REPLY TO ALL" in email communications to avoid violation of the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Maintain communication with the board's legal advisor to review agendas and minutes, coordinate attendance to meetings, address any legal concerns, etc.
- Communicate with individual Council member offices to actively fill immediate vacancies, beginning as early as 90 days before a member's term expiration date.
- Review candidate qualifications and confirm eligibility for new appointments immediately upon receipt of the City Clerk's Office request.
- Submit a quarterly report to the City Clerk's Office with board roster, term dates, and other pertinent information by or before the following dates: March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 to ensure that the [Boards and Commissions Public Portal](#) is kept current.
- Communicate board roster and administrative changes to the City Clerk's Office immediately:
  - ▶ Changes to board liaison and/or legal advisor assignments
  - ▶ Notification of board Chair and Vice-Chair when identified
  - ▶ Board member's resignations and/or terminations by providing backup documentation or correspondence.

#### 2.04.020 - Meetings—Minutes—Recordkeeping requirements.

- A. All duly constituted boards and commissions of the city are required to file their meetings with the city clerk of the city. The original minutes will be filed with the city clerk upon approval by the appropriate board or commission.
- B. The city clerk is required to maintain a file of the minutes of the meetings of all boards and commissions for inspection by the mayor and council and the public.
- C. The city clerk is authorized to require a uniform format of such minutes.

## 9. City Attorney's Office Responsibilities

The City Attorney's Office provides the following guidance and support:

- Reviews and approves the agenda and minutes.
- Communicates with board liaisons to address legal matters.
- Assists in interpreting local, state, and federal policies.
- Provides legal representation during meetings.
- Maintains a neutral position on all topics.
- Assists the board in staying on track.
- Approves agenda notices for public posting, as required by the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Reviews candidate qualifications and confirms eligibility for proposed appointments.
- Annually present to the body about that body's charge, purview, legal requirements, etc.

## 10. City Clerk's Office Responsibilities

The City Clerk's Office offers the following support related to boards and commissions:

- Assist all Council office staff with submitting board appointments; providing information, and guidance for agenda placement.
- Provides membership and vacancy reports to Council Offices and Performance Office.
- Manages the application process, appointments, and membership rosters.
- Reviews candidate qualifications and confirms eligibility for proposed appointments.
- Processes board appointments and reappointments, submits documentation for review and approval to board liaisons and legal representatives.
- Processes appointees' indebtedness checks.
- Prepares and archives all appointment documentation.
- Maintains and manages board appointment information in Granicus and Document Manager, the City's boards repositories.
- Verifies the prompt posting of agendas in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.
- Verifies the prompt filing and online uploading of meeting minutes.
- Trains board liaisons on agenda preparation and posting via Legistar, the City's agenda management software.
- Updates the boards and commissions online website.



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