

**City of
Dodge City**



City of Dodge City, KS

**Advisory Board and
Commission
Member Guidelines**

A Summary of Duties and Responsibilities

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YOUR ROLE AS A BOARD OR COMMISSION MEMBER

Introduction

.....Thank you for volunteering to serve your community through an appointment by the Mayor and City Commission to a citizen board or commission. This handbook will acquaint you with the Mayor and City Commission's policies in regard to boards and commissions and the particular roles and responsibilities of members. This handbook is provided by the Office of the City Manager.

....Boards and commissions are established to increase citizen input and participation in City government. Some of the boards and commissions exist to advise and make recommendations to City Commission while others have distinct regulatory responsibilities that are established by law. By accepting this appointment, you are now in a position to work directly with your local government, on behalf of your fellow citizens, to enrich community life on a wide variety of issues. The greater your participation in the work of the board, the greater will be the effectiveness of the board in carrying out its charge and ultimately improving the community.

.....While the Mayor and City Commission set policy and make decisions affecting their constituency, they also consider citizen participation a vital aspect of good government. Working in partnership with the Mayor and City Commission, City staff, and your fellow citizens, we can continue to set the standards for excellence in good government and quality of life. Residents such as you, who serve on a board or commission, sometime dedicate many hours a month without compensation to make Dodge City's government reflective of the attitudes and beliefs of all its residents. Your efforts do not go unrecognized and the results are clear in the great community we all enjoy. Thank You!

City Attorney's Office

The City Attorney's office is available to all boards and commissions. Calling or meeting with the City Attorney is coordinated through the City Manager. This assists in obtaining the most efficient use of legal services and to control legal cost. With few exceptions, an attorney does not attend board or commission meetings. However, when legal questions arise and the need to confer with the City Attorney presents itself, generally the matter should be deferred and the staff liaison can arrange for the attorney's involvement.

If you have any questions about this material, please feel free to contact the City Manager, City Clerk, Director of Public Information or your staff liaison.

This publication is available electronically at www.dodgecity.org.

In addition to those situations in which there is a real conflict of interest, all members of boards and commissions must be aware of situations in which there is an appearance of conflict of interest. In some cases, a matter may be pending before the board or commission which will not benefit you or a member of your family in any way, but the general public may perceive that a conflict exists. An individual's alliance or allegiance to an organization, group or institution may leave doubt in the public's mind as to that member's ability to make an objective determination. Although there may not be any legal preemption from voting under such circumstances, prudence should prevail. You may want to consider stepping down on that issue.

In all discussions, openness is generally the best policy. Should any situation like this arise, simply notify your Board Chairperson, the Staff Liaison or the City Attorney and they will give you instructions on the next steps to take. If you are still in doubt, the safest course of action is to abstain from participating in any discussions on that particular issue. Abstention from an issue should include your physically leaving the room when the board or commission is meeting during the period the matter is discussed or acted upon.

Your City Government and Becoming a Member

In order to better understand the governmental structure of our city, a summary is provided below. First, a voter selected five member City Commission governs Dodge City. The City Manager is appointed by the City Commission by contract that is reviewed and evaluated on a yearly basis and is a full time professional administrator and the chief administrative officer of the City government. The City Manager is responsible to the City Commission for the administration of all activities, functions and programs of the City in accordance with State and Federal law and policies and guidelines adopted by the City Commission. Though the City Manager has considerable authority, s/he is not authorized to appoint board and commission members. This authority rests with the City Commission.

Any resident may vie for a place on a board or commission. In many cases, a resident may express to a City Commissioner a desire to serve on a city board or commission, or sometimes, as a result of being observed carrying out other volunteer work within the community, a person may be asked if he or she has interest in serving. In any event, the City Commission attempts to appoint individuals who have the appropriate skills and interests for a given board or commission, and they try to appoint a representative cross-section of the Dodge City community.

Authority and Primary Responsibilities

Most commissions and boards get their authority from the state statutes or city resolutions. With this authority, board/commission members are charged with a variety of vital tasks and responsibilities. Boards/Commissions may study specific issues such as a change in zoning, or they may provide general suggestions for a specific government function, such as community development or a community recycling program. Due to their status as appointed representatives, all members must keep in mind that their role is solely an advisory one, subordinate to the City Commission. The City Commission in all cases

reserves the right to change or counter any recommendation from these groups. In either event, the City Commission receives important advisory information from these committees, but due to their elected status, they retain the ultimate decision making authority of the City.

Attendance at Board and Commission Meetings

Your attendance at board and commission meetings is critical. The City Commission realizes however, that occasionally business and family commitments will prevent you from attending. When this happens, use your best efforts to notify a staff liaison that you will not be in attendance. By doing this sufficiently in advance of the meeting, quorums can be projected or agendas adjusted.

Sometimes a business or family situation becomes complicated, making attendance at meetings difficult with little likelihood of changing for some time. If you experience such circumstances, discuss them with your board chairperson and/or staff liaison. The City understands that these situations arise, and your need to step down from serving because of these eventualities does not preclude you from a future appointment to another city board or commission when your schedule might be more accommodating.

Regardless of which board or commission you serve on, you play an important part in Dodge City's municipal government. Without your help, Dodge City could not be the quality community it is today.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest questions arise periodically at all levels of government and can become very complex. Generally, a legal conflict of interest occurs when you, as a member of the board or commission, are slated to vote on a matter (1) involving you or a member of your family by blood or marriage; (2) involving a business owned in whole or part by you or a member of your family by blood or marriage; or (3) whereby the outcome could be economically advantageous to you or a member of your family or to a business owned in whole or in part by you or a member of your family. In all of the cases above, as applicable to your individual circumstances, you have a responsibility to disclose this information to the rest of the commission or board and must abstain from any discussion and vote on the matter.

SPECIAL ISSUES

Minutes

Minutes of board and commission meetings are very important. In some cases, the minutes play a legal role in reviews by other boards or commissions or the City Commission; however, as a rule, meeting minutes are used in maintaining the city's archives and are required under city ordinances. Depending on the nature of the group's work, its available staff support and the complexity of the minutes themselves, board or commission minutes may be kept by a staff secretary, a staff liaison, or by a committee-appointed recording secretary. The Staff Liaison will always ensure one person is identified to take minutes for each formal gathering of the board or commission.

The Kansas Open Meetings Act

All government entities, their boards and commissions are subject to the Kansas Open Meetings Act. This law, though somewhat complex, requires all meetings of boards or commissions to be open to the public. It also requires that notice is provided to all individuals who request it.

A public address audio system should be used when gatherings are not conducive to normal tone speaking and amplification is required. At a minimum, the public should be able to hear what is going on. Depending upon the rules and procedures of a given board or commission, they do not necessarily have the right to participate in those discussions.

The law does provide for closed meetings, but only for very specific subjects such as the purchase of real estate, discussion of a specific lawsuit, or the disciplining of personnel. Except in very rare cases, these categories do not apply to city boards or commissions. If the board or commission has a reason to believe that it needs a closed meeting under the Kansas Open Meetings Act, the meeting should not be held until the matter is discussed with the City Clerk.

The City of Dodge City Commissioners and staff believe very strongly that all boards and commissions have the responsibility to honor both the letter and the spirit of the Kansas Open Meetings Act. Free and open communication is a part of our American system of government and has proven in Dodge City to simply make a better government.

All Dodge City meeting facilities are accessible to disabled board members and the disabled residents who desire to attend meetings. The City Commission requires all board and commissions, when having meetings outside of city facilities, to use only facilities that are accessible to the disabled.

BOARD AND COMMISSION SUPPORT

Role of City Commission

Occasionally, the City Commission appoints one of its own members to be liaison to a board or commission within our city government. Whether the board member is actively involved in the group's discussions depends somewhat on the nature of the work that the board or commission performs, as well as the desires of its members.

Though it is somewhat rare to have elected officials serving as members on boards and commissions, it is not unusual to have a City Commission member attend various board and commission meetings from time to time in the role as an observer. Some members of the City Commission do this solely to become more familiar with board or commission members as well as the work of the group itself. Having a City Commissioner attend a meeting is usually just an expression of that person's interest in the work you are doing and requires no change in your normal meeting protocol. Ultimately, the City Commission's role with respect to boards and commissions is their evaluation of the respective recommendations and directions these groups propose and subsequently the decision to fund or direct city staff resources to implement these proposals.

Role of Staff Liaison

All Dodge City boards and commissions have a city staff member assigned to them. Generally, this will be a department or division head in a department closely aligned with the activities of the particular board or commission. Unless a department is specifically designated by the ordinance establishing the board or commission, the City Manager selects department support. Generally, the department that supports your board or commission will be responsible for arranging meeting space, handling correspondence, arranging notices, and providing technical and secretarial assistance to the board.