



CITY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES HANDBOOK

| A Reference Guide

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MANDATORY REVIEW REQUIREMENT

The Boards, Commissions, and Committees (BCC) Handbook is a reference guide that applies to advisory and regulatory bodies. It is intended to provide an overview of basic laws and procedures during a member's term and to clarify the role and responsibilities of the Board, Commission, and Committee members in relation to the City Council, City staff and the public.

I _____, confirm that:

- I was provided with a copy of the BCC Handbook upon my appointment to a Palo Alto Board, Commission, and Committee.
- I have read the entire Handbook, including any updates as of the signing of this document, reviewing each section including:
 - Requirements to be a member of a Board, Commission, and Committee
 - Ethics Training (AB1234)
 - Legal (Brown Act, Conflict of Interest, Political Reform Act)
 - Role and Responsibilities
 - Code of Conduct
- I agree to follow the guidelines and regulations provided in this Handbook, as required by the California Government Codes (including the Brown Act), Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) regulations, and the Municipal Code, as well as any other required policies/statutes. In the event there is a conflict between state or federal law and this Handbook, state or federal law shall govern. In the event there is a conflict between this Handbook and any procedure adopted by a BCC, this Handbook shall govern.
- I understand that the BCC Handbook is intended as a tool to provide guidance on process and procedures as well as to draw my attention to the primary rules of serving on a BCC under the guidance of the City Council.
- No legal advice is intended through this Handbook.
- It is my responsibility to re-visit this Handbook through my term to review protocol and regulations, and for guidance.
- I am invited to consult with the Staff Liaison, City Clerk, and City Attorney any time I have questions or concerns relating to these guidelines and my service.

Signature

Date

I serve on the following BCC _____.

This page is due to the City Clerk's Department within 60-days of appointment. Ethics training completed on (date) _____

Thank you for your attention to this important information and your responsibility as a BCC Member.

ABOUT THE CITY



Palo Alto, known as the “Birthplace of Silicon Valley,” is home to 69,700 residents and nearly doubles during the day with an influx of employees from major employers. Unique among city organizations, the City of Palo Alto operates a full array of services including its own gas, electric, water, sewer, refuse and storm drainage provided at very competitive rates for its customers. The City of Palo Alto offers robust community amenities including 36 parks, 39 playgrounds, five community and youth centers, 41 miles of walking/biking trails and five libraries. The City also manages a regional airport and provides fire, police and emergency services. Palo Alto is an award-winning City recognized nationally as innovative and well-managed, one of a small number of California cities with a AAA bond rating. City services and performance also receive high marks from community members in the annual community survey conducted by the Polco (formerly National Research Center).

As the global center of technology and innovation, Palo Alto is the corporate headquarters for many world-class companies and research facilities. Home to Stanford University and a top-ranked public school system, Palo Alto also features beautiful and historic residential neighborhoods, vibrant shopping and retail districts. Palo Alto has a highly educated and culturally sophisticated citizenry that is actively engaged in making a difference both locally and globally.

For the City’s website, go here: www.cityofpaloalto.org

To connect with the City on social media, go here: www.cityofpaloalto.org/connect

To sign up for the City’s digital newsletter, go here: www.cityofpaloalto.org/newslettersignup

CITY COUNCIL



The City of Palo Alto operates under a Council-Manager type of government. The City Council consists of seven members and it is the governing body elected directly by the electorate of Palo Alto. Every year, the City Council Members vote and select a Mayor. As the legislative branch of our local government, the City Council makes final decisions on all City matters, sets City-wide priorities and policies, and directs the City Manager to implement these priorities and policies. The City Council adopts ordinances and resolutions as necessary for efficient governmental operations, approves the budget, and acts as a board of appeals. It appoints the City Manager, City Attorney, City Auditor and City Clerk, as well as the members of the City's advisory Boards, Commissions, and Committees (BCCs).

BCCs are primarily responsible for advising and making recommendations to the City Council on City policies and programs. The City Council then uses the advice and recommendations offered by BCCs to make decisions. In addition to making policy recommendations, the Architectural Review Board and Planning and Transportation Commission, and Historic Resources Board also provide recommendations to the Planning Director or Council on project applications.

To learn more about the City Council, go here: www.cityofpaloalto.org/council

For the City Council meeting agendas, go here: www.cityofpaloalto.org/councilagendas



The City of Palo Alto has eight standing Boards, Commissions, and Committees. The City Council also establishes other Ad Hoc committees to assist them in their decision-making process from time to time.

The standing Boards, Commissions and Committees are:

- Architectural Review Board
- Historic Resources Board
- Human Relations Commission
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning and Transportation Commission
- Public Art Commission
- Storm Water Management Oversight Committee
- Utilities Advisory Commission

Other examples of Council appointed groups have included the former Library Advisory Commission, the Citizen Corps Council, the Youth Commission, the Expanded Community Advisory Panel (XCAP) on rail crossings, and the North Ventura Coordinated Area Plan Working Group.

During recruitment periods for BCCs, applicants are encouraged to visit the City website and apply for openings on various BCCs. The requirements for each BCC can be found in the Municipal Code or Council action creating the advisory body and will be reflected in the recruitment material – for example, some have a residency requirement. A physical address must be included on the application and proof of the address provided must be issued if requested. Once applications are received, the City Council determines which applicants to interview. The City Council will then vote to appoint members to serve on a BCC during a public City Council meeting. New appointments for complete terms are made in the Spring. Any needed replacement appointments for partial terms are made as necessary.

If you need to leave your seat on a BCC before your term is expired, submit your resignation in writing to your Staff Liaison, with a copy to the City Clerk. Each letter of resignation must be addressed to the City Council.

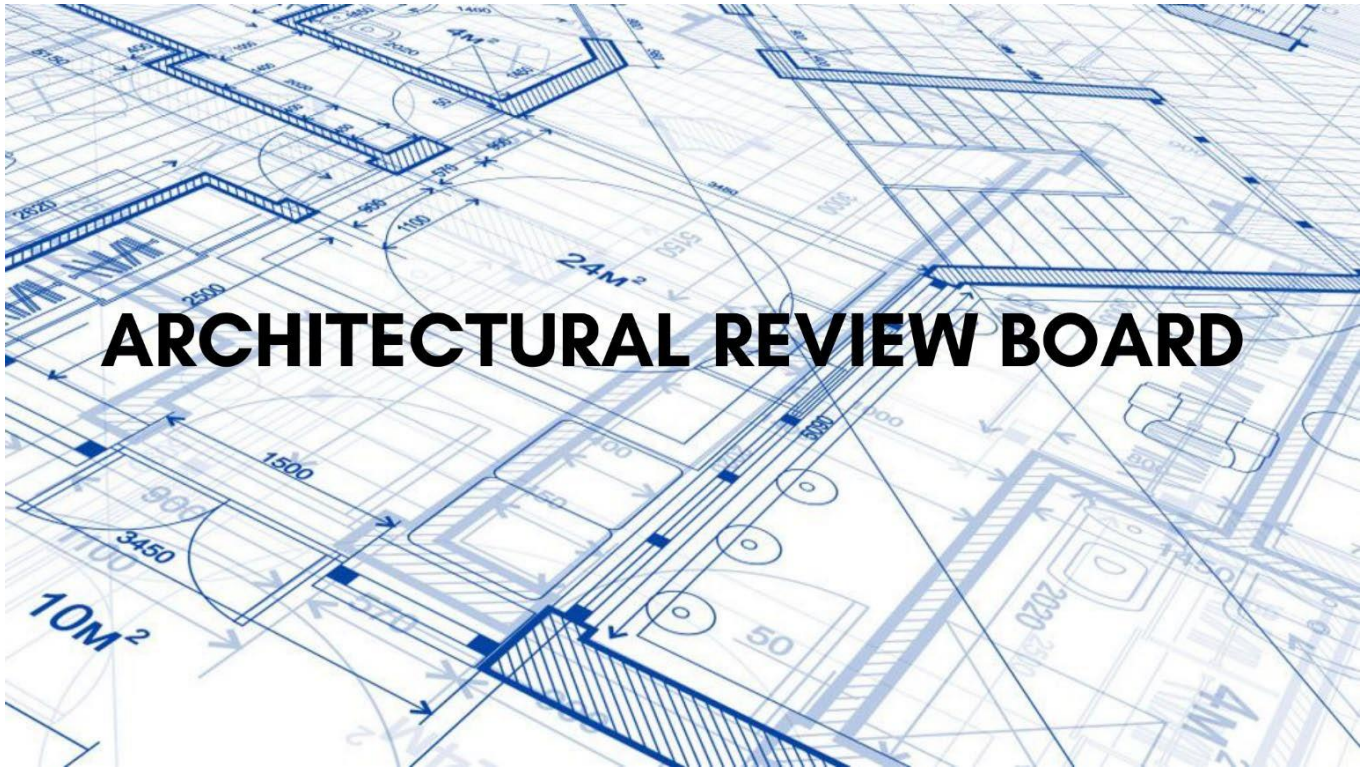
Each BCC meets according to its established schedule.

LIMITATION ON TERMS

Any person appointed to a board or commission shall be immediately eligible, upon the expiration of their term or resignation prior to completion of their term if appointed to a different board or commission, to serve on a different board or commission. The Planning and Transportation Commission and Storm Water Management Oversight Committee members are eligible to serve two successive terms. All other board and commission members are eligible to serve three successive terms on the same board or commission. A member will be considered to have served a term of office if he or she serves more than half of a standard term. A member who has served three consecutive terms of office (two consecutive terms of office for the Planning and Transportation Commission and Storm Water Management Oversight Committee) shall not be appointed to the same board or commission within one year of the last date of service. However, that member may remain on the board or commission for up to six months past the end of the term if no replacement is appointed or until a replacement is appointed, whichever comes first.

APPOINTED BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD



The Architectural Review Board reviews and makes recommendations to the Planning Director on design and related issues for certain new construction, and changes and additions to commercial, industrial and multiple-family projects, as described in the Municipal Code. The Board's goals and purposes are to:

- Promote orderly and harmonious development of the City
- Enhance the desirability of residence or investment in the City
- Encourage the attainment of the most desirable use of land and improvements
- Enhance the desirability of living conditions upon the immediate site or in adjacent areas
- Promote visual environments which are of high aesthetic quality and variety and which, at the same time, are considerate of each other
- To implement and enforce the city's ordinances pertaining to architecture and design

The Board is composed of five members, at least three of whom are architects, landscape architects, building designers or other design professionals. Terms are for three years and commence on April 1. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Sections [2.16](#) and [2.21](#). Residency is not required.

For the ARB webpage, go to <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/architectural/>

HISTORIC RESOURCES BOARD



The Historic Resources Board advises the Planning Director and City Council on matters relating to Palo Alto's historic buildings. The responsibilities of the Board include:

- Reviewing and making recommendations to the Architectural Review Board on proposed exterior changes of commercial and multiple-family buildings on the Historic Building Inventory;
- Reviewing and making recommendations on exterior changes of significant (Categories 1 and 2) single-family residences on the Historic Building Inventory;
- Researching and making recommendations to the City Council on proposed additions and on reclassifications of existing buildings on the Inventory; and
- Performing other functions as may be delegated from time to time to the Historic Resources Board by the City Council.

Terms are for three years and commence on April 1. The Historic Resources Board includes seven members and the members must have demonstrated interest in and knowledge of history, architecture or historic preservation. One (1) member is an owner/occupant of a category one or two historic structure, or of a structure in an historic district; three (3) members are architects, landscape architects, building designers or other design professionals and at least one (1) member possesses academic education or practical experience in history or a related field. See PAMC Chapters [2.16](#), [2.27](#) and [16.49](#).

The Historic Resources Board webpage can be found here: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/historic/>

HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION



The Human Relations Commission is charged with studying, fostering community awareness and understanding, encouraging dispute resolution, and recommending legislation regarding persons or groups who do not benefit fully from public or private opportunities or resources in the community, or are unfairly or differently treated due to factors of concern to the Commission. The Commission's responsibilities include:

- Public or private opportunities or resources in the community include, but are not limited to, those associated with ownership and rental of housing, employment, education and governmental services and benefits;
- Factors of concern to the Commission including but not limited to, socioeconomic class or status, physical condition or handicap, married or unmarried state, emotional condition, intellectual ability, age, sex, sexual preference, race, cultural characteristics, ethnic background, ancestry, citizenship, and religious, conscientious or philosophical belief;
- The Commission will conduct such studies and undertake such responsibilities as the Council may direct; and
- The Commission recommends grantees under the Human Services Resource Allocation Process, Community Development Block Grant, and Emerging Needs Fund.

The Commission is composed of five members who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City, and who are residents of the City of Palo Alto. Terms are for three years and commence on April 1. See PAMC Sections [2.16](#) and [2.22](#).

The Human Relations Commission webpage can be found here: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/hrc>

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION



The Parks and Recreation Commission advises the Community Services Director and City Council on matters pertaining to the activities of the Open Space, Parks and Golf Division and the Recreation Division of the Community Services Department. The Commission's responsibilities include:

- Advising on planning and policy matters relating to the goals of and the services provided by the Open Space, Parks and Golf Division, and the Recreation Division;
- Advising on planning and policy matters relating to the construction and renovation of capital facilities;
- Reviewing state legislative proposals that may affect the operation of the two Divisions;
- Receiving community input concerning parks, open space and recreation activities; and
- Updating and advancing the Parks Master plan and related policies and programs.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is composed of seven members who are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City, and who are residents of the City of Palo Alto. Terms of Commissioners will be for three years and commence on April 1. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Sections [2.16](#) and [2.25](#).

The Parks and Recreation Commission webpage can be found here:

https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/parks_and_recreation_commission/



The Planning & Transportation Commission advises the City Council, Planning Director and Transportation Director on land use and transportation matters, including the Comprehensive Plan, zoning, transportation programs, and related matters. The Commission's primary responsibilities include:

- Preparing and making recommendations to the City Council on the City's Comprehensive Plan regarding development, public facilities and transportation in Palo Alto
- Considering and making recommendations to the City Council on zoning map and zoning ordinance changes
- Reviewing and making recommendations to the City Council on subdivisions, on appeals on variances and use permits
- Considering other policies and programs affecting development and land use in Palo Alto for final City Council action
- Reviewing and making recommendations on individual projects as described in the Municipal Code, and Open Space development
- Reviewing and making recommendations to the City Council on transportation, parking and other related mobility issues.

The Commission is composed of seven members who are current residents of the City of Palo Alto and are not Council Members, officers, or employees of the City. Terms are for four years and commence on April 1. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Sections [2.16](#) and [2.20](#) for more information.

The Planning and Transportation Commission webpage can be found here:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/ptc/>

PUBLIC ART COMMISSION



PUBLIC ART COMMISSION

The Public Art Commission oversees Palo Alto’s temporary and permanent public art programs. The primary duties of the Commission are:

- To advise the city in matters pertaining to the quality, quantity, scope, and style of art in public places
- To periodically review the capital improvement program with the staff for inclusion of works of art in various projects
- To devise methods of selecting and commissioning artists with respect to the design, execution, and placement of art in public places and to advise staff on the selection and commissioning of artists, and the amounts to be expended on art in public places
- To advise and assist staff in obtaining financial assistance for art in public places from private, corporate, and governmental sources
- To review plans for the installation of art in public places and review the inventory of art in public places
- To act as a liaison between local artists and private property owners desiring to install works of art on their private property in public view

The Commission, a five-member body appointed by the City Council, meets once a month. Terms are for three years and commence on April 1. See PAMC Sections [2.16](#), [2.18](#), and [2.26](#). Members are not required to be residents of Palo Alto and should have some demonstrated connection to art.

The Public Art Commission webpage can be found here: <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/arts/>.

STORM WATER MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE



The purpose of the Storm Water Management Oversight Committee is to review proposed storm water management capital improvements and operating programs to be funded from the Storm Water Management Fees and to monitor expenditures of the fund. The Storm Water Management Oversight Committee is charged with reviewing the annual budget and expenditures of the Storm Water Management Fund in order to ensure that revenue from the Storm Water Management Fee is being budgeted and spent in accordance with the terms of the storm water management ballot measure approved by a majority of property owners in 2017. The Committee is responsible for:

- Performing an annual review of the proposed Storm Water Management Fund budget
- Performing an annual review of actual expenditures from the Storm Water Management Fund
- Adopting findings on an annual basis that the proposed budget and actual expenditures of the Storm Water Management Fund are consistent with the spending plan outlined in the 2017 storm water management ballot measure
- Reporting findings on an annual basis to the City Council

The Committee is composed of seven members who are selected and appointed by the City Council for a term of four years and commence on April 1. Each Committee member shall be a resident of Palo Alto, an employee of a business located in Palo Alto or an owner of real property within the City.

The Storm Water Management Oversight Committee webpage can be found here:

https://cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/storm_water_management_oversight_committee/



UTILITIES ADVISORY COMMISSION

The Utilities Advisory Commission (UAC) is charged with advising the City Council on: long-range planning and policy and major program and project matters relating to the electric utility, gas utility, water utility, wastewater collection utility, fiber optics utility and recycled water matters; acquisition and development of electric, gas and water resources; joint action projects with other public or private entities which involve electric, gas or water resources; and environmental implications of electric, gas or water utility projects, and conservation and demand management. Specifically, the Utilities Advisory Commission advises the Council on:

- Development of the City utilities and the recycled water resources
- Joint action projects with other public or private entities
- The consistency with adopted and approved plans, policies, and programs of any major utility
- Legislative proposals regarding City utilities and the recycled water resources, to which the city is a party, in which the city has an interest, or by which the city may be affected
- Utility capital improvement programs, operating budgets and related reserves, and rates, and the recycled water program, budget, and rate
- Environmental aspects and attributes of City utilities and recycled water resources
- Water and energy conservation, energy efficiency, and demand side management

The Utilities Advisory Commission is composed of seven members who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the City Council. The term of office of each member shall be three years and commence on April 1. Six members of the Commission shall at all times be residents of the City. See Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Sections [2.16](#) and [2.23](#) for more information on the Utilities Advisory Commission.

The Utilities Advisory Commission webpage can be found here: <https://cityofpaloalto.org/gov/boards/uac/>

ROLE OF ALL MEMBERS

All Board and commission members are responsible for certain duties and commitments to the City, City Council, and the BCC on which they serve. Each member must know, understand, accept, and accomplish his or her delegated responsibilities in order to be effective. General expectations include:

- Come prepared
- Work collaboratively
- Respect one another, City staff and the public
- Serve the public
- Avoid conflict of interest issues
- Disagree through respectful dialogue



Getting Started

- Take the Oath of Office.
- Complete and sign a Form 700 and turn it in to the City Clerk's Office.
- Understand the role and responsibilities of the appointed BCC.
- Be informed of its functions and relationship with other BCCs.
- Timely complete Ethics training (AB 1234).
- Attend the orientation scheduled by your Staff Liaison and/or the City Clerk.
- Become familiar with the BCC's governing rules and regulations.
- Decide with your Staff Liaison on how and when you will receive agenda packets.
- Attend all regular and special meetings. In the event that you cannot attend a meeting, provide timely notification to the Chair and the Staff Liaison.

During Meetings

- Arrive at meetings on time.
- Be prepared for meetings.
- Review all staff reports, maps, studies, proposals, correspondence, minutes, etc. prior to the meeting.
- Have all reference materials on hand for the meeting.
- Familiarize yourself with conflict of interest regulations and discuss potential conflicts of interest with the City Attorney's office prior to the meeting where any matter of potential conflict will arise. Recuse yourself from any participation in a matter where you have a conflict.
- Consult the City Attorney if you have any questions of a legal nature related to your service as a BCC member.
- Avoid leaving before the meeting adjourns without prior notice.
- Establish a good working relationship with fellow members, City Council, and staff liaison. Exhibit mutual respect to fellow members to ensure a positive working environment.
- Become familiar with parliamentary procedures to ensure that meetings proceed in a timely fashion.
- Consider the overall public good when making a decision.
- Talk to the Chair and Staff Liaison about placing items on future agendas.
- If you receive correspondence addressed to the BCC, including email, forward the correspondence to the Staff Liaison so copies can be distributed to all members and the correspondence can become an official City record.

- Discourage visible and audible signs of agreement or disagreement from the audience such as applause or statements from the floor. Such demonstrations can intimidate those with an opposing view and unintentionally discourage open public discussion of all the issues and points of view.
- Limit your own comments to the issues before the BCC. Avoid the appearance of straying from the subject or "grandstanding."
- Individual commissioners should avoid giving Staff Liaisons direction or making specific requests outside of the public meetings.

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIR

At the beginning of the year, each BCC will select a member to serve as Chair. The Chair exists to structure productive meetings, encourage the input of ideas, promote inclusiveness, and facilitate the overall decision-making process. They do not have greater power than any other member. The following is a list of duties and responsibilities of the Chair:



- Ensure that the BCC completes the annual work plan and reports the results annually to the City Council. The work plan shall include metrics of community involvement and participation in meetings and activities.
- Set a positive tone and manage public input to promote civility and decorum.
- Preside at all meetings, submit all motions to vote and in general, do all things ordinarily required of a Chair such as call or cancel a meeting, coordinate the setting of the agenda with the Staff Liaison, receive public testimony, ensure compliance with the Brown Act, etc. Move forward committee priorities and refrain from promoting or setting a personal agenda. Ensures that items not listed on the agenda are prohibited from being discussed or acted upon pursuant to the Brown Act, unless specific circumstances apply.
- Act as the spokesperson for the BCC, including as the media's point of contact for information regarding BCC activities. Seek advice and involvement of the City's Public Communications Manager as needed, through the Staff Liaison.
- Ensure that all members are heard in a fair and safe manner. The Chair is responsible for ensuring the effectiveness of the group process. Identifies points of agreement among the BCC members in order to build a consensus.
- Ensures that consideration of items on the agenda moves along without delay and makes sure that public testimony is received, but not allowed to disrupt the meeting. This includes setting an acceptable time limit; if necessary.
- Clarifies all ideas as they are discussed, and repeats motions made in a way so all members understand the motion they will be asked to vote on and ensures that actions are properly moved, seconded, and voted upon. Always indicate clearly how the vote is taken such as call for the negative vote, saying, "Those opposed, say No."

In the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chair shall act as presiding officer and shall have the same responsibilities.

REQUIRED TRAINING

Mandatory training shall be provided to all board, commission and committee members by the City through a collaboration between the Offices of the City Attorney, City Clerk, and City Manager, and will include an orientation session for new members. Training shall be delivered as deemed necessary by the Council and/or the City Attorney, City Clerk and City Manager and may include topics germane to a specific board or commission and/or training generic to all boards and commissions (e.g. ethics training or “how to run a meeting” for board and commission chairs).

ROLE OF THE STAFF LIAISON(S)

The staff liaison serves as the link between City staff, City Council, and BCC members. The City Manager assigns a staff liaison to each BCC to provide support, coordination, and guidance. The Staff Liaison makes sure that required BCC meetings occur and, in conjunction with the Chair, prepares the monthly meeting agendas. The staff liaison is also responsible for the coordination, distribution, and posting of all committee agendas pursuant to the Ralph M. Brown Act. Staff reports shall be provided to BCC members and the public seven days in advance of each meeting. Committee members should feel free to contact the staff liaison with questions or requests for support such as sharing City policy or program information and providing historical context to issue under review by the BCC. Staff liaisons will provide direction, guidance, and clerical, organizational, and administrative support to commissions on an as needed basis. The staff liaison also facilitates the transmission of BCC interests, concerns, and recommendations to the City Manager and City Council.

The staff liaison must be aware and advise the Commission of any potential Brown Act violations; the liaison must be present and attentive for the duration of the meeting. At the request of the Chair, and with the support of a majority of the BCC members, the Staff Liaison researches and investigates issues, prepares alternatives and recommendations for BCC and City Council review, and implements City Council policy decisions.

Other duties include facilitating the transmission of BCC interests, concerns, and recommendations to the City Manager and/or City Council; maintaining communication with the Chair regarding City Manager and/or City Council direction or requests; coordinating the annual selection of a Chair and Vice Chair in accordance with the City Council adopted policies and procedures, supporting annual workplan development, and keeping the City Clerk apprised of any resignations or other issues affecting the BCC.

During the BCC meeting Staff Liaisons will ensure there is a quorum prior to the Chair calling a Commission meeting to order and adjourn a Commission meeting in the event there is lack of a quorum 15 minutes after the start time of a meeting. In addition, the Staff Liaison will not allow the public to address the Commission during the 15 minutes while waiting for additional members to arrive to form a quorum. Staff may make announcements during this time; no agenda items shall be discussed among the members present. The Staff Liaison will advise the Commission to recess or adjourn the meeting if a quorum is not present at any point during the meeting.

ROLE OF COUNCIL LIAISONS

The City Council relies upon the expertise and recommendations of the BCCs in advising the Council as it sets City policy. The Council liaison function serves to facilitate and enhance this work. Their principal function is to provide a wide range of information to the advisory body, such as information about Council discussions, policies and actions. This helps provide an historical perspective and thereby place the BCC work in context. However, the BCCs should act independently in formulating recommendations for the City Council to consider. Therefore, it is inconsistent for liaisons to direct, guide or unduly influence the policy making work of the City's advisory bodies. Council liaisons have flexibility in discharging their duties. They may serve with or without attending the meetings of their advisory bodies. Historically, Boards and Commission members have valued consistent participation by Council liaisons. However, at minimum, they should be available for contacts with members of advisory bodies, and particularly with the chairs.

USE OF SUBCOMMITTEES AND AD HOC COMMITTEES

BCCs may consider dividing into subcommittees and/or use ad hoc committees to address certain issues when appropriate. The City Council prefers the use of Ad Hoc committees which are short term and established for the BCC to discuss a specific topic or priority. Sub-committees should be used judiciously as it is the wish of the Council that the entire BCC participate in most agenda topics. Sub-committees work independently and bring a report and recommendations back to the BCC. The subcommittee and/or the ad hoc committee would be composed of less than a quorum of the body and set their own schedule. Subcommittee meetings must be noticed under the Brown Act. Ad hoc committees convene for a single topic and disband when the work on a single item is finished. Ad hoc committee meetings need not be noticed or open to the public. The Chair usually makes assignments to subcommittees and ad hoc committees and directs the workflow. BCCs may have both standing subcommittees and ad hoc committees, though it is recommended that BCCs focus their work through Ad Hoc committees.

Ad hoc or "temporary" committees are treated differently under the Brown Act. Ad hoc committees are not subject to the notice and posting requirements of the Brown Act so long as the committee:

- Consists of less than the number of members which would constitute a quorum;
- Has a defined purpose and a time frame to accomplish that purpose; and
- Is advisory such as the committee has not been delegated any decision-making power and will be returning to the full board on its recommendation.

Establishing Ad Hoc Committees

Members of ad hoc committees designed to be advisory to the board/commission may be appointed by the chair, on behalf of the entire board, commission, or committee or by an action of the entire BCC, depending upon the procedures and practices of the BCC. Although, as noted, the ad hoc committee itself is not subject to the Brown Act if the BCC desires to create an ad hoc committee, the action to create the ad hoc committee should be done at a publicly noticed meeting under the Brown Act and the item should be placed on an agenda for that purpose.

ANNUAL WORKPLAN AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Each BCC should prepare an annual work plan for proposal to the Council by second quarter of the calendar year. The Council will review the work plans and provide feedback annually at a dedicated City Council meeting. The annual report should include the results of the prior year's plan. When applicable, the City Council would like to see metrics of community involvement and participation in meetings and activities included in the work plan.

Council expects BCCs to work on items in the approved workplan. In addition, Council may refer additional items to the BCC in response to new developments. BCCs should refrain from expending their time and that of the staff liaison on items that have not been approved by the City Council. If the BCC would like to add an issue for review after an annual workplan has been approved the City Council, a prompt request by the BCC Chair to the City Council is required and the item will then be addressed by the City Council as a whole.

A workplan template can be found later in the handbook, see **Exhibit A**.

GENERAL PROCEDURES FOR CONDUCT OF BCC MEETINGS

The Chair should recognize other BCC members in the order in which they raise their hands to speak. The Chair should provide an opportunity for each member to speak on an item. BCC members should speak when recognized by the Chair.

When a member of the public desires to address the BCC, they should fill out a speaker's card, proceed to the podium when called, and wait to be recognized before speaking. The Chair should let the public know how long they are allocated to speak. Speakers should limit their remarks to the issue under discussion. Remarks should be addressed to the BCC as a body, and not to any individual BCC member, staff member, or other person.

AGENDA AND ORDER OF BUSINESS



The agenda should contain a brief general description of each item to be considered. Except where provided by law, no discussion or action will be taken on an item not appearing on the agenda. The sequence of items in an agenda is generally as follows:

- Call to Order
- Roll Call
- Approval of Minutes
- Public Comment on items not on the agenda
- Action Items
- Reports of BCC Members, Sub-Committees, and Ad Hoc Committees
- Brief announcements or Matters of BCC Interest
- Adjournment

All agendas should include language stating that agenda materials may be provided in alternate formats pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE



Parliamentary procedures establish a framework for orderly meetings. They encourage participation, structure discussion and facilitate decision making. They permit expression of minority views while ultimately allowing a majority to fashion an outcome.

The following principles are the foundation of effective parliamentary procedures:

- Fairness, respect and courtesy should be afforded to everyone.
- Do only one thing at a time: one subject at a time and one speaker at a time.
- Business must be conducted. The BCC exists to facilitate action, not obstruct it.
- All BCC members are equal and have equal voting rights.
- The majority decides, but the rights and interest of a minority must be protected.
- Silence gives consent, so if you oppose please speak up.
- Once settled, a question generally may not be reintroduced.

The City Council does not use Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure, which were created to structure the meetings of very large formal legislative bodies. The Council has adopted a more streamlined set of procedural requirements [here](#) starting on page 27. BCC members may also find it helpful to review [Rosenberg's Rules of Order](#), a simplified set of procedural rules designed for use at the local government level. A tenet of parliamentary procedure is finality. After vigorous discussion, debate, and a vote, there must be some closure to the issue. And so, after a vote is taken, the matter generally is deemed resolved. Exceptions to this general rule include when a proper motion to reconsider is made, or where new developments occur that warrant further work on an issue.

CODE OF CONDUCT

This section is intended to describe a code of conduct for Boards, Commission and Committee members and designed to define the manner in which Council Members and BCC members should treat one another, City staff, constituents, and others they come into contact with in representing the City of Palo Alto. The City Council encourages positive and respectful dialogue. Therefore, members shall refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges, hostile body language, disrespectful language or verbal attacks upon the character of others. It is both encouraged and expected that the chair of each BCC intercedes when the conduct of another member is rude or violates code of conduct.

BCC members are important to the City's decision-making process, act on behalf of the City Council in their volunteer roles and help shape and further community discussions on complex issues and topics. As such, disagreement may arise during public meetings as different perspectives are shared and providing different perspectives to Council is encouraged. A high level of professionalism and civility is expected of all BCC members throughout their tenure. Disagreement and criticism of policy is fine but personal attacks must be avoided.

It is important that BCC members treat each other and the public with respect, even through disagreement. Elected and appointed officials are composed of individuals with a wide variety of backgrounds, personalities, values, opinions, and goals. Despite this diversity, all have chosen to serve in public office in order to preserve and protect the present and the future of the community. In all cases, this common goal should be acknowledged even though individuals may "agree to disagree" on contentious issues.

Residents, property owners and businesses of City of Palo Alto are entitled to have fair, ethical and accountable local government. Such a government requires that public officials: be independent, impartial and fair in their judgment and actions; use their public office for the public good, not for personal gain, and conduct public deliberations and processes openly, unless legally confidential, in an atmosphere of respect and civility. Elected and Appointed officials shall honor this personal code of conduct from the time of their election or appointment to office.

Act in the Public Interest: Recognizing that stewardship of the public interest must be their principal concern, everyone shall work for the common good of the City of Palo Alto and not for any private or personal interest, and they will endeavor to treat all persons, claims and transactions in fair and equitable manner.

Comply with the Law: Everyone shall comply with the laws of the nation, the State of California and the City in the performance of their public duties. These laws include but are not limited to: the United States and California constitutions; the City of Palo Alto Charter, Municipal Code, City policies and other governing documents related to conflict of interest, election campaigns, financial disclosures, and employer responsibilities and open processes of government.

Conduct of Members: Everyone shall refrain from abusive conduct and verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the City Council, boards, commissions, committees, staff or the public.

No Tolerance for harassment or Microaggressions: The City of Palo Alto is committed to providing an environment for employees, elected or appointed officials, members of the public, and contractors that promotes dignity and respect and is free from discrimination and harassment. The City prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination based upon protected classifications as defined below. “Protected Classification” includes race, religion (including religious dress or grooming practice), religious creed, color, sex (includes gender, gender identity, gender expression, transgender, pregnancy, childbirth, medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth, breastfeeding or medical conditions related to breastfeeding), sexual orientation (including heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality), ethnicity, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, military and veteran status, marital status, family relationship, age, medical condition, genetic characteristics and/or genetic information, and physical or mental disability.

In addition to prohibiting explicit harassment, the City of Palo Alto strives to provide an inclusive environment. One method to create an inclusive public space is to help people develop awareness of microaggressions and remove them from conversation. Microaggressions are comments or actions that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial minority). The City will provide training to help members develop awareness of and then eliminate microaggressions.

Any employee, applicant, elected/appointed official, contract worker, intern or volunteer, who believes he or she has been harassed or retaliated against are encouraged to promptly report the incident and the individuals involved. BCC members may consult with the Chair, Vice-Chair or staff liaison regarding making a report.

Respect for Process: Duties shall be performed in accordance with the processes and rules of order established by the City Council.

Conduct of Public Meetings: BCC members shall inform themselves of public issues, listen attentively to public discussions before the body, and focus on the business at hand.

Communication: It is the responsibility of BCC members to publicly share substantive information that is relevant to a matter under consideration that they received from sources outside of the public decision-making processes.

Disclosure of Corruption: BCC members shall take an oath upon assuming office, pledging to uphold the constitution and laws of the City, the State and the Federal government. As part of this oath, officials commit to disclosing to the appropriate authorities and/or to the City Council any behavior or action that may qualify as corruption, abuse, fraud, bribery or other violations of the law.

Conflict of Interest: To ensure public confidence in City decision making, BCC members shall familiarize themselves with and comply with state conflict of interest laws.

Gifts and Favors: BCC members shall not take advantage of services or opportunities offered due to their public office and that are not available to the public in general. They shall refrain from accepting gifts, favors or promises of future benefits that might compromise their independence, judgment, or action or give the appearance of being compromised.

Confidential Information: BCC members shall respect and preserve the confidentiality of information provided to them concerning the confidential matters of the City. They shall neither disclose confidential information without proper legal authorization nor use such information to advance their financial or private interests.

Representation of Private Interests: In keeping with their role as stewards of the public trust, BCC members shall not appear on behalf of the private interests of a third-party before the City Council or any board, commission or committee or proceeding the City.

Advocacy: It is the role of Commissioners to advise the Council on policies and positions within the domain of their Commission. To the best of their ability, within the domain of their Commission, BCC members shall represent the official policies and positions of the City Council. When presenting their personal opinions or positions, members shall explicitly state that they do not represent the Council or the City.

Improper Influence: BCC members shall refrain from using their position to improperly influence the deliberations or decisions of City staff, boards, commission or committees.

Policy Role of Members: BCC members shall respect and support the Council-Manager structure of the City of Palo Alto as provided in the City Charter.

Positive Work Environment: BCC members shall support the maintenance of a positive and constructive environment for residents, businesses, and City employees.

Compliance and Enforcement: BCC members have the primary responsibility to ensure that ethical standards are understood and met and that the public can continue to have full confidence in the integrity of City government. This personal code of conduct shall be considered to be a summary of ethical conduct by Palo Alto Boards, Commissions and Committees. A member can be removed from their BCC position by the City Council if their conduct fails to meet any of these ethical standards.

For Quasi-Judicial Hearings: Communications with an applicant or any member of the public is strongly discouraged beginning from the time an application has been submitted and until final decision is reached. If any communication does occur, it must be fully disclosed.

Conduct in Public Meetings

The following guidelines provide specific examples of conduct that reinforce the principles identified above:

- *Use formal titles:* Elected and appointed officials should refer to one another formally during public meetings, such as Mayor, Vice Mayor, Chair, Commissioner, Board member or Councilmember followed by the individual's last name.
- *Practice civility and decorum in discussions and debate:* Difficult questions, tough challenges to a particular point of view, and criticism of ideas and information are legitimate elements of a free democracy in action. This does not allow, however, public officials to make belligerent, personal, impertinent, slanderous, threatening, abusive, or disparaging comments. This includes non-verbal communications including body language or eye rolling. No shouting or physical actions that could be construed as threatening will be tolerated. Lack of civility is grounds for dismissal.
- *Honor the role of the chair in maintaining order, while respecting each member's prerogative to intercede on inappropriate conduct:* It is the responsibility of the chair to keep the comments of members on track during public meetings. Members should honor efforts by the chair to focus discussion on current agenda items. If there is disagreement about the agenda or the chair's actions, those objections should be voiced respectfully and with reason, following procedures outlined in parliamentary procedure and the suggestion below.
- *Avoid personal comments that could offend other members:* If a member is personally offended by the remarks of another member, or feels the remarks may be offensive to others, the offended member

should communicate their position and seek resolution to the situation raised. The chair will maintain control of this discussion.

- *Demonstrate effective problem-solving approaches:* Members have a public stage to show how individuals with disparate points of view can find common ground and seek a compromise that benefits the community as a whole.

Outside of official board or commission meetings, individual board and commission members are not authorized to represent the City or their board or commission unless specifically designated by the Council or the board or commission to do so for a particular purpose.

Although a board or commission may disagree with the final decision the Council makes, the board or commission shall not act in any manner contrary to the established policy adopted by the Council.

The Institute for Local Government offers tools and publications to help further a consistent code of conduct for all Boards, Commissions and Committees. This [publication](#) offers tips for civility during public meetings. Some key recommendations include:

- Ensure everyone gets a chance to share their viewpoint
- Embrace different perspectives
- Avoid debates and interruptions
- Listen
- Be compassionate

Conduct with City Staff

Governance of a city relies on the cooperative efforts of elected officials who set policy, appointed officials who advise the elected, and City staff who advise, implement and administer the Council's policies. Therefore, every effort should be made to be cooperative and show mutual respect for the contributions made by each individual for the good of the community.

Treat all staff as professionals: Clear, honest communication that respects the abilities, experience, and dignity of each individual is expected. Unprofessional and/or antagonistic behavior towards staff is not acceptable.

MEETING MANAGEMENT

The City of Palo Alto is committed to conducting efficient, effective, and accessible government operations. The following material outlines techniques that can be used to ensure that BCC meetings are efficiently run and give all residents an equal opportunity to address the issues.

PROCEEDINGS

- It is generally a good idea to turn off cell phones, PDAs or iPads and refrain from texting during meetings unless there is an emergency.
- Please be aware that any messages sent or received relating to City business, including those posted on social media, may become a public record and releasable if requested.
- Documents used or shared at Board, Commission and Committee meetings are subject to the Public Records Act.
- Start the meetings on time. Keep the agenda in mind in order to give each item the appropriate time.
- Announce at the start of a meeting if the order of agenda items is to be rearranged for convenience, for response to those attending for only certain items, or for better pacing of the agenda.
- Let the Chair run the meeting.
- Be fair, impartial, and respectful of the public, staff, and each other.
- Give your full attention when others speak.
- Encourage public participation in the meeting process.
- Come to each meeting with an open mind.
- Base decisions on public engagement, committee discussion, and meeting dialogue.
- Abstain if you have a conflict of interest or if you believe you may have one and have not yet conferred with the City Attorney. You may also abstain if you feel you cannot be fair or cannot consider the item with the public's interest foremost in mind.
- Value and respect the professional expertise of staff and consultants, while providing independent critical thinking, expertise, and input. Remember that people may be attending a meeting for the first time and may be unfamiliar with your procedures. In your discussion, either avoid or explain technical terms or verbal shorthand.
- Listen to the public's concerns. Do not engage in side conversations or otherwise be distracted during public testimony. The opportunity for public testimony is central to the strength of democracy and is therefore encouraged. Active listening, however, does not mean engaging the public in debate. Your response is appropriately saved for after the public testimony is closed.
- Sometimes questions can most effectively focus discussion and direct decision-making. For Example: *What is the history behind this item? What are the benefits and drawbacks? What other alternatives should we consider?*

ATTENDANCE

- The City Council expects that members of BCCs will make every effort to attend all scheduled meetings.
- A compilation of attendance will be submitted to the City Council at least annually listing absences for all commissions/committee members.
- If you miss more than one-third of the BCC meetings during the calendar year, this will be reported to Council and may result in your removal from the BCC.
- Any member who feels that unique circumstances have led to numerous absences can appeal directly to the City Council for a waiver of this policy or to obtain a leave of absence.
- While it is expected that members be present at all meetings, the chair and staff liaison should be notified if a member knows in advance that he/she will be absent.
- When reviewing commissioners for reappointment, attendance at commission meetings will be given significant consideration.

LATE ARRIVAL TO MEETINGS

If a member anticipates being late to a meeting, please notify the staff liaison regarding the approximate time of arrival. Staff will alert the Chair.

ABSENCES

Please refer to the BBC attendance requirements in the section above. It is an expectation as part of your BCC service to attend all meetings. If you plan to be absent from a meeting, inform your staff liaison prior to the posting of your committee's agenda.

MINUTES

The staff liaison will prepare action minutes (except for the Historic Resources Committee, where the secretary shall do so). Action minutes or summary (sense) minutes are preferred. Verbatim minutes are discouraged. The minutes serve as the permanent official record of the advisory body. The minutes should reflect the members in attendance, members who were absent, a description of each agenda item and the action taken by the advisory body. Titles of motions and resolutions are recorded verbatim. In order to become an official record of activities, minutes must be approved by the BCC. Minutes are normally approved as soon as reasonably possible. Amendments or corrections may be made to the minutes in public meetings, with the approval of the BCC.

INTERACTING WITH THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC

It is important to recognize that as a BCC member your actions and comments are often interpreted to be that of the entire BCC, the staff, or the City.. The Communications Office is available to assist BCC members in interactions with the media.

When speaking with the media, observe the following guidelines:

- You must clarify who you represent as the speaker. Are you speaking in your capacity as a BCC Chair or as a private resident? Keep in mind that a member's comments to the press or other public comments are sometimes misinterpreted even though the BCC Chair states that they are speaking for themselves.
- Do not make promises to the public that are binding on the BCC, staff, or the City Council.
- Comments to the media or the public should be factual and accurate. Avoid speculation.

IV. CITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SWEARING IN AND OATH OF OFFICE

Before taking office, each BCC member must be sworn in by the City Clerk, by taking the Oath of Office to swear, or affirm, that he or she will support and defend the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that he or she will bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California; that he or she takes this obligation freely, without mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that he or she will well and faithfully discharge the duties upon which he or she is about to enter.



FORM 700 OBLIGATION AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST (GOVERNMENT CODE SECTION 87103 FINANCIAL INTEREST)

BCC members must file an annual Form 700 by April 1 of each year. In addition, most filers also must file within 30 days of assuming and leaving office. If you have any questions about your Form 700 duty to file, please contact the City Clerk. Failure to timely file a Form 700 is grounds for dismissal.

ETHICS, CONFLICTS OF INTEREST, TRAINING

State and local laws have been adopted to ensure that local decision making is free from certain conflicts of interest or the possibility of conflicts of interest. The Council has determined that appointed BCC members should comply with these rules. Beyond the rules, BCC members should conduct themselves to a high ethical standard, ensuring that all their duties are performed in the public interest.

BCC members must complete two hours of approved ethics training within one year of appointment, and every two years thereafter. BCC members are responsible for compliance and submitting their certificates of completion to the City Clerk. The training covers both conflicts of interest law and ethics principles.

There are a number of options for complying with the training requirement:

Self-study materials are available at <http://www.ca-ilg.org/ab1234compliance>. The materials require that you read two articles on public service ethics laws and principles, take a self-assessment test, and then submit it to the Institute for Local Government with a processing fee for each test. The Institute will review your test(s), provide you the correct answers to the questions and a proof of participation certificate.

The Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC) offers free online training at <http://localethics.fppc.ca.gov/login.aspx>. This option requires you to log onto the FPPC's website, review various screens of materials, take periodic tests to assure retention of the information and then print out a certificate. Failure to recuse can be grounds for dismissal.

REMOVAL

BCC members serve at the pleasure of the Council. Council reserves the right to remove one or more members of a BCC at any time, for any reason. BCC members understand that they are not entitled to any process in the event Council removes them from service. Incumbents seeking a reappointment are required to complete and file an application with the City Clerk by the application deadline.

Board and commission members provide domain knowledge and reflect a diverse range of perspectives in the community. Removal of appointees shall not be on the basis of political perspectives of the Council or commissioner. Removal should be based on performance related concerns such as legal or ethical violations, a pattern of absences, misconduct toward staff, colleagues, or the public, or actions that undermine the public trust in the commission or the Council.

The City Council may remove a member by a majority vote of the City Council. Three council members can agendaize a removal action item. The removal vote will occur in an open Council session where any member of the public can speak.



GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Ralph M. Brown Act, Government Code section 54950 et seq., sets forth certain legal requirements regarding BCCs based on the public's right to know how decisions are made. Public agencies, boards, commissions, and committees exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. With the exception of ad hoc subcommittees, all City BCC meetings shall be publicly noticed and agendized as required by the Brown Act. The public shall be permitted to attend and participate, according to the rules. These transparency procedures improve promote trust in the public body and foster mutual respect by serving the public's right to be heard and considered in the decision-making process.

The League of California Cities prepared a publication titled Open & Public V: A Guide to the Ralph M. Brown Act which is an informative guide to the Brown Act, including tips, examples and illustrations. View it for free at: <http://www.cacities.org/openandpublic>.

For additional information or to answer questions, BCC members should consult with their staff liaison, and through the staff liaison the City Attorney, as necessary.

MEETINGS AND AGENDAS

A "meeting" takes place whenever a quorum is present and official business is considered. An agenda for each regularly scheduled meeting must be posted at least 72-hours in advance. Agendas for special meetings require 24 hours' notice. The agenda should include a brief description of every item to be considered. Except for very brief announcements, if an item is not on the agenda, discussion should be deferred to a future meeting when it can be properly agendized.

AVOIDING UNLAWFUL MEETINGS AND "SERIAL" MEETINGS

BCC members are permitted to socialize in a non-meeting setting but must refrain from discussing any BCC business. Care should be taken to make sure that if a quorum of a BCC is gathered at a public or private meeting place, no public business is discussed and that the gathering will not be interpreted as a meeting. Any conversation that occurs among a majority of the members of a BCC on business that will come before it or is likely to come before it is improper under the Brown Act no matter the means by which the conversation takes place - in person communications, phone calls, writings, and electronic correspondence. When using email, be cognizant that the Brown Act may be violated if a majority of a BCC engages in communication about City business that is or is likely to come before that BCC. Email correspondence is covered by the Brown Act and BCC members should be careful not to "reply all" to a communication directed to a BCC. In addition, emails and phone call records relating to City business may be searchable and releasable pursuant to Public Records Act requests.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The public has the right to be notified of items on the agenda, to attend meetings of a legislative body, to record the meeting, to speak before or during consideration of an agenda item, and to see the materials of the legislative body.

Every agenda must include time for public comment on matters within the jurisdiction of the BCC and not on the agenda. BCC members generally should not engage in discussion of items raised by the public that are not on the agenda.

If a Board or Commission member receives materials or information directly from an applicant, he or she shall notify the Staff Liaison immediately.

Agenda materials released less than 72 hours prior to the meeting must be made available to the public at a specified location as well as at the BCC meeting. The public must be allowed to speak on every agenda item, before an action or vote is taken by the BCC.

Accommodations are available so that persons with disabilities can participate in all aspects of a BCC meeting. Members of the public may make a written request to the staff liaison, including the requestor's name, address, phone number and brief description of the requested materials, preferred alternative format, auxiliary aid or service, or other needed accommodation. Advance notice is kindly requested so that arrangements can be made.

VI. CONCLUSION



The City Council thanks you for applying for and accepting a position on one of the City's Boards, Commissions, or Committees, and for devoting your time to help build a great community in Palo Alto through your civic involvement. Please use this Handbook as a guide as you carry out your duties as a member of a BCC, and please contact the City Clerk or your staff liaison if you need any further information, advice, or assistance.

BCC WORK PLAN GUIDELINES AND PROCESS

The City Council will vote on BCC work plans annually. Workplans are due in June and should consist of up to three priorities. The City Council will ask the BCC Chair to present the workplan to the City Council. Workplans should include if there is an intent to use Ad Hoc committees to assist in the BCC work for the year ahead. After the workplan is approved, if there is an additional priority the BCC would like added, the BCC chair would make a prompt request to the Council.

To guide the work of developing the BCC annual workplans, a short checklist is provided below:

- Review purpose of the BCC
- Discuss any City Council priorities for the BCC
- Discuss existing and possible projects, priorities and goals
 - Order from high priority to low priority
- Finalize draft work plan for City Council review
- Use approved workplan as a guide to focus BCC work throughout the term of the workplan (one or two years)
- Present report to the City Council annually and include:
 - List of priorities, projects and goals
 - Status updates
 - If items are not complete, include why and any other additional details to share with the Council

