

# Guidelines for Civic Agencies

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**Prepared by:** City Clerk's Office  
City of Vancouver

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## WELCOME!

Thank you for volunteering to serve on a City of Vancouver civic agency. These *Guidelines* are designed to support you in your role and provide clarity on matters including City structure, Council authority, roles and responsibilities, meeting procedures, member conduct, and communications protocol. We encourage you to read the document thoroughly and to refer back to it if you are ever unsure of how to proceed. Additional information on each civic agency is available on the City of Vancouver [website](#).

If you have any questions, comments, or concerns at any time, please do not hesitate to contact your Staff Liaison or the Manager, Civic Agencies.

The work of civic agencies takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səilwətaʔt / səilwítulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples. We thank them for having cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial.

## PLEASE NOTE:

City of Vancouver civic agencies are volunteer bodies established and appointed by Council to convey community perspectives to Council and/or staff while advising on City priorities, projects, and initiatives, or to serve statutory functions as outlined in relevant by-laws or terms of reference. They are essential to the City's public engagement efforts, and are often asked to provide early and ongoing feedback on specific projects. They are also a way for residents to develop their civic knowledge and give back to their communities.

Civic agencies make recommendations to Council and staff on matters within their scope of work, and matters that may be referred by Council or staff. They have no decision-making authority and the City is not required to follow their recommendations (unless specific legislation states otherwise).

Civic agencies include approximately 30 boards, commissions, committees, panels, and task forces appointed by City Council.

- **Type A** civic agencies (Council Advisory Committees) make recommendations to Council in alignment with Council-identified strategic priorities, related to equity-denied communities such as Indigenous and Racialized Peoples, Persons with Disabilities, and 2SLGBTQ+ People, as well as local issues such as transportation, arts and culture, and housing.
- **Type B** civic agencies make recommendations to staff on matters related to planning and heritage in specific geographic areas, such as Chinatown or Gastown, or other planning matters like street naming.
- **Type C** civic agencies mainly make recommendations to Council and staff on matters related to development, operations, planning, and/or zoning, and are governed by their own distinct by-laws and/or provincial statutes.
- **Type D** civic agencies are time-limited task forces that advise the Mayor and Council on specific issues like Indigenous Reconciliation, accessibility measures, or budgetary matters.

- **External** civic agencies are appointed by Council, but advisory to and/or administered by affiliated organizations like the Vancouver Public Library or the Pacific National Exhibition.

These *Guidelines* generally apply to **Type A, B, and C civic agencies**, though there may be some variation depending on individual by-laws and terms of reference. If a section applies only to one type of civic agency, it will be noted.

Type D civic agencies generally have procedures outlined in their individual Terms of Reference, and the procedures of External civic agencies are determined by their administering organizations.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

To ensure accessibility for screen readers, this document refrains from using images or diagrams.

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# **1. Introduction**

## **a. A Brief History of Vancouver Civic Agencies**

Vancouver's civic agencies have been offering recommendations on City priorities for nearly a century. Among the earliest was the Vancouver City Planning Commission, which served as the City's planning arm from 1926 to 1952. Beginning in the 1970s, community participation expanded with bodies like the Bicycle Advisory Committee, Special Advisory Committee on Disability Issues, and Special Advisory Committee on Seniors. Since then, civic agencies have evolved to incorporate more voices and greater diversity in the City's public engagement system.

## **b. How the City Works**

### ***i. The Vancouver Charter***

[The Vancouver Charter](#) is provincial law that governs how the City of Vancouver functions. It specifies the powers of City Council, such as creating by-laws and managing the City's budget. It also allows Council to set up civic agencies to help engage with the community.

### ***ii. City Council***

[Vancouver City Council](#) is the main governing body of the city. It includes one Mayor and ten Councillors, who are elected at-large (representing the entire city) for four-year terms. Council holds regular meetings to discuss and make decisions on city matters. Public input is vital to their decision-making, with feedback coming from residents, community groups, businesses, and civic agencies.

### ***iii. City staff***

The City employs over 9,000 staff members, who provide professional and technical recommendations to Council, help implement Council's decisions, offer services to the public, and enforce regulations.

### ***iv. The public***

The public includes Vancouver residents, voters, taxpayers, and those who use City services. They can participate in public engagement by giving input during consultations and hearings, writing to Council, and serving on civic agencies. Public engagement is essential for shaping the City's budget, programs, policies, and services, and the public can get involved with local issues [in many ways](#).

### ***v. Your City Hall***

The City Clerk's Office has created a set of tools called [Your City Hall](#) to improve understanding of how the City works, encourage democratic participation, and reduce barriers to civic involvement. You are invited to explore the [Civics Toolbox](#), which includes fact sheets, presentation slides, and activities designed to help you learn about the City.

## **2. Civic Agency Organization**

### **a. Structure**

Most civic agencies are made up of members of the public, and sometimes representatives from professional associations or community organizations. These members are appointed by City Council through a recruitment and application process. Each civic agency includes at least one City Council member as a non-voting liaison, and depending on the scope, there may also be non-voting external liaisons from bodies like the Vancouver Public Library or the Vancouver School Board. All appointments, including Council and External Liaisons, must be approved by Council.

Additionally, each civic agency has a non-voting staff liaison who provides information on relevant programs and policies. Administrative support is usually provided by the City Clerk's Office, though other City departments may assist in some cases.

### **b. Appointments**

Recruitment for civic agencies happens at the start of each new Council term and continues as vacancies arise. Vacancies are posted on the [City website](#) and may be advertised through social media, digital and print advertising, and community outreach.

Application information is confidential and only accessible to Council and select staff. Staff review applications for eligibility and forward them to the Nomination Subcommittee of Council, which consists of three Councillors. The Subcommittee evaluates each application and recommends appointments to City Council, following the [Diversity on Civic Agencies Policy](#). Council then considers these recommendations and makes final decisions on member selection. Council also has the authority to remove appointed members at any time.

Civic agency term lengths are determined by relevant by-laws or terms of reference.

### **c. Roles and Responsibilities**

The following is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of key groups involved with civic agencies. Specific details may vary depending on individual by-laws and terms of reference.

#### ***i. Members***

- Appointed by City Council;
- Adhere to all applicable laws, by-laws, policies, and guidelines, including those related to conduct, human rights, communications, privacy, and conveying recommendations. Non-compliance may result in dismissal;
- Stay informed by reviewing agenda packages and monitoring relevant Council business;
- Attend all regular meetings and request a leave of absence if unable to attend;
- Participate in additional sessions as needed, such as working sessions and joint engagement sessions;
- Complete administrative tasks and reporting activities beyond the scope of clerical or liaison roles.

#### ***ii. Alternate members***

- Appointed by City Council;
- May fill vacancies arising during the term;

- May be offered a full, voting seat on the civic agency in an order specified by Council or to meet specific composition requirements.;
- May engage in meetings and discussions with chair permission, but do not vote on resolutions and do not contribute to quorum.

**iii. Chairs**

- Selected by membership;
- Preside over meetings, ensuring fair and equitable conduct according to procedural rules;
- Ensure respectful treatment of all participants;
- Facilitate member participation and manage agenda items to keep meetings on track;
- Ensure a member who declares a conflict of interest is not present for discussion or voting on the related agenda item;
- Work with administrative staff and staff liaisons to prepare regular meeting agendas;
- Act as public spokesperson for the civic agency, or designate an alternate spokesperson.

**iv. Council Liaisons**

- Appointed by City Council;
- Do not vote on civic agency matters or direct civic agency activities;
- Attend meetings as regularly as schedules permit;
- Provide information on Council policies and activities with respect to the civic agency's scope;
- Assist with ensuring that work is within the civic agency's scope and the jurisdiction of Council, and is aligned with Council's strategic priorities;
- Review and advise on draft recommendations;
- Do not act as a "representative" of the civic agency;
- Are not obligated to follow specific civic agency recommendations;
- Do not have exclusive access to the civic agency (other Council members may engage).

**v. External Liaisons**

- Appointed by City Council;
- May be elected officials or staff of external organizations;
- Do not vote on civic agency matters or direct civic agency activities;
- Attend meetings as regularly as schedules permit;
- Provide information on external organization activities with respect to the civic agency's scope of work;
- Do not act as a "representative" of the civic agency;
- Are not obligated to follow specific civic agency recommendations.

**vi. Staff Liaisons**

- Assigned by City Manager (authority delegated by City Council);
- Do not vote on civic agency matters or direct civic agency activities;
- Attend all regular meetings, and select an alternate liaison if unable to attend a regular meeting;
- Attend additional sessions as regularly as schedules permit;
- Provide subject matter expertise and information on relevant City priorities, projects, and

initiatives;

- Connect civic agencies with relevant staff groups for the purpose of consultation and information sharing;
- Seek civic agency input and ideas for proposed City priorities, projects, and initiatives;
- Assist with ensuring that work is within the civic agency's scope and the jurisdiction of Council, and is aligned with Council's strategic priorities;
- Review and advise on draft recommendations;
- Assist chairs and administrative staff with preparing meeting agendas;
- May respond to specific requests, but do not receive direction from civic agencies.

**vii. *Administrative Staff (Clerks)***

- Do not vote on civic agency matters or direct civic agency activities;
- Attend all regular meetings and special meetings (not working sessions or subcommittee meetings);
- Organize meeting schedules and related room bookings;
- Maintain attendance and leave of absence records;
- Assist chairs and staff liaisons in preparing and distributing meeting agendas;
- Record and distribute recommendations and "decision-based" minutes to members, liaisons, Council, and City Leadership Team.
- Provide documentation and guidance on meeting procedures;
- Publish relevant materials on the City website;
- Forward correspondence received by the City Clerk's Office to civic agency members for information or action;
- Forward correspondence to members and distribute templates;
- May respond to specific requests, but do not receive direction from civic agencies.

### **3. Meetings**

#### **a. Meeting Types**

There are four main types of civic agency meeting: regular meetings, special meetings, working sessions, and subcommittee meetings. Some civic agencies only hold one or two types of meeting.

##### ***i. Regular Meetings***

Official recommendations to Council and/or staff and other resolutions may be considered and approved at a regular meeting. Regular meetings are open to the public, though members of the public may only speak to agenda items if invited to do so by the chair.

Regular meetings are supported by administrative staff and may be held in person or virtually.

##### ***ii. Special Meetings***

Special meetings are only scheduled to address urgent business, such as making recommendations on a matter that will be considered by Council before the civic agency's next regular meeting. The chair or a majority of members may request a special meeting by delivering written notice to the City Clerk via administrative staff. The notice should briefly describe the nature of the urgent business, and only this business may be addressed at the special meeting. Otherwise, the same rules apply as in a regular meeting.

Special meetings are supported by administrative staff and are held virtually.

**iii. Working Sessions (Type A Advisory Committees)**

Working sessions are informal meetings held by Type A Advisory Committees for learning and discussion about matters related to their scope of work. Official recommendations and other resolutions may not be approved, and working sessions are not open to the public, though staff or other individuals/groups may be invited to participate. The events of a working session must be reported at the next regular meeting.

Working sessions are convened by administrative staff but not otherwise supported, and are held virtually.

**iv. Subcommittee Meetings**

Subcommittees may be convened informally at a civic agency's discretion, to discuss or conduct research on a specific subject related to the scope of work. Official recommendations and other resolutions may not be approved, and subcommittee meetings are not open to the public, though staff or other individuals/groups may be invited to participate. The events of a subcommittee meeting must be reported at the next regular meeting.

Subcommittee meetings are not supported by administrative staff, and members are responsible for securing a venue or convening the meeting virtually or by telephone. City Hall meeting rooms are not available for subcommittee meetings.

**b. Meeting Procedures**

Meeting procedures follow the [Vancouver Charter](#), the [Procedure By-law](#), and these *Guidelines*. Where these documents do not answer a procedural question, the most recent edition of [Robert's Rules of Order](#) applies.

The [Procedure By-law \(15.13\)](#) specifies that civic agencies may only act by passing motions. If desired, and in consultation with administrative staff, Type A and B civic agencies may suspend this rule and employ consensus-based resolution procedures (see p. 15). In all cases, meeting procedures must allow the civic agency to deal with one matter at a time, maintain order and respectful conduct, and give all members equal participation and decision-making rights.

**i. Quorum**

Quorum is the minimum number of members needed to conduct business in a regular or special meeting (usually a majority of appointed members, though some civic agencies may have different quorum rules). Working sessions and subcommittee meetings have no official quorum requirement.

Liaisons and alternate members do not count toward quorum. Members unable to attend a regular meeting in person may participate virtually or by telephone (if these hybrid options are available), and still be counted for quorum and voting.

If quorum is "lost" during a meeting (i.e., if the minimum number of members is no longer present), the meeting is automatically adjourned.

## **ii. Call to Order**

The chair calls the meeting to order (begins it) at the scheduled start time, or when the meeting reaches quorum. If quorum is not reached within 30 minutes of the scheduled start time, administrative staff takes attendance and declares the meeting cancelled.

## **iii. Discussion and Debate**

The chair facilitates members' participation through discussion and debate, and ensures respectful conduct. All members should share meeting time appropriately (ensuring all members are given an opportunity to speak to a matter before a member is allowed to speak to the matter a second time), make sure decisions are made fairly and all views are considered, and treat one another with respect and dignity.

## **iv. Adjournment**

After all business on the agenda has been completed, the chair calls for a resolution to adjourn. After this resolution is approved, administrative staff records the time, and the meeting ends. No more official resolutions may be made after this point.

## **v. Meeting Cancellation**

The chair and administrative staff may cancel a meeting in advance if it is clear the meeting will not reach quorum. For this reason, if a member is unable to attend a meeting it is important to inform the chair and administrative staff, and request a leave of absence as early as possible.

## **vi. Open Meetings**

As public bodies, it is required by law that civic agency operations be transparent and open. Regular and special meetings are open to the public unless it is required that an in camera (closed) meeting be held. It is very rare that a civic agency will have cause to hold an in camera meeting: the potential reasons for such a meeting are listed in [section 165.2](#) of the *Vancouver Charter*. If a member of the public would like to speak to an agenda item in a meeting, they can make a request to the chair in advance, who will decide if it is appropriate to hear from the speaker.

## **c. Meeting Attendance**

### **i. Absence Policy**

Members are expected to attend all regular and special meetings to ensure quorum. Per the [Procedure By-law \(15.8\)](#), missing three consecutive meetings without obtaining an approved leave of absence results in automatic resignation. Variations may exist, so refer to relevant by-laws or terms of reference.

### **ii. Leave of Absence**

Members are required to request a leave of absence through administrative staff if unable to attend a meeting. Approval is decided by attending members during the meeting, and requests should be submitted at least a week in advance to prevent quorum issues. Alternate members are exempt from this requirement.

If a meeting fails to achieve quorum, leave of absence requests cannot be approved. However, any submitted requests will be noted in the official minutes.

If a member needs to take an extended leave from their civic agency, they should discuss the matter with the chair, staff liaison, and administrative staff. The member may request an extended leave of absence, and be temporarily replaced by an alternate member, as needed.

**iii. Medical Leave**

Leave for illness-related absences is considered automatic, and does not need to be approved by the civic agency. However, members are required to notify administrative staff in advance of the meeting; except in extenuating circumstances, notification after the meeting will be recorded as an unapproved absence.

**iv. Resignation**

Members or alternate members wishing to resign their appointment must submit their resignation in writing to the City Clerk, via administrative staff.

**d. Meeting Agendas**

The agenda lists all items to be considered during a regular or special meeting, including procedural and administrative items, and indicates the order of business. It is made available to the public, and serves as notice that the meeting will take place.

Regular meetings are generally scheduled for two hours, though some civic agencies may have longer meetings. Civic agencies are not able to extend meetings beyond the scheduled duration.

**i. Agenda Preparation**

In consultation with members, liaisons, and administrative staff, the chair finalizes agenda items approximately two weeks before the meeting. Items may include staff engagements, member or subcommittee reports, recommendation resolutions, or liaison updates, among others.

**ii. Distribution**

Approximately one week before the meeting, administrative staff upload the agenda to the City website, and email an agenda package including previous meeting minutes, attendance information, and supporting documents to all members, liaisons, and other relevant parties.

**iii. Resolutions**

Where possible, a resolution meant for approval at a regular or special meeting should be distributed to members in writing at least one week in advance. Routine or administrative resolutions may be proposed spontaneously, but draft recommendation resolutions should be reviewed with administrative staff and liaisons, and largely finalized before the meeting in question (see p.15). While administrative staff and liaisons may provide impartial advice on existing City work, procedure, jurisdiction, formatting, and grammar, they do not write recommendation resolutions for the civic agency.

**iv. Order of Business**

The [Procedure By-law \(15.2\)](#) outlines the required order of business for a civic agency meeting. This order may only be varied during the meeting through a resolution receiving at least a two-thirds majority vote (or consensus if using modified procedures—see p. 16). The variation is noted in the minutes.

**v. *New Business***

No new items may be added to the agenda after distribution. However, urgent matters such as announcements or requests to staff or liaisons may be raised during the meeting under the “New Business” agenda item.

**vi. *Working Sessions and Subcommittees***

Members are responsible for producing and distributing agendas for working sessions and subcommittee meetings. While civic agencies may include staff engagements in working session or subcommittee agendas, these engagements must subsequently be reported in a regular meeting.

**e. Meeting Minutes**

**i. *Decision-Based Minutes***

Administrative staff produce minutes for regular and special meetings that include the agenda item, a brief description of what took place, and any resolutions (whether approved or not). Detailed discussion notes are not recorded—if discussion details are needed for future reference, members are responsible for recording (civic agencies may wish to designate a member as note-taker for this purpose).

**ii. *Review***

Following the meeting, draft minutes are circulated to the chair and staff liaison for review. Factual or grammatical errors may be addressed, but the minutes should not be changed substantially.

**iii. *Distribution***

Within 3 business days, any recommendation resolutions are circulated to the City Manager, City Clerk, liaisons, and relevant staff.

Within 2 weeks, the minutes are uploaded to the City website and circulated to Mayor and Council, liaisons, and members, with recommendation resolutions highlighted.

**iv. *Approval***

At the next regular meeting, members either approve or amend the minutes. Amendments are limited to corrections of factual or grammatical errors only.

**v. *Working Session or Subcommittee Notes***

Notes taken by members at working sessions or subcommittee meetings do not need to be approved, and are not uploaded to the City’s website.

**vi. *Follow-Up Summary***

- 1 – 3 days: Recommendation resolutions are forwarded to the City Manager, City Clerk, liaisons, and relevant staff.
- 1 – 2 weeks: Reviewed minutes are posted online and circulated to Mayor and Council, liaisons, and members, with recommendation resolutions highlighted.

- Next regular meeting: Minutes are either approved or amended by members.

#### **4. Civic Agency Recommendations**

All civic agency recommendations and other decisions are enacted through resolutions, which are proposals or requests for action. Most often, resolutions take the form of motions, though Type A and B civic agencies may use alternate methods for passing resolutions (see p. 16).

Recommendation resolutions must be approved in a regular or special meeting to be considered official, included in the minutes, and circulated to Council and staff.

Recommendation resolutions should be developed in consultation with administrative staff and liaisons. They can assist with addressing the following important questions:

1. Is the recommendation within the Committee's scope and the City's jurisdiction?
2. Is the recommendation realistic and actionable?
3. Does the recommendation require funding from existing budgetary sources, or will it necessitate funding in the next year's budget?
4. Is there already work in progress related to the recommendation?
5. Is the recommendation in the correct format, using accessible language, and free from spelling and grammatical errors?

##### **a. Motions**

Motions are proposals that are stated in a specific format, open for discussion and debate, and approved through a majority vote.

Motions should be:

- In order (i.e., within the civic agency's scope and the City's jurisdiction);
- Stated in the positive, not the negative;
- Clear, succinct, and actionable;
- Clearly stated or written by the mover, and restated by the Chair if requested.

The typical process for passing a motion is below:

A member proposes a motion by stating, "I move that..." followed by the action. While it's best to circulate recommendation motions beforehand, routine motions can be proposed without prior notice. Motions include background information and proposed actions.

1. A member proposes a motion by stating, "I move that the Committee..." followed by the action. While it's best to circulate recommendation motions beforehand, routine or administrative motions can be proposed without prior notice. Motions can include

background information (“Whereas” clause) and must contain at least one proposed action (“That” clause). “That” clauses should make sense even if “Whereas” clauses are not read.

2. The chair asks if another member will “second” the motion. A second member’s agreement is needed for the motion to be considered by the group.
3. The chair opens discussion and debate, keeping a speakers list and ensuring all members have a chance to speak once before anyone speaks a second time.
4. After discussion, the chair calls for a vote. Members declare their support or opposition. If the majority support, the motion is passed. If the majority oppose or there is a tie, it fails. Abstentions count as support, unless a member leaves the meeting to avoid voting. However, the member should be mindful that leaving does not cause the meeting to lose quorum and end prematurely.
5. Members can propose amendments to change the motion’s language before voting. An amendment is treated as a separate motion, and needs a seconder, discussion, and a vote. Then, the chair returns to discussion and voting on the main motion.
6. Administrative staff record the vote results and any amendments in the minutes, noting opposing or absent members.

#### **b. Alternate Resolution Procedures**

Motions and parliamentary rules may be seen as stifling or unhelpful, especially by members with different cultural traditions. As a result, Type A and B civic agencies may use alternate, consensus-based procedures to pass resolutions if desired.

These methods should be used in consultation with administrative staff to ensure that they deal with one matter at a time, maintain order and respectful conduct, and give all members equal participation and decision-making rights.

There are different models for making decisions this way, and they generally aim to get as many people as possible to agree on an idea. Before using these methods, your group should decide in advance how many people need to agree for a decision to be made—whether it’s most people, two-thirds, or everyone. An example of a consensus decision-making procedure is detailed below.

Even if your group uses these different methods, decisions still need to be written down in a clear way, using “Whereas” and “That” clauses. This ensures clarity and consistency across civic agencies (see p. 21). Please consult with administrative staff if your civic agency wishes to employ alternate procedures.

##### ***i. Consensus Decision-Making***

Before a meeting, any member can share a proposal for action. At the meeting, the chair introduces the proposal for discussion (no mover or seconder is required). As always, no member should speak to an item more than once until everyone else has had an opportunity to speak.

Members can ask questions or suggest changes to the proposal, which the member who

proposed the action may or may not agree to. Once the proposal is clearly defined and understood, the group checks for consensus. They might do this by saying yes or no, using thumbs up or down, or using another method.

If agreement meets a pre-established threshold, the proposal is passed, and administrative staff record the result as “approved by consensus.”

If agreement does not meet this threshold, any members who voted against the proposal can voice their concerns. Working together and considering different perspectives, the group modifies the proposal to address any concerns, and checks again for consensus.

If any members are still opposed, they may be asked if they are willing to “stand aside,” meaning they have expressed their concerns, but are willing to let the group move forward with the proposal. If there are still concerns after several rounds of modification and checking for consensus, members may decide to “block” the proposal, meaning the group does not move forward with it.

For further resources on alternate decision-making procedures, see the below links:

- [Consensusdecisionmaking.org](http://Consensusdecisionmaking.org)
- [Building United Judgement: A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making](#)
- [“Is Robert’s Rules too Restrictive? Consider Martha’s Rules of Order for Meetings”](#)
- [Madison Community Cooperative member Handbook \(pp. 13 – 14\)](#)
- [“Group Decision Making”](#)

## **5. Chairing the Meeting**

Chairing a meeting involves more than just leading—it means guiding discussions and considering all viewpoints, managing who gets to speak, following procedural rules, and keeping everything running smoothly and fairly. While it helps if the chair has experience with this, facilitating meetings is a skill that anyone can learn.

A good facilitator knows that there is rarely just one right answer, and that talking through different ideas, and even disagreeing, can lead to growth and better understanding. Below is a suggested approach for managing group discussions, based on the facilitation method known as “Deep Democracy,” developed by psychologists Myrna and Greg Lewis in post-apartheid South Africa.

### *1. Gain all the views.*

- Start by reminding everyone what the topic is and how much time you have on the agenda. Make sure everyone who wants to talk gets a chance. If a few people are talking a lot, gently ask if anyone else has something to add. Pay attention to where the conversation is going and what themes are coming up.

### *2. Look for the “no.”*

Sometimes, when everyone seems to agree on something, there might be people who feel differently but aren't saying anything. Encourage them to speak up by asking if anyone disagrees or has a different perspective. Look for subtle

differences in what people are saying.

### 3. *Spread the “no.”*

- When someone does have a different opinion, ask if anyone else feels the same way, even a little bit. Even if you don't agree completely, try to find parts of their viewpoint that make sense to you. This helps create a space where everyone's ideas are valued, even if they're not the same.

### 4. *Vote.*

- Through this process, two or more “polarities” will usually become apparent, and the group will need to make a decision on how to proceed. For example, some members may wish to vote on a related resolution immediately, while others want to refer the matter to a subcommittee for further research.
- Take a quick poll to see which one most people prefer. If one option has more support, ask those who prefer the other option what would make them change their minds. If their conditions are reasonable and don't completely change the decision, see if the group is willing to go along with them. You might need to go through this process more than once. Note that this final step works better in consensus-based scenarios than in majority rules scenarios.

A good facilitator creates an environment where everyone feels respected, supported, and comfortable sharing their opinions, even if they're different.

## **6. Reporting Requirements**

As bodies established by Council, civic agencies typically have reporting obligations—either annually or at more frequent intervals. For example, under the [Urban Design Panel By-law](#), the Panel's recommendations go to the Director of Planning or the Development Permit Board, for inclusion in further reports to Council. If you serve on a Type B, C, or D civic agency, please refer to relevant by-laws or terms of reference for reporting requirements.

### **a. Type A Advisory Committees**

The specific reporting requirements for Type A civic agencies (Council Advisory Committees) are detailed below. All reports must be submitted by set deadlines, using templates supplied by administrative staff.

#### ***i. Work Plan***

Within six months of the first regular meeting of the term, committees are required to approve a work plan. This should outline objectives that assist with advancing Council's strategic priorities, and an action plan for achieving these objectives. The work plan should be completed in consultation with administrative staff and liaisons, to ensure that its objectives are actionable and fall within the scope of the committee and the jurisdiction of the City.

Following approval, work plans are submitted to the City Clerk, reviewed by the City Manager, and circulated to Mayor and Council for information. The work plan is then posted to the

Committee's webpage, and may be reviewed and amended as needed throughout the term.

**ii. Annual Report of Activities**

Each year, committees are required to approve and submit a report of activities to the City Clerk by a specific deadline (usually in November, or September in an election year). If the first regular meeting of the term takes place later than March in a given year, the committee is not required to submit a report until the next year. The report is reviewed by the City Manager, circulated to Mayor and Council for information, and posted to the committee's webpage. This report should reference any progress made on the objectives outlined in the work plan.

**iii. Council of Councils**

Periodically, committees present their objectives and accomplishments to an audience composed of City Council, staff, other committees, and members of the public. This event provides an opportunity for committees and Council to exchange information directly and in person.

## **7. Code of Conduct**

Civic agency members are required to act in accordance with by the [Code of Conduct By-law](#), which sets out conduct expectations for elected officials and civic agency members. The *Code of Conduct* provides important rules and information for civic agency members on standards and values (section 2), confidentiality (section 3), conflict of interest (section 4), and personal gifts and benefits (section 6).

If you feel there has been a breach of the *Code of Conduct* by a Council member or another civic agency member, you may submit a complaint in writing to the City's [Integrity Commissioner](#), who will conduct a preliminary assessment to see if the complaint should proceed or be dismissed. If the complaint proceeds, the Integrity Commissioner may work toward an informal resolution, but if no such resolution is possible, a formal investigation will be conducted and a report issued.

The conduct of City staff is governed under a separate [Code of Conduct Policy](#). Complaints regarding staff conduct should be directed to the relevant [General Manager](#).

All civic agency participants must also be treated in accordance with the [Human Rights Code](#), which prohibits discrimination based on protected characteristics: Indigenous identity, race, colour, ancestry, place of origin, religion, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or age.

**a. Conflict of Interest**

A conflict of interest occurs when a member is involved in an activity that could possibly compromise their motivation for an act as part of their civic agency. Members must avoid improper use of influence and avoid all conflicts of interest (whether real or perceived).

Members must declare a conflict of interest when there is a direct or indirect financial interest in a civic agency matter, or another interest in the matter (often a personal relationship) that constitutes a conflict of interest.

To declare a conflict of interest during a meeting, the member must state the nature of the

conflict, leave the meeting (or be sequestered in a “breakout” room during a virtual meeting), and not re-enter until the relevant agenda item has been completed. For more information on conflict of interest, see [Code of Conduct By-law \(Part 4\)](#), and the [Vancouver Charter \(145.2\)](#).

## **b. Political Activity**

A member is not required to resign their seat if they run for office in an election, nor is the chair required to step down (they must only do so if they win the election). However, a member running for office should be aware of the heightened potential for conflict of interest (whether real or perceived), and may find it simpler to take a leave of absence from their civic agency for the duration of the election period, to be temporarily replaced by an alternate member as applicable.

Members must not use other members’ contact information, or any other City land, facilities, equipment, supplies, services, or other resources to engage in election activities. If you are running for office and are uncertain about declaring a conflict or other related matters, contact the Manager, Civic Agencies.

As public bodies, civic agencies may not support or endorse specific candidates or parties during elections at any level of government. To avoid the perception of impropriety, civic agencies should not engage with candidates through surveys, town halls, debates, etc. It is permissible for a civic agency to raise awareness issues within its scope or to disseminate general information about an election, such as voting times, locations, and methods.

## **8. Communications**

### **a. Communicating with Council**

The role of most civic agencies is to provide recommendations and information to Council and staff, thereby contributing to the City’s progress on strategic priorities. There are several ways for the City to address a civic agency recommendation. If there is a Council agenda item related to the recommendation, Council might consider the recommendation when making decisions on the item. Staff also regularly engage with civic agencies for feedback on projects in development, and so a civic agency recommendations may influence resulting staff recommendations and Council’s final decisions. Finally, an individual Council member may put a version of the recommendation forward as a private member’s motion (though they are not required to do so).

In some cases, Council or staff may not act in accordance with a civic agency’s recommendations. Civic agencies do not direct Council or staff, and Council is not obligated to follow the recommendations given to them. It is important that all Council members be able to make decisions based on debate in open Council meetings, and not be bound by pre-existing commitments.

Similarly, Council liaisons are not obligated to agree with all recommendations or to represent their civic agency in Council, and so civic agencies may wish to communicate with other Council members before developing a recommendation. As spokesperson for the civic agency, only the chair or designate should contact non-liaison Council members directly regarding civic agency matters.

***i. Recommendation Resolutions***

All recommendations should be communicated through resolutions duly approved in a regular or special meeting, and circulated to Council by administrative staff. This ensures that recommendations are delivered for Council consideration in a clear and consistent way, and are recorded in each civic agency’s official minutes.

Here is an example template for a typical recommendation resolution:

MOVED by [member name]  
SECONDED by [member name]

WHEREAS [reason for recommendation]; and

WHEREAS [additional reason for recommendation];

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the [civic agency name] recommends that [desired action]; and

FURTHER THAT [additional desired action].

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

If there is a related item on an upcoming Council agenda, recommendations may be reinforced by [speaking to the matter](#) in a Council meeting. In these cases, the chair is the civic agency’s public spokesperson, or the chair may designate an alternate spokesperson.

As representatives of public bodies, civic agency spokespersons are automatically placed at the beginning of the public speakers queue in Council and Standing Committee meetings, as long as they are speaking on behalf of their civic agency. When speaking to Council on behalf of a civic agency, the spokesperson should be mindful that they do not bring their personal opinions into the matter; only those positions that have been addressed and agreed upon by the civic agency should be discussed.

***ii. Recommendations without Resolutions***

In rare cases, a civic agency may wish to communicate an urgent recommendation before its next regular meeting, but is not able to schedule a special meeting due to time constraints. Here are two situations that may arise:

- A staff report is released a week before the Council meeting in which it will be considered. The civic agency was not consulted during the preparation of the report, but wishes to provide feedback to Council. There is not enough time to schedule a special meeting.
- A time-sensitive recommendation is scheduled for consideration in the civic agency’s regular meeting, but the meeting does not achieve quorum and is cancelled.

In these limited cases, it is permissible for the civic agency chair to send a recommendation letter to Council using the following process:

1. Consult with members via email to obtain consensus on the letter contents and

recommendation (the threshold for consensus should be agreed upon in advance). The body of the letter should indicate majority or total support among members, but may only be signed by the chair.

2. Finalize the letter and send to your civic agency's administrative staff.
3. Administrative staff will format the letter using a City template, and add two disclaimers: first, that the civic agency is not expressing views on behalf of the City; second, that due to time constraints the recommendations contained in the letter have not yet been approved by resolution in a Regular or Special Meeting.
4. Administrative staff will circulate the letter to Mayor and Council, copying the City Manager, the City Clerk, and relevant liaisons and staff.
5. At the next regular meeting, pass a resolution confirming the recommendation contained in the letter, so it is recorded in the official minutes (the letter will then be appended to the minutes):

THAT the [civic agency Name] confirms the following recommendations contained in the letter to Mayor and Council dated [date], entitled "[subject]."

[Insert recommendations].

## **b. Communicating with Other Members**

All members are provided with a distribution list for their civic agency, which contains names and email addresses of members, liaisons, and administrative staff (phone numbers may be shared with members' consent). This distribution list must remain confidential, and members may only use it for civic agency purposes. Please inform administrative staff of any changes to your contact details.

Communications should be limited to email and telephone (see p. 24), and in some cases members may have access to a City-administered SharePoint page for document storage and collaboration. The use of other communication and collaboration platforms, such as WhatsApp, Slack, or Asana, is not permitted for City business.

Civic agencies are encouraged to work together on issues of mutual interest, and chairs will be provided with shared contact information to facilitate this collaboration. Joint meetings of chairs are held periodically, and chairs are encouraged to connect with other civic agencies that may be conducting similar work. Depending on the scope of a given project or initiative, staff groups may request a joint engagement session, involving several civic agencies at the same time.

## **c. External Communications**

### ***i. Correspondence***

Civic agencies may correspond with external groups or individuals using the following process:

1. Pass a resolution in a regular or special meeting approving the delivery of a letter. The letter should be drafted and circulated to members before the meeting. However, it is acceptable to approve the letter in principle, including a general bullet-point description of its contents in the resolution.

2. Finalize the letter, ensuring all members are satisfied with the content, and send it to your civic agency's administrative staff, listing all intended recipients (including contact information).
3. Administrative staff will format the letter using a City template, and add a disclaimer that the civic agency does not express views on behalf of the City, and the content of the letter does not represent an official position of the City of Vancouver.
4. Administrative staff will forward the letter to relevant parties, and forward any return correspondence to the civic agency.

All external correspondence must note that comments are not being made on behalf of the City of Vancouver. The City Manager, City Clerk, and Mayor and Council must be copied on all external correspondence.

## **ii. Civic Agency Webpages**

The City [website](#) serves as the primary digital source for all City information. City staff are responsible for website content and are available to work with civic agencies to ensure informative content is accessible.

Each civic agency has a [dedicated page](#) on the City website. These pages include:

- A description of the civic agency and links to relevant terms of reference or by-law;
- Membership requirements and a list of all current members and liaisons;
- Past and upcoming meeting dates, including agendas and minutes;
- Additional documents like work plans and annual reports;
- Contact information for staff liaison(s) and administrative staff.

## **iii. Social Media**

Civic agencies, with support from Civic Engagement and Communications (CEC), may create and manage a City-affiliated Facebook page or X account. Social media platforms can help civic agencies engage the public on topics within their scope. Civic agencies may not establish any webpages or social media accounts not affiliated with the City. Social media accounts will be temporarily deactivated in between civic agency terms.

To set up a social media account, a civic agency must:

1. Identify the purpose and objectives for using a Social Media channel;
2. Consider the following questions: what are you going to talk about; who are you trying to reach; who will be posting content and how often; how are you going to promote your channel?
3. Read the City's *Social Media Handbook* and sign the *Social Media Practitioner Responsibilities Statement of Acknowledgement Form* (both available on request), which outline expectations for City of Vancouver social media account users;
4. Book an appointment to discuss account set-up or renewal via [social.media@vancouver.ca](mailto:social.media@vancouver.ca). All social media accounts must be set up through CEC to

ensure that account access is transferred when membership changes.

While staff will not post on behalf of the civic agency, they can provide initial orientation and guidance. Civic agencies are expected to adhere to City standards when posting and managing online channels.

If you would like additional information or have questions, contact the Social Media Strategist at [social.media@vancouver.ca](mailto:social.media@vancouver.ca).

Many members maintain personal social media profiles. It is acceptable to identify yourself as a member of a civic agency via personal social media accounts, but you should note specifically that you are not speaking on behalf of your civic agency. Whether you are identified as a civic agency member or not, you should avoid posting or participating in any way that breaches the [Code of Conduct By-law](#).

#### ***iv. Speaking to the Media***

Reporters may contact a civic agency for comment or information on a City initiative or community issue. In these cases, the chair is the civic agency's public spokesperson, unless the chair has designated an alternate spokesperson. If approached by a reporter, members should refer the reporter to the chair/spokesperson.

When speaking to the media on behalf of a civic agency, the chair/spokesperson must make it clear that neither they nor the civic agency express views on behalf of the City. They should refrain from expressing personal opinions and restrict discussion to positions addressed and agreed upon by the civic agency. If the topic has not been addressed by the civic agency, the chair/spokesperson should inform the reporter accordingly and refrain from further commentary.

As bodies of Council, civic agencies should not independently initiate contact with the media to advocate for particular political positions, or regarding a specific policy or issue.

The chair/spokesperson must promptly notify Civic Engagement and Communications of any media interactions by emailing [media@vancouver.ca](mailto:media@vancouver.ca), providing details of the media outlet and topic(s) discussed.

#### ***v. Other Media Activities***

Civic agency members are often experts in their respective fields, and as such may have opportunities to contribute to various media outlets—for example, as an article author or commentator. However, these activities are outside of the scope of civic agencies' media dealings, and as such, any members actively contributing to media outlets should not identify themselves as a City of Vancouver civic agency member. If a civic agency wishes to engage the public on an issue, they are encouraged to do so through the correspondence and social media processes detailed above. Civic agencies are not permitted to use the City logo or branding in public materials.

## **9. Confidentiality**

The [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act](#) (FIPPA) allows members of the public to request any records in the custody or control of the City of Vancouver. FIPPA applies to all correspondence related to City business, including records sent to or received from personal

email accounts. FIPPA also details penalties for any individual who acts in contravention of the Act, up to and including a fine of \$50,000. The Access to Information and Privacy team, within the City Clerk's Office, is responsible for upholding legislative compliance as per FIPPA and the [Privacy Policy](#).

Members are responsible for protecting all correspondence and documentation related to the work of their civic agency. Common documents such as draft agendas, contact lists, motions, calendars, or letters should not be stored on personal computers or shared outside of the civic agency. At the end of the civic agency term, members are required to delete any saved civic agency records from their personal computers or email inboxes. A City administered SharePoint page may be made available to civic agencies for the purpose of storing documents and collaborative work.

Civic agency members' personal contact information is confidential. Membership lists containing personal contact information are only accessible to other members of the civic agency and select City staff. If a member of the public, the media, or a staff group outside of the City Clerk's Office wishes to contact a civic agency, administrative staff will provide the inquirer's contact information to the civic agency for a direct response.

## **10. Resources**

- [City Website](#)
- [Code of Conduct By-law](#)
- [Procedure By-law](#)
- [Vancouver Charter](#)
- [Diversity on Civic Agencies Policy](#)
- [Civic Agency Training Modules](#)
- Social Media Handbook (available on request)
- Indigenous Style Guide (available on request)