Guidelines for Civic Agencies

CITY OF VANCOUVER

WELCOME!

Thank you for volunteering to serve on a City of Vancouver civic agency.
These *Guidelines* will support you in your role, and outline matters such as City structure, Council authority, roles and responsibilities, member conduct, meeting procedures, and communications protocol. You are encouraged 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 at any time you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact 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 səl̓ilwətaʔɬ / sel̓íl̓witulh (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We thank them for having cared for these lands and waters since time immemorial.

PLEASE NOTE:

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

- **Type A** civic agencies make recommendations to Council 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 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.

- **Type D** civic agencies are task forces that advise the Mayor (and through the Mayor, Council) on specific local issues, such as Indigenous Reconciliation or accessibility measures.

- **External** civic agencies are appointed by Council, but advisory to and/or administered by affiliated organizations like VPL or the PNE.

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.

ACCESSIBILITY

This document makes limited use of images and diagrams. These are labelled with alternate text to remain screen reader friendly.

Contents

A Brief History of Vancouver Civic Agencies

Civic agencies are an important form of civic engagement, which have helped to shape City plans, priorities, and initiatives for nearly a century. One of the oldest civic agencies is the Vancouver City Planning Commission, which was the City's planning arm from 1926 to 1952, when the Planning Department was established. Civic agencies open to community participation began to appear from the 1970s onward, including a Bicycle Advisory Committee (which was the first to include some members of the public), a Special Advisory Committee on Disability Issues, a Special Advisory Committee on Seniors, a Public Art Committee, and a Special Advisory Committee on Culture. Since the late 1990s, civic agencies have grown to incorporate more voices and greater diversity in the City's public engagement system.

How the City Works

The Vancouver Charter

The Vancouver Charter is a provincial law that governs how the City of Vancouver operates, what by-laws City Council can create, and how budgets are set. City Council has the authority to pass by-laws to regulate noise and land use, buy and sell property, collect certain taxes, approve expenses, take on debt, give grants, and hire and discharge employees. Under the *Vancouver Charter*, City Council also has the authority to establish advisory committees, allowing for important engagement and connections in the community.

City Council

Vancouver City Council is the main governing and legislative body of the City of Vancouver. It is composed of one Mayor and ten Councillors who are elected at-large (representing the entire City) for a four-year term. Council decisions are influenced in many different ways, including debate during Council meetings, engaging with members of the public and organizations like non-profits and professional groups, and receiving advice from City staff and civic agencies.

City staff

The City benefits from the administrative, technical, and operational expertise of approximately 7,000 staff members. These public servants provide professional and technical advice to Council, work to implement Council decisions fairly and effectively, provide services to the public, and enforce regulations established by Council.

The public

A member of the public is defined as a Vancouver resident, voter, taxpayer, or service recipient. They may sit on a civic agency, and/or provide input in public consultations, public hearings, or other venues. Public engagement is essential for the development of the City's budget, programs, policies, and services, and the public can get involved with civic issues in many ways—not just through civic agencies.

Your City Hall

The City Clerk's Office has developed a set of tools called *Your City Hall*, to increase civic literacy, deepen democratic engagement, and reduce barriers to participation in civic life. You are welcome and encouraged to explore the Civics Toolbox, which includes fact sheets,

presentation slides, and activities that will help you better understand how the City works, and how to make change happen.

Civic Agency Structure

Most civic agencies are made up of members of the public, and sometimes representatives of other bodies like professional associations or non-profit organizations. Many civic agencies are assigned a non-voting City Council liaison, and depending on the specific mandate, may also be assigned non-voting external liaisons from the Vancouver Park Board, the Vancouver Police Department, The Vancouver Public Library, or the Vancouver School Board. Most civic agencies are assigned a non-voting staff liaison to provide information and advice on relevant programs and initiatives. Administrative support is usually provided by the City clerk's Office, but in some cases, other City departments provide administrative support.

Civic Agency Appointments

Recruitment for civic agencies happens near the beginning of each Council term, and throughout the term as vacancies arise. During recruitment, vacancies are posted on the City website and may be advertised through social media, digital and print advertising, and community outreach.

All application information is confidential, and only accessible to Council and select staff. Staff review all applications to ensure applicants meet eligibility requirements, and forward the applications to the Nomination Subcommittee of Council, which consists of three Councillors. The Nomination Subcommittee evaluates each application and recommends appointments to City Council in alignment with the *Diversity on Civic Agencies Policy*. Council then considers these recommendations and makes final decisions on member selection.

Civic agency term lengths are determined by relevant by-laws or terms of reference. Type A advisory committees have a term length of four years: after two years, members may decide whether they wish to end their appointment, or to automatically renew for an additional two years.

Civic Agency Roles and Responsibilities

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 and convey information to Council and staff on matters related to their mandates, 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).

The following is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of key groups involved with civic agencies. Some of these details may vary between civic agencies, depending on individual by-

laws and terms of reference.

Members

- Follow all policies and guidelines outlined here and in other guiding documents and materials, including those related to conduct, human rights, communications, privacy, and conveying recommendations to Council and/or staff;
- Remain informed by reading agenda packages and other preparatory material, staying up-to-date on related news and developments, and monitoring the progress of relevant Council business;
- Attend all regular meetings, and submit a leave of absence request if unable to attend;
- Participate in additional working sessions, subcommittee meetings, and joint engagement sessions, as needed;
- Assist with administrative support, projects, or research that are not part of the clerk's or liaison's role, including:
  - Recording, if thought needed, detailed notes not captured in official "decision-based" minutes (see page 14);
  - Preparing agendas for non-official meetings (working sessions and subcommittee meetings);
  - Managing correspondence, emails, and other documentation;
- As a collective, regularly report activities and progress to Council, which may include:
  - Submitting a work plan that outlines objectives and action items;
  - Submitting an annual report of activities;
  - Participating in the Council of Councils event;
  - Other reporting activities as required by relevant terms of reference or by-laws.

Alternate members

- May be appointed to a civic agency in case any vacancies arise during the term;
- May participate in meetings and discussions with the permission of the chair, but may not vote on resolutions and do not count toward quorum;
- In the event of a vacancy, may be offered a full, voting seat on the civic agency, either in the order indicated by Council, or to fulfill composition requirements set out in the *Diversity on Advisory Bodies Policy* or relevant terms or reference.

Chairs

- Preside over and maintain order in meetings, ensuring business is conducted fairly, equitably, and according to procedural rules;
- May call a member to order if, in the opinion of the Chair, it is necessary to do so;
- Ensure all participants are treated with respect and dignity;
- Determine which members have the right to speak, and give each member opportunities to participate and share opinions and knowledge;
- Manage agenda items and keep meetings on schedule;
- Ensure a member who declares a conflict of interest on an agenda item is not present for any part of the meeting during which the item in question is discussed;
- Work with staff groups, elected officials, and external organizations to plan future meetings;
- Work with administrative staff and staff liaisons to prepare an agenda prior to each regular meeting, maintaining awareness of membership's priorities;

- Act as public spokesperson for the civic agency, unless an alternate spokesperson is designated (and only speak publicly to matters agreed upon by the collective).

Council Liaisons

- Do not vote on civic agency matters;
- Attend meetings as regularly as schedules permit;
- Provide advice and information on Council policies and activities with respect to the civic agency's mandate;
- Assist with ensuring that the civic agency's work is within the mandate and jurisdiction of Council;
- 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 consult).

External Liaisons

- May be elected officials (Park Board Commissioners, School Board Trustees) or staff;
- Do not vote on civic agency matters;
- Attend meetings as regularly as schedules permit;
- Provide advice and information on Park Board, School Board, Public Library, or Police Department policies and activities with respect to the civic agency's mandate;
- Do not act as a "representative" of the civic agency;
- Are not obligated to follow specific civic agency recommendations.

Staff Liaisons

- Do not vote on civic agency matters;
- Attend all regular meetings, and select an alternate liaison if schedules do not permit attendance at a regular meeting;
- Attend other meetings as regularly as schedules permit;
- Assist with ensuring that the civic agency's work remains within scope and mandate;
- Provide subject matter expertise and information on relevant City programs, services, and initiatives;
- Connect civic agencies with relevant staff groups;
- Seek civic agency input and ideas for proposed City programs, services, and initiatives;
- Assist chairs and clerks with preparing agendas;
- Review and advise on draft resolutions from civic agencies;
- May respond to specific requests or recommendations, but do not receive direction from civic agencies.

Administrative Staff (Clerks)

- Do not vote on civic agency matters;
- Attend all regular meetings and special meetings (not working sessions or subcommittee meetings);
- Establish a meeting schedule for the year/term, including room bookings as needed;
- Maintain attendance and leave of absence records;
- Assist chairs and staff liaisons with preparing and distributing meeting agendas;
- Record "decision-based" minutes and circulate to members, liaisons, and Mayor and Council;

- Provide documentation and advice regarding relevant meeting procedures;
- Post membership lists, meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, and other relevant material on the City website;
- Forward correspondence and emails received by the City Clerk's Office to civic agency members for their information or action;
- Provide templates for correspondence, and distribute correspondence to recipients;
- May respond to specific requests or recommendations, but do not receive direction from civic agencies.

Meeting Types

There are four 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.

Regular Meetings

Official resolutions may be considered and passed at a regular meeting. Public notice is given, and members of the public are welcome to attend (unless the meeting is closed to the public in accordance with section 165.2 of the *Vancouver Charter*). Members of the public may only speak to matters if invited to do so by the chair.

Regular meetings are supported by administrative staff, who help prepare the agenda in advance, record "decision-based" meeting minutes, and distribute decisions and recommendations to Council and other relevant staff. Regular meetings may be held in person or as "hybrid" meetings, meaning that members and the public have the option to join by telephone or virtually via web conferencing. Regular meetings are generally scheduled for two hours, though some Type C civic agencies may have longer meetings. At the beginning of each year, a regular meeting schedule is prepared by administrative staff and posted to the civic agency webpage.

Special Meetings

Special meetings are separate of the regular meeting schedule, and are only meant to address urgent business (typically making recommendations on a matter that will go before Council prior to the next 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: official resolutions may be considered and passed, public notice is given, and members of the public are welcome to attend (unless the meeting is closed to the public in accordance with section 165.2 of the *Vancouver Charter*). Members of the public may only speak to matters if invited to do so by the chair.

Special meetings are supported by administrative staff, who help prepare the agenda in advance, record "decision-based" meeting minutes, and distribute decisions and recommendations to Council and other relevant staff. Special meetings are held virtually via web conferencing. Special meetings are generally scheduled for one hour, although depending on the agenda and the civic agency's level of preparation, a special meeting may take much less time.

Working Sessions (Type A Advisory Committees)

Working sessions are held by Type A advisory committees in months when there is no regular meeting scheduled. These informal sessions are not open to the public, though staff or other individuals/groups may be invited to participate. The civic agency may receive information and learn about any matters related to their mandate. It may not pass any resolutions or otherwise make any official decisions. Working sessions provide a useful space for learning and discussion in advance of regular meetings. Anything taking place in a working session should be reported at the next regular meeting.

Working sessions are set up and convened by administrative staff, but administrative staff do not take minutes or stay for the duration of the meeting. Working sessions are held virtually via web conferencing. At the beginning of each year, a working session schedule is prepared by administrative staff and circulated to members.

Subcommittee Meetings

Subcommittees may be established and convened informally at the civic agency's discretion, to address a specific topic or initiative. Members of the public may be invited to participate. The subcommittee may discuss any issues it wishes, but may not pass any resolutions or otherwise make any official decisions. Subcommittees often conduct research, or specific work referred by the broader civic agency. Anything taking place in a subcommittee meeting should 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.

Meeting Procedures

The *Vancouver Charter*, *Procedure By-law*, and these *Guidelines* are the primary reference documents for meeting procedures. Where the *Vancouver Charter* or *Procedure By-law* does not answer a question about procedure, 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 modified meeting procedures that are less formal and more consensus-based (see p. 15). In all cases, it is important that meeting procedures 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.

Quorum

Quorum is the minimum number of members required to be present at a regular or special meeting to conduct official business. Quorum is usually a majority of appointed members (e.g. 8 out of 15 appointed members). Some civic agencies may have additional quorum rules set out in a by-law, terms of reference, the *Vancouver Charter*, or other guiding legislation. Working sessions and subcommittee meetings have no quorum requirement, unless the civic agency has established this internally.

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 required is no longer present), the meeting is adjourned automatically. The civic agency, by consensus, may agree to continue the meeting as a working session without the presence of administrative staff; however, official resolutions may not be passed.

Call to Order

The chair calls the meeting to order at the scheduled start time, or when the meeting has achieved quorum. If quorum has not been achieved 30 minutes after the scheduled start time, the administrative staff takes attendance, records the result in the minutes, and declares the meeting cancelled. The civic agency, by consensus, may agree to continue the meeting as a working session without the presence of administrative staff; however, official resolutions may not be passed.

Discussion and Debate

The chair is responsible for the good conduct of the meeting and for facilitating all members' participation. All members should share meeting time appropriately, make sure decisions are made fairly and all views are considered, and treat one another with respect and dignity. If one member is dominating discussion, the chair may wish to request input from other members or conduct a roundtable poll of opinion.

Adjournment

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

Meeting Cancellation

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

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 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.

Meeting Attendance

Absence Policy

Members should make every effort to attend all regular and special meetings, and be mindful that their absence may result in meeting cancellation due to lack of quorum. Per the *Procedure*

By-law (15.8), civic agency members are considered to have resigned their appointment if they are absent from three consecutive regular or special meetings without obtaining an approved leave of absence. Some civic agencies vary in this regard, so please refer to relevant by-laws or terms of reference.

Leave of Absence

If a member will be absent for a regular or special meeting, they must submit a leave of absence request to administrative staff in advance of the meeting in question. At the meeting, members will decide whether to approve or deny the request. Such requests should be submitted as early as possible, so the meeting may be cancelled if it will not have quorum. Alternate members are not required to obtain a leave of absence.

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.

Medical Leave

Absence due to illness is considered an automatic leave, 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.

Resignation

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

Meeting Agendas

The agenda is a list of 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.

Preparation

In consultation with members, liaisons, and administrative staff, the chair finalizes agenda items approximately two weeks before the meeting. Items may include staff presentations or consultations, member or Subcommittee reports, discussion of recommendations, or liaison updates, among others.

Distribution

Approximately one week before the meeting (no later than five days in advance), administrative staff upload the agenda to the City website, and email links to the agenda and previous meeting minutes, along with meeting attendance information, to all members, liaisons, and other relevant parties. When required, supporting documents for agenda items are included as attachments.

New Business

Following distribution, any additional agenda items may be brought forward at the meeting under "New Business," which takes place at the end of the agenda. Matters that are not

considered urgent by the civic agency may be postponed to the next meeting.

Resolutions

Where possible, resolutions meant for ratification at regular or special meetings should be circulated in writing to members a minimum of one week in advance of the meeting. While members may propose resolutions spontaneously, it is encouraged that they be reviewed with relevant liaisons in advance, and largely finalized before the meeting in question. It is important to note that staff may not write resolutions for the civic agency, or instruct the civic agency to make specific decisions.

Order of Business

After the agenda is published, it is considered finalized and no further changes may be made before the meeting in question. If the civic agency needs change the order of business, it may do so through a resolution requiring a two-thirds majority vote (or consensus if using modified procedures—see p. 17). The variation is noted in the minutes.

Working Sessions and Subcommittees

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

Meeting Minutes

Decision-Based Minutes

Administrative staff produce "decision-based" minutes for regular and special meetings, meaning that each agenda item appears with a title, a brief description of what took place, and any resolutions (whether approved or not). Verbatim discussion is not recorded; if discussion details are needed for future reference, members are responsible for recording more detailed notes (civic agencies may wish to designate a note-taker for this purpose).

Review

Following the meeting, administrative staff circulate the draft minutes to the chair and staff liaison for review. Informational or grammatical errors may be addressed through review, but the minutes should not be changed substantially.

Distribution

Within 3 business days of the meeting, administrative staff circulate any resolutions to the City Manager, City Clerk, liaisons, and relevant staff.

Within 2 weeks, the minutes are posted on the City website and circulated to members, liaisons, and Mayor and Council.

Depending on their nature, Council, the City Manager, and/or staff may take action related to any approved resolutions. Staff may include reference to civic agency recommendations and comments in Council Reports.

Approval

At the next regular meeting, members are asked to either approve or amend the minutes. Amendments to the minutes are limited to corrections of factual errors or incomplete information only. As with chair and liaison review, amendments should not substantially alter the minutes, or stray from City minute-taking standards.

Working Session or Subcommittee Notes

Minutes or notes taken by members at working sessions or subcommittee meetings do not need to be approved, and are not posted on the City's website.

Follow-Up Summary

- 1 – 3 days: Resolutions are forwarded to the City Manager, City Clerk, Mayor and Council, and relevant staff.

- 1 – 2 weeks: Reviewed minutes are posted online and circulated to members, liaisons, Mayor and Council, and relevant staff.

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

Civic Agency Resolutions

All civic agency decisions are enacted through resolutions, which are proposals, statements, 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. 17).

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

Resolutions containing recommendations to Council and/or staff should be developed in consultation with administrative staff and liaisons, who can assist with the following important questions:

1. Is the recommendation within the Committee's terms of reference 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 require funding in the next year's budget?

4. Is there already work in progress related to the recommendation?

Motions

The *Procedure By-law* (15.13) states the following:

"An advisory committee may act only by motion but unless Council:

a) has expressly delegated to the advisory committee an executive or administrative

power in respect of which the advisory committee passes a motion; or

b) has expressly approved a motion passed by the advisory committee;

no motion passed by the advisory committee is binding on the City."

Motions are stated in a specific format, open for discussion and/or debate, and approved through a majority vote (e.g. 8 out of 15 members). In limited circumstances, a two-thirds majority or a unanimous vote may be required: further rules regarding motions are listed in the _Procedure By-law_ (Part 8).

Motions should be:

- In order (i.e. within the civic agency's mandate 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 normal order of a motion follows:

1. If a member wishes to make a motion, they must be given the floor by the chair, and state, "I move that…" followed by the proposed action. As noted earlier, recommendation motions should be drafted and circulated in advance of the meeting, but minor or administrative decisions may be moved without prior circulation. Motions may contain one or more "WHEREAS" clauses, detailing background information and reasoning, and must contain at least one "THAT" clause, detailing the proposed action. While "WHEREAS" clauses are useful for providing context, "THAT" clauses should be self-contained (i.e., should make sense even if "WHEREAS" clauses are not included).

2. Another member must state that they "second" the motion for it to be considered.

3. The chair asks if any member would like to declare a conflict of interest, then opens the floor to discussion and debate, ensuring that all members have equal opportunity to give their opinion on the motion. No member should speak to a motion a second time before all members have had the opportunity to speak.

4. After discussion and debate are completed, the chair asks for a vote, and members must state whether they support or oppose the motion. If a majority support the motion, it is "carried"; if a majority oppose the motion or there is a tie, it is "defeated." Abstaining from a vote is registered as support—if a member wishes to not vote on an item, they must leave the meeting while the vote is conducted and will be marked as absent for that vote.

5. If a member would like to change the language of the motion, they may move an "amendment" before voting begins. The amendment is treated as a new motion: it requires a seconder, debate/discussion, and a vote. After this is completed and depending on the outcome, the chair may return to discussion and voting on the main motion, either with amended language or as originally stated.

6. Administrative staff record the results of the motion and any amendments in the minutes, noting any members who were opposed or absent.

Alternate Resolution Procedures

The City recognizes that motions and parliamentary rules are rooted in colonialism, and may be considered stifling or unhelpful, particularly by members with different cultural traditions. For this reason, Type A and B civic agencies may use alternate, consensus-based procedures to pass resolutions, if so desired.

Alternate procedures should be applied in consultation with administrative staff, to ensure that they meet the City's requirements for meeting procedures: they deal with one matter at a time, maintain order and respectful conduct, and give all members equal participation and decision-making rights.

To employ alternate procedures in a meeting, a civic agency must first suspend *Procedure By-law* rule of order 15.13 for the duration of the meeting. To do this, the following motion must be moved and carried at the beginning of each meeting, in accordance with the above-noted procedures and with a two-thirds majority vote:

> THAT the [civic agency name] suspend *Procedure By-law* rule of order 15.13 for the duration of the meeting, to allow alternate decision-making procedures.

There are many variations of alternate decision-making models, and unlike majority-based procedures, they generally share the goal of generating as much agreement as possible on a given proposal. Your civic agency should agree in advance what the threshold will be for this agreement—whether it is a majority, two-thirds, or all members in agreement on a given matter. Two examples are detailed below: Consensus Decision-Making, and Martha's Rules. Please consult with administrative staff if your Type A or B civic agency wishes to employ alternate procedures.

Regardless of the decision-making procedures used, resolutions must still be recorded in the minutes using the "WHEREAS… THAT…" format, to ensure clarity and consistency across civic agencies.

Consensus Decision-Making

Through discussion, a proposal for action emerges. As always, a member should only speak to an item a second time after all other members have had the opportunity to speak.

When the proposal is clearly defined, the group tests for consensus (through verbal confirmation, a straw poll, thumbs up or down, or another method).

If agreement meets the threshold previously agreed upon by the group, the proposal is passed, administrative staff record the result, and the group may move on to the next agenda item.

If agreement does not meet this threshold, any members who are unsatisfied with the proposal may raise their concerns.

Working together and considering varying viewpoints and perspectives, the group modifies the proposal to address any concerns raised, and returns to the test for consensus.

If any members are still unsatisfied with the proposal, they may be asked if they are willing to "stand aside," meaning they have registered their concerns, but are willing to let the group move forward with the proposal.

If, after several rounds of consensus testing and modification, there are still concerns, one or more members may ask to "block" the proposal. In this case, the group does not move forward with the proposal, and administrative staff record the result. This is a rare outcome in consensus-based models, as the previous steps usually allow for concerns to be addressed to the full group's satisfaction.

Martha's Rules

Any member may sponsor a proposal, which is circulated in advance of the meeting and contains the following:

1. Summary;
2. Background;
3. Pros and cons;
4. Possible alternatives;
5. Full text of the proposed action.

The sponsor is responsible for the proposal, and the issue may not be discussed or voted on unless the sponsor is present.

In the meeting, the sponsor presents the proposal, and after briefly responding to any clarifying questions or concerns, a "sense vote" is taken. Members are asked to give a thumbs up if they like the proposal, a sideways thumb if they can live with the proposal, or a thumbs down if they are uncomfortable with the proposal.

If thumbs up and sideways meet the threshold previously agreed upon by the group, the proposal is passed, administrative staff record the result, and the group may move on to the next agenda item.

If this threshold is not met, any members who are uncomfortable may state their objections, followed by group discussion (generally time-limited by the chair). The sponsor may modify the proposal to address any concerns raised, and at the end of the discussion period, the chair calls for a new vote.

If the threshold is still not met, the sponsor may decide whether to postpone the item to a future meeting for reworking, or to withdraw the proposal entirely.

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

- 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"

Chairing the Meeting

While the full responsibilities of the chair are detailed above (see p. 8), this section goes into deeper detail on the practice and meaning of chairing. During a meeting, the chair is responsible for facilitating discussion, determining who has the right to speak, and keeping the meeting on time, focused, and balanced. It may help if the chair has prior experience with facilitation, but this is not a requirement—facilitation is a skill that can be developed like any other.

A skilled facilitator should remember that there is no monopoly on truth, and that discussion, disagreement, and even conflict can all lead to growth and better understanding. Below is a suggested process for approaching any group discussion, based on a facilitation method called "Deep Democracy" that was developed in post-Apartheid South Africa by psychologists Myrna and Greg Lewis. This method is excellent for making decisions and generating buy-in within consensus-based systems, but can also be applied in majority-based systems as well.

1. *Gain all the views.*
   - Reiterate the topic for discussion, and remind the group how much time has been allotted on the meeting agenda. Make sure that everyone who wishes to speak has a chance to do so. If a few members are monopolizing the discussion, interject by saying "I'd like to hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet—are there any other thoughts on this matter?" As discussion goes on, you will see dominant directions or themes emerge, as members build on each other's thoughts and feelings.

2. *Look for the "no."*
   - Often, when a dominant direction is emerging, anyone with conflicting thoughts or feelings may avoid jumping in, wishing instead to "go along to get along." Encourage these members by asking, "does anyone feel differently about this?" They do not have to voice outright opposition—instead, you might look for more subtle variations on the themes that are emerging.

3. *Spread the "no."*
   - When a "no" emerges, ask the group, "does anyone else feel this way, even a bit?" Whether or not you fully agree with the "no," highlight an element you connect with, and encourage members to do the same. This helps to create a more open environment where diverse opinions are valued, and members feel safe going against the current.

4. *Vote.*
   - Through this process, two or more "polarities" will usually emerge, 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.
   - At this point, take a straw poll to see which way the group is leaning: if there is a clear majority, ask the members in the minority "what do you need to come along?" Encourage those who voted "no" in the straw poll to explain what conditions they would need in place to change their vote. Assuming these conditions do not negate the decision entirely, ask the group if they are willing to proceed with the new conditions in place (you may need to work through this process more than once). Please note, this final step is more applicable in

consensus-based scenarios than *Robert's Rules*-based scenarios.

A skilled facilitator creates an environment that is curious, respectful, supportive, and open to the discomfort that can arise when differing opinions are shared. At least twice per term, the City Clerk's Office will offer specific chair training, where interested members can learn and work on facilitation skills.

Reporting Requirements (Type A Advisory Committees)

Please note that this section is applicable to Type A advisory committees only. Consult relevant by-laws or terms of reference for reporting requirements of other civic agencies.

As committees of Council, Type A advisory committees are required to report accomplishments and progress to Council. All reports must be submitted by set deadlines, using templates supplied by administrative staff.

Work Plan

Within six months of the first regular meeting of the term, committees are required to approve and submit a work plan to the City Clerk via administrative staff, which is then reviewed by the City Manager and circulated to Mayor and Council for information. The work plan is posted to the City website, and is subject to review and amendment as needed over the four-year term.

The work plan includes up to five specific objectives, including target start and end dates, an action plan, and a list of any parties and/or resources that will be integral to accomplishing the objectives. It should be completed in consultation with administrative staff and liaisons, to ensure that its objectives are actionable and fall within the mandates of the committee and City Council.

Annual Report of Activities

Each year, committees are required to approve and submit a report of activities to the City Clerk via administrative staff, which is then reviewed by the City Manager and circulated to Mayor and Council for information. The report of activities should make reference to the objectives outlined in the work plan. It must be approved by resolution and submitted to administrative staff by a specific deadline (generally a date in November, or August in an election year), and is posted to the City website.

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 provide feedback and information directly and in person.

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 initiate the below process:
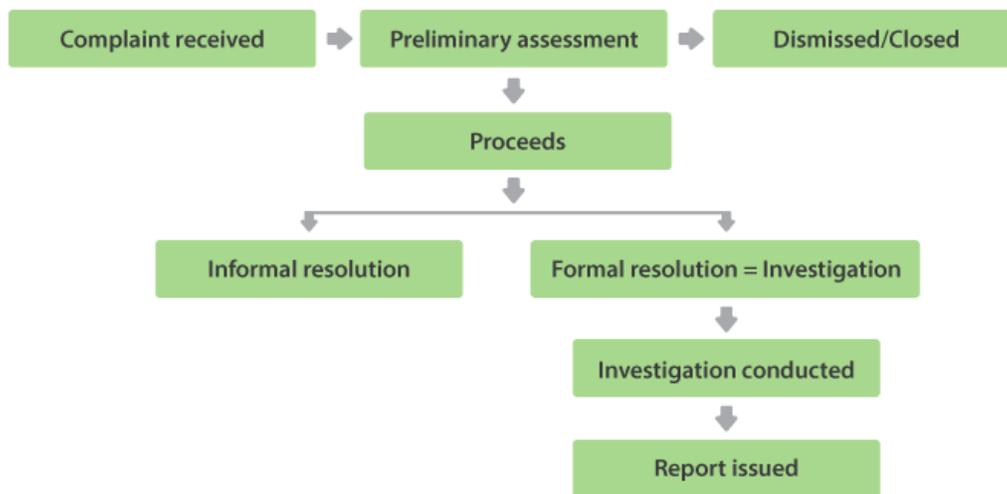
The conduct of City staff is governed under a separate *Code of Conduct Policy*. Complaints regarding staff conduct should be directed to the relevant General Manager.

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.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest occurs when a member is involved in an activity that could possibly compromise the 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).

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, or services 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 of its own priorities or to disseminate general information about an election, such as voting times, locations, and methods.

Communications

Communicating with Council

A civic agency's main role is to provide recommendations, advice, and information to Council and staff. There are several ways for the City to address a civic agency recommendation: Council may take the recommendation into consideration in their deliberations; they may direct staff to undertake action in accordance with the recommendation; an individual Councillor may put a version of the recommendation forward as a private Council member's Motion; or the recommendation may be incorporated in the development of a staff report.

In some cases, Council or staff may not act in accordance with a civic agency's recommendations. Civic agencies do not direct staff, and Council is not obligated to follow the recommendations and advice 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 represent their civic agency in Council, and so civic agencies may wish to seek support from other Council members prior to developing a recommendation.

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 to Council 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

Recommendations may be reinforced by members speaking to the matter in a Council meeting. In these cases, the chair is the civic agency's public spokesperson, unless the chair has designated 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, provided 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 matters that have been addressed or agreed upon by the civic agency should be discussed.

Recommendations without Resolutions

In rare cases, a civic agency may wish to make 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(s) contained in the letter, so that they are 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].

Communicating with Other Members

All members receive a distribution list for their civic agency, which contains names and email addresses for members, liaisons, and administrative staff (phone numbers may be provided with members' permission). This distribution list must not be shared, and members may only use it for civic agency purposes. Please inform administrative staff of any changes to your contact information.

Civic agencies are encouraged to work together on issues of shared interest, and chairs are connected to each other through shared contact information. 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.

External Communications

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 prepared and circulated to members before the meeting; however, it is permissible to approve the letter in principle, including in the resolution a general, bullet-point description of its contents.

2. Finalize the letter, ensure other members are satisfied with the content, and send 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 is not expressing views on behalf of the City.

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.

City Website

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

Civic Agency Webpages

Each civic agency has its own 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;
- All 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.

Social Media

Civic agencies, with the support of Civic Engagement and Communications (CEC), may create and manage a City-affiliated Facebook page or Twitter account. Social media accounts can help civic agencies engage the public on topics within their mandates. 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. All social media accounts must be set up through CEC to ensure that account access is transferred when membership changes.

Staff will not post on behalf of the civic agency, but will provide initial orientation and guidance. Civic agencies are expected to follow City standards for posting and managing online channels.

If you would like additional information or have questions, email the Social Media Strategist at social.media@vancouver.ca.

Many members may have their own personal social media presence. It is acceptable to identify yourself as a member of a civic agency through your 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 contravenes the *Code of Conduct By-law*.

Media Relations

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 (or vice-chair) is the civic agency's public spokesperson, unless the chair has designated an alternate spokesperson. If a reporter approaches a member for comment, the member should refer the reporter to the chair or alternate spokesperson.

When speaking to the media on behalf of a civic agency, the spokesperson must make it clear

they are not speaking on behalf of the City of Vancouver. The spokesperson should also be mindful that they do not bring their personal opinions into the matter; only those matters that have been addressed or agreed upon by the civic agency should be discussed. This may prove difficult at times, especially if a reporter has a tight deadline. The spokesperson should tell the reporter if the civic agency has not discussed the matter or has not reached a final resolution, and refrain from commenting further.

If a member is contacted by the media and wishes to express a personal opinion without the approval of the civic agency, they must make it clear that they are speaking as an individual, and not on behalf of the civic agency or the City of Vancouver.

Members must immediately inform Civic Engagement and Communications (CEC) about any interaction with the media by emailing media@vancouver.ca, and stating the media outlet and topic(s) discussed.

Issuing a Media Release

In certain circumstances, civic agencies may issue a media release that CEC will distribute to relevant media outlets. To issue a media release, a civic agency must follow this process:

1. Contact CEC at media@vancouver.ca to determine if the topic is newsworthy. The issuing of frequent, non-newsworthy media releases is discouraged, as it leads to a loss of credibility. All civic agency media releases are subject to CEC review, and if deemed non-newsworthy or inappropriate, will not be distributed.

2. Pass a resolution in a regular or special meeting approving the media release. The release should be prepared and circulated to members in advance of the meeting (staff and liaisons may not assist with content); however, it is permissible to approve the release in principle, and include a description of its contents.

3. Finalize the media release, ensure other members are satisfied with the content, and send to your civic agency's administrative staff.

4. Administrative staff will format the media release and add a disclaimer that the civic agency is not expressing views on behalf of the City. The City logo may not be used on civic agency media releases.

5. Administrative staff will forward the media release to CEC for review and distribution, copying the City Manager and the City Clerk.

All media releases must state 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 media releases.

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 social media or media release

processes detailed above. Civic agencies are not permitted to use the City logo or branding in public materials.

<u>Confidentiality</u>

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.

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.

<u>Civic Agency Resources</u>

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