

CITY OF ELLENSBURG BOARDS & COMMISSIONS HANDBOOK



INTRODUCTION

Your decision to participate in the local government of the City of Ellensburg is very much appreciated. The City would not be the exceptional community it is without the time, energy, knowledge, and talent of its many diverse and widely experienced community members, like you.

Participation in city government requires work and commitment but offers many rewards in the areas of shaping city policy decisions and working with interesting and varied people. The work that the volunteer Board and Commission members perform in support of our community and in partnership with the City Council is invaluable and emphasizes the Council's commitment to customer service.

Participation also carries responsibilities, and this handbook attempts to provide background information, policies, and guidelines which will help you in assuming the responsibilities of your new commitment. The handbook is also designed to make it as easy as possible for you to enjoy your participation and the experience of serving in city government.

GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION

The City of Ellensburg is a noncharter code city under chapter 35A of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) with a Council/Manager form of government. A noncharter code city is one which has not adopted its own local charter, but has, nevertheless, *home rule*. This is the broadest form of home rule authorization available to cities in the State of Washington. The authority of the City Council is limited only by the constitutions of the United States and the State of Washington and specific state legislation which either limits the authority of the city to act in a particular area of concern, or on a particular body of subject matter. By contrast, cities which are not code cities must look for state legislation specifically giving them the authorization to act.

The City of Ellensburg adopted a Council/Manager form of government in 1949, being the second city in the State of Washington to adopt such a plan. This Council/Manager form of government was retained when the City adopted noncharter code city classification in 1991.

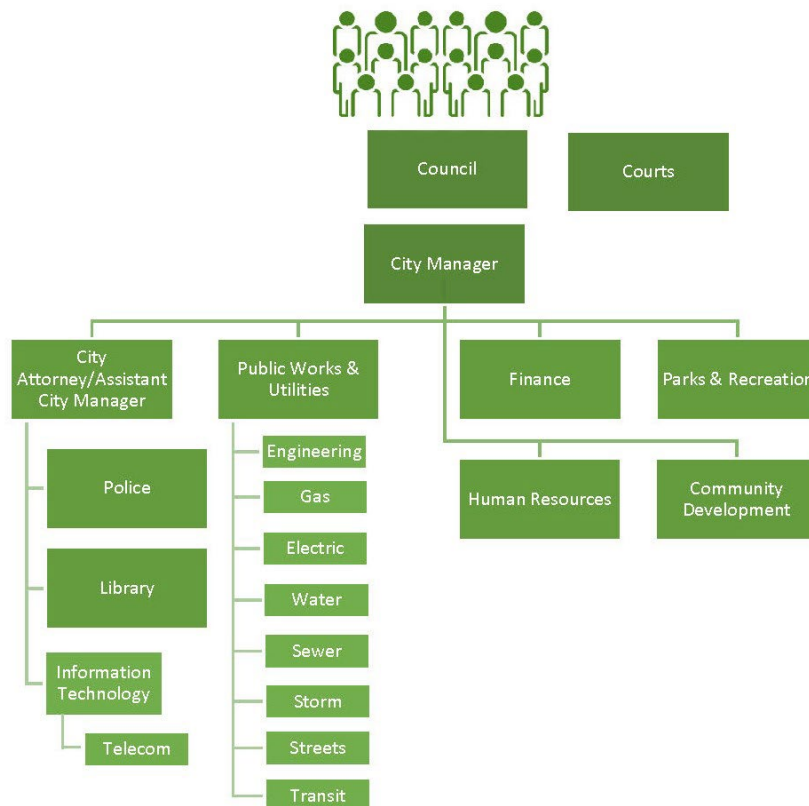
Under the Council/Manager form of government, seven Councilmembers are elected "at large," meaning they serve the City as a whole rather than representing wards or districts. Councilmembers are the only elected officials and are elected for a four-year term with elections held in odd-numbered years. Four councilmembers are chosen at one election and three at the next odd-numbered-year election. All candidates for Council must file declarations of candidacy with the Kittitas County Auditor during the five-day filing period that begins two weeks prior to Memorial Day in the year in which the regular City election is held. Each term begins with the first regular meeting in January following the election.

Biennially, at the first meeting of the new Council, a mayor is chosen from among the Council membership. The salaries of the Mayor and Councilmembers are set by

ordinance and may not be increased or decreased after their election nor during their term of office. In case of the Mayor's absence, a mayor pro tempore is also selected. When there is a vacancy in the Council, the remaining members appoint a person to fill the office until the next general municipal election in an odd-numbered year.

City councilmembers are not full-time City officials and retain their positions in private industry, business, professions, and personal enterprise. The Mayor presides at Council meetings and is recognized as the head of the City for ceremonial purposes and by the Governor for purposes of military law. In times of public danger or emergency - if authorized by a vote of the Council - the Mayor takes command of the police, maintains order, and enforces the law.

The City Council also hires a trained professional city manager to be the executive head of the City. This person is called the City Manager. The City Manager chooses and is responsible for the hiring, firing, and replacement of all other City employees (subject in some instances to Civil Service regulations) and department heads. The City Manager is personally responsible and accountable to the City Council for all administrative actions and the performance of employees. Both the line of communication and the line of command or the direction between the City Council and the various City departments and employees must go through the City Manager.



CITY DEPARTMENTS

City services and functions are performed by the following City Departments:

- Community Development
- Executive (including the City Manager, Human Resources, and City Attorney)
- Finance
- Library
- Parks & Recreation
- Police
- Public Works and Utilities

The City also provides a variety of utility services, including:

- Electric
- Gas
- Sewer
- Stormwater
- Telecommunications
- Water

ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

To acquaint you with the administrative workings of city government, a brief description of each of the City departments follows. There are seven departments in the City's organizational structure: City Manager, Community Development, Finance, Library, Parks and Recreation, Police, and Public Works and Utilities. The responsibility for the operation of each department is assigned to a Department Director appointed by the City Manager.

CITY MANAGER

The City Manager is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the City Council. The Manager is responsible for the efficient administration of City resources and City-wide department operation in accordance with Council policy. The City Manager provides overall planning, supervision, direction, and control of all City programs and services and is empowered by State law to appoint and remove all department heads, officers, and employees of the City. Personnel and Civil Service activities relating to City employment opportunities and testing are also provided by this department. Staff serves the City Council, the Civil Service Commission, the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission, and the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee.

ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER/CITY ATTORNEY

Within the City Manager's Office, the Assistant City Manager/City advises the Council and all departments and boards and commissions in all legal matters pertaining to City business. They conduct, on behalf of the people, prosecutions for violations of the City Code, represent the City in litigation to which it may be a party, and draft legal and official documents for presentation to the City Council. In the current organizational structure, the

Assistant City Manager/City Attorney oversees Police, the Library, IT Services and the Telecom Utility.

FINANCE DEPARTMENT

The Finance Department provides a wide range of services, including accounting controls and procedures, to efficiently and effectively meet the financial information and reporting needs of the City in accordance with the Council's fiscal policy. These responsibilities include accounting and cash management services, billing and collection services for all City operations, and data processing services. Meter reading services are provided for all City utilities including gas, electric, and water.

The functions of the City Clerk also fall in this department, providing City Council minutes, agenda preparation assistance, records management, oaths of office, City Code in-house updating, bid openings, public notices, ordinances and resolutions, public information, and business license processing. The Finance Department provides staff services for the Fire Relief and Pension Board.

LIBRARY

The City Library provides not only reading and book services for children and adults but also is responsible for scheduling and providing the community with a variety of cultural, special events, and performing arts programs. The department director also supervises staff that market and schedule use of the Hal Holmes Community Center. The Library provides staff support for the Library Board and Arts Commission.

PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

The Parks and Recreation Department provides the direction and coordination necessary to ensure that recreational needs of the community are met. It fulfills these obligations through operation and maintenance of the City parks, Memorial Pool and Fitness Center, the Ellensburg Racquet and Recreation Center, scheduling park and recreation activities, and providing staff and scheduling services to the Stan Bassett Youth and Community Center and the Adult Activity Center. The Recreation Department provides staff services for the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Senior Citizens Advisory Commission.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The Community Development Department provides review and evaluation of all current private development projects in accordance with State requirements, the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and other land use standards. The Department prepares staff reports for the Planning Commission and City Council on annexations, subdivisions, re-zoning, use permits, variances, and flood-plain issues. Building inspection services are contained in this department providing enforcement services for the health and safety codes of the City as they relate to buildings. Plans are checked for code compliance and various inspections are performed to ensure that structures are in conformity with the plans. The Department provides staff services for the Affordable Housing Commission, Planning Commission, Environmental Commission, and Landmarks and Design Commission.

POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Police Department is responsible for law enforcement and crime prevention. Among its responsibilities are enforcing federal, state and local laws, protection of residents and property, and crime prevention, investigation, apprehension, and consulting services. The Animal Control Center also operates under the Police Department and provides a shelter for lost and abandoned animals, providing for adoption in some cases, responds to animal nuisance situations, and provides public information.

PUBLIC WORKS AND UTILITIES DEPARTMENT

The Public Works and Utilities Department encompasses several functions important to the needs of the City, including: engineering services, implementing capital improvement plans, street maintenance and cleaning, signing, marking, and traffic signals; maintenance and operations for the City's electric, water, gas, and wastewater distribution systems, managing activities in support of the city's stormwater permit, and operating the public transit system, Central Transit. City shop operations are included in this department, providing maintenance of City equipment and vehicles, warehousing, and centralized purchasing. The Public Works and Utilities Department provides staff services to the Public Transit Advisory Committee and Utility Advisory Committee.

BOARDS, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

The City encourages participation by members of the community on numerous boards, commissions, and committees. All boards and commissions operate under a set of general rules as well as specific guidelines addressed to individual boards or commissions. The general rules applicable to all are set forth first with individual definitions and guidelines for each specific board and commission addressed later.

General Guidelines

Roll, Authority & Staffing

The general rules and guidelines for organizations of the City's boards and commissions are found in Chapter 1.12 of the Ellensburg City Code (ECC). Per the City code, City Council appoints the members of all advisory committees, commissions, and boards. The City code also establishes the regulations for how vacancies are filled, the organization and meeting requirements, remote attendance, and residency qualifications. All City boards and commissions act in an advisory role to the City Council except for the Landmarks & Design and Planning commissions, which act primarily as an advisory body but may also act as a decision-making body in certain prescribed areas. Thus, the primary role of all boards and commissions is to review and make recommendations to the City Council on matters within their scope of responsibility and to promote increased public participation in determining City policies and program implementation.

Advisory groups should represent the general interests of the City as a whole and not specific program areas or special interest groups.

Organization & Officers

The Chairperson

The chairperson and vice-chairperson of all advisory bodies are elected annually in January (except for certain commissions where a councilmember is designated by ordinance as the chairperson). The chairperson is the key to the entire group process and is the hub of the action. The chairperson must balance being strong enough to make certain that the meeting is run by the rules, but democratic enough to use the power and authority of the position wisely. The chairperson's ability to handle meetings will have a significant impact on morale, operation, and effectiveness. The chairperson must make certain that discussions do not get sidetracked on minor issues and must have the ability to see the "whole picture." The most important part of being chairperson lies in the ability to find a common ground and in achieving a compromise, if appropriate.

Minutes

It is the responsibility of the individual commission, or staff if assigned, to record and maintain minutes for all meetings. These minutes should be "summary" and not "verbatim" which briefly describe the issues and actions taken. Minority opinions of members may also be recorded in the minutes if desired. Comments by all members on every agenda item cannot practicably be included in the minutes. Also, members abstaining for legal conflict of interest requirements or other reasons are required to state their reason in the minutes. Certain issues may require more detailed minutes as considered necessary by the members. Minutes must be submitted to the City Manager's Office for inclusion in the City Council agenda.

Quorum

A majority of the commission or board membership shall constitute a quorum for conducting business. A regular meeting may not be opened without a quorum present.

Budget Recommendations

The City of Ellensburg prepares its operating budget on an biennial basis. Boards, committees, and commissions are encouraged to annually review and comment on department programs and capital projects that may be related to their scope of interest. This evaluation is intended to focus attention on the overall program and service priorities and commission objectives and is not intended to be an evaluation of the administration or operation of City departments.

In addition, the Environmental, Landmarks and Design, and Parks and Recreation commissions review applications for the Council-funded grants programs and recommend allocation of funds to the City Council for approval.

Administrative Matters

Commissions should not become involved in the administrative or operational matters of City departments unless specifically provided in their prescribed powers and duties. Members may not direct staff to initiate programs, conduct studies, or establish department policy without approval of the City Manager and/or City Council. City staff

assigned to boards and commissions will provide general staff assistance such as preparation of agenda materials and general review of department programs and activities, and to perform limited studies, program reviews, and other services of a general staff nature. Commissions may not establish department work programs or determine department program priorities. The responsibility for setting policy and allocating scarce City resources properly rests with the City's duly elected representatives, the City Council, and cannot be delegated to an outside group.

Communication with Staff and Other Members

Staff typically distributes meeting agenda, minutes and other materials by email. All email related to board and commission business is subject to disclosure as public record per Ch. 42.56 RCW, the Washington Public Records Act. The City therefore provides a City email account to all board and commission members. Members are required to use their City email account for communication with City staff, fellow members or anyone else while conducting board or commission business.

Communication with the City Council

Communications to the City Council should be made by memoranda, including all rationale, for routing by staff through the City's agenda process for inclusion as Council agenda items. All budget recommendations should be accompanied by a recommended funding source. It should be emphasized, additionally, that when a member who is present at a Council meeting is asked to address the Council on a matter, the member should represent the viewpoint of the particular commission as a whole (not a personal opinion), unless a proper qualification is made.

Working with other Members

Members should make every effort to uphold their reputation for honesty, fairness, and openness with the residents of the community. Each group will undoubtedly consist of diverse personalities; it is important we work together to accomplish common goals.

When members interact positively, the internal organization runs smoothly, and the group is functional. The ideal commission works toward consensus solutions after a good deal of technical study. It should clarify the various positions in order that its recommendations allow a rational decision on the part of Council.

Effective board and commission members:

- Attend all meetings
- Are prepared for meetings
- Recognize that serving the public interest is the top priority
- Operate in an open and transparent manner
- Listen to all participants and review all information before making a judgment
- Are willing to work with the group in making decisions
- Recognize a compromise may be necessary to reach consensus

Code of Conduct

The City of Ellensburg strives to ensure that individuals appointed to serve on a City board or commission will treat all persons and decisions in an equitable manner and will conduct business in a way that exemplifies transparency and open communications. The work of board and commission members is therefore governed by the following Code of Conduct, which applies to all members:

- Board members will make decisions based on the best interest of the board's mission and will avoid actual conflicts of interests as well as the appearance of a conflict of interest
- Board members shall not use their appointed position to influence board or commission decisions in which they have a financial interest or where they have an organizational responsibility or a personal relationship that would present a conflict of interest. If there is a conflict of interest regarding a particular agenda item, the board member will refrain from participating in that discussion or decision.
- Board members will become familiar with enabling legislation and governing documents that pertain to their board or commission and are required to complete training within 90 days of appointment by City Council regarding the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act (Ch. RCW.42.30) and Washington State Public Records Act (Ch. RCW 42.56). The City Manager's office will provide resources for completion of no-cost, online training to satisfy this requirement.
- Board members shall not accept or seek for others any gifts or things of value offered in connection with their appointment.
- Board members will respect fellow board or commission members, staff, and the public by treating all with patience, courtesy, and civility at all times.
- Board members shall not speak or act on behalf of their board except when formally given such authority to do so for a specific purpose. When speaking to the public or to the press, board members shall explicitly state that they are not representing their board or commission or the City, but are simply presenting their personal opinions or positions as a private resident.
- Board members shall use public resources (e.g., staff time, equipment, supplies, email accounts, or facilities) appropriately, and shall not use City equipment, materials or property for personal use, convenience, or private gain.
- Board members will oppose discrimination and resist stereotyping in all forms. The City has a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment, and retaliation. Any board member who engages in conduct that is discriminatory, harassing, or retaliatory towards fellow board members, City staff, or the public will not be tolerated, and the board member is subject to removal from the board. No one should ever be harassed or humiliated, afraid, or discriminated against because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, or any other factor.
- Board members shall not post on social media statements that are derogatory, bullying, intimidating, harassing, use insults or post content that is hateful, slanderous, threatening, discriminating, or pornographic. Members of the public may not separate your personal social media posts from your role as a board member.

Working with Staff

City staff assigned to work with the advisory groups report to the City Manager, who, in turn, reports to the City Council. Each board or commission is usually assisted by a particular department director or designated City staff who provide support. Staff support also means facilitating operations. Staff is aware of their responsibilities, and commission members should be aware of the time involved on the part of staff in preparing requested studies and reports.

If friction develops, individuals should make every attempt to clarify differences and make certain that clear communication is taking place. The public meeting should not be used to express anger or disagreement. If differences cannot be resolved by this method, the Mayor and/or City Manager should then be consulted to assist in resolving the matter.

Reports to Council on Commission Actions

There will be occasions when City staff will be required to prepare an agenda report on either a commission action or appeal for City Council review. In preparation of such a report, the staff member should present both the staff position and the commission's position. The position of members not voting in the majority on an item should also be presented in the staff report if indicated by the member.

Public Meeting v. Public Hearing

Public Meeting: In the State of Washington all meetings of governmental bodies, including City Council and all boards and commissions, at which any type of action will be taken must be open to the public. This is the meeting held on a regularly scheduled basis, at a specific time and place, or if held at some other time or some other place, an announcement of the time and place of meeting is given to the public beforehand.

Any person may attend and observe a public meeting. There is, however, no right of the public to participate in a public meeting nor to comment on the subject matter being considered by the governmental body. The public body may, if it so chooses, permit such participation, but it is not required to do so. However, all City boards and commissions usually allow public comment during meetings and limits those comments to three (3) minutes.

Public Hearing: At a public hearing, any member of the public in attendance who may be affected by the subject matter under consideration, or the decision to be made, has a right to speak and a right to be heard. There are two types of public hearings, those involving legislative decisions and those involving quasi-judicial issues. Depending on the issue, participation in quasi-judicial hearings may be limited by the chairperson.

There is often a staff report presented at public hearings followed by testimony or a presentation from the applicant or appellant, which is made without a time limit unless otherwise agreed upon by the members. Following the presentation by the applicant or appellant, additional speakers should be allowed to speak in a random order, depending upon the number of speakers and the degree of interest in the issue. There should be a uniform time limit for each speaker (five minutes) in a City Council public hearing. If a public hearing is required by law, however, relevant, non-repetitive testimony must be accepted. Finally, the applicant or appellant should be provided the opportunity of rebuttal as the last speaker under the same uniform time limit.

Legal Assistance

Some commissions require the assistance of the City Attorney. When there is doubt concerning the legality of an issue, the City Attorney may be called upon to advise members as to the legality of the proposed action. In some cases, litigation is required; all records of the proceedings must be carefully retained.

Remember the adage, "Discretion is the better part of valor," and when in doubt about the legality of a procedure, wait until the legal opinion is rendered. If necessary, a hearing may have to be continued until matters can be clarified. Counsel must very often control the circumstances surrounding a particular matter since they may be required to defend the action in court. Great care must be taken in the maintenance of records of the proceedings when litigation is a possibility. The direction of the City Attorney should be followed closely.

Other Issues

Commission Members Running for Elective Office

Members of the City's commissions are permitted to retain membership on appointive bodies while seeking any elective office. Members of appointive bodies shall not, however, use the meetings, functions, resources, or activities of such bodies for purposes of campaigning for elective office.

Commission Positions on Ballot Proposals and Legislation

Commissions may review and make recommendations to the City Council on ballot proposals and legislation. The City Council may review all such recommendations. Commission members may not use their title or position to publicly endorse or oppose a candidate or ballot proposition.

Responsibilities of Commission Members

To be selected as a City commission member is a high honor and provides an unusual opportunity for genuine public service. Although specific duties of each vary widely with the purpose for which they are formed, there are certain responsibilities that are common to all members. The following is a summary of those responsibilities.

1. Understand the role and scope of responsibility. Be informed of the individual commission's scope of responsibility and operating procedures.
2. Be careful to represent the majority views of your individual commission. Individual "opinions" to the public and press are discouraged and, if given, should be identified as such.
3. Members should represent the public interest and not special interest groups.
4. Members are in a unique position of serving as a liaison between the City and its residents and can help reconcile contradictory viewpoints and build a consensus around common goals and objectives. Members serve as a communication link between the community, staff, and City, presenting City programs and recommendations and providing a channel for expression by residents.
5. Do your homework and be thorough in recommendations. View situations under consideration prior to the meeting to be fully prepared to discuss, evaluate, and act on all matters scheduled for consideration. Conclusions based on careful preparation will strengthen the value of the group's recommendations.
6. Supportive relationships with the City Council and City staff are basic for successful operation of any commission. In contacting City personnel on items of consideration, the proper channel is through the designated City staff person providing staff support for your group.
7. Establish a good working relationship with fellow group members. Respect individual viewpoints, allow other members time to present their views fully before making comments, be open and honest, welcome new members, and strive to minimize political action on issues.
8. Council appointments to commissions are made without regard to political party affiliation. Members are not restricted from participating in political activities; however, members should not use or involve their membership in the conduct of political activities.

Attendance Requirements for Members - Removal from Office

Although rare, a member can be removed from office by the City Council for various reasons. Examples include neglect of duty, an unlawful act, violation of the Code of Conduct, or if the member has three or more unexcused absences at regular meetings in a calendar year.

Requests for excused absences from regular meetings should be submitted for inclusion as Board or Commission agenda items, preferably prior to the absence.

As of January 2022, all board and commission meetings are held in "hybrid" fashion – both in person and via a virtual platform (such as Zoom). Members and the public can attend either way.

Appointment Policies and Procedures

The City Council establishes commissions as desired to assist and advise them in the conduct of City business. The following is the Council policy with respect to commission member appointments:

1. All appointments and replacements require formal action of the Council.
2. Any person desiring to be considered for appointment to any City commission, including incumbent members seeking reappointment, shall complete an application form stating the commission on which the person desires to serve.
3. New applicants are required to attend at least one meeting of the board or commission they wish to serve after which time they will be interviewed by a subcommittee consisting of the board/commission chair, City Council liaison, and assigned staff, who will then make an appointment recommendation to City Council.
4. The City Council shall not appoint any person to a commission who would have recurring conflicts of interest requiring abstentions in an excessively high percentage of situations.
5. The City Council makes all appointments at an open public meeting.
6. Vacant positions to the boards and commissions are advertised on the City's web page, local media, and City social media to allow those interested in membership to apply.
7. The City will keep the applications for those applicants who apply for membership on a City board or commission and are not appointed for a period of six months to be reconsidered should other vacancies occur.
8. Members shall serve without compensation for their services as such, provided, however, such member shall receive reimbursement for necessary travel expenses and other expenses incurred on official duty when such expenditures have been authorized by the Council.
9. Commission members who will be completing their first term will be asked if they desire consideration by the City Council for a second term.

City Boards and Commissions

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.86 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (5 members required to be city residents), 3-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Affordable Housing Commission was created to support the development of safe and affordable housing and related services in the City, by assisting the City in determining gaps in affordable housing, and by making recommendations to the City Council for addressing the identified affordable housing needs of City residents.

ARTS COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.33 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (not required to be city residents), 4-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Arts Commission was created for the purpose of advising the City Council on matters concerning performing and visual arts; to encourage and promote art activities of individuals, organizations, and government agencies in the City; and to formulate and recommend to the City Council an arts advancement program for the City. A spending plan (budget) is submitted to the City Council prior to July 31 of each year.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.28 of the City Code; RCW 41.12.030

Membership: 3 members (required to be City residents), 6-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities. Applicants must be residents of the City for at least three years preceding appointment. Two members constitute a quorum, and the votes of any two members concurring are sufficient for the decision of all matters and the transaction of business. Civil Service Commission duties include:

1. Making rules and regulations regarding the manner in which examinations for police positions may be held and appointments, promotions, transfers, reinstatements, demotions, suspensions, and discharges.
2. Hear and determine appeals or complaints regarding the administrative work of the personnel department, appeals upon the allocation of positions, the rejection of an examination, and such other matters as may be referred.
3. Provide for, formulate, and hold competitive tests to determine the relative qualifications of persons seeking employment.
4. Establish and maintain eligibility lists for various classes of positions.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.88 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (5 must be City residents – all must be residents of Kittitas County and includes 1 City councilmember), 3-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission will advise the City Council on diversity, equity, and inclusion matters with the mission to support Ellensburg in celebrating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community that welcomes and is supportive of all residents and visitors because doing so enriches each individual's life and the community's wellbeing and vitality.

ELLENSBURG BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY BOARD dba CenterFuse

Authority: Chapter 1.62 of the City Code

Membership: 7-9 members (not required to be City residents), 3year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: CenterFuse is a public development authority and an independent legal entity as authorized by RCW 35.21.730 through 35.21.755, guided by its charter to undertake, assist with and otherwise facilitate, promote or provide for business development within the City.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.60 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (3 members may be non-city residents with no more than 2 residing outside the UGA, 2 members may be under 18 years of age. President of the Ellensburg Environmental Club is an ex-officio member), 5-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Environmental Commission was created for the purpose of advising the City Council on environmental matters with the mission of maintaining and enhancing the uniquely livable and sustainable environment enjoyed by residents of the City. The commission reviews SEPA applications and comments on proposed projects, as well as advising the City Council on matters to promote bicycle use within the City.

LANDMARKS AND DESIGN COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 15.280.030 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members, 4-year terms (majority (4) must be City residents and shall include 2 property owners within the Downtown or Residential Historic Districts, 1 member from the Ellensburg Downtown Association or a property owner, business owner, or resident of the C-C or C-C II zone, 3 professionals and 1 member at-large).

Duties & Responsibilities: The Landmarks and Design Commission was created for the purpose of conducting a design review process for those buildings within the historic districts or designated as historic landmarks, to protect, preserve and enhance the desirable qualities and unique character of Ellensburg, to promote and enhance construction and maintenance practices, recognizing environmental and architectural design as part of the process, and promoting educational, cultural, aesthetic, and social values by preserving and protecting structures of historic interest.

LIBRARY BOARD

Authority: Chapter 1.66 of the City Code

Membership: 5-7 members (majority of members must be City residents, 5-year terms).

Duties & Responsibilities: The Library Board provides input to the City Manager, City Council and Library Director. Ellensburg is a Code City; the library is a department of the City and the Board's role is an advisory one. The Board considers and recommends policy to govern library operation and programs. It recommends on Director appointment, participates in efforts to secure library funds, advises the Director in preparation of the budget, assists the Director in developing policies including collection development, and supports and participates in public relations and marketing programs.

LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Authority: Chapter 2.28 of the City Code; RCW 67.28.1817

Membership: 7 members (3 members must be from the lodging industry; 3 from organizations involving activities authorized to receive tax proceeds; and 1 City councilmember), 2-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Lodging Tax Advisory Committee reviews proposed changes to the lodging tax rate, tax exemptions, and use of the tax. Tax proceeds may be used for tourism promotion, the acquisition and operation of tourism-related facilities, and other uses authorized by state law.

PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.16 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (majority (4) required to be City residents), 3-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Parks and Recreation Commission has the responsibility of making recommendations to the City Council pertaining to recreation programs and parks development and operation, to encourage and promote all forms of recreational programs and activities that will employ the leisure time of the people in a constructive and wholesome manner; and to periodically review and make recommendations for revisions to the Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. Budget recommendations may be submitted to the City Council prior to June 30 of each year.

PLANNING COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.14 of the City Code; Ch. 35.63 RCW

Membership: 7 members, (5 members required to be City residents, all members must reside in Kittitas County), 6-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Planning Commission is responsible for reviewing and making revision recommendations to the City Council pertaining to the long-term Comprehensive Land Use Plan and the Land Development Code. The Commission also conducts hearings and makes recommendations on a variety of land-use applications.

PUBLIC TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Authority: Chapter 1.84 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members, (1 Council member, 1 Central Washington University representative and 1 Associated Students of Central Washington University Student Government representative and 4 members at large), 3-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Public Transit Advisory Committee shall advise and make recommendations to Council pertaining to the maintenance and operation of public transit within the City, develop and implement a community outreach program, provide advice and recommendations to City's transit provider, Council and staff concerning the public transit system, and report at least annually to Council on matters as they pertain to the City's public transit system.

SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMISSION

Authority: Chapter 1.48 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (Members must be at least 55 years of age and include representatives of agencies or organizations primarily interested in senior citizens), 2-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Senior Citizens Advisory Commission was created for the purpose of making recommendations to the City Council on matters pertaining to senior citizen participation in programs and use of facilities provided by the City. The Commission also encourages and promotes activities to meet the needs of senior citizens, and formulates and recommends long-term needs and goals for senior citizens to the City Council.

UTILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Authority: Chapter 1.50 of the City Code

Membership: 7 members (2 City Councilmembers, 1 Central Washington University representative, 2 City electric or gas utility customers, 1 KITTCOM representative, 1 telecommunications utility customer), 3-year terms.

Duties & Responsibilities: The Utility Advisory Committee was created for the purpose of providing a mechanism for the City Council of Ellensburg to obtain the benefits of recommendations, advice and opinions on those matters affecting City utility policy and operations.

Conducting A Public Hearing

Conducting the public hearing is often the most difficult task for a new chairperson. Often there are two or more sides and the participants are highly motivated and often nervous. The role of the chairperson is to make sure all participants are treated fairly. Whenever possible, place the most controversial item early on the agenda. If possible, the commission should take action promptly enough to avoid holding an item over.

Begin the public hearing with the reading of the prepared opening statement for a public hearing and follow with an explanation of the purpose and what action is requested and what action may be possible. The prepared script also includes time limits for testimony, which usually starts at five (5) minutes per person, but with additional time allowed once all those present have had an opportunity to speak. All persons speaking must identify themselves, not only for the record, but also so they can be spoken to by name. They must be recognized by the chairperson before speaking. All public hearings must be recorded by a staff person.

Don't let testimony ramble but do permit all persons who wish to add non-repetitive information to do so. Use the hearing to gather necessary information about the community, neighborhood, and individual desires or concerns about the proposal. It is recommended that the applicant or appellant be allowed to speak first. Following the presentation by the applicant, all additional speakers may be permitted to speak in a random order. Provide the applicant an opportunity to make a rebuttal.

At most public hearings, the commission is trying to understand the resident's view of the proposal. Be careful not to prejudge. Use the hearing to gather information. Do not get trapped in a dialogue with the speaker over trivial matters. Try to reinforce the speaker and help them overcome their anxiousness and nervousness. You may want to repeat back to the speaker what you believe were their main points. Try to avoid speaker to audience conversation. The purpose of the hearing is to help your commission to act, not to engage in debate.

Sometimes inflammatory comments are made in public hearings. Try not to overreact to these comments. They do not require answers. Most are expressions of frustration. Try to turn this frustration to constructive discussion. Ask questions. Refer to the person by name. If you feel that some comments must be responded to, be calm and informational. Do not return insult for insult. Be a pillar of understanding, forgiveness, and strength.

After all testimony is taken, close the public hearing with the prepared closing statement.

Commission members should not express their views on the proposal until after the public hearing is closed and discussion begun, but they may ask questions during the hearing to clarify the applicant's or other's position. Comments and questions by Commission members during the hearing should not suggest a position one way or another. After the public hearing is closed, each Commission member should be invited to discuss their views on the proposal.

Call for a motion and a second to the motion. Ask if there is further discussion. A voice vote may be taken or a roll call vote if there appears to be a divided vote on the issue. A roll call vote should always be called for in controversial situations. Make the outcome of the vote clear to the applicant.

View the public hearing as democracy in action at the local level. Set your personal goal to make the public hearing work by seeing that everyone is treated fairly, and the commission had all the facts to make a fair decision. See that the commission was open in its deliberations, no one person dominated the meeting, and no one left the meeting feeling misunderstood or, worse, unable to state their view.

SOME ADDITIONAL FACTS

Ellensburg is the only city in Washington operating six utilities: light, gas, water, sewer, stormwater, and telecom. Our electric distribution system is one of the oldest in the State.

The City purchased an electric production and distribution system from private interests in 1891 and from that date to the present has operated a very successful system. In the beginning, electric energy was produced by steam power and then later by a small hydro-electric plant using water diverted from the Yakima River. The electrical use within the City continued to grow to the point where, in 1941, the City abandoned production of electricity by local means and entered the first of several agreements with Bonneville Power Administration for supplying Ellensburg with its entire needs of electrical energy.

In 1913 Ellensburg as a municipality entered the water production and distribution business. Today this system consists of one large well facility located approximately seven miles northwest of the City, used when water demand is high, three deep groundwater wells operating outside the City limits, plus seven groundwater wells operating inside the City limits, as well as an additional groundwater well coming online in 2022. Two reservoirs hold approximately 5.1 million gallons of water, and the system is divided into high and low pressure zones. The City maintains ownership of a gravity watershed system, too, which was a primary source of water in earlier years but is currently not used. The watershed is approximately nine miles north of the City limits. The distribution system has been brought up to date and improved by an annual program of replacing the old wooden water lines with cast iron and ductile iron mains. Today none of the original wooden mains exist in the in-town distribution system.

The City has been in the sewage collection and disposal business since at least the early 1930s. The City constructed a wastewater treatment plant in 1939 which operated until 1974 when it was decommissioned and fully replaced with a new wastewater treatment plant at a new site off South Canyon Road that was constructed in 1972. The new plant was then modified and improved in 1982 for the handling of sludge. In 1993 an ambitious program was initiated to upgrade the facility to meet State and Federal requirements and to handle the needs of our community for many years into the future.

In 1956 the City began constructing a natural gas distribution system with the first customer (the Antler's Hotel) being turned on in January 1957. The City operates and maintains the natural gas distribution system within its service territory which includes the city limits and specified areas in the county beyond the City limits. The City has long-term gas transportation and storage agreements in place and utilizes an outside firm to provide asset management services to assist with gas procurement and delivery utilizing those agreements. Gas is delivered to Ellensburg at the Kittitas Tap Station approximately 2 ½ miles east of town from Williams Northwest Pipeline. From there the City adds odorant to the natural gas then flows it through two pressure reducing regulator stations before gas is distributed throughout the system to our customers.

The City of Ellensburg received its first National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) stormwater permit from the Department of Ecology in 2007. The utility was officially formed in 2009 and established a code and rates to accommodate the work the permit required. Since that time the utility obtained grant funding to build its own decant facility, purchase a vacuum truck, two new high efficiency sweepers, comply with all the outreach education activities, build an Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE) program, conduct effectiveness monitoring studies, write the Operation and Maintenance

Plan, Management Plan, Annual Report, audits, grant fund Gateway projects and various other grant funded projects

Pride in our downtown area and a desire to keep it viable and prosperous has inspired several plans for downtown renovation. In 1974 an ambitious program was completed for enhancing the downtown area with paver brick sidewalks, traffic nodes, parking patterns to provide additional spaces, and tree plantings. In recent years, sidewalk flower box and node plantings have been encouraged to beautify the downtown area; the paver sidewalks have been renewed and the area expanded. In 1981 the Rotary Pavilion (now Unity Park) and park area were dedicated, providing yet another downtown beautification project. All encourage use of our downtown businesses by both local patrons and tourists passing through our area.