

# City of Ferndale **Boards and Commissions Manual**

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**Presented By:**  
Ferndale City  
Clerk's Office

*Updated June 2025*

The purpose of this manual is to serve as a guide of all boards and commissions policies, rules, and regulations for current and aspiring members. Please refer to the City of Ferndale Municipal Ordinances, Charter, or State of Michigan laws to resolve disputes.



**FERNDALE**



# Table of Contents

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<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Overview .....	2
Descriptions .....	3
Roles and Responsibilities .....	17
Staff and City Council Liaisons .....	19
Eligibility .....	23
Appointment Process .....	24
Removal of Members .....	27
Onboarding .....	28
Discourse with Dignity .....	29
Communications .....	31
Procedures, Records, and Rules .....	34
Expenses .....	44
Schedule Changes .....	45
Resources .....	47

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# Boards and Commissions Overview

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**Boards and commissions provide opportunities for citizens of a wide variety of talents and backgrounds—residents, business owners, entrepreneurs, and beyond—to work together and make our community a stronger, more vibrant place. Thank you for stepping up to share your expertise and enthusiasm!**

The City's charter requires that each board and commission provide an annual report to Council on the business conducted during the previous fiscal year, as well as future plans prior to the beginning of the City's fiscal year (July 1).

**All Boards and Commissions must adhere to the Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, and the City's Code of Ordinance Chapter 2 Administration, Article XII, Boards and Commissions-General Rules, unless otherwise stated in another ordinance, charter, resolution, policy, or state statute.**

# Boards and Commissions

## Descriptions

**MCL** = Michigan Compiled Law

**FCC** = Ferndale City Charter

**FCO** = Ferndale City Ordinance

Board or Commission	Number of Members	Governing Document	Term Limits
Accessibility and Inclusion Commission	7	<u>FCO Art 2-XI</u>	No
Arts and Beautification Commission	9	<u>FCO Art 2-XV</u>	No
Board of Review	5	<u>MCL Act 206 of 1893</u> <u>FCO Art 17-II</u>	No
Board of Zoning Appeals	7 (with 2 alternates)	<u>MCL 125.3601</u> <u>FCO Art 24-XIX</u>	No
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority	9	<u>MCL Act 381 of 1996</u> <u>Bylaws</u>	No
Citizens Police Advisory Review Board	5	<u>FCO Art 2-XIV</u> <u>Board policies</u>	Yes (Limited to 3 Consecutive Full Terms)
Civil Service Board	3	<u>FCC Chapter XXA</u>	No
Construction Board of Appeals	5	<u>MCL 125.1514</u> <u>FCC Sec 6-113</u>	No
Downtown Development Authority	9	<u>MCL Act 57 of 2018</u> <u>FCO Art 19-VI</u>	No
Election Commission	3	<u>FCC Chapter IV, Sec 25-26</u> <u>MCL 168.25</u>	No
Employee Pension Board	3	<u>FCO Art 2-VII</u>	No
Environmental Sustainability Commission	9	<u>FCO Art 2-VIII</u>	No
Housing Commission	5	<u>MCL 125.651 - 125.709e</u> <u>FCO Art 19-III</u>	No
Parks and Recreation Commission	7	<u>FCO Art 13-III</u>	No
Planning Commission	9	<u>MCL 125.3815</u> <u>FCO Art 24-XVIII</u>	No
Police and Fire Pension Board	6	<u>FCC Chapter XIXB</u>	No
Sidewalk Hardship Committee	4	<u>CC 05-18-92</u> <u>CC 02-08-93</u> <u>CC 07-13-98</u>	No

## **Accessibility and Inclusion Commission**

The commission studies challenges relating to persons with visual, hearing, cognitive, or mobility disabilities and their interaction with the community, and advises City Council on its findings. Members are to include primarily visually, hearing, cognitively and/or mobility disabled individuals or organizations representing them.

Preferred Areas of Expertise:

Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations, Architecture,  
Building Construction/Engineering, Accessibility Issues,  
Education, Event Planning

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## **Arts and Beautification Commission**

The Arts and Beautification Commission emphasizes and strengthens the City's ability to promote the beautification of public spaces and artistic and cultural opportunities for residents and visitors.

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Art, Culture, Education, Event Planning, Music, Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations, Forestry, Event Planning, Horticulture, Landscape Architecture, Property Maintenance/Management, Real Estate

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## **Board of Review**

The Board of Review annually hears and decides upon requests for adjustments to tax assessments.

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Banking/Finance, Real Estate/Development Law (no agents or brokers), Property Appraisal/Assessing

## **Board of Zoning Appeals**

The Board of Zoning Appeals grants variances to the zoning ordinance when a unique, practical difficulty not caused by the property owner arises. This board also hears and decides appeals and reviews any order, requirement, decision or determination made by an administrative official or body charged with the enforcement of this chapter, including the director, the building department and the planning commission, other than special land use or planned unit development applications. The BZA may reverse or affirm, in whole or in part, or may modify the decision and make a determination as, in the BZA's opinion, should have been made, and to that end, shall have all the powers of the officer or body from whom the appeal is taken.

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Architecture, Law, Planning, Building/Construction, Engineering, Real Estate

## **Brownfield Redevelopment Authority**

The Brownfield Redevelopment Authority encourages the redevelopment of environmentally contaminated property by providing and overseeing financial incentives for the cleanup and redevelopment of affected properties.

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Commercial Banking, Chemical Engineering, Commercial Real Estate/Development Law, Economic Development, Environmental Engineering/Consulting/Law, Property Appraisal/Assessing

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## **Civil Service Board**

The Civil Service Board was established by City Charter in 1927. The Commission's duty is to represent the public interest in personnel administration in the City Service through oversight of the Civil Service System.

**Continued on next page.**



## **Civil Service Board (cont.)**

The purpose of the Civil Service System, which is based on merit principles and scientific methods, is to afford a fair and equal opportunity for public service, to establish conditions of service which will attract employees of character and capacity; and to improve the efficiency of personnel administration. The Commission provides an avenue of appeal for disciplinary action, approves test battery and qualification procedures and approves eligibility lists for promotions and new hires, and oversees the appointment and probationary periods of full-time employees.

### **Preferred Areas of Expertise:**

- Employment/Labor Law
- Human Resources/Personnel
- Labor Relation
- Public Administration

## **Citizens Police Advisory and Review Board**

The purpose of the Citizens Police Advisory and Review Board is to foster open communication between police leadership and the community, provide greater transparency for police conduct complaints and use of force reports and the processes that follow, and improve and strengthen police-community relations through enhanced transparency, review of police conduct, and opportunities for community input on police policy.

“A member shall not be appointed to the board if the person is serving a sentence for a criminal conviction, is an announced candidate for a political office in the city, works for the city's police department, or is a city employee. Board composition should include members with relevant skills and experiences, including but not limited to members from segments of the community who are vulnerable and tend to have negative interactions with police and members who have experience with mediation, mental health or social work, antiracism or equity, restorative or transformative justice, law enforcement, or criminal justice.” (FCO Article 2 – XIV)

## **Construction Board of Appeals**

The Construction Board of Appeals receives appeals from any person who was refused a building permit in the City of Ferndale. It hears the appeal and renders its decision with a statement of reasons for the decision, not more than 30 days after submission of the appeal.

“One member shall be an elector of the City and four members shall be appointed who shall be qualified by experience and shall have evidence of interest in building and housing by possessing a background of experience as a professional engineer, architect, a member of a building construction trade or building construction industry, or banking and finances with experience in home mortgages, or other electors having knowledge of buildings or the building industry.” (FCC Sec 6-113)

## **Downtown Development Authority**

The Ferndale Downtown Development Authority (DDA) has worked to ensure the long-term viability of Ferndale's downtown by investing in infrastructure, landscaping, marketing, and business support. The DDA also collaborates with the City of Ferndale to support and develop the downtown to meet the needs of businesses, visitors, and residents.

The Board is comprised of the Mayor (or their designee from City Council) and 8 members appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council.

“Not less than a majority of the members shall be persons having an interest in property located in the downtown district or officers, members, trustees, principals, or employees of a legal entity having an interest in property located in the downtown district.”  
(MCL 125.4204)

## **Election Commission**

The Election Commission is the legal authority under Michigan State law for supervising and executing all elections within the City of Ferndale.

The Commission consists of the City Manager, City Clerk, and City Attorney by virtue of office. The Commission holds the power to delegate duties and responsibilities of election administration to the City Clerk and their staff.

Per City of Ferndale City Charter, the Election Commission does not have any resident board members.

## **Employee Pension Board**

The Employee Pension Board administers, manages, and operates the retirement system serving most City employees and retirees.

The Employee Pension Board has no non-staff members, and the board meets jointly with the Police and Fire Pension Board as the Joint Pension Board quarterly.

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## **Environmental Sustainability Commission**

The Environmental Sustainability Commission supports the sustainability efforts of the City, with a goal of ensuring equity among the environment, society, and economy.

“Members of the commission shall be residents of the City and be comprised of members with professional experience related to sustainability.” (FCO Art 2-VIII)

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Education, Energy, Equity, Civil/Construction Engineering, Environmental Engineering/Consulting/Law, Recycling, Solid Waste

## **Ferndale Housing Commission (FHC)**

The FHC is governed by the Board, which provides financial oversight, establishes policies, sets the strategic plan, and hires and directs the Executive Director. The Executive Director manages the staff and day-to-day operations of the organization.

The FHC Board is appointed by the Mayor of the City of Ferndale to serve staggered five year terms. The Board is charged with overall governance and oversight of the commission, and it appoints and directs the Executive Director.

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## **Parks and Recreation Commission**

The Parks and Recreation Commission guides the development of park and recreation services for public use. It studies the needs of park and recreation facilities and activities, and reports them with estimated costs to City Council for final consideration.

Preferred Areas of Expertise:

Advertising/Marketing/Public Relations, Banking/Finance, Fitness/Recreation, Forestry, Land Use Planning, Landscape Architecture, Physical Education, Public Administration

## Planning Commission

The Planning Commission considers, advises, and recommends to the City Council amendments to the Zoning Ordinance, reviews development of the City in accordance with current and future needs, approves plat subdividing and drafts, adopts and administers the Master Plan for the City.

"One [board member] shall be a member of the council to be selected by a resolution of the council to serve as a member ex-officio, and eight of whom shall be appointed by the mayor, subject to confirmation by the council. The appointed members shall hold no other municipal office except that one member may be a member of the zoning board of appeals... All ex-officio members appointed shall have full voting rights." (FCO Art. 2 - III)(34 & 39)

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Architecture, Building Construction, Civil Engineering, Facilities Management, GIS/AutoCAD, Historic Preservation, Land Use Planning, Landscape Architecture, Property Maintenance/Management, Real Estate/Development/Law



## **Police and Fire Pension Board**

The Police and Fire Pension Board administers, manages, and operates the retirement system serving employees and retirees of the Police and Fire departments

The Police and Fire Pension Board has one resident member, and the board meets jointly with the Employee Pension Board as the Joint Pension Board quarterly.

Preferred Areas of Expertise: Banking/Finance, Labor Law, Public Administration

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## **Sidewalk Hardship Committee**

The Sidewalk Hardship Committee hears appeals from property owners who find that they cannot pay all at once for City-scheduled sidewalk replacements on their property.

A resident represents each quadrant (Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, Southwest) of the City on the Committee. (City Council meeting 9/28/92 - item # 362-5; amended 02/08/93; amended 07/13/98)

# Roles and Responsibilities of Boards and Commissions Members

Boards and commissions serve as an administrative and/or advisory role to the decision-making process by City Council. Board and commission members are tasked with carrying out the mission of the board or commission they serve in accordance with the City's goals, ordinance/charter/law, and the Open Meetings Act. Volunteering as a board or commission member lends your voice to the community.

Here are a few ways to be an effective board member:

## **1. Be familiar with the operating statute, bylaws, and other critical documents of your board or commission.**

These documents provide information on the mission and scope of your group as well as how it should operate.

## **2. Be involved in ethical decision making.**

Ferndale relies on its many boards and commissions to provide critical guidance in City decisions and to serve as important forums for public participation. With this privilege, comes a responsibility to comply with governmental ethics laws and to uphold the public's trust.

## **3. Attend meetings and be prepared.**

Most of the City's boards prepare an agenda prior to the meeting and many provide related materials. The board members are expected to come to each meeting prepared to discuss the relevant issues, having reviewed any provided documentation.

**All board and commission positions are voluntary (unpaid), except for the Board of Review.**

**Note: Boards do not have the authority to enter into agreements on behalf of the City. All agreements and contracts MUST be approved by City Council.**

# Staff and City Council Liaisons

## Staff Liaisons

- Serves as the recording secretary for the board or commission, as appointed by the City Manager. Some board and commissions may have bylaws that assign recording duties to a member of the board. The staff liaison is still responsible for posting the agendas and minutes on Granicus.
- Prepares and distributes minutes for the board or commission.
- Prepares and distributes materials to be considered in the business of the board or commission.
- Publishes notices of meetings and is responsible for providing accommodations to persons attending meetings (Note: Publications required to be posted in the newspaper should be arranged with the City Clerk's Office at least three weeks prior to required date of publication).
- Provides the board or commission with recommendations for items to consider.
- Ensures City Staff and/or City Council are informed on board or commission actions and discussions.

# Staff and City Council Liaisons

## Staff Liaisons (cont.)

- Works with board or commission members to create annual report/presentation for City Council.
- Works with board members with upcoming term expirations to determine continued interest in serving on the board.
- Notifies newly-appointed board and commission members of appointments by City Council.

## City Council Liaisons

- Serves as the council liaison for two years, beginning the January of a new City Council, unless otherwise determined and voted on by the City Council.
- Serves as non-voting members of board or commission (exception: Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeal, Board of Review, Employee Pension Board, Police & Fire Pension Board).
- Aligns the goals of the board or commission to City Council's Strategic Plan or other Council initiatives.

## All Liaison Information

Board or Commission	Staff Liaison	Recording Secretary Duties	Contact Information
Accessibility and Inclusion Commission	James Krizan	Yes	<a href="mailto:jkrizan@ferndalemi.gov">jkrizan@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Arts and Beautification Commission	Sommer Realy	Yes	<a href="mailto:sommer@downtownferndale.com">sommer@downtownferndale.com</a>
Board of Review	Philip Whitfield	Oakland County	<a href="mailto:pwhitfield@ferndalemi.gov">pwhitfield@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Board of Zoning Appeals	Melissa Kalnasy	Yes	<a href="mailto:mkalnasy@ferndalemi.gov">mkalnasy@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Brownfield Redevelopment Authority	Roger Caruso	Yes	<a href="mailto:rcaruso@ferndalemi.gov">rcaruso@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Civil Service Board	Justin Giorlando	Yes	<a href="mailto:jgiorlando@ferndalemi.gov">jgiorlando@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Citizens Policing Advisory and Review Board	Dan Jacey	Yes	<a href="mailto:djacey@ferndalemi.gov">djacey@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Construction Board of Appeals	James Jameson	Yes	<a href="mailto:jjameson@ferndalemi.gov">jjameson@ferndalemi.gov</a>

## All Liaison Information (cont.)

Board or Commission	Staff Liaison	Recording Secretary Duties	Contact Information
Downtown Development Authority	Jennie Beeker	Yes	<a href="mailto:jbeeker@downtownferndale.com">jbeeker@downtownferndale.com</a>
Employee Pension Board**	Dave Movilla	Yes	<a href="mailto:dmovilla@ferndalemi.gov">dmovilla@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Environmental Sustainability Commission	Logan Applebee	No	<a href="mailto:lapplebee@ferndalemi.gov">lapplebee@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Parks and Recreation Commission	LaReina Wheeler	Yes	<a href="mailto:lwheeler@ferndalemi.gov">lwheeler@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Planning Commission	Melissa Kalnasy	Yes	<a href="mailto:mkalnasy@ferndalemi.gov">mkalnasy@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Police and Fire Pension Board**	Dave Movilla	Yes	<a href="mailto:dmovilla@ferndalemi.gov">dmovilla@ferndalemi.gov</a>
Sidewalk Hardship Committee	James Jameson	Yes	<a href="mailto:jameson@ferndalemi.gov">jameson@ferndalemi.gov</a>

\*\*The Employee Pension Board and Police and Fire Pension Boards meets jointly.

# Board and Commission Eligibility

Members of the City's boards and commissions must be residents of the City unless otherwise specified in the ordinance, charter, or statute. Members may not hold any other municipal office while serving on a City board or commission. All board and commission members are appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council.

Interested residents must submit a completed application for the board they are requesting to serve on. This includes all reappointments to boards and commission. The Mayor and City Council members will review applicants for vacant positions on a quarterly basis. Applications remain active for six months.



# Board and Commission Appointment Process

Staff liaisons should remain diligent about monitoring board vacancies and upcoming appointment expirations. Although City Clerk staff will provide support to each board and commission, the staff liaisons are responsible for ensuring their respective boards are operating as intended.

## Appointment for New Members

1. The staff liaison should review all applications for the vacant board position and provide a recommendation list to the City Clerk to share with the Mayor, if available.
2. The Mayor will call and interview candidates on the staff liaison's list.
3. The Mayor will share their decision to the City Clerk.
4. The City Clerk will confirm an agenda date with the Mayor for term renewal and add an agenda item for that board member. The City Clerk will communicate with the staff liaison the date of the appointment and the liaison should encourage the chair and new board member to attend the City Council meeting.
5. The City Clerk's Office will add the appointment to Granicus.

# Staff and City Council Appointment Process

## Re-Appointment for Existing Board Members

1. The City Clerk's Office will review upcoming board and commission vacancies quarterly. The staff liaisons will be notified of any upcoming vacancies on the board.
2. The staff liaison should reach out to a board member roughly 3-4 months prior to the expiration of that board member's term to determine if the board member is interested in continuing their service to the board.
3. If the board member is interested in being reappointed for the board position, the staff liaison should direct the board member to renew their application in Granicus (keep in mind that Granicus should auto-populate the board member's information from their original application, so usually only minor updates are necessary). All board members must renew their application. Note: If the board member is not interested in being reappointed, please refer to previous "Appointment for New Board Members" section.

# Boards and Commissions

## Appointment Process

4. Once the new application has been resubmitted, the board member should communicate with City Clerk staff that the application has been completed and that the board member is interested in being reappointed.

5. The City Clerk will provide the application to the Mayor and the Mayor will determine if they would like to reappoint that board member.

6. If the Mayor requests the board member be reappointed, the City Clerk will confirm an agenda date with the Mayor for term renewal and add an agenda item for that board member. The City Clerk will notify the staff liaison of the Mayor's desire to reappoint the board member.

7. The staff liaison will notify the board member and chairperson of the committee of the Mayor's decision to reappoint. The chairperson and board member are not required to attend the City Council meeting.

8. The City Clerk's Office will add the reappointment to Granicus.

# Boards and Commissions

## **Attendance/Removal of Members**

Individuals who are interested in serving on a board or commission should consider their availability and the meeting frequency, especially if they may live outside of Ferndale for an extended period. Board members are expected to attend every meeting, though there may be circumstances that a board member may need to excuse themselves from a meeting. Board members may request a 90-day maximum leave of absence from City Council.

It is important to note that boards are unable to meet if they do not meet quorum, thus impacting the overall effectiveness and productivity of that board.

Board members serve at the will of City Council and can be removed for cause. Although exceptions can be made, repeated non-attendance may result in the removal of that board member.

"Prior to consideration of any removal of a member from a board or commission, council shall provide notice to such member who may request a hearing before council and receive an explanation of the reason for their removal prior to consideration of any such removal."

(Ord. 1252 (1))

# Board and Commission Onboarding Process

## Board and Commission Onboarding Process

- New members will be notified of their appointment by the staff liaison.
- The City Clerk will provide the staff liaisons with their Oath of Office. The staff liaison must organize a time to have the appointee sign the oath (this can occur at the first meeting of the appointee). The staff liaison is responsible for returning the oath to the City Clerk's Office.
- The board/commission staff liaison will send the Boards and Commissions Handbook along with a meeting schedule and any other pertinent materials to new members for their review.
- The board/commission staff liaison may choose to set up a meeting with new members to review the Boards and Commissions Handbook and offer any additional guidance required.

# Staff and City Council

## **Discourse with Dignity**

We ask all attendees to review and follow these points to ensure discourse with dignity for all.

1. Participation from traditionally underserved and unheard-from voices is encouraged, and we are committed to making our spaces safe for these community members to be heard.
2. Remember that some audience members or speakers may be attending their first public meeting or may feel uncomfortable speaking publicly, and their voices deserve to be heard. Please be respectful.
3. Disorderly conduct from the audience that disrupts or disturbs the meeting is not allowed; all participants deserve the opportunity to hear the meeting without interference by others.
4. Abusive language, threats, bullying, and personal attacks are discouraged. It's hard to get to the root of an issue if the content is buried within disruptive or harmful behavior.
5. For productive conversation, comments should address issues, not people.

# Staff and City Council **Discourse with Dignity**

The Mayor or presiding officer has the authority to enforce the Rules of Procedure. Individuals who engage in disorderly conduct or disturb the public meeting may be ruled out of order by the Mayor or presiding officer. If a person continues to be disorderly and disrupt the public meeting, they may be asked to leave the meeting or the Mayor or presiding officer may request a recess of the public meeting to restore order and allow the business of the public body to proceed.

We at the City of Ferndale believe in the rights of all people to exercise their First Amendment right to free speech while maintaining dignity in our public meetings.

**Thank you for helping us to achieve this important balance.**

# Board and Commission Communications

## Policy

The City of Ferndale adopted a Communications Policy in 2016 to be followed by all City departments and entities, including Boards and Commissions:

***All public-facing and/or external communications or publications that will be seen by residents or constituents (more than five people) must be created in coordination with or reviewed by the Communications Director prior to print/distribution.***

If your Board or Commission is planning to create or distribute any external-facing communication—including presentations, signage, print collateral such as postcards or brochures, advertising, merchandise, digital or web content, and social media content—please consult the Communications Department before proceeding.



# Board and Commission Communications

## Logos

Boards and Commissions are to use the approved City of Ferndale logo. The logo must not be altered in any way, including recoloring, reformatting, tilting/turning, cropping, or adding to other logos. No new logos or graphics shall be created on behalf of any Board or Commission without prior consultation and approval from the Communications Department. For complete information about logo usage, please see the Communications & Style Guide.

## Presentations

The City has an accessible PowerPoint presentation template that all departments, Boards, and Commissions are asked to use for public-facing presentations. If you need assistance, consult your staff liaison.

# Board and Commission Communications

## Social Media

Board and commissions may, with the approval of Council and in accordance with all City social media policies, establish social media accounts. There is an approvals process (Communications Director, City Manager, and City Council) that must be followed. All social media accounts must assign the Communications Director and/or Communications Specialist as page/account administrators or moderator. If you are interested in creating a social media account, please start the process by meeting with the Communications Director.

## Website

Each Board and Commission is assigned a City-approved web page at **[ferndalemi.gov/government/boards-commissions](http://ferndalemi.gov/government/boards-commissions)**. These pages can be customized in a number of ways; consult with the Communications Department to update your page. The creation of new or stand-alone websites, blogs, or other digital resources outside of the **[ferndalemi.gov](http://ferndalemi.gov)** domain is not permitted.

# **Board and Commission Parliamentary Procedures, Records, and Rules**

## **Parliamentary Procedure**

- Boards and commissions meetings will be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised edition.
- Each member of a board or commission present at a meeting shall vote on each motion made unless excused based on a real or perceived conflict of interest.

## **Records Liaisons — Publish Agendas/Minutes on City Website**

- All boards and commissions will maintain public records in accordance with the City's adopted record retention schedules.
- If someone who is not the liaison is creating the minutes, they must send the minutes to that board's liaison to post the minutes for compliance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act.
- All minutes must include roll call of members who are present.

# **Board and Commission Parliamentary Procedures, Records, and Rules**

## **Boards and Commissions Rules/Bylaws**

- Boards and commissions may adopt administrative rules which pertain to the actual conduct of their business in accordance with the boards and commission ordinance.
- Rules will not be effective without the approval of the Council and, once approved, must be made available to each person conducting business before the board or commission.

# Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)

The Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) provides all persons (except persons incarcerated in correctional facilities) access to public records of public bodies. Generally, all City records are subject to disclosure under FOIA, including all email correspondence, text messages relating to boards and commissions business, and other records.

**Any and all email correspondence relating to boards and commission should copy the staff liaison to ensure that the City has record of the correspondence.**

- "Reply All" emails should be avoided to reduce potential Open Meetings Act violations.

# Open Meetings Act

Boards and commissions meetings shall be open to the public, and all business shall be conducted in open session in accordance with the Michigan Open Meetings Act, unless otherwise permitted as a closed session under the Michigan Open Meetings Act.

Meetings must be held publicly and must be accessible for all individuals, regardless of residency status.

- Preferably, the meeting will be held in a City-owned facility, unless otherwise approved by City administration.

There must be an opportunity for the public to speak at each regularly scheduled meeting. Boards can and should adopt Rules of Procedure for their meetings with the assistance of their liaisons.

**All board decisions must be made at a public meeting.**

“Decision” means, “a determination, action, vote, or disposition upon a motion, proposal, recommendation, resolution, order, ordinance, bill, or measure on which a vote by members of a public body is required and by which a public body effectuates or formulates public policy” (MCL 15.262(d)). Furthermore, “all deliberations of a public body constituting a quorum of its members shall take place a meeting open to the public” (MCL 15.263 (2) AND (3)).

**Informal meetings are permitted per the following restrictions/guidelines.**

- Perception Management: Even if no actual discussions of public business occur, the presence of a quorum at such events can create a perception of impropriety. Officials should be transparent about the purpose of the gathering and ensure that no public business is discussed.
- Providing Notice: If public business might be discussed, or if the event might be perceived as an official meeting, it is prudent to follow public notice requirements. This transparency protects Board Members from any concerns about impropriety.

**The OMA establishes what board members can perform collaboratively outside of an open meeting.**

Information that needs to be distributed to the entire board should be provided to the Staff Liaison and then sent by BCC to the board. Any discussion with a quorum of all board members should be provided as an agenda item at the next open meeting, even if no official action is intended to take place. It is highly recommended that the board form subcommittees that are composed of less than a quorum of the board if some projects or items need to be addressed between meetings.

Subcommittees may make a recommendation to the board, but any official decisions will still need to be made during an open meeting of the entire board.



**Conferences, Workshops, and Seminars:** Ongoing education and development for board members is encouraged. Perception is less of an issue with professional workshops than an informal meetup of a quorum of members. The OMA applies to a quorum of board members present at any event. Appointed board members should ensure that workshops and seminars do not turn into unofficial meetings where public business is discussed. Members should avoid discussing matters that could come before the public body for decision-making. Conversations about general topics, educational content, or networking that do not relate to public policy decisions are generally acceptable.

## **Subcommittees and Advisory Committees**

“The OMA does not apply to committees and subcommittees composed of less than a quorum of the full public body if they “are merely advisory or only capable of making ‘recommendations concerning the exercise of governmental authority.” (Open Meetings Act Handbook, Page 10). In other words, boards and commissions can form subcommittees to discuss and determine recommendations to the board as a whole if the subcommittee is composed of less than a quorum of that body.

# Boards and Commissions

## Procedural Items

### Preparing Agendas

The staff liaison should communicate with the chairperson of their respective board to determine the items that should be addressed in each upcoming meeting. The staff liaison is responsible for creating and posting the agenda in Granicus. Note that agendas are not required to be posted on the board outside City Hall. However, City Council, Planning Commission, Board of Zoning Appeals, and Downtown Development Authority minutes should be posted, as a courtesy.

### Taking Minutes

Staff liaisons are responsible for taking "action minutes" for each meeting. In other words, actions (decisions made) should be recorded, and discussions leading up to the decision are not required for the minutes. The only motions that should be recorded are those that have been made, seconded, and voted on. The motion should include the individual's name who made the motion, the individual's name who seconded the motion, and a roll call vote of the individuals who voted on the motion.

# Boards and Commissions

## Procedural Items

### Taking Minutes (cont.)

Minutes must include the following information:

- Name of board or commission
- When and where the meeting was held
- Which board members are present (roll call)
- Full text of each motion made, with mover and seconder
- Public hearings must include the time the hearing was opened and closed
- Calls to Audience and Commissioners do not need to be recorded in the minutes, although we can include a brief summary as a courtesy
- Time of adjournment

Minutes must be uploaded to the City's website using Granicus, available for the public.

# Boards and Commissions Expenses

It is very rare for most boards and commissions to receive or spend any kind of money. However, boards and commissions may be allowed an amount of money for expenses with approval by council. Gifts and donations are subject to approval and acceptance of council and shall be deposited with other public monies by the Finance Director. Boards cannot apply for, receive, or administer grants without approval of council and the Finance Department.

# Boards and Commissions

## Schedule Changes

### Annual Schedule

The annual schedule for all boards and commissions run from January 01 through December 31 of each year. Each Board and Commission must determine the following year's schedule no later than November 30. The staff liaison must immediately share the schedule with the Clerk's Office, so that it can be approved by City Council in December.

### Changes to Schedule

Boards may choose to adjust their schedule throughout the year. If a board makes the decision to change the schedule, the change must be posted on the board outside of City Hall within three days of the decision being approved. The post must include new dates, times, and places of the meetings must be included on the post. This information should also be reflected in Granicus.

# Boards and Commissions

## Schedule Changes

### Meeting Cancellations

The cancellation of a meeting with short notice should be extraordinarily rare. If board members are not able to attend a meeting, they should communicate that information with the staff liaison as soon as they become aware that they cannot attend the meeting. If the staff liaison determines that a quorum of board members will not be present for the upcoming meeting, they should cancel the meeting at that time. The staff liaison is responsible for posting the cancellation on the City's website and outside City Hall.

# Important Resources

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[City of Ferndale 2025 Meeting Calendar](#)

[State of Michigan: Open Meetings Act \(OMA\) Handbook](#)

[State of Michigan Freedom of Information Act \(FOIA\) Handbook](#)

[Michigan Municipal League: Agendas and Minutes](#)





# Thank You!

Thank you for your time and review of this information. For questions about a specific board or commission, please reach out to the corresponding Staff Liaison. For all other questions or concerns, reach out to the City Clerk's Office at **[clerk@ferndalemi.gov](mailto:clerk@ferndalemi.gov)**.

**Presented By :**  
Ferndale City Clerk's Office

