



# Citizen Advisory Committee

# HANDBOOK

CLATSOP COUNTY, OR

[ClatsopCounty.gov](http://ClatsopCounty.gov)

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**Clatsop County’s Mission**

*NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR  
SERVING CLATSOP COUNTY  
WITH INTEGRITY  
HONESTY AND RESPECT*

## Welcome

You join many people who serve as volunteer members on Clatsop County Advisory Committees. The information contained in this handbook is intended to assist new members become acquainted with their responsibilities and the functions and decision-making processes of the committee to which they have been appointed. We hope you will find it helpful.

Advisory committees are those established by the County to advise the County on various aspects of government. They will be established and assigned responsibilities by the Board as necessary. Any advisory committee created by the Board may be discontinued by majority vote of the Board.

In addition, the Board may establish a special committee for a specified purpose or project. The Board shall advise the members of a special committee of its purpose and its goals and provide the special committee with a time certain for submitting a recommendation to the Board. Staff assistance or other assistance as deemed advisable by the Board may be provided to any committee or special committee.

Each committee has a set of bylaws consistent with County policies, ordinances and applicable provisions of state law and become effective upon approval of the Board.

## Appointment of New Members

New members are sought from the community to fill advisory committee positions. Members are appointed to advisory committees by the Board of Commissioners and serve at the pleasure of the Board. Members are required to sign a Statement of Roles and Responsibilities form (**Attachment A**). Terms vary in length depending on the committee.

## Removal of Committee Members

Any committee may recommend to the Board of Commissioners the removal of any of its own members in accordance with that committee's bylaws. Unless otherwise provided by law, the Board may remove any appointed committee member from his or her appointment by majority vote of the Board. Removal shall be at the Board's discretion. (Ord. 11-14)

## Legal Obligations of Committee Members

As a committee member, it is important to remember that you have legal responsibilities.

- **Public Bodies:** Advisory Committees are considered “public bodies” under Oregon law. As a result, you must ensure that your committee operates in compliance with the open meetings laws (ORS 192.610 et seq.) **Oregon’s open meetings laws essentially require three things:**

- 1. Notice must be provided for all meetings,**
- 2. Meetings must be open to the public, and**
- 3. Minutes must be created for each meeting.**

A “meeting” is defined as including not only formal gatherings of the board but also any occasion where a “quorum” (**quorum and voting for the conduct of business shall be a majority [50% plus 1] of appointed membership**) of members come together and deliberate on committee issues. This definition also applies where subcommittees are concerned. Therefore, if three members of a five-member subcommittee come together and begin to discuss committee matters, the open meetings laws must be complied with. This is true whether you are in a social setting or in a formal meeting. It is important to be aware of this fact when you find yourself with other committee members, whatever the situation.

- **Public Officials:** Advisory committee members are considered “public officials” and must act consistently with Oregon’s ethics laws (ORS 244.010).

**Oregon’s ethics laws prohibit:**

- 1. Any public official from gaining financially or avoiding financial detriment as a result of his or her position regardless if it is salaried or not.**
- 2. Receipt of gifts with a total value of more than \$50.00 from any single source. A gift is defined as something of value given to a public official, for which the official does not pay an equal value. Gifts of entertainment are included in the \$50 gift limit.**
- 3. Public officials must declare any conflicts of interest at a public meeting.**

A conflict exists if a decision or recommendation potentially could affect the finances of the committee member or the finances of a family member. If a conflict exists, the committee member must declare this fact at a meeting where the issue is discussed and may need to refrain from discussing or voting on the matter. The laws surrounding conflicts of interest are confusing but also contain exemptions that may apply. If you are unsure whether a conflict exists, you should contact the staff person assisting your committee to discuss the matter.

**Claims of Meetings Law Violation:**

Most claims that the open meetings laws have been violated will be made against the public body itself. However, claims may be brought against the individual public officials (in this case volunteer committee members). Public officials may be sued personally for public meeting violations and complaints may also be registered with the Government Standards and Practices Commission (GSPC) and investigated. In most of these circumstances, the county should be able to

represent or act in defense of a public official who has acted in good faith. However, if it appears that a public official has intentionally acted outside the law, the county will not assist with defense.

## **Legal Protection for Volunteers**

Clatsop County is a local public body and is subject to legal action and suit for the torts of its officers, employees and agents, including volunteers (Oregon Tort Claims Act). A tort is any breach of a legal duty which results in injury to a specific person or persons for which the law provides remedy. "Injury" can include such things as financial loss, damage to reputation or emotional injury as well as physical injury.

According to the Act, the action or suit is brought only against the county, not the individual volunteer. The volunteer, upon written request, is entitled to indemnification (protection from the cost of judgement) and legal defense for any tort committed while in the performance of the volunteer's duties. This is true unless the act or omission complained of amounted to malfeasance in office, willful or wanton neglect of duty, or criminal activity.

## **Being an Effective Committee Member**

Members are appointed to Clatsop County committees to represent the public at large. Many times appointments are made to reflect geographic interest, and area of expertise, or to represent an interest group or professional association. Keep this in mind as you become acquainted with your fellow committee members. Remember each member brings an important point of view. Listening to different points of view produces good policies and procedures and fair solutions to problems. If you are unsure of the committee's mission or the item under discussion, you may ask questions and seek information until you have a clear answer and good understanding of the expectations.

It is vital that all members attend meetings regularly and come to meetings prepared. It is important that you read all reports, proposals and other documents prepared or distributed by staff or board officers prior to meetings.

## **Staff Support for Advisory Committees**

County staff within a department manages most Clatsop County committees. The primary role of staff is to carry out the rules, policies and programs developed by the committee. Staff also brings to the committee's attention issues of importance, assists the chair with agenda development, and compiles background information for the committee to study.

In addition, staff responsibilities include: meeting arrangements, preparation of minutes, processing complaints, communication with members and other administrative duties. Staff is available to provide information for and assistance to committee members.

## Meetings

Members of a group have a responsibility for the content and product of meetings they attend. They should come prepared to take ownership for their contribution and the end result of the meeting. Meetings do matter.

- **Attendance:** Regular meeting attendance is important. Members should be aware of specific attendance requirements of their committee and always notify staff or the board chair if unable to attend a meeting.
- **Promptness:** Meetings should start and end on time.
- **Meeting time and place:** Specify a regular meeting time and place, and establish a procedure for notifying members of meetings.
- **Participation:** Everyone's viewpoint is valuable, every team member can make a unique contribution; therefore, emphasize the importance of both speaking freely and listening attentively.
- **Basic conversational courtesies:** Listen attentively and respectfully to others, do not interrupt, one conversation at a time, and so forth.
- **Interruptions:** Decide when interruptions will be tolerated and when they will not.

## Introduction to Robert's Rules of Order

Parliamentary Procedure is a set of rules for conduct at meetings that allows everyone to be heard and to make decisions without confusion. County boards and advisory committees use Robert's Rules of Order as a guideline to conduct their business.

Parliamentary Procedure usually follows a fixed order of business. Below is a typical example:

1. Call to order.
2. Roll call of members present.
3. Approval of minutes of last meeting.
4. Officers' reports.
5. Committee reports.
6. Unfinished business.
7. New business.
8. Announcements.
9. Adjournment.

Business is brought before a committee by the motion of a member. A motion may itself bring its subject to the committee's attention, or the motion may follow upon the presentation of a report or other communication. A motion is a formal proposal by a member, in a meeting, that the committee take certain action.

Members can:

1. Make motions.
2. Second motions.
3. Debate motions.
4. Vote on motions.

How to present a motion:

1. Obtain the floor
  - a. Wait until the last speaker has finished.
  - b. Address the Chair by saying, "Mr./Ms. Chair."
2. Make your Motion
  - a. Speak in a clear and concise manner.
  - b. Always state you motion affirmatively. Say, "I move that we..." rather than, "I move that we do not ..."
  - c. Avoid personalities and stay on your subject.
3. Wait for a second to your motion
4. Another member will second your motion or the Chair will call for a second.
5. The Chair States Your Motion
  - a. The Chair will say, "it has been moved and seconded that we..." thus placing your motion before the membership for consideration and action.
  - b. The membership then either debates your motion, or may move directly to vote.
6. Putting the Question to the Membership
  - a. The Chair asks, "Are you ready to vote on the question?"
  - b. If there is no more discussion, a vote is taken.
  - c. The Chair announces the result of the vote immediately after putting the question; a majority vote in the affirmative adopts any motion.
7. If your motion does not receive a second, the motion dies for lack of a second.

Voting on a Motion:

The method of a vote on any motion depends on the situation and by-laws of policy of your committee. There are two methods used to vote by most committees, they are:

1. By Voice—The Chair asks those in favor to say, "aye", those opposed to say "no". Any member may move for an exact count.
2. By Roll Call – Each member answers "yes" or "no" as his name is called. This method is used when a record of each person's vote is required.

Parliamentary Procedure is the best way to get things done at your meetings. But, it will only work if you use it properly.

1. Allow motions that are in order.
2. Have members obtain the floor properly.
3. Speak clearly and concisely.
4. Obey rules of debate
5. Most importantly, *BE COURTEOUS*.

## **Committee Roles**

By participating as a committee member, each person makes a unique contribution through his or her presence alone, but some members may assume additional roles within the committee. Each role that people select within a committee has guidelines that help ensure success. The following are general guidelines that may vary with the requirements or needs of each committee.

### ***Chair***

- Suggests committee direction and options for setting goals.
- Provides a supportive environment for process, content, and committee members.
- Coordinates activities of subcommittees.
- Sets agendas.
- Sets the tone and pace for the committee.
- May share role of meeting preparation with a staff person.
- Represents the committee in the community.
- If there is no appointed facilitator, the chair serves as facilitator and while in that role, remains neutral on content and focuses on process.

### ***Committee Member***

- Arranges adequate time to carry out responsibility as a committee member.
- Comes to meetings prepared.
- Listens to other members of the committee.
- Participates in committee discussion and decision making.
- Serves on appropriate sub-committees.

### ***Facilitator***

- Guides committee through agenda.
- Remains neutral in regard to content of the meeting.
- Encourages each member to participate fully.
- Keeps committee energy positive and focused.
- Suggests methods to enable the committee to clearly solve the problem so that everyone agrees with the outcome.
- Works with the chair and staff in meeting logistics.

## **Public Meetings Law**

“The Oregon form of government requires an informed public aware of the deliberations and decisions of governing bodies and the information upon which such decisions were made. It is the intent of ORS 192.610 to 192.690 that decisions of governing bodies be arrived at openly.”

“The key requirements of the Public Meetings Law are to hold meetings that are open to the public unless an executive session is authorized, to give notice of meetings and to take minutes or otherwise record the meeting. In addition, there are requirements regarding location, voting and accessibility for disabled persons.”

## **Public Records Law**

Government transparency is vital to a healthy democracy. Public scrutiny helps ensure that government spends tax dollars wisely and works for the benefit of the people. Oregon’s Public Records and Meetings Laws underscore the state’s commitment to transparency. Government records are available to the public, and governing bodies must conduct deliberations and make decisions in the open.

## **Advisory Committees**

### ***4-H and Extension Service Advisory Council***

The purpose of this council is to cooperate with Oregon State University Extension Service and the county Extension staff in planning, promoting, developing, implementing and evaluating Extension programs to meet the needs and interests of county residents.

### ***Ambulance Service Area Advisory Committee***

The Ambulance Service Area Advisory (ASAA) Committee is responsible for maintaining a high standard of quality emergency medical service in Clatsop County by updating/maintaining the ASAA plan, overseeing the ambulance franchise agreement, and serving as an advisory body on matters regarding emergency medical services, pre-hospital care consumers, and the medical community.

### ***Budget Committee***

The Clatsop County Budget Committee is created by State Law. It has the responsibility for reviewing the proposed budget prepared by the County Administrator. The Budget Committee is charged by law with recommending to the County Board the appropriations that will support the required services during the County's fiscal year, which begins July 1<sup>st</sup>.

### ***Fair Board***

The Board has the exclusive management of the grounds and all other property owned, leased, used or controlled by the County and devoted to the use of the County Fair.

### ***Human Services Advisory Council***

The Human Services Advisory Council has several general duties and

responsibilities. They are: (1) To identify needs and establish priorities for three areas of interest: developmental disabilities; mental health and alcohol and drug. (2) To participate in the selection of service providers; (3) To participate in the evaluation of services to assure they are effectively addressing the needs and priorities, and are of high quality; (4) To provide a community balance and an independent opinion to the Board of Commissioners regarding service directions, decision, and proposals; and (5) To provide a link to the community at-large through advocacy, public information, and education activities sponsored by the County.

### ***Planning Commission***

The Planning Commission advises the Board of Commissioners on land use planning, conducts land use hearings and implements the County's zoning and comprehensive plan.

### ***Property Value Appeals Board***

The Board of Property Tax Appeals hears petitions for reduction of the real market or assessed values of property as of July 1 and considers applications to excuse liability for the penalty imposed under ORS 308.295. The Board also reviews the Assessor's Certified Ratio Study for the current year and makes recommendations to the Assessor regarding that study. The Board makes recommendations to the Assessor regarding changes in current year property value resulting from the effect of events or activities occurring outside property. The Board also hears appeals of the prior year's value based on declines that occurred after July 1 and on or before June 30 of the previous tax year.

### ***Public Safety Coordinating Council***

The Public Safety Coordinating Council is responsible for developing and recommending to the Board of Commissioners a comprehensive local corrections program (both adult and juvenile) and to coordinate local criminal justice policy among affected entities.

### ***Recreation Lands Planning Advisory Committee***

The Clatsop County Recreational Lands Planning Advisory Committee has the responsibility of assisting the County in the development of long-range plans for County parks and directing the formulation and preparation of amendments to Clatsop County's Recreation Lands Element of the Comprehensive Land Use Plan. In addition, the Committee advises County staff regarding the County's update of its Parks Master Plan; and provides a public forum for citizen input regarding proposed changes that potentially impact parks, recreational lands, trails, boat ramps and related programs within the county.

### ***Rural Law Enforcement District Advisory Committee***

The Rural Law Enforcement District Advisory Committee is an elected committee that provides local input to the Clatsop County Sheriff on issues concerning service levels, enforcement priorities and general operation of the law enforcement district, and recommends the annual budget to the Board of Commissioners.