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Welcome Marion County Advisory Board Member



You join many people who serve as volunteer members of Marion County advisory boards. Advisory boards provide guidance to decision-makers and bring public participation into the process of government. This handbook contains a list of the boards and commissions on which the public may serve for Marion County, a description of the functions of boards and some of the responsibilities of board members. Members are appointed by the Board of Commissioners to serve a term. Terms vary in length depending on the board.

Although each board, council, committee or commission has a different mission, volunteers who serve as advisory board members for Marion County usually perform this service in a group. Each group functions a little differently as directed by the statute or charter for that particular board. The information in this section is intended to assist new advisory board members become acquainted with the functions and decision-making processes of the group to which they have been appointed. We hope you will find it helpful.

Legal Obligations of Advisory Boards

As an advisory board member, it is important to remember that you have legal responsibilities.

- **Public Bodies:** Advisory boards are considered “public bodies” under Oregon law. As a result, you must ensure that your board 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” (usually majority) of the board members come together and deliberate on board issues. This definition also applies where board subcommittees are concerned. Therefore, if three members of a five-member board subcommittee come together and begin to discuss board 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 board members, whatever the situation.





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

1. **Any public official from gaining financially as a result of his or her position regardless if it is salaried or not, and**
2. **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 board member or the finances of a family member. If a conflict exists, the board 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 advisory board or call Marion County Legal Counsel at (503) 588-5220 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 board members): public officials may be sued personally for public meetings 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.

Resources for Information:

The open meetings laws and the ethics laws assure that Oregon’s system of government operates properly. Fortunately, it is not difficult to comply with these laws. The first step is knowing what is required. You will receive more detailed information from staff supporting the advisory board. For now, knowing that these laws exist should identify potential issues. If you ever have any questions, please contact the county volunteer coordinator, your staff person or Marion County Legal Counsel. Any of these contacts can assist you with information and answers to your questions while you focus on the important service you are providing to the county.



Marion County numbers to remember:

Volunteer Coordinator	(503) 588-7990
Board of Commissioners	(503) 588-5212
Legal Counsel	(503) 588-5220

Legal Protection for Volunteers

Marion 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, Oregon Revised Statutes 30.260 - 30.302). A tort is any breach of a legal duty which results in injury to a specific person or persons for which the law provides a 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 against the individual volunteer. The volunteer, upon written request, is entitled to indemnification (protection from the cost of any 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 Board Member

Members are appointed to Marion County boards to represent the public at large. Many times appointments are made to reflect a geographic interest, an area of expertise, or to represent a special interest group or professional association. Keep this in mind as you become acquainted with your fellow board members. Remember each member brings an important point of view. Listening to differing points of view produces good policies and procedures and fair solutions to problems. If you are unsure of the board'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. You will find more information about meetings and member roles in this section.

Staff Support for Advisory Boards

Most Marion County advisory boards are managed by county staff within a department. The primary role of staff is to carry out the rules, policies and programs developed by the board. Staff also brings to the board's attention issues of importance, assists the chair with agenda development, and compiles background information for the board 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 board 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 board and always notify staff or the board chair if unable to attend a meeting.

Robert's Rules of Order: Most county advisory boards use Robert's Rules of Order to conduct their business. If you would like resources on how to apply these rules to the discussion prior to a decision, contact the county volunteer coordinator for a handout on using parliamentary procedure in meetings.

Meeting management tips:

- All participants arrive prepared
- There are clear ground rules that all agree to honor
- Agenda is written and shared
- Physical environment is comfortable
- Start and end at the times agreed on by the group
- All participants contribute
- Process is moved and focused
- Outcome is clear to all
- Work to be accomplished is defined and assigned
- Laughter and fun are encouraged

Ann Schauber, Oregon State University Extension Service

Ground Rules

Every group should establish ground rules on how meetings will run, how members will interact and what kind of behavior is acceptable. Because each group member is an individual, each has a different way of accomplishing tasks. At times these different ways can cause friction between members and slow down the process of the group as a whole.

Each member is expected to respect these rules, which usually prevents misunderstandings and disagreements. Three to five ground rules are sufficient for most groups. Some examples of ground rules include:

- **Attendance:** Groups should place a high priority on meetings, talk about what would be legitimate reasons for missing a meeting, and establish a procedure for informing the group leader of a member's absence from a scheduled meeting.
- **Promptness:** Meetings should start and end on time.
- **Meeting place and time:** 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.
- **Other norms or ground rules** that can be decided ahead of time by the group such as acceptable language, humor, jargon, etc.

Group Roles

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



Chair

- Suggests group direction and options for setting goals.
- Provides a supportive environment for process, content, and group members.
- Coordinates activities of subcommittees.
- Sees that agendas are set.
- Sets the tone and pace for the group.
- May share the role of meeting preparation with a staff person.
- Represents the group 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.

Group Member

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

Facilitator

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

Your group needs a facilitator if:

- U There is a difference in opinion on the direction of the group**
- U Productivity is lacking and goals are not being accomplished.**
- U No one seems to care about anything**
- U Goals are not clearly defined**
- U The group is newly formed or has changed in membership**
- U The organization experiences a lack of direction**
- U The group is involved in strategic planning**
- U The leader is not delegating**
- U The group is dominated by one or two individuals**
- U Group members are not participating in discussions**



Group Decision Making

Just as the functions of Marion County's advisory boards are different, so are the ways in which each board reaches a decision. After a discussion, some groups may vote; others may prioritize and select the decision which emerged as a priority; and still others may use consensus as a way to reach a decision.

It is important for volunteer advisory board members to be aware of the type of decision-making process their board uses and to become familiar with it. Consensus as a decision-making process is explained in this information because fewer people are familiar with it than with the other processes used by boards. For information on other decision-making methods, contact the county volunteer coordinator.

What is consensus?

The Team Handbook, Joiner Associates, Inc., 1988.

In many cases a group's goal should be to reach decisions that best reflect the thinking of all group members. This is called "reaching consensus." It is easy to be confused about what consensus is and is not:

Consensus is...

- U Finding a proposal acceptable enough that all members can support it; no member opposes it.

Consensus is not...

- U A unanimous vote - consensus may not represent everyone's first priorities.
- U A majority vote - in a majority vote, only the majority gets something they are happy with; people in the minority may get something they do not want at all, which is not what consensus is all about.
- U Everyone has unhappily agreed to go along with the decision

Consensus requires...

- U Time
- U Active participation of all group members
- U Skills in communication: listening, conflict resolution, discussion facilitation.
- U Creative thinking and open-mindedness.

To reach consensus, the team must let each member participate fully in the decision. This may mean going through several rounds of the outlined process for the group. And when the decision is reached, probably no one will be completely satisfied with the decision, but everyone can live with it.

Steps in the consensus decision-making process:

- Describe and define the problem, situation or issue that needs a decision. If complicated, hand out in written form beforehand.
- Brainstorm a list of alternatives without judging, discussing or rejecting any ideas. To encourage participation, take only one idea from each person.
- Review, change, consolidate, rewrite and set priorities through group discussion.
- Make a consensus decision. When a solution is reached, make sure it is written on a flip chart or chalkboard so everyone can see.
- Implement the decision: who will do what, when, and how.
- Group will evaluate and revise the results later if necessary.

Boards and Commissions

For information about any of the following boards, commissions, councils or committees, please contact the county's volunteer coordinator in Business Services, Human Resources Division, PO Box 14500, Salem, Oregon 97309, (503) 588-7990, or e-mail: volunteer@co.marion.or.us. For more information about current openings on advisory boards, visit the Marion County Volunteer Opportunities web page: <http://volunteer.co.marion.or.us>.



Alcohol and Drug Planning Committee - Eleven members advise the Marion County Health Advisory Board in all matters relating to the problems of alcoholism/alcohol abuse and drug addiction/abuse, including education, treatment, prevention, rehabilitation, law enforcement, criminal justice and law reform. (ORS 275.275)

Ambulance Service Area Committee - Eleven members review and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners regarding the selection criteria for determining a franchise to provide emergency ambulance service and to periodically review the Ambulance Service Area plan. (ORS 682.205)

Board of Property Tax Appeals - Three members consider the appeals received on the real market value or assessed value of all properties within Marion County. (ORS 309.020)

Budget Committee - Three commissioners and three appointed citizens prepare an operating budget for Marion County considering all expenses. (ORS 294.336)

CARTS Regional Advisory Committee - Two Marion County representatives who live north of the Santiam Basin area attend meetings to advise and make recommendations to the Chemeketa Area Regional Transportation System on new programs or changes to existing programs. (Intergovernmental agreement pursuant to ORS Chapter 190)

Children and Families Commission - Not limited to twenty-one members who are appointed by the Board of Commissioners to develop a coordinated comprehensive plan for children and families, mobilize communities to improve family wellness, and build a comprehensive family support system. (ORS 417.705)

Compensation Board - Three to five members who are knowledgeable in personnel management and compensation determine the compensation schedule for county elected officials. (ORS 204.005)



Council of Economic Advisors— Fourteen members of business, finance and government who are knowledgeable in revenue forecasting and predicting trends meet semi-annually to review Marion County’s major revenue sources, predict trends, develop preliminary revenue forecasts in January and a final forecast in April for integration into the county’s annual budget process. (Board Resolution 12/31/03)

Economic Development Advisory Board— Thirteen members representing business, government, and economic development appointed by the Board of Commissioners based on their ability to foster economic development meet to assist with economic development and to recommend grant awards of Video Lottery Grant monies and other economic development funding streams. (Board Resolution 8/22/03)

Fair Board - Seven citizen members plan, organize and implement the Marion County Fair. (ORS 565.210)

Food Services Advisory Committee - Five members analyze and submit recommendations to Marion County Environmental Health and the food industry pertaining to concerns in this area. (Health Department)

Health Advisory Board - Twelve to fifteen members advise the Board of Commissioners and Health Department of all issues relating to the public and mental health services offered by Marion County. (Board Order 2/4/86)

Healthy Start Advisory Committee - Sixteen members represent Healthy Start stakeholders in the community. They meet bi-monthly to provide guidance and support to Marion County Healthy Start and to advise the Marion County Children and Families Commission on program oversight and accountability. (Board Order 1/14/04)

Mid-Willamette Valley Area Commission on Transportation - One private sector representative appointed by the commissioners to attend meetings for the discussion and coordination of long range transportation issues affecting the mid-Willamette valley’s livability. (Oregon Transportation Commission)

Mid-Willamette Valley Cable Regulatory Commission Budget Commission -Two public members are appointed to the budget commission. One member lives in Comcast’s service area within the City of Salem and the other member lives outside the city limits of Salem, but within Comcast’s service area. Once a year members of the budget commission attend one meeting to review the CRC’s operating budget and CCTV contract. (Special service government established by the City of Salem and Marion County)



Mid-Willamette Valley Community Development Partnership Board - Twenty-seven members, fourteen elected officials and thirteen from the private sector serve on the board to help local governments and small businesses access federal and state economic development finance programs, provide regional economic development planning, and to provide a political forum on regional economic development issues. (Intergovernmental agreement pursuant to ORS Chapter 190)

North Santiam Watershed Council - Commissioners recommend one Marion County representative with consideration of recommendations from the Watershed Forum to advise the Secretary of Agriculture on a regular or periodic basis on matters relating to management of the Opal Creek Scenic Recreation Area. (An advisory council pursuant to Section 1023 of the Omnibus Parks and Public Lands Management Act of 1996)

Parks Commission - Seven members advise the Board of Commissioners on matters pertaining to the county parks and recreation facilities. (Board Order 9/16/58)

Planning Commission - Nine members provide citizen review of conditional uses, zone changes, and overall planning for the county. (ORS 215.020)

Public Safety Coordinating Council - Four citizen representatives serve with members of local judiciary officers and law enforcement to facilitate cooperation and coordination in local criminal justice policy. (ORS 423.560)

Salem Foundation - Board of Commissioners chair appoints a Marion County representative to the Salem Foundation Distribution Committee. The Salem Foundation is a charitable trust administered by the Pioneer Trust Bank. The trust instrument provides that a member of the Distribution Committee is to be appointed by the County Judge, which has been replaced by the chair of the county board of commissioners. (Charitable Trust)

Solid Waste Management Advisory Council - Twenty-two members representing various organizations in the community and lay persons develop and recommend policies addressing solid waste issues to the Board of Commissioners. (Board Order 7/10/89)

Tobacco Prevention Coalition - Eleven members serve to advise the Health Advisory Board and the Board of Commissioners on all matters related to the problems of tobacco use including education, treatment, prevention, law enforcement, and law reform. (Board Order 4/1/98)



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