



City of Harper Woods Boards and Commissions Applicant Information

Thank you for taking an interest in your local government and helping us work to achieve great things in the City of Harper Woods. Your appointment to a city board or commission requires no prior experience in public service; this document serves to introduce the application process and expectations for serving on a board or commission.

The City of Harper Woods appoints people to 9 boards and commissions that advise and assist in carrying out the functions of local government. These boards and commissions provide a critical reservoir of knowledge and community input that informs City policy, activities, decisions, and operations.

The City of Harper Woods is a Council-Manager form of government. Under this system, the City Council (including the Mayor) sets policy, while the City Manager is the chief executive who implements the policies and manages the daily operations of the City. This is somewhat analogous to a corporation which is governed by a board of directors but managed by a CEO.

Most boards and commissions are created by City resolution or ordinance and serve as advisory bodies to the City Council or City Manager. They provide information, analysis, and recommendations to inform decisions on matters pertaining to the board or commission's specialized knowledge. A few boards and commissions have specific authority to make binding decisions in certain areas, such as the Board of Zoning Appeals. These bodies generally derive their decision-making authority from state laws.

Regardless of the specific duties, each board and commission play an important part in City government. Appointees to boards and commissions perform a public service to their community and have both an obligation and an opportunity to provide useful and appropriate input that will help shape their government. This requires a thorough understanding of their board or commission's role as well as a willingness to engage constructively with other board members and staff.

Application Submission and Selection

Interested residents are asked to fill out an [application](#) and return it to the City Clerk. Applicants for board and commission vacancies are interviewed once a month, prior to the first Council meeting of the month, by the City Council Interview Subcommittee. Applications are kept on file for one year after submittal.

Vacancies are filled on a rolling (as available) basis. Board members and commissioners serve three-year terms and terms expire in January at which point the individual is eligible for reappointment.

City Council tries to appoint members that have specific interests and/or background in the board or commission. Preference is usually given to renewing members, but attendance is considered as a factor prior to reappointment.

General Duties and Responsibilities of Appointees In the broadest sense, the role of an individual appointee is to bring their experience and wisdom to the body and deliberate with other members to reach decisions that fulfill the purpose of the board or commission. Below are some general tips and expectations for appointees:

- Act courteously during the meetings and treat other members of the body, the public, and City staff with respect.
- Disagreements are inevitable, but appointees should remain civil and focus on issues rather than personal differences.
- Observe good parliamentary practice. This comes with practice and will become more comfortable as you go.
- Arrive to meetings on time and let city staff and the chairperson know if you will be present. Unexpected absences can cause a meeting to be cancelled if not enough members are present to establish a quorum.
- Come prepared. Review proposed minutes, agenda packets, and other information ahead of time to allow for informed deliberation and discussion.
- Represent your board or commission appropriately. Do not speak for your board or commission unless authorized to do so. Make clear when you are speaking in a personal capacity if there is any doubt.

The information contained in this document will assist as you consider serving on a City board or commission. If you have additional questions, there are many people who can help including current board and commission members, and City staff, especially the City Clerk's office.

The City meetings schedule is available [here](#), and additional information is available on the [Boards and Commissions page](#) and the [Agendas and Minutes page](#).