

## “ALL ABOARD” FOR CLEAN AIR AND CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

### How to get involved in municipal boards and commissions

Boards and commissions are an important part of the municipal policy making process. Whether elected or appointed, these sub-governmental bodies are charged with creating policy that helps shape a city. By joining a local board or commission, YOU become an active part of the decision-making process to protect children’s health.

Many cities and towns are now using sustainability boards and environmental commissions to help implement sound policy and prepare cities for climate change. As a concerned parent, your voice is needed on these boards.

#### What is a municipal board or commission?

A municipal board or commission is a group that advises and/or supports the mayor and city council. Most municipal boards/commissions are authorized through the city’s charter or code and are comprised of citizen volunteers.

#### What qualifications do I need to become a member of my city’s board or commission?

You must be a resident of the city in which you seek to become a member of the board or commission. You may also need to be a registered voter, however this is not true in all cities. Check with your city clerk’s office and specifically ask if there are any requirements to join a local board or commission.

#### What types of boards and commissions exist?

**Regulatory boards or commissions** – These groups can generally establish standards and guidelines, oversee policy implementation, and impose fines. Members are usually appointed by the city mayor and/or council and serve for a specific term. They operate independently of the city council, however their decisions can typically be appealed to the full city council, which has final oversight. Examples of these boards are airport authorities, climate resiliency commissions, planning commissions and park commissions.

**Area-specific supervisory boards or commissions** – These groups are charged with oversight of a particular region or subject area and are typically elected by the residents of the community. They operate independent of the city council and have final decision-making authority. These boards may also have the authority to tax. Examples of these boards are school boards, city transportation authorities, and housing authorities.

**Program advisory boards** – These groups generally act as an advisory team to the mayor and/or city council. Members are often appointed. Some have open membership and allow all volunteers to join. Program advisory boards are a valuable part of the city policy making process as they often research and provide pertinent background information for important city regulations. Examples are tree boards, environmental sustainability boards, and arts councils.

## What does a board or commission actually DO?

Boards and commissions execute specific missions as outlined by the city charter, code, or council. Boards meet regularly, however not as often as a city council. Boards maintain minutes and keep open, public records.

## How do I know if my city has one?

You can obtain a list of all boards and commissions active in your city through the city website or the city clerk's office.

## How do I get started?

Just ask! Find a board or commission that you are interested in. Reach out to the coordinator of the board or commission, or simply attend a meeting. If it is an advisory board, ask to join. If it is an appointed board, ask when the next board position will be open and any requirements to be considered. If there is an application process, obtain and complete the application. Or reach out to your city council member or mayor and let them know personally that you are interested in a certain board or commission.

## Will this take a lot of time?

Only as much as you have to give. Most boards or commissions meet at least monthly, so be prepared to attend at least 1-2 meetings a month. Educated engagement is important so be sure to read available materials and talk to other members about the work at hand. You should also be prepared to talk with people outside of the board to get ideas and input about the charge of the board or commission.

## Are these paid positions?

No, most boards are made up of volunteers. Serving on a volunteer board is a great way to give back to your community, while shaping the future of your city.

## How long do I serve?

Most boards have terms of service. Whether one, two, or four years, your term will be a true service to your community.

## EXAMPLES OF MUNICIPAL BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Citizen Environmental Advisory Committee - San Antonio, TX

<https://webapp9.sanantonio.gov/BoardCommApplication/BoardsandCommissions>

Sustainability Advisory Board, Coral Gables, FL

<http://coralgables.com/index.aspx?page=1110>

Planning Commission, Duluth, MN

<http://www.duluthmn.gov/boards-commissions/>

Tree & Public Gardens Commission, Bexley, OH

<http://www.bexley.org/treecommission/>