

KLICKITAT  
COUNTY  
ADVISORY GROUP  
HANDBOOK

Adopted: August 14, 2018

## **Welcome to Klickitat County**

This information has been prepared for you the advisory group member to give you the foundation, philosophies and policies that make Klickitat County government a wonderful place to volunteer and work. Please remember that these are general guidelines and are not meant to take the place of any by-laws or procedures developed by your group.

Volunteers are a vital part of government's existence and are deeply appreciated. Klickitat County will do everything possible to make your volunteer experience a positive one. We invite your ideas and suggestions. Your input enables the county to maintain and improve programs and services. We wish you success in your volunteer experience and hope this information helps you as a volunteer for Klickitat County.

### **Advisory Groups**

You join many people in Klickitat County who serve as volunteer members of advisory groups. The main role of the advisory group is to provide department staff and the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) with important recommendations about policy. Only when there is a statute granting an advisory group with a specific power does the advisory group go beyond the role of providing recommendations. While most advisory groups are limited to providing recommendations, the diverse perspectives and experiences of group members makes recommendations vital for the county government to make good informed decisions. Therefore, the role of advisory groups is essential for the wellbeing of Klickitat County.

This handbook contains a list of the boards and commissions on which the public may serve for Klickitat County, a description of the functions of boards, and an outline of some of the responsibilities of members.

The BOCC appoints community members to serve terms which vary in length depending on the advisory group. Each board, council, committee or commission serves a different mission, with the advisory group members functioning as a team. Each group is established by the BOCC and directed by governing statute. Members are expected to establish an effective working relationship with each other and the BOCC by showing respect for other viewpoints. Supportive relationships based upon mutual respect are essential to the group's success.

Requests for information or support should be directed to the designated staff person for that board or council.

## **Non-Discrimination\***

It is our goal to create, foster and maintain an atmosphere of non-discrimination in all personnel and volunteer-related matters. This commitment will be supported by the positive, practical efforts of all county employees and volunteers.

Klickitat County is committed to a work and volunteer environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work or volunteer in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal employment opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, Klickitat County expects that all relationships among persons in their capacity as a volunteer will be business-like and free of bias, prejudice, and harassment.

If, as a volunteer for Klickitat County, you feel you may be the subject of discrimination or harassment, you may contact your advisory board staff person, the elected official in your corresponding department, or the human resources department. Any reports of discrimination or harassment will be examined impartially and resolved promptly.

## **Sexual Harassment\***

Klickitat County is committed to eradicating sexual discrimination in the workplace and specifically condemns sexual harassment of county employees and volunteers by other county employees or volunteers. Watching and listening for indications from your peers that attention is unwelcome is the first step in preventing problems. Actively speaking up and supporting those who are victimized shows that you take the problem of sexual harassment seriously.

If you believe that you have been subjected to sexual harassment, report it as quickly as possible. Do not suffer in silence. Report it to your advisory board staff person, the elected official in your corresponding department, or the human resources department

## **Drug Free Workplace\***

Klickitat County expects all employees and volunteers to report to their assignment free from drug and/or alcohol impairment and to remain at work in a condition that enables them to perform their duties in a safe, efficient, legal and professional manner. Klickitat County encourages employees and volunteers who may have an alcohol and/or drug use problem to voluntarily seek evaluation and treatment that will lead to successful rehabilitation. Volunteers must abide by the provisions of this policy as a condition of volunteer service.

\* If you have questions, please ask your board staff person, elected official in your corresponding department, or the human resources department.

## **Being an Effective Advisory Group Member**

Citizens are appointed to Klickitat County advisory groups to represent the public interest. The appointments may reflect a geographic interest, an area of expertise, or a special interest group or professional association. As you become acquainted with your fellow advisory group members, remember that each individual brings an important point of view. Listening to diverse points of view produces fair solutions to problems. If you are unsure of the group's mission or the item under discussion, you should ask questions and seek information until you reach a clear answer and good understanding of the expectations.

Advisory bodies provide an important link between the community and the BOCC. The information each group provides about specific community needs and opinions can have a profound effect on public policies. Advisory group members play a very special role in creating recommendations on governmental issues.

As a member of an advisory group, you will be expected to:

- Interpret community opinions, attitudes, and needs to department staff and the BOCC
- Study programs and services, and analyze problems and needs
- Offer new proposals and recommend changes in programs and policies
- Provide fellow community members with information about County policies, programs and budgets

While advisory groups counsel department staff and the BOCC with important recommendations about policy, they do not create or administer policy, programs, or services unless their governing statute grants this power to them.

When presenting recommendations, it is essential that advisory groups:

- Provide all recommendations in written form
- Express all ideas in clear and concise language
- Propose solutions that are viable and cost-effective
- Identify the reasons for suggested changes
- Reflect a consensus of a majority of the group members.

It is vital that all members regularly attend meetings and come to meetings prepared. The best preparation is to read all reports, proposals and other documents distributed by staff prior to meetings. This practice enables the meeting time to be used for thoughtful conversation and time to create a recommendation for the County.

## **Laws Affecting Advisory Group Activities**

As an advisory group member appointed by the BOCC, you should be aware of certain restrictions and requirements that may affect you during your tenure as an advisory group member. Advisory group members must be familiar with and operate within their group's governing statutes and bylaws, and county, state and federal laws at all times. These laws assure that government operates properly. Fortunately, it is not difficult to comply with these laws. The first step is to know what is required. If you

have questions, please ask your board staff person or elected official in your corresponding department. They will assist you while you focus on the important service you are providing to the county.

## **Open Public Meetings Act**

Washington’s open public meeting (OPM) laws essentially require three things: notice must be provided for all meetings, meetings must be open to the public, and minutes must be created for each meeting. A “meeting” is defined to include not only formal gatherings of the advisory group but also any occasion, even subcommittee meetings, where a “quorum” (usually majority) of the advisory group members come together and discuss group issues. Because of this law, if a quorum is present outside of an open meeting, discussions concerning any issues before the advisory board may not take place. Electronic communications may constitute a meeting which is subject to the OPM if a majority of members discuss information, give input or take action via e-mail. If an advisory board member wishes to discuss an issue with other members, they should do so only during a prescheduled open meeting. Failure to follow this practice can result in liability to the volunteer, as stated below.

Most claims that the open meeting laws have been violated will be made against the public body itself. However, claims may be brought against the individuals (in this case volunteer board members); and, public officials may be sued personally for public meeting violations. In most of these circumstances, the county will represent or act in defense of an advisory group member who has acted in good faith. However, if it appears that a member has intentionally acted outside the law, the county may not assist with defense. Willful failure to abide by the law can result in personal liability including fines.

Because meetings are open to the public, there are strict rules about when someone may be excluded from a meeting due to their behavior. If you believe an individual is posing a threat to the integrity of the meeting, you must call for law enforcement who is trained to determine when an individual should rightfully be removed. Choosing to exclude an individual who is exercising their right to free speech can result in a violation of the OPM.

## **Public Records Act**

The Public Records law applies to most county boards and advisory groups. Under the Act, all records, including but not limited to written documents, diagrams, and recordings, must be preserved as a public record. If a document is considered or created by a volunteer or the advisory group, a copy of the document must be preserved. This is also true for any emails or other documented communications concerning your role as an advisory member. If a records request is made, the County will work to obtain copies of the documents in order to fulfill the request. Failure to maintain records and provide them upon request can result in liability to the county, and if the failure to disclose was willful and intentional, personal liability to you.

The most commonly requested document for advisory boards are the minutes. Minutes of all regular meetings must be recorded and made available for public inspection. Whether the minutes are made available via the County website is a decision made by the department head, but minutes should be readily accessible to anyone seeking to examine them.

## **Ethics and Appearance of Fairness**

Washington’s ethics laws prohibit public officials from gaining financially as a result of his or her position. Also, public officials must declare any conflicts of interest at a public meeting. A conflict exists if a recommendation potentially could affect the finances of the group member or the finances of a family

member. If a conflict exists, the member must declare this fact at a meeting where the issue is discussed and may need to refrain from discussing or voting on the recommendation. If you are unsure whether a conflict exists, you should discuss this with the staff person assisting your committee.

## **Influencing Ballot Measures**

RCW 42.17.130 strictly forbids the use of public facilities for the purpose of assisting a campaign for election of any person to any office or for the promotion or opposition to any ballot proposition unless they are activities which are a part of the normal and regular conduct of the office or agency. Members of advisory groups must take care when supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure that they are doing so in their individual capacities only and to ensure that they are not using any public facilities or resources in such activities. For example, Jane Doe, an appointed Planning Commissioner, cannot support a candidate by signing her name as “Jane Doe, Klickitat County Planning Commissioner”, but she can sign “Jane Doe.” John Doe, who is a member of an advisory group, cannot use the facilities or the forum of an advisory group meeting to publicly support a candidate or ballot measure but as an individual he can speak to individual members of the group to express his political opinions.

## **Public Communications Guidelines**

To fulfill its mission on behalf of citizens, Klickitat County welcomes and encourages public participation and input at all levels. Klickitat County’s community councils, boards, commissions and task forces provide a vital and useful avenue for people to communicate and share their comments, concerns, ideas and advice with their county government. We encourage citizen advisory groups to reach out and seek participation and input from members, clubs and organizations of their respective communities.

When speaking with citizens and other groups concerning issues, the discussions should be before the entire group during a prescheduled meeting so as to not violate the Open Public Meetings Act. Further, all discussions should remain respectful. Diverse opinions allow for thoughtful conversations and, in turn, better recommendations.

## **Staff Support for Advisory Groups**

County staff support most Klickitat County advisory groups. The primary role of staff is to represent the interests and needs of the county and facilitate two-way communication between the group and the BOCC or other county departments. Staff coordinates the administrative activities for the group including maintaining minutes, forwarding recommendations or implementing actions, and ensuring compliance with applicable laws, such as the Open Meetings Act. Staff responsibilities include meeting arrangements, processing complaints, communication with members, facilitating a yearly work plan and other administrative duties. Staff assigned to advisory groups are available to provide information for and assistance to the group.

## **The Meetings**

Each advisory group member is responsible for the content and productivity of meetings they attend and should come prepared to take ownership for their contribution to the meeting. Meetings do matter. The following guidelines will assure that participants contribute productively.

- 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 ON THE TIMES AGREED ON BY THE GROUP
- ☐ ALL PARTICIPANTS CONTRIBUTE
- ☐ PROCESS IS FOCUSED
- ☐ OUTCOME IS CLEAR TO ALL
- ☐ WORK TO BE ACCOMPLISHED IS DEFINED AND ASSIGNED

## **Group Decision Making**

Just as the functions of Klickitat County’s advisory groups are different, so are the ways in which each group reaches agreement. After a discussion, some groups may vote; others may prioritize and select the recommendation that emerged as a priority; and still others may use consensus as a way to reach a decision. It is important for volunteer advisory group members to be aware of and familiar with the type of decision-making process their group uses.

## **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 of the more important ground rules might include:

- Attendance: Groups should place a high priority on attendance at 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.
- 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.
- Breaks: Decide whether there will be breaks, when and for how long.
- Interruptions: Decide when interruptions will be tolerated and when they will not.
- Rotation of routine chores: Decide who will be responsible for routine chores required of regular meetings and decide how to rotate these duties among the group of members.
- Agendas, minutes, and records: Decide how the group will handle these issues.
- 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 with his or her presence alone, but some members may assume additional roles within the group. Each role that people may 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**

- As group leader, the chair suggests group direction and options for setting goals.
- The chair provides a supportive environment for process, content, and group members.
- The chair coordinates activities of sub-committees.
- The chair sees that agendas are set.
- The chair sets a positive tone and pace for the group.
- The chair may share the role of meeting preparation with the advisory group staff person.
- The chair 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 rules of the group.
- Participates in group discussion and decision-making.
- Keeps facilitator neutral and on track with the process.
- 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 the group to clearly solve the problem so that everyone agrees with the outcome.

### **Recorder**

- Records the group's ideas.
- Asks for clarification to ensure accuracy.
- Helps keep the facilitator and group focused.

## **County Advisory Group Policies**

### **ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING CITIZEN ADVISORY GROUPS**

This policy applies to the BOCC and all departments under its jurisdiction that provide staff support to citizen advisory groups.

#### **1. Board Establishes Citizen Advisory Groups**

- Identifies needs, purposes and legal mandates.
- Determines duration and renewal options.
- Determines composition and minimum qualifications.
- Appoints members.
- Allocates resources.
- Establishes standards for member participation.



## **2. The Board Provides for Recruitment**

- Referrals from advisory group members, professional, community and neighborhood interest groups, department heads, elected officials, and individuals.
- Commissioners may directly appoint individuals who are uniquely qualified.

## **3. Board Evaluates, Renews, and Dissolves Advisory Groups**

- Board evaluates advisory groups' purpose, goals and accomplishments, and supports and maintains or dissolves groups accordingly.

## **4. Staff provide Support for Advisory Group Members**

Staff will orient and train board members about their roles and responsibilities. Advisory group members will:

- Understand the county's long-term goals.
- Understand the group's organizational mission.
- Agree to BOCC approved by-laws or rules the group follows to conduct meetings.
- Work with other advisory group volunteers to create recommendations.

# **QUALIFYING FOR APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY GROUPS**

This policy applies to applicants and members of all formal advisory groups.

## **1. Applicants Must Meet Resident Qualifications**

To be considered for appointment, an applicant must:

- Reside in Klickitat County, except when the individual has unique expertise or other qualifications required by a particular group.
- When an Advisory Group member appointed as representative of a Commissioner District relocates their residence to another district; they may complete their appointment at the pleasure of the appointing commissioner.

## **2. Applicants and Group Members Must Meet Minimum Expectations**

Applicants and group members seeking reappointment must be willing to:

- Support the County's long-term goals.
- Support the mission and goals of the group.
- Actively participate in group activities, including attendance at a minimum of two-thirds of all regularly scheduled meetings.
- Maintain the highest ethical standards.
- Disclose any actual or potential conflict of interest.
- Agree not to use group membership as a means to publicly disseminate personal opinions or philosophies.

## **3. Citizens May Serve on Multiple Advisory Groups**

Unless otherwise restricted by law, a citizen may serve on multiple advisory groups.

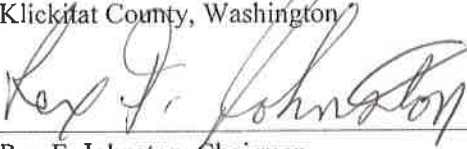
## **4. Members Serve at the Pleasure of the BOCC**

Unless otherwise restricted by law, the BOCC may, by a majority vote, remove any member of a County Advisory Board, Commission, Council, or Committee without cause. Members removed by the Board

shall be so notified. If the member represents another organization or government jurisdiction, that agency shall also be notified of the member's removal.

ADOPTED this 14<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2018

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Klickitat County, Washington

  
Rex F. Johnston, Chairman


  
Jim Sizemore, Commissioner

  
David M. Sauter, Commissioner

ATTEST:  
Clerk of the Board

  
in and for the County of Klickitat,  
State of Washington

FOR KLICKITAT COUNTY  
PROSECUTING ATTORNEY:  
Approved As To Form:

  
David Quesnel, Prosecuting Attorney  
Attorney At Law

## APPENDIX A

### ADVISORY GROUPS

**Board of Adjustment:** Responsible for hearing matters concerning zoning, including but not limited to applications for conditional uses and variances, and appeals from decisions made concerning the administration of the zoning ordinances.

**Board of Equalization:** Responsible for considering appeals received on the value of properties in Klickitat County. Volunteers review cases based on citizen assessment appeals and determine equalization of values of personal and real property taxes.

**Board of Health:** Responsible for supervising matters pertaining to life and health within the county, including providing enforcement through officers of health statutes and state rules, enacting rules and regulation to protect the health.

**Citizen Review Committee:** Responsible for establishing and prioritizing projects on or within the Klickitat salmon recovery region and the development and adoption of the “Klickitat Salmon Recover Region Strategy.”

**Civil Service Commission:** Responsible for overseeing the process for filling Civil Service jobs with qualified personnel, and to establish a merit system of employment for county deputy sheriffs and other employees of the office of county sheriff.

**Horticulture Pest and Disease Board:** Responsible for investigating complaints received on unsprayed, neglected or abandoned vegetation, for the purpose of enabling the county to more effectively control and prevent the spread of pest and diseases.

**Land and Natural Resources Advisory Committee:** Responsible for monitoring federal and state actions and advising BOCC concerning such agencies with regards to matters involving land and natural resources, including but not limited to agricultural and livestock, timber, cultural resources, recreation, wildlife, and property rights.

**LEOFF:** Responsible for providing for an actuarial reserve system for the payment of death, disability, and retirement benefits to law enforcement officers, firefighters, and their beneficiaries in case of disability or death, and effecting a system of retirement from active duty.

**Lodging Tax Advisory Committee:** Responsible for reviewing and advising BOCC on imposition or modification of lodging tax, grant applications, request for proposals, and making recommendation regarding allocation of local lodging tax funds.

**Noxious Weed Board:** Responsible for taking action as may be necessary to coordinate the noxious weed control programs of the county and adopt a county plan for the control of noxious weeds.

**Open Space Advisory Committee:** Responsible for representing the active farming community to serve in an advisory capacity to the assessor in implementing guidelines as established by the department of revenue for assessment of open space and farm and agricultural lands.

**Planning Commission:** Responsible for assisting the Planning Department in carrying out its duties, including assistance in the preparation and implementation of the Comprehensive Land-Use Plan and recommendations to the Department for the adoption of official controls and/or amendments. Planning Commission also review and provide recommendation on site specific proposals such as preliminary long subdivision, manufactured home park application, shoreline conditional uses and shoreline variances.

**Senior Services Advisory Board:** Responsible for representing the interest of the senior citizens and providing planning and coordination for transportation, and educational and social needs of the senior population in Klickitat County.

**Solid Waste Advisory Committee:** Responsible for assisting in the development of programs and policies concerning solid waste handling and disposal and reviewing and commenting upon proposed rules, policies, or ordinances prior to their adoption.

**Shoreline Advisory Committee:** Responsible for providing recommendations to the Planning Department concerning the shorelines within Klickitat County, with consideration of the Shoreline Management Act of 1971.

**Veterans Advisory Board:** Responsible for advising BOCC on the needs of local indigent veterans, the resources available to local indigent veterans, and programs that could benefit the needs of local indigent veterans and their families.