

City of Hamtramck  
Citizen Boards and Commissions  
Member's Handbook and  
Statement of Privileges and Duties

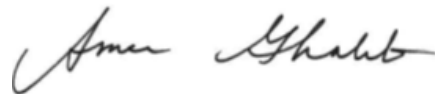


The City of Hamtramck appreciates your agreement to serve on one of its Boards or Commission. Through your service, you assist the Mayor and City Council in making the City of Hamtramck a better place to live, bring a needed citizen perspective to the governing process and, hopefully, learn a little about how a local government, its officers and employees, work to provide for the public health, safety and welfare.

On the following pages are a listing of the privileges and duties of a citizen Board or Commission member. Your commitment to serve is not a single event, but a continuing and ongoing act of service. By learning your duties and following through, you provide a very important part of City government.

On behalf of the citizens of the City of Hamtramck, please accept my thanks and the thanks of the City Council for your time and dedication.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amer Ghalib". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Amer Ghalib**

Mayor

## Introduction

Welcome and thank you for taking an interest in local government and helping us work to achieve great things in the City of Hamtramck. Your appointment to a city board or commission requires no prior experience in public service. We have put together this outline to help you navigate your new role.

The City of Hamtramck 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.

Most boards and commission 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 specialized knowledge. Other boards and commissions serve the city in various capacities such as organizing and sponsoring events. A few boards and commissions have specific authority to make binding decisions in certain areas, such as the Planning Commission or the Zoning Board of Appeals. These bodies generally derive their decision-making authority from state laws.

## Expectations for Appointees

Prior to your first meeting you should familiarize yourself with the bylaws of your board or commission and review the upcoming agenda materials. You may also wish to review materials or videos from prior meetings. See the Online Resources section below for links to access these materials.

## General Duties

Act courteously during 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. The chair's role is to run an efficient meeting while allowing all points of view to be heard and a full discussion to take place in an orderly fashion. Assist the chair by being concise in making your point and not interrupting others. The City Council follows Robert's Rules. According to Robert's Rules, a quorum is required to have a formal meeting. During meetings motions must be made before discussion on a topic and discussion must be related to the motion at a Council Meeting. The point of the board or committee is often to plan and take on a more "workshop/discussion role". In these cases, an agenda must be adhered to and discussion must be related to the agenda topic.

Arrive to meetings on time and let your staff liaison and chair know if you will be absent. Unexpected absences can cause a meeting to be cancelled if not enough members are present to establish a quorum. If a quorum is not present the commission will be unable to conduct regular business, so as

a courtesy to your fellow commissioners and the public, please provide advanced notice of any absences. Regular absences shall be grounds for removal of a board member for neglect of duty.

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. As an appointee, people may perceive you to speak on behalf of the city or your board or commission outside of regular meetings. Do not speak for your board or commission unless appropriately authorized to do so.

## **Specific Duties**

Enabling legislation and bylaws are important documents that delineate member types.

### Officers

Boards and commission often decide to authorize members to elected offices such as the chair, secretary, or vice-chair, to carry out specific functions to serve the rest of the board or commission. Major systems of parliamentary procedure define some of these functions, such as the duty of the chair to preside over and keep decorum during meetings.

### Chair

The chair has the role of leading the meeting and keeping decorum during meetings. The chair shall call the meeting to order. Any board or commission member wishing to speak shall address the chair and, upon recognition of the chair, shall speak on the question under debate.

### Secretary

Before proceeding with the business of the board or commission, the secretary shall call the roll of the members, and the names of those present and those absent shall be entered in the minutes. If the absence of the member is excused, it shall be noted in the minutes.

## **Governing Rules**

A few key resources provide structure for operating a healthy board and commission. It is important to be knowledgeable about legislation surrounding boards and commissions.

### Open Meetings Act

City boards and commissions are expected to conduct themselves according to the procedures contained in the Michigan Open Meetings Act ("OMA"). Essentially, this means that City board and commissions deliberate and make all their decisions during a public meeting, potentially including a full discussion of the reasons for those decisions. Commissioners should avoid emailing, talking, or otherwise communicating with a majority of other members outside of a public meeting. Members

should not discuss how they will vote, reasons for voting a particular way, or other pros and cons of an issue that may come before the commission.

Sometimes, discussion between commissioners outside of a public meeting may be necessary (for example, when developing draft policy / idea recommendations for presentation to the full commission). In such cases, the discussions should involve as few commissioners as possible and never involve a quorum.

If the matter warrants substantial discussion by multiple commissioners outside of the regular meeting schedule, a subcommittee may be appropriate, the meetings of which would be posted and open to the public.

Basic Rights of the Public during a meeting governed by the Open Meetings Act:

- The public can attend without a requirement to sign in or identify themselves
- The public can address the assembly under the rules prescribed for public comment
- The public can get a full picture of the decision-making process; assemblies avoid exchanging written notes, secret ballots, electronic messages, and telephone calls during meetings

#### Freedom of Information Act

In general, records of the city are subject to disclosure under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). Email communications about board or commission business are generally considered to be public records subject to disclosure under FOIA.

## **Local Rules**

### Meeting Notice

Advanced Public Notice of meetings is provided, at a minimum, by physically posting a notice and listing the meeting on the City Website. Posting is typically required to be made no less than 18 hours before a meeting.

There are two types of meetings: Regular meetings and special meetings. Boards and commissions schedule regular meetings at the start of each year, if applicable. When necessary, commissions may reschedule regular meeting dates by vote at a meeting throughout the year. Special meetings supplement the regular meeting schedule and often focus on specific topics. Scheduling either type of meeting includes many common key points.

#### *Key Points for Scheduling Meetings:*

Avoid scheduling meetings for dates identified as Regular City Council meeting days, City holidays and/or other recommended holiday observances.

Advanced notice of meetings is required for all meetings. Work with your staff liaison to make sure these are published and distributed appropriately.

## Agendas & Agenda Packets

Agendas are critical documents for keeping meetings on topic and progressing in an orderly manner. With the exception of subcommittee meetings, agendas are required to be posted online for all meetings at least 18 hours ahead of each meeting.

Staff liaisons help boards and commission publish agendas online ahead of meetings.

Agenda packets are the supporting documents relating to items on the agenda and encompass any materials distributed to members for review and action. (Under record retention rules, the City keeps all agendas and agenda packets created as part of the permanent record of each meeting).

## **Role of City Staff**

### Staff Liaisons

Each board and commission has a staff liaison that provides professional and administrative support. Staff liaisons are the primary conduit for members of boards and commissions to communicate with the city. Your staff liaison should be your first contact if you have any questions related to your board and commission. Staff liaisons perform a variety of roles, including:

- Serving as a channel of communication between the board/commission and other City staff
- Scheduling meetings and booking meeting locations
- Maintaining board/commission records
- Coordinating the collection and distribution of information requested by the board commission

### City Clerk's Office

The City Clerk's Office provides a wide range of support and oversight to ensure meetings and records relating to board and commissions are accurate and meet applicable requirements, including:

- Maintaining rosters by updating with appointments and resignations
- Reviewing and posting meeting notices prepared by staff liaisons
- Arranging accessibility accommodations requested for accessibility at public meetings
- Emailing all new appointees the expiration date of the appointee's terms and other information the City Clerk deems appropriate

### Meeting Minutes

Minutes shall be available for public inspection and for review by members of board and commission as well as the general public within 8 business days after the meeting to which the minutes refer. The Secretary shall send the minutes to the staff liaison within a few days after the meeting so that the minutes can be posted. Boards and commissions review, correct, and approve proposed minutes at the next regular meeting.

Both regular and special meetings are documented by minutes, whenever a meeting is held. Minutes must provide a record of the date, time, place, and attendance of members at a meeting along with a record of any decisions made or roll call votes conducted at a meeting. Minutes are *not* a transcription.

### Conclusion

The City of Hamtramck appreciates your service on one of its Boards or Commission. Review the websites below for additional information pertaining to your Board or Commission. Thank you!

### **Online Resources**

[Chapter 30 – Standing Rules for Board and Commissions \(Hamtramck\)](#)

[Apply for Boards and Commissions](#)

[Arts and Culture Commission](#)

[Beautification Commission](#)

[Board of Review \(Assessment\)](#)

[Downtown Development Authority](#)

[Historical Commission](#)

[Housing Commission](#)

[Human Relations Commission](#)

[Income Tax Review Board](#)

[Library Board](#)

[Planning Commission](#)

[Senior Advisory Council](#)

[Youth Advisory Council](#)

[Zoning Board of Appeals](#)