



ADVISORY BOARD & COMMITTEE HANDBOOK



Alachua County Board of County Commissioners

12 SE 1 St., 2nd Floor Gainesville, FL 32601
Tel (352) 264-6900 or 711 Florida Relay Service

County Website
www.alachuacounty.us

Advisory Board Page

<https://alachuacounty.us/Depts/BOCC/AdvisoryBoards/Pages/default.aspx>

Table of Contents

3 From the Chair

4 Welcome!

4 How Advisory Boards and Committees Work

6 Summary of Responsibilities

7 Frequently Asked Questions

9 Public Records & the Sunshine Law

10 Meeting Guidelines

11 Parliamentary Procedure

13 Important Contact & ADA Information



Alachua County

Board of County Commissioners

Ken Cornell, Chair
Anna Prizzia, Vice Chair
Mary Alford
Charles S. Chestnut, IV
Marihelen Wheeler

Administration
Michele L. Lieberman,
County Manager



Dear Citizen:

Advisory Board and Committee members play a vital role in the policy development process within Alachua County government. Your primary responsibility is to conduct research and provide recommendations or suggestions to the County Commission on various issues of public concern.

This handbook is designed to provide you with the essential information to fully understand your role and responsibilities as an Advisory Board or Committee member. It also outlines key rules which govern all board and committee members, such as parliamentary procedures and Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law.

Alachua County is on an exciting path to a great future, and we are glad to have you as part of this journey. Your expertise and insights are invaluable as we work together to address the challenges ahead.

Thank you again for your commitment to serving as an Advisory Board and Committee member. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ken Cornell". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Ken Cornell, Chair
Alachua County Commission

Welcome

Welcome and Congratulations on your appointment to an Alachua County advisory board or committee! We are pleased that you are willing to devote your time and efforts to improving the quality of life in our community.

How Advisory Boards and Committees Work

What are Advisory Boards and Committees?

Advisory boards and committees are created by ordinance, resolution, or Florida Statute. They are designed to provide advice and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on diverse matters of public concern.

Advisory board and committee members are appointed by the Alachua County Board of County Commissioners. The Board also appoints citizens to other types of boards that provide different services for County government, i.e., quasi-judicial boards and authorities.

Quasi-judicial boards perform functions in a manner comparable to the courts, but more informally.

An example of an authority is the Gainesville-Alachua County Airport Authority, which ensures that the Gainesville Regional Airport is managed in the most efficient manner to ultimately benefit its customers.

Requirements for Board and Committee Members

Board and committee members should have:

- The expertise necessary to accomplish the board or committee's objectives.
- A reputation for integrity and community service.
- An interest or experience in the board's area of service.
- Sufficient time available to prepare for and attend meetings.

Financial Disclosure

Some board and committee members are required by law to file financial disclosure forms (Section 112.3145, Florida Statutes). If appointed to one of these boards or committees, you must file a Statement of Financial Interest with the Alachua County Supervisor of Elections within 30 days of your appointment.

When you resign or your term expires, you must file a financial disclosure statement within 60 days of leaving. Your board or committee's staff liaison can help you obtain these forms, or they can be found at www.ethics.state.fl.us.

Boards and committees that require financial disclosure include:

- Local Planning Agency and Planning Commission

Electing Officers

Once per year, advisory board and committee members elect a Chair, Vice-Chair, and any other officers required by their founding legislation or bylaws. Before you accept a nomination, please consider whether your term as an advisory board member or committee member will expire during the coming year. No one is guaranteed reappointment. If you are not appointed to a new term, your board or committee will have to hold an emergency election at its next meeting.

Setting Goals

Advisory boards and committees must submit an annual work plan/report to the Board of County Commissioners indicating their achievements and progress for the year. Your staff liaison will assist you in preparing these reports, which are due each year by October 1. An annual report encourages boards to develop focused work plans and ensures the Board is kept informed of advisory board and committee activities. Advisory boards and committees are to present their annual work plan/report to the Board during one of its twice-monthly regular meetings.

Correspondence & Communication

Any use of County government logos or letterhead must be coordinated with your staff liaison to prevent misrepresentation of the Board or County policies. Formal correspondence stating the advisory board or committee's position on an issue should always be coordinated with your staff liaison. Be careful when communicating with the media—please be very clear that you are expressing your own opinions and are not speaking on behalf of your board or committee.

Financial Responsibilities

A few boards and committees have specific responsibilities that task them with making financial or funding recommendations. Most County boards, however, do not have management or budget oversight duties. It is the County Manager's role to recommend and direct County budget issues.

The purpose of advisory boards and committees is to give the County Commission an in-depth assessment of an issue related to the board's area of expertise and to offer a recommended course of action.

Summary of Responsibilities

Advisory boards and committees are successful when members and County staff understand the board or committee's purpose and work together to achieve it. This provides the foundation for a good relationship built on mutual respect and a clear understanding of each other's responsibilities.

Board and Committee Members Should:

- File a financial disclosure form, if applicable.
- Notify staff, the board or committee Chair of any anticipated meeting absences.
- Speak openly and clearly during meetings.
- Listen and respond to members of the public who attend meetings.
- Vote on all motions (unless you have a conflict of interest - more on that in Meeting Guidelines).
- Note a conflict of interest and follow the appropriate procedures.

County advisory boards and committees are the first step for many important issues that go before the Board of County Commissioners. The purpose of advisory boards and committees is to advise the Board; it is not to make policy.

Your recommendations will always be considered; however, keep in mind that the recommendations your board or committee makes may not always be adopted by the Board, which frequently must take other factors into consideration before making a policy decision.

Staff Members:

- Create the meeting agenda, with help from the board or committee Chair.
- Supply background information, documents, and presentations on agenda items to board and committee members sufficiently in advance of meetings.
- Attend board and committee meetings in a non-voting capacity.
- Record attendance.
- Take and distribute meeting minutes.
- When requested, staff may make recommendations on agenda items.
- Inform board and committee members of the Board of County Commissioners' actions concerning routine recommendations and appeals.
- Provide technical and administrative assistance to the board and committee.
- Provide initial orientation and continuing education for board and committee members.

Board and Committee Members and Staff Share These Responsibilities:

- Be on time for meetings.
- Know and practice parliamentary procedure (Page 12).
- Be familiar with the issues: Review background information, the agenda, and previous minutes before the meeting.
- Be courteous to each other and to members of the public.
- Be open and responsive to questions and concerns.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. How often does my board or committee meet?

A. The number of times a board or committee meets depends on its area of service, goals, and mission. Please check with your staff liaison regarding meeting times, dates, and locations.

Q. What if I miss a meeting?

A. Advisory board and committee members who miss four out of six regularly scheduled meetings will automatically be removed from the board or committee. This is because advisory boards and committees cannot meet if there are not enough members present for a quorum (a quorum is more than 50 percent of the members).

Generally, there are no excused absences unless there are extenuating circumstances that require the approval of the County Manager or designee. If you know that you will not be able to attend at least 50 percent of your board's meetings, it would be best to notify your staff liaison and submit your resignation. Then, when circumstances have changed, you can reapply, and your chances of appointment will be much better than if you were removed for an attendance violation.

Q. How long will I serve?

A. Most board and committee member terms are two to four years. It is possible that your initial appointment could be less than the normal term due to being appointed to the position in the middle of a term.

As a disclosure, the Board of County Commissioners has the capacity to remove members without cause, meaning no reason must be given.

Q. What if I can't finish my term?

A. Submit a letter of resignation to your County Staff Liaison who will copy the Advisory Board Coordinator.

Q. How is an "Alternate" different from other board and committee members?

A. As an alternate, you are subject to the same attendance rules as all other members. You are welcome to join in the discussion at each meeting, but you cannot make a motion, second a motion, or vote on a motion unless one or more voting members are absent.

Q. May I serve another term?

A. We hope this will be a rewarding experience for you and for County government. You will be contacted by County staff near the end of your term and asked if you would like to apply for another term.

Q. May I serve on more than one board or committee at the same time?

A. Yes, with some exceptions, you may serve on more than one board or committee. Members of quasi-judicial boards or committees, such as the Local Planning Agency and Planning Commission, are considered appointed County officeholders and may not hold more than one office. Therefore, if you are an appointed or elected County, municipal, or state officeholder, you cannot serve on one of these boards or committees.

You also cannot serve on a quasi-judicial board or committee for the City of Gainesville at the same time as serving on a quasi-judicial board or committee for Alachua County. This would constitute dual officeholding, which is prohibited by Florida law. Please check with your staff liaison if you need additional clarification.

Q. Whom do I call if I have a question about advisory board and committee procedures or need more information on some aspect (s) of County operations?

A. A County representative is present at each advisory board and committee meeting and can assist you in getting the information you and your board or committee need. Members of county staff can be reached by phone or email Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Public Records & the Sunshine Law

Public Records

Public records are defined as all materials made or received by an agency in connection with official business that are used to perpetuate, communicate, or formalize knowledge. This includes advisory boards and committees and you as an advisory board or committee member.

In addition to written documents, public records can include tapes, emails, photographs, films, videos, and sound recordings. Florida's law for public records establishes rules for how long these materials must be retained and when they can be destroyed. Your county staff liaison keeps master copies of board and committee agendas, minutes, etc., and you should give the liaison any public records you receive directly outside of your advisory board and committee meetings.

Government-in-the-Sunshine Law

Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine Law was enacted in 1967. It establishes a basic right to access most meetings of boards, commissions, and other governing bodies of state and local governmental agencies or authorities. Sunshine Law requires:

1. Meetings of boards and committees to be open to the public.
2. Reasonable notice of meetings.
3. Minutes of meetings to be taken.

The Sunshine Law applies to elected and appointed boards and committees at the state and local level and to any gathering of two or more members of the same board or committee to discuss a matter that will foreseeably come before that board or committee for action. As an advisory board or committee member, you must observe these laws.

Follow the Sunshine Law to the letter. Do not communicate with your fellow board or committee members by phone, letter, email, in-person, etc., about any matters related to your board or committee.

- All meetings and discussions between two or more elected or appointed officials who serve on the same board or committee require public notice.
- It is a good idea to consider everything you say or do at a board or committee meeting to be a public record and let this guide your actions.
- If you receive requests for materials from citizens or members of the news media, you must provide them with a copy.
- You and/or County staff cannot manipulate the timing of the release of public records. Staff will do their best to keep you informed before you read it in the newspaper.

Sunshine Law/Public Records Information/Frequently Asked Questions

<https://alachuacounty.us/Depts/bocc/advisoryboards/Pages/default.aspx>

If you require additional information, please contact your staff liaison or the Advisory Board Coordinator at (352) 374—5204.

Meeting Guidelines

Handy Tips

You will become very familiar with meetings as an advisory board or committee member, and you will quickly learn to appreciate meetings that run smoothly, as opposed to those that drag on endlessly yet accomplish little.

- Study background materials beforehand, but do not make up your mind. Additional information may be presented at the meeting, and you will want to keep an open mind so you can fairly consider all the facts.
- Before the board or committee can conduct business, it must have a quorum - a majority of members present.
- The Chair is responsible for moving the meeting along, but members should assist by getting to the heart of an issue so a conclusion can be reached in a reasonable amount of time.
- The board or committee may establish and publicize general guidelines governing the length of presentations and public participation. Fifteen minutes is usually enough time for the main presentation; three minutes is the usual time limit for members of the public.
- After presentations and public participation, board and committee members may ask questions. This time should be limited to board or committee questions only, with discussion for or against an issue held until after a motion has been presented.
- After questions are answered, a voting member should make a motion. Only after the motion is seconded can the Chair open the floor for discussion, ensuring that comments remain brief and focused.
- The Chair should try to keep members focused and moving toward a conclusion and may occasionally summarize the discussion. When a debate has concluded, the Chair should call for the question or ask if members are ready to vote.

Voting Conflicts

Simply put, you cannot vote on an issue that may benefit you or the business that employs you (“special private gain” is the official term). Special private gain exists if you or your spouse owns something that would be affected by the vote or have an ongoing business relationship with someone whose interests would be affected.

If a Voting Conflict Exists

- Before the issue is discussed, publicly explain the conflict for the record.
- Abstain from voting.
- Within 15 days of the vote, document your conflict in writing. Ask the County staff member who attends your meetings for a memorandum of voting conflict and return the completed form. You cannot participate in the board or committee’s discussion of the issue (Florida Statute 112.3143).
- Members with a voting conflict question should contact their staff liaison or the County Attorney’s Office (352-374-5218).

Parliamentary Procedures

Imagine a meeting where everyone talks at the same time. Not much would get done - that is why parliamentary procedure exists.

These common-sense rules allow for the orderly flow of ideas and discussion and are widely used to govern meetings. Alachua County Government follows *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (Alice Sturgis)*, a guide used for more than fifty years. Do not worry if the process seems confusing at first; you will learn the terminology quickly.

Alachua County Government follows *The Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure (Alice Sturgis)*, a guide to parliamentary procedure for more than fifty years. Don't worry if at first the process seems confusing. You'll learn the lingo in a short time and before you know it, the procedures will become second nature.

A key element of parliamentary procedure is the **Motion**. There are seven recognized steps in making a motion, as follows.

1. A member asks to be recognized: "Mr. or Madam Chair."
2. The Chair recognizes the member: "Ms. Smith."
3. The member states the motion: "I move the application be approved."
4. Another member (without waiting to be recognized) seconds the motion: "I second the motion."
5. The Chair repeats the motion and calls for discussion: "It has been moved and seconded that the application be approved. Is there any discussion?"
6. After discussion, the Chair puts the motion to a vote: "If there is nothing new to be added to the discussion, we are ready to vote. All those in favor of the application being approved say 'aye.' Those opposed say 'no.'" The Chair pauses for the vote.
7. The Chair counts the votes and announces the outcome: "The motion passes/fails by a five to four vote."

Here are other motions which are a part of parliamentary procedure:

Main motion: Only one motion before an assembly at a time; cannot be introduced when any other motion is before the group.

Motion to amend: Changes a motion before it comes up for final vote; takes precedence over the motion to which it applies (you must vote on the amendment before voting on the main motion).

Substitute motion: Amends by substituting another form, changed or additional wording.

Motion to extend or limit debate: Sets time to be spent on matter before assembly, either by limiting

time allowed for each speaker or by indicating a time in which to discontinue further discussion (amendments and debate related to type and time of limitations are allowed).

Motion to refer: Refers question to a committee (either standing or ad hoc) or to a person for further study/report.

Motion to postpone to a certain time: Defers consideration to a definite future date.

Motion to table or motion to lay on the table: Temporarily puts aside the motion being considered. Must be taken from the table at that meeting or the next meeting. Not amendable or debatable.

Motion to reconsider: Action taken to bring a question up again after it has been adopted or rejected (debatable but not amendable).

Motion to rescind: Action taken at a later meeting to repeal the previous action (debatable but not amendable).

Motion to recess: Indicates a recess for a short period of time during a meeting (amendable and debatable with restrictions.)

Motion to adjourn: Ends all discussion at this meeting (amendable and debatable with restrictions).

Question of Privilege: Deals with the rights and comforts of a member and the assembly. For example, requests for a person(s) to speak louder or to turn up the air conditioning (does not require a second). The Chair can make the decision on such minor motions or requests such as point of order, parliamentary inquiry, withdrawal of a motion and or second (none of these require a second).

Examples for making motions – All of these motions must be seconded

1. "I move the report be approved with a recommendation that necessary funding be provided to implement the projects in the report." (**main motion**)
2. "I move to amend that funding be provided on projects 2-10 only." (**amendment**)
3. "I offer a substitute motion to accept the report for further study." (**substitute motion**)
4. "I move to refer the report to the finance subcommittee for an in-depth analysis of the availability of necessary monies." (**motion to refer**)
5. "I move further consideration be tabled." (**motion to table**)
6. Later in the same meeting, a member on the prevailing side of any of the foregoing motions: "I move to reconsider our previous actions regarding" (**motion to reconsider**)
7. At a subsequent meeting, a member on the prevailing side of motions 1-5: "I move we rescind our action of (date) regarding...." (**motion to rescind**)

Important Contact & ADA Information

We hope you found this handbook helpful. On the following pages is a list of advisory boards and committees (subject to change), as well as descriptions of each. Additional information is available online at: <https://alachuacounty.us/Depts/bocc/advisoryboards/Pages/default.aspx>

Contact Information

Kimberly McKinney
Advisory Board Coordinator
County Manager's Office
Alachua County Board of County Commissioners
(352) 374-5204
kmckinney@alachuacounty.us

Disability Notice

If you have a disability and need accommodation to participate in a county program, service, or public meeting, please contact the Equal Opportunity Office at (352) 374-5275 at least two business days prior to the event. TDD users, please call 711 (Florida Relay Service).