



KITSAP COUNTY ADVISORY GROUP HANDBOOK

Kitsap County Mission

Kitsap County Government exists to protect and promote the safety, health, and well-being of all County residents in an accessible, efficient, effective, and responsive manner.

Visit kcowa.us/advisorygroups for additional resources, tools and training.

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Welcome to Kitsap County

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

Volunteers are a vital part of government's existence and deeply appreciated. Kitsap 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 Kitsap County.

Advisory Groups

You join many people in Kitsap County who serve as volunteer members of advisory groups. Advisory bodies provide guidance to decision-makers, bring public participation into the process of government, and provide an important link between the community and Commissioners. The information each group conveys 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.

The Board of County Commissioners holds the political and legal responsibility for the conduct of county government and welfare of the county. As a result, Commissioners may not accept all recommendations made by advisory groups but this does not imply a lack of confidence or disinterest in the advice. The Board must weigh the guidance provided by advisory groups along with a broad scope of other considerations, as they reach the decisions for which they are responsible.

This handbook contains a list of the boards and commissions on which the public may serve for Kitsap County, a description of the functions of boards and outlines some of the responsibilities of members. The Board of Commissioners appoints community members to serve terms which vary in length, depending on the advisory group. People may serve on more than one 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 Board of County Commissioners and directed by governing statute. Members are expected to establish an effective working relationship with each other and the Board of County Commissioners 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 liaison for that board or council.

The information in this handbook is intended to acquaint new advisory group members with the functions and processes of County Advisory Groups. We hope you find it helpful.

Advisory group member adherence to County Policies

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.

It is the intent of Kitsap County that all employees and volunteers work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment by another employee, supervisor, volunteer or non-employee for any reason. Discriminatory conduct in any form undermines morale and the integrity of employment or volunteer relationships, and interferes with the productivity of the group.

If, as a volunteer for Kitsap County, you feel you may be the subject of discrimination or harassment, you may contact your advisory board staff person, the County Volunteer Services Coordinator, or County Commissioners. Any reports of discrimination or harassment will be examined impartially and resolved promptly.

Sexual Harassment*

Kitsap 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 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 or the County Volunteer Services Coordinator.

Drug Free Workplace*

Kitsap County expects all employees and volunteers to report to their assignment free from drug or alcohol impairment and remain in a condition that enables them to perform their duties in a safe, efficient, legal and professional manner. Kitsap County encourages employees and volunteers who may have an alcohol 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 or the County Volunteer Coordinator for a copy of these Kitsap County policies.*

Being an Effective Advisory Group Member

Residents are appointed to Kitsap County advisory groups to represent the public interest. Appointments may reflect a geographic interest, area of expertise, special interest group or professional association. As you become acquainted with your fellow advisory group members, remember that every 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.

- Understand the county's long-term goals.
- Understand the group's organizational mission.
- Agree to BCC approved by-laws or rules the group follows to conduct meetings.
- Implement a plan for setting yearly goals.
- Determine how they will evaluate the group's work each year.
- Know who the assigned staff person/s are, what functions they perform and how much of their time is allocated to supporting the advisory group.

Board member expectations:

- Attend all regular meetings
- Actively participate in committees and subcommittees
- Prepare for meetings in advance, reviewing the agenda, meeting minutes and other documents that will be discussed
- Recognize advisory groups must operate in an open and public manner
- Willingness to work with others in the advisory group
- Share information with your community or the organizations you represent and bring diverse opinions, community concerns and questions forward to the advisory group, staff and Commissioners.
- Study programs and services, and analyze problems and needs, as requested.
- Offer proposals and recommend changes in programs and policies, as requested.
- Provide community members with information about County policies, programs and budgets that may be presented at advisory group 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

While advisory groups counsel department staff and the Commissioners 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 to the Commissioners, it is essential that advisory groups:

- Provide all recommendations in written form
- Express 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.

Laws Affecting Advisory Group Activities

As an advisory group member appointed by the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners, 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. You will receive more detailed information from the staff supporting your advisory group. If you have questions, feel free to contact the County Volunteer Services Coordinator or your advisory group staff person. They will assist you while you focus on the important service you are providing to the county.

Open Public Meetings Act

Washington's open meeting 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. Electronic communications may constitute a meeting which is subject to the OPMA if a majority of members discuss information, give input or take action via e-mail.

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); 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 will not assist with defense.

All email and text message communication relating to your advisory group service is considered public record and you may be required to release those records as part of a Freedom of Information Act request.

Public Disclosure

The minutes of all regular meetings must be recorded and made available for public inspection. The law also requires that you maintain records of business conducted through electronic communications among members. The Public Records law applies to most county boards and advisory groups. Regardless of whether the Act applies; all advisory groups should be in compliance with the law. Advisory group members are encouraged to set up a separate e-mail address for advisory group business so that in the case of a public records request, those records are easy to submit. Check with your staff liaison if you have questions about this. Note that text messages related to council business are also considered public records.

Ethics and Appearance of Fairness

Washington's ethics laws prohibit public officials from gaining financially as a result of their 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, an appointed Planning Commissioner could not support a candidate by signing their name and position on the Planning Commission but could sign with only their name. A member of an advisory group could not use the facilities or the forum of an advisory group meeting to publicly support a candidate or ballot measure but could advocate to members of the group in a private, individual capacity outside of a meeting.

Public Communications Guidelines

To fulfill its mission on behalf of residents, Kitsap County welcomes and encourages public participation and input at all levels. Kitsap 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.

Kitsap County hosts a rich pool of volunteers. We appreciate and respect the willingness of residents to offer valuable experiences by volunteering time and energy to serve on the county's advisory bodies. We encourage advisory groups to reach out and seek participation and input from members, clubs and organizations of their respective communities.

One of the most effective methods to inform the public of meetings, events and activities is through the media. Kitsap County government supports positive and cooperative relationships with the media and cherishes the right of both individual free speech and the press.

We ask that members of Kitsap County advisory groups follow these basic guidelines:

- For an effective meeting announcement to the media, ensure staff is informed of special meeting presentations and topics of discussion, and given to staff at least a week in advance so information may be distributed to the public.
- For clear and unambiguous communication to the media, it's both prudent and efficient to have one spokesperson for the advisory committee. This is usually the chair of the group but please check with your staff liaison if you are contacted by the media as the county may wish to be contribute to the response.
- As people with constitutional rights of free speech, everyone has a right to an opinion on any issue. However, if the advisory group has not made a decision or taken a position on a specific issue, please make sure to indicate that the thoughts you share either orally or written are your own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the committee. You may not identify yourself as a member of the advisory group if you are speaking as an individual, for instance if writing a letter to the editor, testifying in a public hearing or writing an opinion piece.

Staff Support for Advisory Groups

County staff support Kitsap 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 Board of Commissioners or other county departments. Staff coordinates the administrative activities for the group including coordinating minutes, posting agendas and minutes on the advisory group website, requesting county staff presentations on topics of interest, forwarding recommendations or implementing actions, coordinating a public meeting space and ensuring compliance with applicable laws, such as the Open Public 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.

Meetings

Advisory group members are responsible for the content and productivity of meetings and should come prepared to take ownership for their contributions. Meetings do matter. The following guidelines will assure that participants contribute productively.

- All participants arrive prepared and on time.
- Members show mutual respect to each other and the public attending meetings.
- Agenda is distributed in advance of the meeting
- Physical meeting environment is comfortable and accessible to all, and accommodations are made as requested.
- Meetings start and end on times agreed on by the group.
- All participants contribute and actively engage.
- Outcomes of discussion, voting and other actions are clear to all.
- Work to be accomplished is defined and assigned.
- Laughter and fun are encouraged.

Group Decision Making

Just as the functions of Kitsap 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 to reach a decision. It is important for volunteer advisory group members to be aware of and familiar with the decision-making process their group uses. Advisory groups are advised to use Robert's Rules to guide meeting formats.

Ground Rules

Every group should establish ground rules that are reflected in the group's bylaws. 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 prevent misunderstandings and disagreements. Some of the more important ground rules might include:

- **Attendance:** Groups should place a high priority on attendance at meetings. Establish a procedure for informing the chair and/or staff of a member's absence from a scheduled meeting. Absences not reported may be considered unexcused and result in the removal of a member.
- **Promptness:** Meetings should start and end on time.
- **Meeting place and time:** Specify a regular meeting time and place and establish a procedure for notifying members of meetings.
- **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.
- **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 cell phone use and addressing public comment during meetings.

Group Roles

By participating as a member of a group, each person makes a unique contribution with their 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 reports of sub-committees back to the full advisory group.
- The chair works with vice-chair and staff to set the agenda and distribute it to members.
- The chair sets a positive tone and pace for the group, ensuring the meeting starts and ends on time.
- The chair encourages each member to participate fully and keeps the group energy positive and focused.
- The chair may share the role of meeting preparation with advisory group staff.
- The chair represents the group in the community and serves as spokesperson.
- The chair serves as facilitator of meetings, in coordination with staff, and while in that role, remains neutral on content and focuses on process.
- The chair may work with staff to mediate group disputes or issues with individual advisory group members and suggest methods to solve problems.
- The chair ensures time for public comment that should be reflected on the agenda.

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 sub-committees.
- Shares information from their community/neighborhood/organization they might be affiliated with to the advisory group and from the advisory group to their community/neighborhood/organization.

Recorder/Secretary

- Follows the meeting minute guidelines to record regular meetings. Minutes must include time/date/location/attendance/agenda/actions taken and results of voting. They may also capture a brief summary of discussion, new business, public comment.
- Asks for clarification to ensure accuracy.
- Submits the meeting minutes to the chair at least one week prior to the next meeting so the chair can distribute the draft minutes with the agenda.

Bylaws

Every advisory group should have a set of bylaws to direct and clarify its actions, procedures, and organization. Bylaws are the guidelines by which a group functions. Bylaws and bylaws amendments must be approved by the Board of Kitsap County Commissioners.

Bylaws define the primary characteristics of an organization, prescribe how it should function, and include rules that are so important that they may not be changed without prior notice to members and formal vote and agreement by a majority of members. Advisory Group members are expected to become familiar with and adhere to bylaws and all relevant statutes. Contact the Volunteer Services Coordinator when considering bylaws amendments to review the approval process.

An organization's bylaws generally include the following:

- Name of group
- Mission statement
- Membership representation
- Officers
- Meetings and attendance
- Committees; Subcommittees
- Amendment procedures for making changes in the bylaws.

Appointment and Removal from Advisory Groups

To be considered for appointment, an applicant must reside in Kitsap 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.

Advisory group members serve at the pleasure of County Commissioners. Unless otherwise restricted by law, the Board of County Commissioners may 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

Kitsap County Advisory Groups

For more information, visit the website at <https://kcowa.us/advisorygroups> or contact Kitsap County Volunteer Services at 360-337-4650, rpirtle@kitsap.gov.

ACCESSIBLE COMMUNITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This committee is made of those who want to improve accessibility in the county. Its purpose is to support disability awareness and access for people with disabilities through technical assistance and other resources funded by the Accessible Communities Act.

AREA AGENCY ON AGING ADVISORY COUNCIL

This council advises the Area Agency on Aging in the development and implementation of the Area Plan for Aging Services; conducts public hearings; represents the interests of older persons; and reviews and comments on all community policies, programs and actions which affect older persons. Members are appointed to three-year terms and a majority must be at least 60 years old.

BOARD OF EQUALIZATION

The Board considers appeals received on the value of properties in Kitsap County. Members review cases based on assessment appeals and determine equalization of values of personal and real property taxes.

BOUNDARY REVIEW BOARD

The purpose of the Boundary Review Board is to allow cities and towns to adequately plan and finance urban services and boundary extensions, consistent with comprehensive land-use plans. The board reviews proposals for changes in boundaries of cities, ports and other authorities.

BREMERTON-KITAP ACCESS TELEVISION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The committee acts as an advisory body to the Bremerton-Kitsap Access Television (BKAT) staff, City of Bremerton Council, and the Kitsap County Commissioners. It makes recommendations on policy relating to services and facilities, promotes community outreach and provides a forum for public concerns regarding use of facilities, programming and other related issues.

CENTRAL KITSAP COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Members appointed from the Central Kitsap area review and make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners on growth management issues and other items of community concern. The council conveys information on county projects and initiatives with the public.

COUNTY BUDGET COMMITTEE

This group is tasked with reviewing county programs and services and making recommendations on the county's revenues, expenditures and mandated costs for a sustainable budget to support those services.

COMMISSION ON CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Members represent health, social services, law and justice, the military, education, business, youth and the community at large. The commission provides advice on the needs of children, youth and families; facilitates coordination of information and services; and advocates for a community environment that fosters healthy families and children.

COUNCIL FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

The council advises County Commissioners on issues related to prejudice and discrimination, racially motivated violence and malicious harassment. The council promotes equitable treatment of all people and works to reduce prejudice and its effects through education, resource referrals, and advocacy.

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES ADVISORY BOARD

The board consists of parents and representatives of business, schools, medical services and other concerned residents. Members review service plans, funding applications and budgets and make recommendations regarding developmental disabilities services funded through the county. They also provide community education on developmental disabilities.

GRANT REVIEW COMMITTEES FOR BLOCK GRANTS

Community members serve on two committees that review capital and services grant request applications funded through federal Community Development Block Grants and the Home Investment Partnership. Local grant funds may also be awarded.

KINGSTON COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

This council was formed to foster communication within the Kingston community and to help develop and promote a sense of community vision and pride. Members bring issues and county projects to the attention of the Kingston community and provide a means for receiving and conveying the community response to the county.

KITSAP REGIONAL LIBRARY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The board is responsible for adoption of rules and regulations in the governance of the Kitsap County library system. They establish and administer the annual budget, review and set annual property tax levy and evaluate organizational needs for the orderly and efficient management and control of area libraries. Five trustees are appointed to serve five-year terms.

LODGING TAX ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Lodging Tax Advisory Committee is composed of representatives from lodging tax contributors and organizations that could qualify to receive funding. The committee advises and makes recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners on how best to distribute and expend lodging tax revenue.

LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN ADVISORY COUNCIL

The purpose of the Ombudsman Advisory Council is to advise the Regional Long-Term Care Ombudsman on recruitment, selection, training, support and evaluation of volunteer ombudsman. The council also disseminates public information regarding volunteer opportunities, training and program services and assists in local program operation, goals and priorities.

MANCHESTER COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Manchester Community Advisory Council represents residents of Manchester in furthering the goals and policies of the Manchester Community Plan and shares information on county projects and initiatives. It also serves as a conduit between the county and community.

MENTAL HEALTH, CHEMICAL DEPENDENCY & THERAPEUTIC COURT COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Mental Health, Chemical Dependency and Therapeutic Court Community Advisory Committee reviews applications, makes recommendations for and evaluates funding from the 1/10th% sales and use tax enacted to fund mental health and chemical dependency treatment programs and services in Kitsap County.

NON-MOTORIZED FACILITIES COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Non-Motorized Facilities Community Advisory Committee was established to advise the Board of County Commissioners and staff on non-motorized transportation projects and funding and contributes to the county's planning processes.

NOXIOUS WEED CONTROL BOARD

The board reviews policy and guidelines to assure compliance with state, federal and other weed control regulations. The board also monitors and implements rules and regulations for an effective weed control program.

OLYMPIC WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The council works with the county commissioners of the Olympic Consortium to provide strategic planning and policy guidance for workforce development activities in the Kitsap/Clallam/Jefferson counties service area. Members represent business, organized labor, education, economic development, public welfare and employment agencies.

PARKS ADVISORY BOARD

The Parks Advisory Board provides input to the Parks Director and County Commissioners on the acquisition, development and administration of park properties. The group may also be asked to address specific issues related to property acquisition, planning, improvements and facilities.

PLANNING COMMISSION

The commission assists the Department of Community Development in carrying out its duties, conducts public hearings and makes recommendations to the Kitsap County Board of Commissioners. Three members from each Commissioner District are appointed to four-year terms.

PUBLIC FACILITIES DISTRICT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Public Facilities Board of Directors is authorized to acquire, construct, own, remodel, maintain, repair, and operate sports facilities, entertainment facilities, convention facilities, regional centers and contiguous parking facilities.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION

This three-member commission establishes a merit system of employment and makes rules and regulations detailing the manner that examinations, appointments, promotions, reallocations, reinstatements, demotions, suspensions and discharges are made related to employees of the Kitsap County Sheriff's office.

SOLID WASTE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This committee assists in the development of programs and policies concerning solid waste handling and disposal. Members also review and comment on proposed rules, policies or ordinances concerning solid waste issues prior to adoption. Members are appointed by the incorporated cities, the Tribes, and County Commissioners.

SUQUAMISH COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

This council was established to facilitate communication between the county and community; share desires and concerns of the community with County, Suquamish Tribe and other government entities; and to bring to the Suquamish community issues and projects of the County and Suquamish Tribe.

VETERANS ADVISORY BOARD

The Veterans Advisory Board advises County Commissioners on the needs of local indigent veterans, reviews and assists in the distribution of emergency grants to veterans and shares information about resources available to benefit indigent veterans and their families. The board also organizes events including the Run to Tahoma and Stand Downs for military families.

WASHINGTON STATE FERRIES ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Bainbridge, Bremerton, Kingston and Southworth Ferry Advisory Committees collect input from ferry riders from their terminal and keep riders informed on issues affecting terminal service. FACs convey user suggestions, complaints and needs and promote improvements to Washington State Ferries management and the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council.