

Boards,
Commissions,
and Committees

CITY BOARDS, COMMISSIONS AND COMMITTEES

Board, Commission and Committee Origins

Albany's existing boards, commissions and committees originate from two sources: 1.) the Albany City Charter; and 2.) City Council action through ordinances, resolutions or minute action.

Boards and Commissions established by the Albany City Charter include the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Civil Service Board. Boards, commissions and committees established by the City Council action may be ongoing or may have limited tenure. Ongoing boards, commissions and committees are generally created by ordinance or resolution to perform defined duties within a specified area of interest for an indefinite period of time. Examples of these types of advisory bodies include the Park & Recreation Commission, the Traffic & Safety Commission, the Waterfront Committee, the Albany Arts Committee, the Albany Library Board and the Charter Review Committee. Limited tenure boards, commissions or committees are generally created by City Council resolution or minute action, for a specific purpose and/or limited period of time. If warranted, the City Council may choose to extend the tenure of such a body.

City boards and commissions may also be authorized by Federal or State law or by voter initiative. At the current time, Albany does not have any advisory bodies that originate from these sources.

Board, Commission and Committee Roles and Functions

Albany's boards, commissions and committees generally serve in one of two capacities: judicial and/or advisory to the City Council.

Boards and commissions with a quasi-judicial role have authority to make specific decisions that affect the actions of individuals, either by authorizing or restricting certain types of activities. For example, the Planning & Zoning Commission has the authority to grant or deny variances and use permits under the Zoning Ordinance. Individuals have the right to appeal these decisions to the City Council. Albany's advisory bodies with quasi-judicial authority include the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Civil Service Board.

All of Albany's boards, commissions and committees serve in an advisory capacity to the City Council regarding City policies and programs within their specified scope of responsibility and expertise. This role involves receiving public input, evaluating options and making recommendations to the City Council.

Serving on a Board, Commission or Committee

Each of Albany's boards, commissions and committees has a specified number of members. Generally, each City Councilmember appoints one or more members to the particular advisory board and these appointees have a term concurrent with the elected term of the appointing Councilmember. In certain cases, a board, commission or committee has additional members that are either appointed by an individual Councilmember, by the City Council as a whole, or by a different body, such as the Albany Board of Education. Specific information regarding the composition of each ongoing board, commission and committee is described in the next section of this handbook.

Appointed citizen board, commission and committee representatives are generally required to be residents and electors of the City of Albany. In addition, it is the City of Albany's policy that when a citizen serves on a board, commission or committee, his or her address and telephone number will be a public record unless the City Clerk is specifically told not to release that information.

In November 1996, the voters of Albany approved Measure Q, which amended the City Charter regarding the appointment, term and removal of members of City advisory bodies. It also provides that appointments made by the City Council as a whole, where nominations are not made by the Mayor or individual Councilmembers. The terms shall extend until the next municipal election (per Charter Sec. 3.23a). The measure requires the City Council to establish, by ordinance, a uniform policy for automatic removal of appointees due to excessive absenteeism, failure to maintain a residence in Albany, or conviction for a felony. Measure Q also specifies that removal of appointees for any other reason shall be only for cause and then only by a majority vote of the City Council. The City already has an ordinance, which provides that a person is removed if there are three consecutive unexcused absences.

In June 2006, the voters of Albany approved Measure H, which amended the City Charter to provide that appointees to committees, commissions, boards serve for a term lasting until the next municipal election (2 years).

Specific Responsibilities and Composition of Ongoing Boards, Commissions and Committees

The following pages provide summary information of each of Albany's ongoing boards, commissions and committees, including its origin, role, composition and any particular requirements or provisions that may apply.

Subject to the direction of the City Council and the availability of resources, meetings of Commissions, Committees and Boards may be broadcast on Cable Channel 33.