

Advisory Boards and Commissions: Appointment Guidelines

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Whether you are making first-time appointments to advisory boards and commissions, considering reappointment of current board members or deciding whether to vote to confirm appointments made by the official with appointing authority, there are some universal truths that apply. They include:

- Choose appointees who have demonstrated an ability or willingness to work with others – even those with whom they may not agree.
- As the one making appointments, avoid potential appointees who are your perfect opposite – voters chose you for a reason. Appointments should be consistent with your expressed policy choices.
- Don't be reluctant to re-appoint experienced board members – sometimes experience pays great dividends – particularly on an advisory board where many members are new to their responsibilities.
- Be sure that prospective appointees know what will be expected of them – that their efforts will take place in public, and there may be some controversy along the way. The governing board won't always agree. A highly qualified appointee who doesn't have time to serve does you no favors.
- If you are called upon to confirm appointments, don't confuse your responsibilities. Your primary consideration is whether an appointee is generally fit for public service – not whether you would have appointed the same person.

Appointment and confirmation are only the beginning. Those who agree to serve on advisory boards should receive competent training on open meetings, legal principles in their subject area and should be supported by staff and a legal advisor. Advisory boards should know what is expected of them – occasional direct communication is essential, but they shouldn't be "told" what advice to give – that would miss the point of having advisors. Facilities and resources should provide adequate support for effective board or commission activities.