

# Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association Parks & Recreation Commission Handbook S-A-M-P-L-E



## INTRODUCTION

This booklet has been prepared to assist new and long term commissioners in their role on the Parks and Recreation Commission. Commissioners are truly “the voice of the people” in bringing the needs, interest and desires of the residents of \_\_\_\_\_ into focus and perspective for effective action. However, they cannot allow themselves to be missionaries for any particular facility, program or organized vocal group. They should be concerned about offering the widest possible service to the community within the limits of the staff and budget to meet these services.

Commissioners are appointed by the City Council from a pool of applicants. Selection is made after the City Clerk’s office has notified City Council of a vacancy. New commissioners are typically persons well known in the community. These individuals may have backgrounds that are very diverse and may have little to do with parks and recreation. It becomes very important for commissioners to become acquainted with their roles and responsibilities through an orientation.

To accomplish this orientation, this booklet has been prepared to assist commissioners in clarifying their roles and understanding adopted commission procedures. Materials in this booklet have come from a variety of sources. However, most of the commission specific materials like, Key Points, Commission Responsibilities and Relationships were taken from the “Commissioners and Board Members Handbook”, produced by the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association. Please take the time to read through the materials included in this booklet. If you have any questions, please contact staff or the chairperson of the commission. Thank you for contributing your time and effort to making the City of \_\_\_\_\_ a better place to live.

## PURPOSE OF THE PARKS & RECREATION COMMISSION

***“None of us is better than all of us! . . . Commissions which utilize all the resources among its members will solve problems, render decisions and make accomplishments of a quality that exceeds the best of an individual in the group.”***

Advisory Commissions are established to provide a communication link between the community and the City Council and its recreation and park staff as the city strives towards contributions to a better quality of life. The Commission is advisory in nature and their input, usually in the form of a recommendation to the City Council or staff, is considered in evaluating effectiveness of programs and policies.

Advisory Commission members are expected to learn, as quickly as possible, the scope of their authority and responsibility as delegated by the City Council. In addition, it is quite important the individual commission member gain an understanding of his/her relationship with the City Council, staff and community.

## **COMMISSION RESPONSIBILITIES**

***“Our future may lie beyond our vision, but it is not beyond our control. It is not fate or nature or irresistible tides of history that will determine our destiny, but instead it will be the work of our hands and hearts matched with reason and principle. “***

Each commissioner must learn, understand, accept and accomplish delegated responsibilities in order to be an effective and viable force on the commission. The areas of responsibility are:

1. Commission attendance
2. Committee work
3. Assignments delegated by City Council
4. Knowledge of Parks, Recreation & Trails Master Plan
5. Volunteer work
6. Legislative advocate
7. Technical consultant in areas of expertise

The major responsibility of the commission is to participate in the review and update of the department's short and long term goals and objectives. All other responsibilities and activities should be supportive of those objectives. The following is a list of category of assignments and roles in those assignments in general terms.

1. Budget
  - a. Know and understand the department's budget.
  - b. Identify community needs and determine long and short range priorities.
  - c. Recognize competition between departments for budget dollars.
  - d. Be aware of pressures on staff and be prepared to present and champion budget to City Council.
2. Policy
  - a. Policy should be planned action - not reaction.
  - b. Policies should provide for periodic review and updating.
  - c. Recommendations for changes in policy may be initiated by commission members, staff or City Council.
  - d. Unenforceable policies should be reviewed or deleted.
3. Land Acquisition and Facility Development
  - a. Be aware of the City's Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan.
  - b. Participate in updating the Master Plan.
  - c. Receive community input regarding wants and needs.
  - d. Keep public informed regarding plans and progress.

- e. Review and make recommendations regarding developments with community best interests in mind.
4. Financing
    - a. Be involved in reviewing program facility fees and charges.
    - b. Be alert to any alternate sources of funding like grants, gifts, endowments, joint ventures or legislation.
    - c. Assist City officials with bond issues, levies or tax initiatives as requested.
    - d. Serve as liaison with agencies granting gifts or endowments.
  5. Public Relations
    - a. Commission members are always in public relations for the City. Their words, actions and deeds can be reflected upon the City.
    - b. Commissioners should assist staff in promoting programs as requested.
    - c. Commissioners should keep lines of communication open to the public.
  6. Programming
    - a. Programming is a staff function.
    - b. Commissioners monitor programs to ascertain that community needs are being met.
    - c. Understand program philosophy.
    - d. Support program efforts.
    - e. Serve as a buffer between staff and special interest groups.
    - f. Responsible for recommendations of community involvement and brings back community feedback.
  7. Legislation
    - a. Must recognize that a continuing legislative knowledge is important.
    - b. Individual and commission contact with political personalities is essential.
    - c. Protects staff from political involvement.
    - d. Actively fosters legislation favorable to parks and recreation.
  8. Education
    - a. Support advanced training for staff.
    - b. Read publications on various relevant subjects and bring information to commission for consideration.
    - c. Each commission member has a personal responsibility for continuing exposure and education to further his/her knowledge of the park and recreation issues.

## COMMISSIONERS AND RELATIONSHIPS

As a Commissioner, you will be responsible for working a wide range of individuals. Each Commissioner comes from various backgrounds - educationally, occupationally, religiously, socially, economically, physically and culturally. When relating to others, it is important to keep this in mind. Below is a short statement about the relationships with the various groups:

### 1. **Relationship with Other Commission Members**

- a. Respect the other Commissioner's viewpoint even though it may be opposite of yours.
- b. Allow other Commissioners to articulate their views and then attempt to make an objective evaluation of those views to the limit of your ability.
- c. Evaluation of other Commissioner's viewpoint should be based upon what is best for the City of \_\_\_\_\_.
- d. Strive to minimize political action among Commissioners whenever possible.
- e. Be open and honest at all times.
- f. Do not expect every Commission to give of their time, talent and knowledge to the same degree.
- g. Recognize and assist new Commissioners and make them feel welcomed.

### 2. **Relationship with City Council**

- a. The relationship is defined by City Council and may change as councils change.
- b. It is unethical for an individual Commissioner to attempt to influence or persuade the City Council to assume a position which may be in opposition to the Commission as a whole.
- c. When a split opinion exists at the Commission, it would be appropriate to forward to City Council a majority and minority report with the final recommendation.
- d. Remember Commissioners are appointed by City Council.
- e. The Commission has an obligation to serve the public.
- f. Contact with City Council should be open and never used to circumvent staff or the Commission.
- g. Commissioners should never knowingly and openingly embarrass City Council or staff.
- h. Commissioners should render as much assistance as possible to City Council and avoid placing them in an untenable position.
- i. Assist City Council in developing public trust.
- j. Commissioners should be sensitive to the City's priorities. There are times when, for the good of the overall agency, it may require adjustment of the priority level of a particular project.
- k. Commissioners fall under the restrictions of the act whereby decisions and recommendations can only be made at a duly constituted meeting which is open to the public.

3. **Relationship with Government Officials**

- a. Be aware that elected officials are sensitive to political involvement which may be viewed as their prerogative and within their purview. Roles need to be clarified by the City Council prior to involvement.
- b. Contacts with elected officials on behalf of the City should be made only with knowledge and approval of the City Council.
- c. Personal political involvement should be influential and supportive of the City's objectives.
- d. Commission members should support legislative efforts favorable to parks and recreation issues.
- e. The Commission should not be used for personal political gain, favors or influence.
- f. Commission members may act as liaison with city, county, state and national elected officials on behalf of the city when coordinated with the City Council.

4. **Intra-departmental Relationships**

- a. Remember City Council and administrative perceptions on the importance of recreation and parks services is essential to a community's quality of life.
- b. Know and understand the roles of various departments within the city.
- c. Be willing to provide leadership for developing and maintaining a climate for cooperation among various city commissions.

Parks & Recreation Commission  
Proposed 2009-2010 **SAMPLE** Work Plan

Duties

5. *Act in an advisory capacity to the City in all matters pertaining to parks and public recreation, and to cooperate with all other governmental agencies and civic groups in the advancement of sound recreation planning and programming.*

Priority: A1

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Advisory Body to the City Council and School Board.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Attend City Council meetings and relay information on various topics; accept assignments to committees and boards and inform Council of actions taken; Attend School Board meetings and relay information on various topics. Develop and improve communication with the Commission, City Council and School Board. Receive direction from the City Council and take action as directed. Review park and recreation programs so that they are consistent with the Parks, Recreation and Trails Master Plan and make recommendations to City Council.

Commissioner Availability: School Board - \_\_\_\_\_  
City Council - \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: Assignment requires attendance at City Council and/or School Board meetings. Requires 3 hours per meeting, 6 hours per month.

Staff Role: To be determined.

Council Role: Refer matters of parks and recreation for Commission recommendation.

## Duties

6. *Recommend joint recreation programming in accordance with Education Code \_\_\_\_\_, including all amendments to such provisions, and render assistance regarding the terms of the contractual agreement between the City Council and the Board of Education.*

Priority: A2

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Review City/School Joint Use Agreement

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Review contract annually. Make recommendation in regards to revisions, additions or deletions to the contract.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: 1-2 hours per year.

Staff Role: Assist with contract revisions and present information to the City Council.

Council Role: Provide the Commission with direction/comment.

## Duties

- Aid the Public Services Director and the person in charge of recreation for the school district in making plans for the conduct of recreation activities.*

Priority: A3

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Assist Public Services Director and School District personnel with recreation programs.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Encourage community participation at recreation events; volunteer time for recreation activities; promote recreational activities at public meetings; encourage citizens to volunteer their time at local recreational events.

Commissioner Availability: Ongoing commitment of all commissioners.

Commitment Required: Commitment falls under regular attendance at general meetings and 10-20 hours annually for special activities.

Staff Role: Provide information to Commissioners regarding programs that need assistance.

Council Role: To be determined.

## Duties

8. *Interpret the community recreational programs for public officials in order to promote understanding and financial support from public and private sources.*

Priority: A4

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Legislative and public involvement.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Attend public meetings and address recreation program issues; network with the Wisconsin Park & Recreation Association to address legislative issues; address city, county, state and federal agencies in regards to local recreation needs.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: Requires minimum quarterly meetings of CPRCBM.

Staff Role: Provide administrative support.

Council Role: Provide the Commission with direction/comment.

## Duties

9. *Recommend the establishment of general policies with respect to the Parks, Recreation and Trails.*

Priority: A5

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: General policy development.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Review standard operating procedures for improved efficiency and effective delivery of services. Issues like hours of operation at community centers, rental policies, refund policies, non-resident fees, etc.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: Commitment falls under regular meetings, except for any research.

Staff Role: Provide professional expertise and current practices.

Council Role: Provide the Commission with direction/comment.

## Duties

10. *Consider recommendations and requests originating from any source outside the Public Services Department*

Priority: A6

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Public forum.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Agendize items for consideration by the Commission and make recommendation to City Council as appropriate.

Commissioner Availability: All Commissioners

Commitment Required: Commitment falls under regular meetings.

Staff Role: Provide administrative support.

Council Role: Consider Commission recommendations.

## Duties

11. *Make periodic inspections of park and recreation facilities.*

Priority: A7

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Risk Management Issues.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Diminish risk at public parks and recreation facilities; insure that the facilities are safe for users; ADA compliance; Commission and Recreation & Community staff to work more closely with the Fleet & Facilities Manager and Parks & Landscape Manager; staff to develop a risk management program for the park areas and recreation facilities.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: Requires 3-4 hours per quarter of Commissioner's time.

Staff Role: Provide administrative support.

Council Role: Provide the Commission with direction/comment.

## Duties

12. *Make such investigations or surveys in the general field of recreation administration as may be requested by the City Council or the Board of Education or as may be deemed advisable by the commission, and to fully report its findings and recommendations to the respective bodies.*

Priority: A8

Category: Research and surveys.

Assignment Item: Existing

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Conduct or recommend to conduct survey, program evaluations and research park and recreation issues in order to report to City Council or the Board of Education.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: To be determined.

Staff Role: Provide administrative support.

Council Role: Provide the Commission with direction/comment.

## Duties

13. *Assist in the acquisition, development, beautification and maintenance of parks and recreation facilities in the city and its surrounding areas as part of the master plan of the Parks, Recreation and Trails plan in keeping with community needs and future growth.*

Priority: A9

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Park and Recreation Development.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Respond to community input and requests; review and give input to Park Development needs based on Parks & Recreation Master Plan annually; focus on development of additional facilities; conduct public hearings; conduct selection process for design firms; address sports facility issues that may arise; and make recommendations to City Council.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioner \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: May require additional public hearings and meetings.

Staff Role: Provide administrative support and professional expertise.

Council Role: Provide the Commission with direction/comment.

Duties

14. *Advise the Public Services Director in the preparation of the annual budget and the long range park, recreation and community services capital improvement budget.*

Priority: A10

Category: Existing

Assignment Item: Financial Management Issues.

Method(s) of Fulfillment: Review User Fees annually; review Parks & Landscaping budget and Recreation and Community Services budget, determine capital improvement priorities and make recommendations to City Council.

Commissioner Availability: Commissioners \_\_\_\_\_

Commitment Required: Commitment falls under regular meetings except for any committee assignments.

Staff Role: Administrative support.

Council Role: Review commission recommendations.