



**City of Laramie**  
**BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS HANDBOOK**  
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## OVERVIEW

Service on a board or commission provides residents and Council representatives alike an opportunity to become involved with our community at an integral, founding level. It also informs key decisions and policymaking of the governing body: the City Council.

Established by both Wyoming State Statute and local municipal ordinance, boards and commissions are a necessary component of governance in the City of Laramie. Each board or commission operates in a specialized capacity, developing recommendations and gathering information critical to issues of concern to the City Council. Some Commissions have certain policy-making capacity as well. The City Council is represented on each board or commission, as well as ad-hoc committees, through an ex-officio or liaison member (or members) who is appointed during a regular Council session.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide an orientation to incoming City Council representatives —as well as a refresher to current Council members— regarding City of Laramie Boards and Commissions. This handbook also provides broad guidelines for board and commission members and residents while acting in the capacity of their appointed positions.

If you have questions regarding any board or commission, or concerning your various appointments as a Council liaison, please contact the City Manager's Office, or the city staff liaison listed in each applicable section. Contact information is also available online at the City's Web site, [www.cityoflaramie.org](http://www.cityoflaramie.org), and then navigate:

**SEE:** Departments ☞ City Manager ☞ Boards and Commissions ☞ (*name of specific boards, joint powers boards, commission, or ad hoc committee*).

## SERVICE ON BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

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### Being an Effective Board Member

The Mayor and City Council understand that boards and commissions are essential to the operation of the City of Laramie, providing valuable citizen contributions of expertise, time, perspective, and profession. The role of residents in policymaking is unique as a member of a board or commission as they are volunteers who have willingly given of their personal time. Despite the fact that positions are voluntary and uncompensated, resident/members serve the City of Laramie as part of the decision- and policy-making structure, representing the City in an official capacity. Resident members and Council liaisons are expected to display professionalism, appropriate demeanor, and to exercise sound judgment at all times when acting in an official capacity.

### Attendance and Participation

Being an effective member of your board or commission begins first and foremost with reliable, regular attendance at all meetings. Participation means not only physically being there, but also offering your input, being prepared for meetings, and making certain you are fully informed on all issues affecting the board. This is especially important when matters arise in which a deciding vote is required.

Members are required to attend training of the Wyoming Public Documents and the Open Meetings Acts on an annual basis, where representation, accountability, and ethics are covered.

### Representation

Representing the City through boards and commissions both professionally and personally is another responsibility of all members. According to the Wyoming Public Documents and the Open Meetings Acts, (W.S. §16-4-201 *through* -205, Rev. 2013) a member of a board or a commission may not speak for the board individually—except in limited and predetermined cases.

Additionally, you are expected to refrain from speaking about business of the board on an individual basis and to avoid offering your individual opinion when speaking about board matters.

### Accountability

As a member of a board or commission, you are expected to act within reason and accept responsibility for your actions. However, you are protected by law when acting in your official capacity with limited immunity. WS §16-4-401, *through* 16-4-408:

**QUALIFIED IMMUNITY** – You are granted immunity in most cases if you were acting within the scope of your duties. If this is the case, the city will help with your defense.

**ERODE IMMUNITY** – unethical actions or wrongful purpose could lead to exposure to liability e.g. intentionally violating due process rights, equal protection or acting contrary to legal advice. Be sure to take all of the possible precautions to avoid these actions.

# CITY GOVERNMENT

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## Council-Manager Form of Government

The form of government in the City of Laramie is the Council-Manager form of local government.

This form of government combines the strong political leadership of elected council members with the professional managerial experience and expertise of an appointed city manager who manages day-to-day operations. In Laramie, the City Council is the governing body and is made up of nine (9) members and includes both a Mayor and a Vice-Mayor. All legislative power is concentrated in this elected body, as the City Council acts as the policy-making body for the City by establishing public policies and setting goals and objectives for City-based strategic planning.

## Boards and Commissions

The City Council works through individual liaisons on each board or commission. State Statute or Municipal Ordinance establishes the legal authority for staff to address specific city action items consistent with goals set by Council that are adopted on a bi-annual basis. Board and commission members are appointed by and serve solely at the discretion of City Council.

## City Manager

The City Manager serves as the chief executive officer of the city and is charged with the implementation of policy decisions that are set by Council, as well as employing city staff, with the exception of the City Attorney and Municipal Judge. The manager is appointed by City Council, and must be responsive to the recommendations of the council. If at any time the council determines that the city manager is not acting in the best interest of the city, the council has the authority to terminate the manager at any time.

The City Manager is hired to serve the council and the community and to bring to the local government the benefits of training and experience in administering local government activities with the direction of the governing body. Professional government managers direct the services that affect the health, safety and welfare of residents in an equitable and ethically balanced manner. The manager prepares a budget for the council's consideration; recruits, hires, and supervises the government's staff; serves as the council's chief adviser; and carries out the council's policies through implementation. Council members and citizens count on the manager to provide complete and objective information to City Council, including both the pros and cons of alternatives, and the long-term consequences.

## City Departments

- Administrative Services Department
  - Municipal Court Division
  - Utility Billing
  - Accounting/Finance
- City Manager's Office
  - Information Technology
  - City Clerk's Office
- Community Development Department
  - Planning
  - Code Administration
  - Engineering Division
- Laramie Fire Department
  - Emergency Medical Services
- Human Resources Department
- Parks and Recreation Department
  - Parks Division
  - Cemetery/Mosquito Control
  - Recreation Division
  - Facilities Management Division
- Police Department
  - LARC Division
  - Animal Control
  - Operations & Investigations
- Public Works Department
  - Solid Waste Division
  - Streets Division
  - Water & Sewerage

# OPEN MEETING LAWS

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## Regular Meetings

Wyoming State Statute §16-4-401 *through* 403 requires that all meetings of boards and commissions be open to the public.

**THE DEFINITION OF A “MEETING”** is an assembly of at least a quorum of the governing body which has been called by proper authority of the agency for the purpose of discussion, deliberation, presentation of information or taking action regarding public business.

**THE DEFINITION OF AN “ACTION”** is the transaction of official business of an agency, including a collective decision of a governing body, a collective commitment or promise by the governing body to make a positive or negative decision, or an actual vote by a governing body upon a motion, proposal, resolution, regulation, rule, order or ordinance.

**NO VOTE (OR ANY OFFICIAL ACTION) MAY BE TAKEN** by telephone, e-mail, or at social events unless specifically stated in the board or commission’s by-laws and is not in violation of the Open Meetings Act.

**THE OPEN MEETINGS ACT** under Wyoming State Statute §16-4-401 through 408 requires that certain information about each meeting be properly made available to the public. This includes: a public notice of the place, location, and agenda of the meeting. The public in attendance cannot be required to state their name or to sign in, however may be required to give his name and affiliation if they are seeking recognition at the meeting.

**MINUTES OF ALL PROCEEDINGS** must be kept and made available as defined in the **WYOMING PUBLIC RECORDS ACT** – WSS §16-4-201 *through* 205.

## EXECUTIVE SESSION

**MEETINGS HELD IN EXECUTIVE SESSION** are generally closed to the public (WSS §16-4-405). Meetings of this nature are only permitted in certain situations if certain conditions are met.

Some instances where closed public meetings are permitted are as follows:

- On matters deemed threatening to national security;
- Consider the appointment, employment, or dismissal of a public officer, professional, employee, or to hear charges brought against an employee;
- Matters concerning litigation in which the governing body is a party;
- When licensing or grading examinations;
- Matters dealing with the term, parole, or release of a prisoner;
- Consider the selection of a site or purchase of real estate when public knowledge may result in an increase in price;
- Consider the acceptance of gifts, donations when the donor has request the gift be confidential;
- Consider or receive any classified information;
- Consider salaries during employment negotiations;
- Consider suspensions, expulsions, or other disciplinary action of a student.

**MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF EXECUTIVE SESSION** must be maintained with some exceptions. For a full explanation of closed session meeting conditions and open meetings laws see relative Wyoming State Statues attached in the Appendix.

# MEETING PROCEDURES

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## Parliamentary Procedure

**ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER, REVISED** shall be used to conduct the business of all meetings of Boards and Commissions of the City of Laramie. Parliamentary procedures provided in **ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER** outline how to properly conduct a meeting, with the goal of completing the transaction of business fairly and allowing an opportunity for each board member to be heard.

## Quorum

A “QUORUM” IS A MAJORITY of the board or commission members. Any official action such as adopting a motion requires a quorum of members be present.

## Voting and How to Make a Motion

VOTING IS ONE OF THE MAIN METHODS that boards and commissions accomplish public business and take official action. The most common approach is to offer a motion for approval or denial.

TO MAKE A MOTION:

1. Ask to be recognized by the chair.
2. Once recognized, make your motion by saying “I move that…” followed by a description of the action to be taken.
3. Next, another member must second the motion by saying, “I second the motion.”
4. The chair will then repeat the motion and call for any discussion on the topic.
5. Once discussion has ceased or if there is no discussion, the chair will “call the question.”
6. Those who are in favor will answer “aye” and those opposed will answer “nay.”
7. The chair will state whether or not the motion “is carried” or “has failed.”

ALWAYS STATE YOUR MOTION in an affirmative manner. In other words, move to take action as opposed to moving not to take action.

## Conflict of Interest

AVOIDING A CONFLICT OF INTEREST or the appearance thereof is important to the public accountability of board and commissions. If members suspect that they may have a conflict of interest with an issue before the board, the following questions are helpful to consider if you question whether or not you have a potential conflict.

If you respond “yes” to any of these questions, you may choose to **abstain** from voting.

- Is your interest direct and immediate as opposed to speculative and remote?
- Does your interest provide you a greater benefit or a lesser detriment than it does for a large or substantial group or class of persons who are similarly situated?
- Does your interest give the appearance of impropriety?