

Alameda County Elections Commission

Meeting Agenda

August 27, 2026

4:00 p.m.

1225 Fallon Street, Room G-1

Oakland CA 94612

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89560674332>

Teleconference Location: City Hall, 34009 Alvarado-Niles Road, Union City, CA 94587. Pursuant to Government Code section 54953(b), this notice and agenda will be posted, and members of the public may attend and provide public comment at the teleconference location.

Pursuant to California Government Code section 54957.5, any public records related to a matter subject to discussion at this meeting that are distributed to a majority of the Elections Commission's members less than 72 hours before the meeting will be made available for public inspection at the Registrar of Voters' Office, 1225 Fallon Street, Oakland, California 94612, Room G-1.

Speaking times for the public comments are three minutes per person, unless the chair determines otherwise. Written comments can be sent to Elections.Commission@alamedacountyca.gov.

1 Call to Order / Roll Call

2 Agenda Changes

3 Approval of Meeting Minutes

Attachment - pp. 4-6

4 Announcements and Communications on Issues Not on the Agenda

No discussion on these items.

- a. From staff
- b. From commissioners - (Dieter) The approved June 2026 post-election assessment was emailed to the Board of Supervisors.

5 Public Comment on Issues Not on the Agenda

6 Monthly Update from Registrar of Voters (ROV) Office

7 Ongoing Agenda Items

7-A Ad Hoc Committee Reports - Temporary and task-specific committees were formed to address particular issues. The point person for each committee has an asterisk by their name.

7-A(1) Voting Participation (Seabrook,* Moore, Whitehurst, Lindsay, Hernandez) – Discussion Only
Formed in November 2024, this committee is looking into how the ROV can increase voter participation in Oakland Districts 6 & 7.

7-A(2) Youth Participation (Varlack,* Whitehurst, Butter, Hernandez) – Discussion Only
Formed in October 2025, this committee is working to support efforts to strengthen youth civic engagement regarding elections, and to coordinate with the ROV on outreach and program development.

7-A(3) Budgeting for Elections (Wagner,* Pham, Lindsay) – Discussion Only
Formed in February 2026, this committee is working with the ROV office to produce a written fee schedule that clearly defines exactly how jurisdictions will be charged with an explanation of those charges, including RCV, Youth Voting, and the reallocation of five or more ballot measures.

7-A(4) Rules and Procedures (Dieter*) – Action Item
Formed in April 2026, this committee is updating the commission's [rules and procedures](#). Based on the commission's feedback and the review for Brown Act compliance by county counsel, the commission will consider approving the attached draft revisions. In addition for further reference, the county "Boards and Commissions Orientation Handbook" is available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/13JWjXvgUobSFVGLI-HhyYtTN4smtrx33/view?usp=drive_link
Attachments - pp. 7-47

8 Regular Agenda Items

8-A Election Services Discussions and Potential Memorandums(s) of Understanding – Discussion Only
At the July 18 commission meeting the commission recommended that the Registrar of Voters enter discussions with city officials regarding the costs of election services and report back to the commission every two months on progress. The commission will receive an update from the ROV.

8-B Workshop on Election Commission Interests – Discussion Only
Commissioners and staff are invited to suggest topic(s) of interest that could be agendized. Suggested topics should teach us something new or aim to achieve better performance on an existing benchmark or present a new benchmark. In preparation of presenting a topic, everyone is encouraged to identify an issue and assess the Commission's and ROV's ability to address that issue.

8-C Commission member restrictions– Discussion Only
The commission will review and discuss the following commission member restrictions in Administrative Code 2.134.060: "A. Restrictions on Holding Office. No member of the commission may hold any other county office or be an officer of a political party. [¶] B. Restrictions on Employment. No member of the commission may be a registered campaign consultant or registered lobbyist in the county or be employed by or receive gifts or other compensation from a registered campaign consultant or lobbyist registered in the county. No member of the commission may hold any employment with the county. [¶] C. Restrictions on Political Activities. No member of the commission may participate in any campaign supporting or opposing a candidate or ballot measure that will appear on the county or municipal ballot. For purposes of this section, participation in a campaign includes but is not limited to making contributions or soliciting contributions to any committee, including general purpose committees; publicly endorsing or opposing or urging endorsement or opposition of any candidate or ballot measure; or participating in decisions by organizations to participate in a campaign."
(Underscoring added.)

9 **Special Report from the ROV** – Temporary Election Workers at Registrar of Voters office
Separate from election workers at vote centers, the [Alameda County Human Resource Services Department](#) administers the Temporary Assignment Pool (TAP). This program functions as an in-house staffing agency to fill short-term and service-as-needed roles across various county offices, including at the ROV.

10 **Adjournment** (by 6:30 p.m. if viable)

If you would like to receive email notifications for upcoming agenda postings, please subscribe at https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAALAME/subscriber/new?topic_id=CAALAME_467

Attachment for Agenda Item #3 – **Draft July Meeting Minutes**

Unapproved Elections Commission Meeting Minutes

July 16, 2026

4:00 PM

1225 Fallon Street, Room G-1
Oakland CA 94612

1 Call to Order / Roll Call

The Elections Commission meeting convened at 4:16 p.m. with President Dieter presiding as chair.

Present: Irene Dieter, Susan Henderson, Jim Lindsay, Alexander Ramon, Karl Seabrook, David Wagner, and Karen Butter [participated via teleconference at 229 Oyster Pond Road, Alameda, CA 94502 pursuant to Gov. Code § 54953(b)(3)].

Absent: Judy Belcher, Alissa Moore, Sasha Ritzie-Hernandez, Tiega Varlack, Allie Whitehurst, and ex-officio Thai Nam Pham

County staff in attendance:

Registrar of Voters (ROV): Cynthia Cornejo, Noe Lucio, Charles Smithline, and Shaheer Siddiqui

County Counsel: Jason Allen

2 Agenda Changes

No changes were made to the agenda.

3 Approval of Meeting Minutes

A motion was made to approve the June 18, 2026 Elections Commission meeting minutes by Commissioner Ramon, seconded by Commissioner Lindsay, and passed 6-0, with Commissioner Henderson abstaining.

4 Announcements and Communications on Issues Not on the Agenda

2:22

Interim Registrar Cornejo announced that the August 18th Special General Election for Congressional District 14 is being conducted, and the November 3rd Statewide General Election process has begun with the candidate nominations period ongoing. Commissioner Lindsay reminded the commission that the voting rights organization seat is open and that Commissioner Henderson's seat for a Disability Rights organization will be open. President Dieter added that the Board of Supervisors had recently advertised the voting rights seat on the county website. Commissioner Henderson announced that this was her last meeting.

5 Public Comment on Issues Not on the Agenda

5:29

There was no public comment on non-agenda items.

6 Monthly Update from Registrar of Voters (ROV) Office

5:50

Ms. Cornejo explained how a registered voter can vote their vote-by-mail ballot at a Vote Center without their identification envelope. In response to clarifying questions, she added these are not considered provisional ballots and the process is publicized.

7 Ongoing Agenda Items

7-A Ad Hoc Committee Reports

7-A(1) Voter Participation Committee

11:36

Commissioner Seabrook reported that more data has been requested from the Alameda County Labor Council. Commissioner Lindsay said the category of age will not be included, but that the Youth Participation Committee could seek that data by age.

7-A(2) Youth Participation Committee

14:14

Commissioner Butter reported the committee did not meet this month.

7-A(3) Budgeting for Elections Committee

14:43

Commissioner Wagner reported they decided on a plan of action; to ask the Registrar of Voters to educate the committee on how budgeting process works. Ms. Cornejo reported that the language explaining the five or more measures pricing has been posted on the ROV website and was presented at the workshop with the city clerks.

7-A(4) Rules and Procedures Committee

16:08

President Dieter explained the changes to the document based on the commission's feedback. County Counsel Allen provided input and said he will review for Brown Act compliance before the next meeting. The commission decided to revisit this item again at the next meeting; no action was taken.

8 Regular Agenda Items

37:50

8-A June Post-election Assessment

President Dieter explained the assessment revisions. A motion to approve the post-election assessment and submit it to the Board of Supervisors was made by Commissioner Wagner, seconded by Commissioner Seabrook. Discussion ensued. The motion passed unanimously.

8-B Response Protocols to Email Inquiries

1:02:13

Ms. Cornejo reported that on the website under "Contact Us", users can select a subject category, provide their contact information, and a request description. The message will be emailed to the specific subject matter team, and the team typically responds within 48 hours. The ROV has a specific media point of contact to facilitate quick and efficient response. There have been no complaints. An email inbox exclusively for the city clerks was created after the

recent City Clerks workshop. Clarifying questions were asked and answered.

8-C Public Records Act Requests

1:13:00

Ms. Cornejo reported that the Public Records Request portal has enabled the team to record and track incoming requests for information more efficiently, using a color-coded system according to deadline and complexity of the request, and that requests are responded to according to legal parameters. There are 10 days to respond to requests, but if more time is needed the deadline can be extended. No action was taken.

8-D Voter Protection

1:18:00

Ms. Cornejo explained that the ROV always prepares for voter protection at Vote Centers, partnering with local and county policing agencies, before every election. The Secretary of State's office has created training on how to handle potential dangers, and all county elections offices are working with the county sheriff and city police chiefs in preparation, including providing them with the locations of the vote centers. The protected space from disturbance and electioneering around a drop box or vote center is 100 feet. Clarifying questions were asked and answered.

9 Special Report from the Registrar of Voters

1:34:40

David Pink, Elections Division Manager, presented the aspects of staffing Alameda County's 100 Vote Centers. Commissioners asked clarifying questions regarding Vote Center staffing needs, language support, and the terms used to describe the worker roles.

10 Adjournment

1:53:59

The meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

DRAFT

Proposed deletions are indicated by strikethroughs and additions are in red

Alameda County Elections Commission

Operating Rules & Procedures

The purpose of the Elections Commission is “to oversee all public federal, state, district and municipal elections conducted by the Alameda County Registrar of Voters. The commission shall oversee the implementation of general policies for the registrar of voters, and shall periodically report back to the Board of Supervisors regarding the proper administration of general practices of the registrar of voters as it pertains to administration of elections in the county” ([Admin. Code, sec. 2.134.010](#)).

In pursuit of this mandate the Elections Commission has adopted the general guidelines herein, which are intended to:

- Promote healthy group dynamics and orderly meetings that are efficient, meaningful, and a good use of people’s time;
- Set clear, reasonable expectations about our activities and procedures for commissioners, Registrar of Voters staff, and members of public; and
- Balance the needs for (a) substantive discussion among commissioners as the basis for decisions and collective action with (b) advice and feedback by members of the public, especially those from communities that experience barriers to voting.

These rules and procedures were developed to be easy to understand and apply, with an emphasis on simplicity, accessibility and plain language, especially for commissioners who are new to board service generally or the Elections Commission specifically.

This document may be updated as needed or desired by a majority of the commission so that the Elections Commission adapts to change and continues to function well as a group in order to fulfill its purpose.

version 1.0, adopted 11/21/2024, **version 2.0 adopted [date]**

Table of Contents

● Meetings	3
1. Number and Timing of Meetings	3
2. Brown Act Meeting Reminders	3
3. Order of Business – ~~Approved at 9/24 meeting~~	4
4. Rules of Order – ~~Approved at 9/24 meeting~~	4
5. Public Comment	5
6. Agendizing Matters	6
7. Submitting Materials for Agenda Items	7
8. Subscribing to Notifications	7
9. Agendas, Recordings and Minutes	7
10. Special or Emergency Meetings	8
11. Closed Sessions	8
 B. Internal Working Guidelines	 8
1. Commissioners' Requests of the Registrar of Voters	8
2. Directing Staff	9
3. Gathering Information	9
4. Maintaining Records	9
5. Recommendations for the Board of Supervisors	10
6. Commissioner Communications Under the Brown Act	10
7. Recusals and Conflicts of Interest	11
8. Onboarding New Commissioners	12
9. Fulfilling Appointed Terms	12
10. Terms for Serving as President and Vice-President	12
11. Ad Hoc Committees	12
12. Member Responsibilities	
 C. External Working Guidelines	 13
1. Written Public Comment	13
2. Engaging with Members of the Public	13
3. Regular Reports to the Board of Supervisors	13
 Appendix : Brown Act Scenarios	 14

A. Meetings

These guidelines apply to Elections Commission meetings and describe how meeting-related processes should be conducted.

A-1. ~~Number and Timing of Meetings~~ Schedule and Location of Meetings

~~Regular meetings shall be held on the third Thursday of each month, starting at 4:00 p.m. lasting no later than 6:30 p.m. The commission does not meet in August or December. The location of the meetings is 125 12th Street, 4th Floor, Suite 400, Oakland, CA, in the Hayward/Union City Rooms.~~ A meeting schedule is set by the Elections Commission and the ROV. Any changes to this schedule shall be made by a supermajority of the commission. The location of the meetings is posted on every meeting agenda. The President may cancel a regular meeting with appropriate notice, but shall do so only when necessary, such as due to lack of quorum.

~~Commissioners are expected to participate in person, and those who are unable to attend a given meeting should notify the President and the Elections Commission clerk in advance if possible. Commissioners should submit requests for accommodation to the President and/or Vice President.~~

A-2. Brown Act Meeting Reminders

Only items included on the agenda can be discussed and acted upon during the meeting. If a commissioner wants something to be discussed, they may make a formal request to put it on a future agenda (see A-6. Agendizing Matters). The commission cannot take action or discuss any item not on the agenda. Brief announcements are not considered discussions.

The location for the meeting and/or teleconferencing location must be accessible to the public including people with disabilities. The public must have an opportunity to directly address the body before or during the consideration of any agenda items, and regular meetings must include a general comment period to address any matters related to the Elections Commission (see A-5. Public Comment).

~~Commissioners may participate remotely in up to two meetings per year when they have just cause or when emergency circumstances prevent~~ there is reason that prevents them from attending in person, such as due to a medical condition, disability, or a physical or family medical emergency. In these instances, the commissioner must notify the President and county counsel as early as possible to request permission to

~~attend the meeting remotely. If at least a quorum of the Elections Commission is participating in person and the President grants permission, the commissioner should then notify the Elections Commission clerk in advance of the meeting that they will be appearing remotely.~~ **assistance or accommodations.** ~~The commissioner must use both audio and video technology when participating in meetings remotely.~~

~~Commissioners who want to participate remotely in meetings, without just cause or emergency circumstances, may do so from a public place that is accessible to members of the public, including people with disabilities. This location must be listed in the posted agenda for anyone who would like to participate in the meeting from that location.~~

Commissioners attending remotely must satisfy all applicable requirements under the Brown Act, which may vary depending on the reason for their remote appearance. Commissioners must work with the President and county counsel to ensure the appropriate requirements are met.

A-3. Order of Business

Having a predictable order for the Elections Commission to address relevant matters during its meetings makes it more likely the commission will stay focused and not lose track of any decisions or actions. This consistent format for how the commission will routinely spend meeting time is called the Order of Business and the commission will progress through these items in order, one at a time. This template is the basic outline for every Elections Commission meeting agenda so participants and observers can easily follow what's happening:

1. Call to order / Roll call
2. ~~Swearing in and welcoming new commissioners~~ *[correct subsequent numbering]*
3. Changes to the agenda
4. Approval of minutes
5. Communications or announcements from staff and commissioners on ~~non-~~ agenda items **not on the agenda**
6. Registrar of Voters monthly update
7. Public comment on items **not** on the agenda
8. **Ongoing agenda items – such as ad hoc committee reports**
9. Regular agenda items —~~labeled action or discussion~~
 - a. Items carried over from previous meeting
 - b. ~~Ad hoc committee reports, recommendations~~
 - c. Other items, which may include new business
10. Registrar of Voters special presentation
11. ~~Public comment on agenda and non-agendized items~~
12. Adjournment

A-4. Rules of Order

Groups and organizations often agree on rules for conducting meetings and making decisions so there's an orderly way for members to deliberate issues and determine the will of the majority.

Many groups, including this Elections Commission, have adopted an existing system of rules called Rosenberg's Rules of Order. For details on Rosenberg's Rules of Order, read the free digital version of [Rosenberg's Rules of Order](#) (PDF, 10 pages) available at the League of California Cities website at www.calcities.org. The President of the Elections Commission is charged with guiding the meeting and applying these rules of order, and the Vice-President of the Elections Commission fulfills this responsibility when the President is not available.

In addition to Rosenberg's Rules of Order, the Elections Commission adheres to the following supplemental rules:

Meeting a Quorum: A quorum is one more than half the filled seats of the commission, excluding the ex officio seat. If a quorum is not present after a roll call, the chair will announce that the meeting has been cancelled due to a lack of quorum.

Counting Votes: No proxy voting shall be allowed. The vote count on a motion will be called by the clerk. The Vice-President and President will be called upon last to vote. A majority vote of the quorum present shall be required for the approval of any matter, excluding the ex officio seat.

A-5. Public Comment

The Elections Commission welcomes public input and feedback. There are two portions of the agenda set aside for public comment: one for ~~all agenda items collectively, typically for up to 20 minutes, to take place in advance of any commission action or discussion on these items;~~ and another for ~~agenda and non-agenda items, typically for up to 10 minutes, toward the end of the meeting (see items 7 and 10, respectively, under A-3. Order of Business).~~ **items not on the agenda at the beginning of the meeting, typically for up to 15 minutes; and another as each agenda is being heard. All speakers, regardless of elected or appointed status, shall limit comments to three (3) minutes. The chair has the discretion to modify this time limit, consistent with the Brown Act's requirements.**

Registrar of Voters Department staff or commission members may provide a brief and factual response to a comment, ~~but if the comment is about~~ **on** a non-agenda item, ~~but~~ no action or discussion on that topic may occur during the meeting.

No speaker may cede time to another person or speak on the same agenda item twice.

a. Clerk's Responsibilities

The Registrar of Voters staff member assigned to support the commission as its clerk will facilitate public comment, keep time, and alternate between speakers in the room and those who have joined virtually. People who wish to give public comment will be called upon to speak in the order that they either:

- Submit a speaker slip to the Registrar of Voters staff members stationed ~~outside~~ **at** the meeting room, indicating they want to comment in person on an agenda item(s) and/or non-agenda item(s). The staff members will give these speaker slips to the clerk assigned to the Elections Commission, or
- Raise their hand in Zoom when asked to by the clerk at the beginning of that portion of the agenda, if joining the meeting virtually.

~~At the onset of each public comment portion of the agenda, the clerk will state the total number of people who want to speak, and the President will confirm the time limit per person. When the time allocated for public comment ends, the clerk will remind everyone that the Elections Commission accepts written comments at eec@acgov.org (see C-1. Written Public Comment). (Note that this group email address will be changed to ElectionsCommission@AlamedaCountyCA.gov as part of the county-wide transition to a new domain name.)~~

b. Expectations and Protocols for Speakers

Speakers should be aware that Elections Commission meetings are recorded and posted online, including all public comments. Persons attending the meeting in person and wishing to address the commission must submit a speaker card to the clerk in person at the meeting.

All speakers, regardless of whether they are commenting as a member of the public or in their capacity as an elected or appointed official, will wait to be called upon by the clerk.

All speakers are encouraged to first introduce themselves by name, say if they are commenting as a representative of an organization, ~~and identify the relevant agenda item, if applicable. In addition:~~

- ~~• Speakers joining in person are expected to use the provided microphone so everyone can hear their remarks, and the podium will be positioned so the speaker can easily see the countdown timer. Speakers will see a green light around the microphone when it's amplifying.~~
- ~~Speakers joining virtually are encouraged to turn on their camera for the duration of their comment. The clerk will enlarge this view from the speaker's camera for the participants in the room, without obstructing the speaker's view of the countdown timer. web~~

~~All speakers, regardless of whether they are commenting as a member of the public or in their capacity as an elected or appointed official, will wait to be called upon by the clerk, and:~~

- ~~• for the public comment period at the beginning of the meeting on agenda items, each speaker will usually be given three (3) minutes,~~
- ~~• for the public comment period at the end of the meeting on agenda and non-agenda items, each speaker will usually be given two (2) minutes, and~~
- ~~• the President has the discretion to alter the per-speaker time limit as needed. Time limits for public comment are imposed only to ensure efficiency and should generally be consistent for all topics.~~

Requests for accommodations by members of the public should be made to the Elections Commission clerk.

A-6. Agendizing Matters

The President, Vice-President, Registrar of Voters, and Deputy Registrar of Voters ~~retain the list of agenda requests, prioritize the possible agenda items, and create the agenda for each meeting. This list of requested agenda items is available to commissioners and the public at: <http://bit.ly/4fz4SGM>.~~

Commissioners who wish an item to be agendized should send a formal request to the President with enough information for the public to know what the commission will be considering during the meeting. **Anyone from the public who wishes to have a topic agendized must enlist a commissioner to make the request.** A recommendation to the commission for action may be included, and this material will be published with the posted agenda (see A-7. Submitting Materials for Agenda Items). **The running list of agenda requests is available upon request.**

A-7. Submitting Materials for Agenda Items

Reports by ad hoc committees submitted for inclusion with the agenda packet should list all of the committee's members and state whether the item is for action or for discussion only.

If a commissioner wants material on any agenda items to be part of the **public record agenda packet**, they should submit ~~their comments or material~~ **it** to the Elections Commission clerk **by the clerk's deadline** in advance of the meeting ~~if possible. The material must be related to items on the agenda.~~ **If a commissioner's agenda material is sent to the clerk after the agenda has been posted, the clerk will ensure that the materials are made available to members of the public in a manner consistent with the Brown Act.**

- ~~• If the material is sent to the clerk before the agenda packet has been posted, it shall be posted with the agenda.~~

- ~~If material for an existing agenda item is sent after the agenda has been posted, it will be included with the meeting minutes and the printed agenda packets distributed at the meeting.~~

Commissioners who wish to email the entire commission should review B-6b. Recommended Practices for Commissioner Communications Under the Brown Act.

A-8. Subscribing to Notifications

~~Notice for regular meetings must be posted 72 hours (three days) in advance, per the Brown Act, and the posted agenda must briefly describe all matters to be discussed (see A-9. Agendas, Recordings and Minutes).~~ To be alerted via email when agendas are posted or if a meeting is canceled, ~~contact the President of the Elections Commission at jim@jerel.com.~~ **register at** https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAALAME/subscriber/new?topic_id=CAALAME_467. You may also **To** subscribe to county e-subscriptions, including updates from the Registrar of Voters Department, on election results and to observe election processing, **register** at: <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/CAALAME/subscriber/topics>.

A-9. Agendas, Recordings and Minutes

Agendas, video recordings and meeting minutes are posted at this Alameda County Board of Supervisors web page on Committee Meetings: <https://bos.acgov.org/committee-meetings/>.

Agendas are posted at least 72 hours before a scheduled meeting. Video recordings are **typically** posted several days after the meeting, and meeting minutes are **added posted** only after they are formally approved by the Elections Commission, typically one month later.

Meeting minutes are an official record of the decisions made, tasks assigned, and actions decided upon. They preserve the knowledge and intentions shared, making them a valuable point of reference for what transpired at a meeting. The chair of the meeting can help with notetaking by summarizing discussions before moving to the next topic. Also see B-4. Maintaining Records. **Following each meeting, the clerk will prepare minutes that identify actions taken by the Commission.**

A-10. Special or Emergency Meetings

If the Elections Commission meets at a time or place other than the time or place specified for regular meetings (see A-1. Regular Meetings), it is either a special or emergency meeting:

- a. The President may call special meetings to address specific matters. No ~~other~~ business **other** than the ~~special subject shall~~ **matters listed on the agenda may** be considered at the special meeting. Special meetings may be called at any

time, but ~~notice must be received~~ **the agenda must be posted and notice must be provided** at least 24 hours ~~prior to~~ **before** the meeting, ~~by~~ **to** all members of the body and to all media outlets that have requested notice in writing.

- b. Emergency meetings, which are extraordinarily rare, may be called upon one-hour notice to media outlets that have requested notice in writing. The Brown Act defines an emergency as a crippling activity, work stoppage or other activity which severely impairs public health, safety or both.

A-11. Closed Sessions

The commission is authorized to hold closed (non-public) sessions for limited purposes to discuss and act on matters such as threats to the security of the Registrar of Voters Department; pending litigation; contracts; and certain other matters as may be authorized by law. The President may call a closed session upon consultation with the county counsel, and after determination a closed session is both authorized and appropriate under the circumstances.

* * * * *

B. Internal Working Guidelines

These guidelines apply to internal activities that take place outside of regular meetings, such as commissioners' interactions with each other and the Registrar of Voters Department, for example.

B-1. Commissioner Requests of the Registrar of Voters

The President and Vice-President are the commissioners' points of contact for the Registrar of Voters Department. All requests for information or other tasks must be sent by a commissioner to the President and Vice-President. ~~The list of pending requests from commissioners and others is available only to the President, Vice-President, Registrar of Voters, and Deputy Registrar of Voters because some information must remain confidential.~~

These requests are triaged and tracked by the President, Vice-President, Registrar, and Deputy Registrar. ~~The request list is not public, but commissioners who have requested information or action should be kept up to date on the status of their requests and may ask the President or Vice-President about the status of their requests.~~

B-2. Directing Staff

Commissioners are not empowered to direct or order county or city staff to perform tasks or provide information.

B-3. Gathering Information

Information-gathering from interested organizations or individuals is allowed. Commissioners are encouraged to do independent research and can, as members of the public, request information from public agencies using the same mechanisms as the public, including formal public records requests. When requesting information as a private individual regarding elections, the person should be explicit that they are communicating as a private individual and not as an elections commissioner.

Alternatively, the Elections Commission may agendaize and vote to request certain information as a body. Individual commissioners may request information from the Registrar of Voters Department, but must work through the President or Vice-President, see B-1. Commissioners' Requests of the Registrar of Voters.

B-4. Maintaining Records

In order to preserve and pass on relevant information to successive commissions, the Vice-President shall maintain a dated annual list, as well as a cumulative index, of all substantive issues decided upon by the Elections Commission, and indicate which issues were sent to the Board of Supervisors. Background documents are stored on the county website under agenda and minutes on the date the issue was heard and accepted, see A-9. Agendas, Recordings and Minutes.

Before any officer's term ends, that commissioner should ensure they hand off key documents to the incoming President or Vice-President. The outgoing and incoming officers should work with the Elections Commission clerk to update access to relevant folders and files in the Google Drive specific to the Elections Commission. ~~The Elections Commission clerk is responsible for managing access to this Google Drive and keeping it organized.~~ **The outgoing and incoming officers should work with the** clerk to update access to relevant folders and files specific to the Elections Commission.

B-5. Recommendations for the Board of Supervisors

After a proposed recommendation to the Board of Supervisors is approved by the Elections Commission, the President will forward it to the entire Board of Supervisors with its supporting materials. **When necessary,** ~~The President shall~~ **will** work to get the recommendation on an upcoming agenda of the Board of Supervisors. The lead of the relevant ad hoc committee may wish to follow up to ensure that ~~the issue is agendaized,~~ and questions and concerns are addressed.

B-6. Commissioner Communications Under the Brown Act

The Brown Act is California's law that requires that all meetings for local government agencies, including related bodies like commissions, be open and public. The purpose of the Brown Act is to ensure that public agencies consider and take action on official business in a public manner. This has implications for how commissioners may

communicate with each other outside of its regular meetings. (See the [Appendix](#) for Brown Act Scenarios.)

a. Mandatory Training on the Brown Act

Upon appointment, commissioners must educate themselves on the Brown Act by:

- watching this video created by the City of San Diego, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_4copyoRCg&t=31s,
- **watching the county counsel's presentation at the March 2026 commission meeting, @ 1:40 video time** <https://alamedacounty.granicus.com/player/clip/10167?redirect=true>
- reading this guide by the League of California Cities, <https://www.calcities.org/resource/open-public-v-a-guide-to-the-ralph-m.-brown-act>.

These materials will inform commissioners about appropriate conversations among commissioners between meetings and the Brown Act requirements for how the commission must conduct official business in a public manner.

b. Recommended Practices

- Rather than avoid contact with other members entirely, commissioners are encouraged to understand how to comply with the Brown Act so they can communicate with each other on issues of interest between meetings. These conversations are not considered meetings under the Brown Act so long as they include ~~only a few members and~~ less than a majority of commissioners.
- Be intentional about your conversations with other commissioners. For example, check first whether your colleague has already discussed a given topic with any other commissioners, to make sure that speaking with you too does not involve a majority of Elections Commission members. When there are no vacant seats on the Elections Commission, a majority of members is seven people; when there are open seats to fill, this number is fewer.
- When sharing information with the entire Elections Commission, consider sending the information to the clerk of the Elections Commission and ask that it be included in the next agenda packet under Communications, instead of emailing the entire commission.
- Refrain from replying all to any emails sent to eec@acgov.org, **Elections.Commission@alamedacountyca.gov** and be sure to send messages to this group email via blind carbon copy (bcc:), so any responses go only to you, instead of to the entire group. This helps avoid email discussions involving the entire body, which would be in violation of the Brown Act. ~~(Note that this group email address will be changed to ElectionsCommission@AlamedaCountyCA.gov as part of the county-wide transition to a new domain name.)~~
- Commissioners may not respond on social media to other commissioners' posts on matters before the commission. That means no liking, commenting, upvoting, retweeting, or heart-ing the social media posts of other commissioners.

c. Brown Act Questions and Concerns

Commissioners are encouraged to promptly raise questions and concerns so they have clarity on appropriate behaviors and so any violations can be addressed right away and corrected. Questions or concerns related to the Brown Act can be directed to a more experienced commissioner, to the President ~~for possible addition to an upcoming agenda~~, and/or to the county counsel assigned to the Elections Commission.

B-7. Recusals and Conflicts of Interest

Public officials are expected to make decisions that serve the public interest and promote the greatest public good, and conflicts of interest interfere with a person's ability to maintain an objective and impartial perspective. An elections commissioner has a disqualifying conflict of interest when their other commitments, obligations, duties or goals could reasonably affect their decisions as an elections commissioner, in ways that could financially benefit themselves, other individuals, entities or parties, or if they have a duty or loyalty to another entity that conflicts with the interests of the commission. In such cases, there is a risk of biased decision-making that could sacrifice the public's interest in favor of the official's duties to other entities, groups or people. To avoid actual bias or the appearance of possible improprieties, the public official is prohibited from participating in the decision.

Commissioners who are concerned about a possible conflict of interest should speak with the President and the county counsel assigned to the Elections Commission to determine whether their particular situation constitutes a conflict of interest and to identify appropriate next steps. Commissioners who intend to recuse themselves from any matter due to a conflict of interest should notify the President in advance of the meeting, so the recusal can be announced at a meeting before the item is heard. When commissioners recuse themselves from voting on an item they must leave the panel until the item is concluded. The recused person must not send information to other commissioners or staff about the issue.

B-8. Onboarding New Commissioners

The Elections Commission selects one commissioner to serve for at least a year as a liaison for new commissioners to offer assistance during their transition onto the commission. The liaison will provide the new commissioner(s) with access to **useful information** [this useful links document](#) and answer any questions.

B-9. Fulfilling Appointed Terms

Commissioners serve at the discretion of the Board of Supervisors. Appointment terms are provided in the ordinance establishing the Elections Commission and are posted online at the portal for the Alameda County Boards, Commissions and Committees: <https://www.acgov.org/bnc/#!/board/a0U6T00000XmqABUAZ>.

Commissioners are encouraged to complete their appointed term, as resigning midterm may cause disruption. It is the responsibility of each commissioner to inform their nominating source when their term is about to end and to say whether they are interested in serving a consecutive term, if eligible.

B-10. Terms for Serving as President and Vice-President

The commissioners serving in the roles of President and Vice-President are chosen by the Elections Commission and serve for at least one year, but for no more than two consecutive years. The nominations and election of these two ~~Elections Commission~~ officers should take place ~~at every January meeting~~ **the month prior to the new term of office begins**. Also see B-4. Maintaining Records, for steps for officers whose terms will end soon.

B-11. Ad Hoc Committees

An ad hoc committee is a temporary group **of less than a quorum of commissioners** formed to complete a specific task or address a particular issue. The commission may create ad hoc committees when it determines, by a majority vote, such additional committees are necessary. Each ad hoc committee will have a lead, and the committee will report on their progress and/or make recommendations to the commission. The ad hoc committee will be disbanded by majority vote of the commission after it fulfills its responsibilities.

B-12. Member Responsibilities

- 1. Attend all regular meetings. The President and county counsel are available to assist members in determining the appropriate remote attendance option.**
- 2. Prepare for and participate in meeting discussions. Review the packet before each meeting and come prepared to discuss relevant topics. If you have any clarifying questions, you may contact the President of the Commission or ROV support staff as early as possible before the meeting. Members are encouraged to speak to their experiences and understanding of the priorities of their community in all commission discussions.**
- 3. Maintain an open mind and think at the county-wide level. During commission meetings, listen carefully to fellow members' opinions and consider the broader regional implications of decision points. Be open to altering your perspective based on information presented in the discussion, by staff, or through regional insights shared by fellow members. Ask questions to staff and fellow commissioners to gain deeper understanding and clarity, particularly regarding how decisions may impact different areas within the county.**

4. To be well-informed, representative voices for the community, commissioners are encouraged to make site visits and read election-related materials in support of Registrar of Voters activities and programs.

6. Attend at least one Board of Supervisors meeting a year if possible. Remote attendance is available.

7. Communicate with your nominating authority. Regularly communicating with your nominating authority will allow you to establish priorities for the Registrar of Voters or nominating authority and gather additional information on the goals and objectives of the community.

* * * * *

C. External Working Guidelines

These guidelines apply to public activities that take place outside of regular meetings, such as commissioners' interactions with members of the public, for example.

C-1. Written Public Comment

Email messages sent to ~~eec@acgov.org~~ Elections.Commission@alamedacounty.ca.gov go to all members of the commission, the Registrar of Voters, the Deputy Registrar, and the clerk for the Elections Commission. The recipients' names will be clearly stated on the county website. There should be no expectation of privacy; any emails sent to ~~eec@acgov.org~~ Elections.Commission@alamedacounty.ca.gov are considered part of the official public record and subject to disclosure under law. ~~(Note that this group email address will be changed to ElectionsCommission@AlamedaCountyCA.gov as part of the county-wide transition to a new domain name.)~~

Agenda item correspondence distributed to all or a majority of the commission on agenda items will be posted with the published agenda or otherwise made available to the public as required by the Brown Act.

C-2. Engaging with Members of the Public

Commissioners are encouraged to engage with members of the public and especially with historically underserved communities and other groups that experience barriers to voting. Gathering input and hearing feedback from the public outside of meetings allows ~~us as a body~~ the commission to fulfill ~~our~~ its duties related to promoting voter registration, education and outreach, and encouraging the widest possible voter participation in elections.

Commissioners may speak individually to any member of the public outside of meetings and may respond directly to emails from members of the public, so long as they do not

~~include~~ ~~copy~~ more than a quorum of the commission. A commissioner should interrupt or otherwise try to stop a member of the public from disclosing what any other commissioners have said about a given topic (see Serial Meetings in the Appendix: Brown Act Scenarios). Commissioners may, but are not required to, disclose any private conversations with members of the public.

In response to matters brought up by the public, commissioners may seek to agendize an issue at a future meeting, see A-6. Agendizing Matters. For responding to public comment during meetings, see A-5. Public Comment.

C-3. Regular Reports to the Board of Supervisors

The Elections Commission is an advisory body to the Board of Supervisor and ~~may~~ ~~decide to directly communicate or make recommendations to the Board.~~ ~~The President and Vice President lead the process of reporting to the Board of Supervisors at least twice per year, in April and October. The Elections Commission will also report to the Board of Supervisors after every general election with a post-election assessment that~~ ~~The commission must conduct and provide post-election assessments to the Board.~~

* * * * *

Appendix: Brown Act Scenarios

The Brown Act restricts the communications that commissioners may have with each other outside of an open and public meeting. This appendix presents several scenarios to illustrate the kinds of communications among commissioners that are permitted or prohibited. Many of the scenarios are adapted from a presentation by attorney Ravi Patel.

Definition of a Meeting

A “meeting” is “any congregation of a majority of the members of a legislative body ... to hear, discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body.” When there are no vacant seats on the Elections Commission, a majority of members is seven people; when there are open seats to fill, this number is fewer.

This means that it’s fine to meet with other commissioners in between regular meetings and discuss elections-related topics, so long as it includes less than a quorum, i.e. the minimum number of members who must be present in order to legally conduct business, typically one more than half the members of the body. Just be very sure that you don’t violate the Brown Act by having a majority of commissioners, directly or indirectly, in any discussion.

Scenarios: Is it a meeting under the Brown Act?

1. Seven commissioners meet to discuss Cast Vote Records – YES, a majority of the body (7 of 13) met to discuss and deliberate a topic before the Elections Commission. This is the kind of scenario you want to avoid in order to comply with the Brown Act.
2. Two groups of four commissioners meet **separately** to discuss Cast Vote Records – NO, as long as **members of** the two groups don’t coordinate **or discuss the issue** with each other, no meeting has taken place.
3. Ten commissioners gather to have lunch and watch the Olympics. They talk about family, sports and vacations, but do not hear, discuss or deliberate anything related to elections – NO, as long as they really did not discuss items likely to come before the Elections Commission, no meeting has taken place.
 - This is not considered a meeting under the Brown Act, just commissioners socializing. It is also acceptable if many commissioners happen to participate in a professional conference or attend the same community event or public meeting, for example.

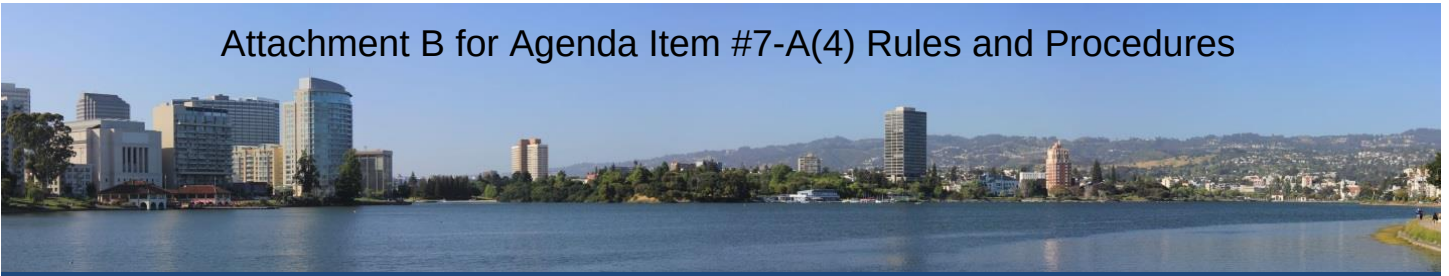
Serial Meetings

A meeting of the majority of the body may still occur, through intermediaries or a series of smaller meetings, calls, emails, or text messages, for example. These are called serial meetings and are prohibited under the Brown Act: “A majority of the members of a

body shall not, outside of a meeting ... use a series of communications ... to discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item of business”

More Scenarios: Is it a meeting under the Brown Act?

4. One commissioner has separate conversations with six other commissioners about a specific agenda item before the commission – YES, called hub-and-spoke meetings with the one commissioner as the hub, this is considered a serial meeting and would be a violation of the Brown Act.
5. Two commissioners have each met with three different members about a specific topic on an upcoming agenda. Afterwards, these two commissioners exchange emails about their respective meetings and share other commissioners’ opinions about Cast Vote Records – YES, this is a serial meeting where eight commissioners, i.e., a majority of the body, have through a series of communications, discussed, deliberated, or take action on an item within the subject matter jurisdiction of the body, outside of an open and public meeting.
6. Three members of an ad hoc committee on Cast Vote Records meet to discuss Cast Vote Records – NO, because committees by definition have fewer members than a majority of the body. Ad hoc committees are appointed by the body at a public meeting, have a limited subject matter scope and duration, and are expected to conduct business outside of open and public meetings.
 - Brown Act violations can still occur when committee members engage other commissioners in their discussions and actions, resulting in a majority of members doing business outside of an open and public meeting.



ALAMEDA COUNTY
Boards and Commissions
ORIENTATION HANDBOOK



Alameda County Mission

To enrich the lives of Alameda County residents through visionary policies and accessible, responsive and effective services

Vision

Alameda County is recognized as one of the best counties in which to live, work and do business

Values

Integrity, honesty and respect fostering mutual trust

Transparency and accountability achieved through open communications and involvement of diverse community voices

Fiscal stewardship reflecting the responsible management of resources

Customer service built on commitment, accessibility and responsiveness

Excellence in performance based on strong leadership, teamwork and a willingness to take risks

Diversity recognizing the unique qualities of every individual and their perspective

Environmental stewardship to preserve, protect and restore our natural resources

Social responsibility promoting self-sufficiency, economic independence and an interdependent system of care and support

Compassion ensuring all people are treated with respect, dignity and fairness

Welcome and Introduction



Welcome to the exciting world of County Boards and Commissions. This Orientation Handbook is intended to provide useful information to appointed members (members) of Boards and Commissions who serve as representatives of the County of Alameda.

Volunteering for the County and as representatives of the public, members need information about their roles and responsibilities related to County business, their assigned Board or Commission, legal parameters and County protocols.

This Orientation Handbook will tell you what your responsibilities and obligations are. Take the time to read through this handbook so you will understand how business is transacted by the various Boards and Commissions.

Attend meetings faithfully and become an advocate for the community you represent. Your role is valued, important and appreciated.

For more information and a full listing of each Alameda County Board and Commission, visit: <https://www.acgov.org/bnc/#/home>



Table of Contents



Chapter 1 | Overview

What are Boards and Commissions?	6
What is the role of Boards and Commissions?	6
How long can I serve on a Board or Commission?	6

Chapter 2 | Responsibilities of Appointees

Appointee characteristics	7
The responsibilities of membership	7
The benefits of membership	8
Mandatory review of Orientation Handbook	8
Your responsibilities at meetings	8

Chapter 3 | Effective Meetings

Effective meetings, the basics	9
Planning, preparing and conducting effective meetings	10

Chapter 4 | Rules of Order

The Chairperson should take a back seat during discussions	12
The basic format for an agenda item discussion	12
Motions	14
Courtesy and decorum	14
Public input	14

Chapter 5 | The Ralph M. Brown Act

Principle behind the Ralph M. Brown Act	15
What is a meeting?	15

Table of Contents



What is not a meeting?_____	15
Agenda requirements_____	15
Rights of the public_____	16
Permissible closed meetings_____	16
Standing and ad hoc committees of a Board or Commission_____	16
Consequences of violating the Brown Act_____	17
Chapter 6 Public Records Act_____	18
Principle behind the Public Records Act_____	18
What is a public record?_____	18
Information on a phone, PDA or Smart Phone_____	18
What is not a public record?_____	18
Public records requests_____	19
Chapter 7 Ethics and Form 700_____	20
Ethics training_____	20
Conflict of Interest_____	20
What is the purpose of filing a Statement of Economic Interest (Form 700)?_____	21
Who should file Form 700?_____	21
When do I have to file my Form 700?_____	21
Who do I call with questions regarding filing requirements?_____	21
Conclusion_____	22

Chapter 1

Overview



What Are Boards and Commissions?

Boards and Commissions are organizations of knowledgeable local residents who address a specific area of concern. Some Boards and Commissions are mandated by State and federal statute; some are established by County Charter, ordinance, resolution or other action taken by the Board of Supervisors.

Advisory Boards and Commissions are those that provide recommendations or advice to the Board of Supervisors.

Some Boards and Commissions, also known as decision-making groups, are those that make final County decisions, can compel a County decision, or make substantive recommendations that are regularly approved without significant modification by the Board of Supervisors.

What is the Role of Boards and Commissions?

Boards and Commissions serve a vital role in County government by gathering and analyzing public input and recommending options to the Board of Supervisors. The guiding principle of any recommendation by a Board or Commission to the Board of Supervisors is that of addressing the **overall public benefit**. Some Boards and Commissions are authorized by the Board of Supervisors to take independent action (i.e. Planning Commission, Civil Service Commission, Assessment Appeals Board, etc.).

Most Boards and Commissions do not make policy decisions, manage or direct programs, or commit County resources.

How Long Can I Serve on a Board or Commission?

The tenure of an appointee to a regular Board or Commission is limited to twelve consecutive years on any single body. If reappointment to another full-term would cause an appointee to serve more than twelve (12) consecutive years on a Board or Commission, the appointee shall not be re-appointed. If an appointee is still serving on a Board or Commission after twelve (12) consecutive years, the appointee shall then be deemed to hold over until a qualified successor is appointed.¹ If an appointee serves ten (10) years on Board or Commission “A” and then resigns, that individual can be appointed to any other Board or Commission and the service time begins again.

Note that the enabling document of a Board or Commission (by laws, resolution, ordinance etc.) may dictate the maximum number of years allowed for a particular body.

¹ Board Operating Procedures, Alameda County Board of Supervisors, Amended January 3, 2011

Chapter 1

Overview



Note Regarding Representing your Board or Commission

Members of Boards and Commissions may not speak on behalf of, or as a representative of, their Board or Commission, nor advocate for an issue as a representative of a Board or Commission, without the express consent of the Board or Commission.

Appointee Characteristics

Effective, active members of Boards and Commissions who get enjoyment and satisfaction from their time and work tend to have many of these characteristics:

Service-oriented

Enjoy working for the greater public good

Active interest and involvement in the community

Can work toward a consensus

Honest, open-minded and willing to listen to and consider the thoughts and opinions of others

Effective communicator

Curious

Has a general understanding of the functions and workings of county government

Passionate about public issues and willing to work to achieve goals

Willing to commit the time needed to serve effectively and attend meetings

Chapter 3

Effective Meetings



The Responsibilities of Membership

Boards and Commissions members are responsible for staying informed, complying with established policies and regulations and providing high-quality service to the community. Some of the duties you will be expected to perform as a member of a Board or Commission include:

- Swearing in, and signing the Oath of Office. Without these steps you are not considered a voting member of the body
- Review of this Orientation Handbook
- Familiarizing yourself with the Board or Commission's bylaws, governance and routine business
- Consistent attendance at all Boards or Commissions meetings and at subcommittee meetings
- Participating in all Boards or Commissions hearings, planning sessions and retreats, and in-service training
- Understanding the function of the Boards or Commissions
- Respecting the voice and spirit of your Board or Commission peers and the community you serve
- Performing your duties as a sworn member as described in the bylaws
- Familiarizing yourself and complying with regulatory statutes such as the Brown Act and the Public Records Act
- Acting responsibly and efficiently when using County assets, including personnel, property, equipment and funds
- Maintaining the highest ethical standards
- Completing the Statement of Economic Interest Form 700, when applicable
- Submitting a resignation in writing to your appointing authority and copying the Chair, the Board Liaison, and Clerk of the Board.

The Benefits of Membership

The individuals who serve on Alameda County Boards and Commissions are among the most respected and appreciated volunteers in the community. The benefits of service on a Community Board or Commission are many and include:

- Making a difference in your community
- Developing and enhancing leadership capabilities
- Having a voice
- Expanding networks
- Learning new skills

Chapter 3

Effective Meetings



Mandatory Review of Orientation Handbook

To be an effective new member of an Alameda County Board or Commission, you will be required to read and acknowledge receipt of this Orientation Handbook within **the first 30 days of your appointment**.

Your Responsibilities at Meetings

As a member, you have a responsibility for the content and productivity of the meetings you attend. The following information is intended to help you in your new role.

Members are responsible for:

- Reviewing meeting materials in advance
- Attending meetings on time
- Notifying the Chairperson if you cannot attend a meeting
- Attending meetings of sub-committees if serving on those sub-committees
- Maintaining a respectful and open, professional environment

Members should be conversant about the issue being heard, be aware of the proposal under consideration, come with an open and inquiring mind, and be considerate of speakers. They should be prepared to ask questions of speakers and provide input when necessary.

Effective Meetings, the Basics

Members of Alameda County Boards and Commissions have a responsibility for the content and productivity of meetings they attend. Members should come prepared to take ownership for their contribution to the end result of the meeting. Meetings do matter. Here are some ways members can make a contribution and meetings are made more effective:

- All participants arrive prepared and on time
- All participants contribute
- There are clear ground rules that all agree to honor
- Process moves forward and is focused
- Agenda is written and posted according to the Brown Act
- All voting items on the agenda require that a quorum be present
- Outcome is clear to all
- Physical environment is comfortable and assigned
- Work to be accomplished is defined
- Start and end on the times agreed on by the group
- Laughter and fun are encouraged

Chapter 3

Effective Meetings



Regular attendance is important and any member can be removed from a Board or Commission for inadequate attendance based on the rules of procedure that have been adopted by each Board or Commission.

Every group should establish ground rules on how meetings will run, how members will interact and what kind of behavior is acceptable. 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 prevents misunderstandings and disagreements. Three to five ground rules are sufficient for most groups. Some of the more important ground rules might include:

- **Attendance.** Talk about what would be legitimate reasons for missing a meeting, and establish a procedure for informing the group leader of a member's absence from a scheduled meeting.
- **Promptness.** Meetings should start and end on time.
- **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.

Chapter 3

Effective Meetings



Planning, Preparing, and Conducting Effective Meetings

With proper planning and preparation, any meeting can be effective and enjoyable. Meetings have several functions. They give members a chance to discuss and evaluate goals and objectives, listen to public input, keep updated on current events, provide a chance to communicate and keep the group cohesive. But most of all, meetings allow groups to pull resources together for decision making. If the facilitator starts with a careful plan and finishes with a thorough follow-up, the meeting will run smoothly.

Before The Meeting

- The Chair should define the purpose of each meeting and spend time constructing the agenda with clarity of purpose and appropriate time allotted for each item
- Members should review the posted agenda and background material to be prepared and feel involved and up-to-date.
- Choose an appropriate meeting time. Set a time limit and stick to it, if possible. Remember, members have other commitments. They will be more likely to attend meetings if you make them productive, predictable and as short as possible.
- If possible, arrange the room so that members face each other, i.e., a circle or semi-circle. For large groups, try U-shaped rows.
- Choose a location suitable to the group's size. Small rooms with too many people get stuffy and create tension. A larger room is more comfortable and encourages individual expression.
- Use visual aids for interest (e.g., posters, diagrams, etc.).
- Vary meeting places if possible to accommodate different members. Be sure everyone knows where and when the next meeting will be held.

During the Meeting – role of the Chair

- The Chair should greet members and make them feel welcome, even late members when appropriate.
- Start on time. End on time (to the extent public comment is satisfied under the Brown Act).
- Review the agenda and set priorities for the meeting.
- Stick to the agenda.
- Encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas. You will have better quality decisions as well as highly motivated members; they will feel that attending meetings is worth their while.
- Encourage feedback. Ideas, activities and commitment improve when members see their impact on the decision making process.
- Keep conversation focused on the topic. Tactfully end discussions when they are not related to the agenda, are getting nowhere or becoming destructive or unproductive.
- Keep minutes of the meeting for future reference in case a question or problem arises.
- Be a role model by listening, showing interest, appreciation and confidence in members. Admit mistakes.

Chapter 3

Effective Meetings



- Summarize agreements reached and end the meeting on a unifying or positive note. For example, have members volunteer thoughts of things they feel have been good or successful or reiterate the organization's mission.
- Set a date, time and place for the next meeting.

At an effective meeting:

- Attendance was good
- Everyone was on time
- Members knew one another
- There was some humor during the meeting
- Members and officers helped one another when needed
- There was an atmosphere of free expression



Chapter 4

Rules of Order



Meetings of Boards and Commissions are conducted using generally accepted rules of order and the guidelines below are considered to be commonly accepted rules of conduct of meetings, and are presented as guidelines. In general:

Rules should establish order. The first purpose of the rules of procedure is to establish a framework for the orderly conduct of meetings.

Rules should be clear. Simple rules lead to wider understanding and participation. Complex rules create two classes: those who understand and participate and those who do not fully understand and do not fully participate.

Rules should be user-friendly. That is, the rules must be simple enough that members of the public feel they have been able to participate in the process.

Rules should enforce the will of the majority while protecting the rights of the minority. The ultimate purpose of the rules of procedure is to encourage discussion and to facilitate decision-making by the body. In a democracy, the majority rules. The rules must enable the majority to express itself and fashion a result, while permitting the minority to also express itself (but not dominate) and fully participate in the process.

Rules should comply with the Brown Act (if the Act applies to the particular Board or Commission).

The Chairperson Should Take a Back Seat during Discussions

While all members of the governing body should know and understand the rules of procedure, it is the Chairperson (Chair) who is charged with applying the rules of conduct. The Chair should be well versed in those rules, because the chair for all intents and purposes makes the final ruling. In fact, all decisions by the chair are final unless overruled by the governing body itself.

Because the Chair conducts the meeting, it is common courtesy for the Chair to take a less active role than other members of the body in debates and discussions. The Chair should strive to be the last to speak at the discussion and debate stage and should not make or second a motion unless convinced no other member of the body will do so.

The Basic Format for an Agenda Item Discussion

Most Boards and Commissions meetings are required to have a written, published agenda. The meeting is governed by the agenda and the agenda constitutes the body's agreed-upon road map for discussion. Each agenda item can be handled by the Chair in the following basic format.

First, the Chair should clearly announce the agenda item number and should clearly state the subject. The Chair should then announce the agenda format that will be followed.

Second, following that agenda format, the Chair should invite the appropriate people to report on the item, including any recommendation they might have. The appropriate person may be the Chair, a member of the governing body, a staff person, or a Committee Chair charged with providing information about the agenda item.

Chapter 4

Rules of Order



Third, the Chair should ask members of the body if they have any technical questions for clarification. At this point, members of the governing body may ask clarifying questions to the people who reported on the item, and they should be given time to respond.

Fourth, the Chair should invite public comments or, if appropriate at a formal meeting, open the meeting to public input. If numerous members of the public indicate a desire to speak to the subject, the Chair may limit the time of each public speaker provided that each speaker is afforded the same amount of time. At the conclusion of public comments, the Chair should announce that public input has concluded (or that the public hearing, as the case may be, is closed).

Fifth, the Chair should invite a motion from the governing body members. The Chair should announce the name of the member who makes the motion.

Sixth, the Chair should determine if any member of the body wishes to second the motion. The Chair should announce the name of the member who seconds the motion. It is normally good practice for a motion to require a second before proceeding with it, to ensure that it is not just one member of the body who is interested in a particular approach. However, a second is not an absolute requirement, and the Chair can proceed with consideration and a vote on the motion even when there is no second. This is a matter left to the discretion of the Chair.

Seventh, if the motion is made and seconded, the Chair should make sure everyone understands the motion. This is done in one of three ways:

- The Chair can ask the maker of the motion to repeat it

- The Chair can repeat the motion

- The Chair can ask the secretary or the clerk of the body to repeat the motion

Eighth, the Chair should now invite discussion of the motion by the members of the governing body. If there is no desired discussion or the discussion has ended, the Chair should announce that the body will vote on the motion. If there has been no discussion or a very brief discussion, the vote should proceed immediately, and there is no need to repeat the motion. If there has been substantial discussion, it is normally best to make sure everyone understands the motion by repeating it.

Ninth, the Chair takes a vote. Simply asking for the “ayes” and then the “nays” is normally sufficient. If members of the body do not vote, then they “abstain.” Unless the rules of the body provide otherwise or unless a super-majority is required (a two-thirds majority), a simple majority determines whether the motion passes or is defeated.

Tenth, the Chair should announce the result of the vote and should announce what action (if any) the body has taken. In announcing the result, the Chair should indicate the names of the members, if any, who voted in the minority on the motion. This announcement might take the following form: “The motion passes by a vote of 3-2, with Smith and Jones dissenting. We have passed the motion requiring a 10-day notice for all future meetings of this governing body.”

Chapter 4

Rules of Order



Motions

Motions are the vehicles for decision-making. It is usually best to have a motion before the governing body prior to discussing an agenda item. This helps everyone focus on the motion before them.

Motions are made in two steps. First, the Chair recognizes the member. Second, the member makes a motion by preceding the member's desired approach with the words: "I move..." A typical motion might be: "I move that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings."

The Chair usually initiates the motion by inviting the members to make a motion: "A motion at this time would be in order." Or, by suggesting a motion to the members: "A motion would be in order that we give a 10-day notice in the future for all our meetings."

As noted, the Chair has every right as a member of the body to make motion, but normally should do so only if they wish a motion to be made but no other member seems willing to do so.

Courtesy and Decorum

The rules of order are meant to create an atmosphere where the members of the body and the public can attend to business efficiently, fairly and with full participation. And at the same time, it is up to the Chair and the members of the body to maintain common courtesy and decorum. Unless the setting is very informal, it is always best for only one person at a time to have the floor. It is always best for every speaker to be first recognized by the Chair before proceeding to speak.

The Chair should always ensure that debate and discussion of an agenda item focus on the item and the policy in question, not on the personalities of the members of the body. Debate on policy is healthy; debate on personalities is not. The Chair has the right to cut off discussion that is too personal, too loud or too crude.

Debate and discussion should be focused, but free and open. In the interest of time, the Chair may, however, limit the time allotted to speakers (as long as equal time is allotted to every speaker), including members of the body.

Public Input

The rules outlined here help make meetings very public-friendly. In addition, and particularly for the Chair, it is wise to remember three special rules that apply to each agenda item:

Rule One: Tell the public what the body will be doing.

Rule Two: Keep the public informed while the body is doing it.

Rule Three: When the body has acted, tell the public what the body did.

Public input is essential to a healthy democracy, and community participation in public meetings is an important element of that input. The challenge for anyone chairing a public meeting is to accommodate public input in a timely and time-sensitive way, while maintaining steady progress through the agenda items. The rules presented here for conducting a meeting are offered as tools for effective leadership and conducting effective meetings.

Chapter 5

The Ralph M. Brown Act



Principle behind the Ralph M. Brown Act

Local legislative bodies - such as Boards and Commissions - are created in recognition of the fact that several minds are better than one, and that through debate and discussion, the best ideas will emerge. The law which guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in meetings of local legislative bodies is the Ralph M. Brown Act.

Boards and Commissions are subject to certain legal requirements that are based on the public's right to know how decisions are made. These include the Brown Act (open meeting law), and the Public Records Act (see next chapter for the Public Records Act). If your group would benefit from legal advice about the Brown Act, the Chair may contact the Department Liaison.

The Brown Act applies to the majority of Alameda County Boards and Commissions. Members of these bodies must adhere to the provisions and requirements of the Brown Act.

What Is a Meeting?

Any congregation of a majority of the members of a Board or Commission at the same time and place to hear, discuss or deliberate on any matter within its jurisdiction.

What this means:

- A majority of members may not consult outside an agency-convened meeting.
- Brown Act Illegal Meetings: A majority of members may not "develop a concurrence as to action" on business through serial meetings, intermediaries, electronic or telephonic communication, or other means of subterfuge.

What Is Not a Meeting?

- Individual contacts between Board or Commission members and another person.
- Majority of members at conferences that are open to public (as long as majority does not discuss board business).
- Majority of members at social or ceremonial occasions (as long as majority does not discuss Board or Commission business).
- Majority of members at public meeting on topic of local community concern (as long as majority does not discuss Board or Commission business).

Agenda Requirements

- Regular meeting—Agenda posted 72 hours in advance.
- Special meeting—Agenda posted 24 hours in advance.
- Limited exceptions where business not on the agenda may be transacted.
- Must contain a description of every item to be discussed.
- Closed session items must be listed.
- Must include time for public comment.

Chapter 5

The Ralph M. Brown Act



There will be no consideration of matters not properly agendized unless:

- A majority vote determines that the matter at question constitutes an emergency.
- A two-thirds vote determines need to take immediate action (i.e., cannot reasonably wait until the next meeting) if the matter came to the agency's attention after the agenda was posted.

Rights of the Public

Members of the public have a right to:

- attend without identifying oneself.
- see Board agenda materials.
- record the meeting.
- say anything, even if unrelated to agency business.
- speak before or during consideration of an item.

Under limited circumstances, members of Boards and Commissions may speak to an item that is not on the Agenda, including when:

- clarifying questions asked.
- referring to staff for information.
- briefly announcing or reporting on own activities.

Permissible Closed Meetings

While Boards and Commissions are required to hold meetings in open forum, the Brown Act recognizes the need, under limited circumstances, for meetings to be held in private in order to carry out responsibilities in the best interests of the public. For example, the law contains a personnel exception based on notions of personal privacy, and a pending litigation exception based upon the precept that government agencies should not be disadvantaged in planning litigation strategy. It would be extremely rare for Boards and Commissions to be involved in the types of activities that would justify a closed meeting. It is advised that Boards and Commissions check with their Department Liaison when considering whether to conduct a closed meeting.

Standing and Ad Hoc Committees of a Board or Commission

If a Board or Commission wishes to establish a standing or ad hoc committee of certain members, check with the Department Liaison as to establishing such a subcommittee and the applicability of the Brown Act.

Chapter 5

The Ralph M. Brown Act



Consequences of Violating the Brown Act

The consequences for violations of the Brown Act include:

- Some actions, if not “cured” may be declared void.
- Lawsuit brought by the District Attorney or any interested persons.
- Violations may be stopped by civil lawsuit.
- Criminal sanctions for intentional violations (up to 6 months in jail/\$1,000 fine).
- Attorney’s fees.

To see more about the Brown Act, go to:

<https://oag.ca.gov/sites/all/files/agweb/pdfs/publications/brownAct2003.pdf>



Chapter 6

Public Records Act



Principle behind the Public Records Act

“Implicit in the democratic process is the notion that government should be accountable for its actions. In order to verify accountability, individuals must have access to government files. Such access permits checks against the arbitrary exercise of official power and secrecy in the political process” CBS Ins. v Black, (1986) 42 Cal. 3d 646, 651.

What Is a Public Record?

Public records include any writings containing information relating to the conduct of the public’s business that are prepared, owned, used, or retained by any local or state agency or Board or Commission, regardless of physical form or characteristics. This includes emails, texts, minutes, reports, recordings of meetings and more.

Board reports and files of Boards or Commissions are open to the public under Public Records Act. Materials distributed to the members, except privileged items, are public records and must be made available for inspection and copying within 10 days of a request (an extension of an additional 14 days is permitted if there is a qualified reason for an extension). Requested records must always be provided “without delay”, which means that if the documents are readily available, they should be produced without waiting for the 10 days to elapse. (See CA. Gov’t Code 6253).

Assume that e-mail sent among members of the Board or Commission and/or staff is public information.

Public records shall be open for public inspection upon request.

Information on a Phone, PDA or Smart Phone

Information kept on a home computer or PDA or smart phone related to government business may be subject to disclosure unless exempt. This includes e-mail and other public records.

Personal information is not subject to disclosure and may be redacted to protect privacy interests.

What Is Not a Public Record?

There are a wide variety of specific exemptions where records may be withheld and not disclosed to the public. The most often specific exemptions include:

- Some preliminary drafts that are not retained in the ordinary course of business.
- Pending litigation records.
- Some private personal information if disclosure would constitute unwarranted invasion of personal privacy (e.g., social security number, medical information, tax information).
- Some law enforcement records.

Chapter 6

Public Records Act



Public Records Requests

If a Board or Commission member receives a public records request it should be immediately forwarded to the Department Liaison. The Department Liaison may request your cooperation and provide further direction in order to respond to a public records request. Either the Department Liaison or County Counsel will then take the following steps:

- Respond to the request in writing within 10 days or sooner if the records are available. An extension of an additional 14 days is permitted if there is a qualified reason.
- Assist the member of the public in making a focused and effective request, if the request is unclear.
- Turn over copies of documents within a reasonable time.
- If the public record is in an electronic format, the agency may be required to turn the record over in an electronic format.

The consequences for failing to turn over public records are serious and may include:

- Lawsuit
- Paying plaintiff's court costs
- Paying plaintiff's attorney's fees

For further detail, the full text of the Public Records Act, or advice on application in a particular instance, contact the Department Liaison. The Public Records Act is also available <https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes.xhtml> in the Government Code, section 6250-6270.



Chapter 7

Ethics and Form 700



Ethics Training

A key responsibility of Boards and Commissions membership is maintaining a high standard of ethics. Members are expected to demonstrate the highest degree of principle and integrity. California Assembly Bill 1234 requires that if a local agency provides any type of compensation, salary, or stipend to, or reimburses the expenses of a member of its legislative body (as defined), that local agency's officials must receive ethics training.

You will be notified in your appointment letter if you are required to complete such training.

Some key ethical goals include: encouraging high standards of behavior by public officials; increasing public confidence in the institutions that serve the public; and assisting public officials with decision-making.

If you are unsure whether you need to complete ethics training, please contact your Board or Commission's staff Liaison. Ethics online training is available on the Fair Political Practices Commission website:

<https://www.fppc.ca.gov/content/fppc-v2/fppc-www/learn/public-officials-and-employees-rules-/ethics-training.html>

Ethics training covers topics such as:

- Laws relating to personal financial gain by public servants, including laws prohibiting conflicts of interest;
- Laws relating to claiming gifts and travel, use of public resources or gifts of public funds, and mass mailing restrictions; and
- Government transparency laws such as financial interest disclosure requirements, the Brown Act and the Public Records Act.

Conflict of Interest

Under the Political Reform Act certain public agencies are required to adopt a Conflict of Interest Code. Each public agency determines which of their Boards and Commissions are required to be covered under a Code. Not all Boards and Commissions are covered by a Conflict of Interest Code. If the body is covered, the Code designates the positions that are required to file Statements of Economic Interests (Form 700), and assigns disclosure categories specifying the types of interests to be reported.

A determination of whether a conflict of interest exists would take into consideration, for example, the following, and other, circumstances:

- The individual makes, participates in or uses their official position to influence a governmental decision; and
- It is foreseeable that the decision will affect the individual's economic interest; and
- The effect of the decision on the individual's economic interest is material; and

Chapter 7

Ethics and Form 700



- The effect of the decision on the individual's economic interest is distinguishable from the effect on the general public.

If you have any questions concerning conflict of interest please contact your Department Liaison.

What is the purpose of filing a Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700)?

The purpose of financial disclosure is to alert public officials to personal interests that might be affected while they are performing their official duties, i.e., making government decisions. Disclosure also helps inform the public about potential conflicts of interest. Filed forms are public documents that must be made available to anyone who requests them. Forms and instructions are available on the Fair Political Practices Commission website: <https://www.fppc.ca.gov/content/fppc-v2/fppc-www/Form700.html>

Who should file Form 700?

In Alameda County, only members appointed to designated Boards and Commissions must file Form 700. **Please refer to your appointment letter or contact your Board or Commission Liaison to find out if you are a designated filer.**

Please check with your Department Liaison to verify your filing location.

When do I have to file my Form 700?

- Assuming Office Statement – must be filed within 30 days of assuming office.
- Annual Statement – must be filed no later than the April 1st deadline.
- Leaving Office Statement – within 30 days of leaving office.

Who do I call with questions regarding filing requirements?

California Fair Political Practices Commission

1102 Q St # 3000, Sacramento, CA 95811

Email Advice: advice@fppc.ca.gov

Toll-free advice line: 1 (866) ASK-FPPC | 1 (866) 275-3772 | www.fppc.ca.gov



Conclusion



Conclusion

We hope that you have found this handbook useful. If you have any questions that are not addressed here, please direct your questions to your Department Liaison or to the Alameda County Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Office. Your questions and comments are welcome.

Thank you for your service to our County.

For information on Boards and Commissions vacancies, applications and service, please visit the County website at <https://www.acgov.org/bnc/#/home>, or contact:

Office of the Clerk of the Board

1221 Oak Street, Suite 536, Oakland, CA 94612

Phone (510) 208-4949 | Fax (510) 208-9660 | www.acgov.org/clerk

IMPORTANT

**Please return a signed copy of the Confirmation of Receipt form
on the following page to the Clerk of the Board.**

Banner scenic photographs by Michael Rock, Information Technology Department, Alameda County

Orientation Handbook updated: January 2024

Confirmation of Receipt



Confirmation of Receipt of Oath of Office

I received my oath of office with my appointment letter. I understand that I am not considered a voting member of the Board or Commission until I have executed the oath of office and submitted the original executed oath to the Clerk of the Board.

- ☐ I have already submitted the originally signed Oath of Office to the Clerk of the Board for filing.
- ☐ My originally signed Oath of Office is being mailed with this receipt to the Clerk of the Board for filing.

Confirmation of Receipt of Alameda County Boards and Commissions Orientation Handbook

I have read and understand the general role and responsibilities of members of Boards and Commissions as described in this document.

Print Name

Name of Board or Commission

Signature

Date

Please return your original executed oath of office to the Clerk of the Board:

Mailing address: Clerk of the Board's Office
Attn: Boards and Commissions
1221 Oak Street, Suite 536
Oakland, CA 94612

You may return this Receipt of Confirmation via email cbs@acgov.org, fax (510) 208-9660 or U.S. Mail to address above.