



# LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION MANUAL

This manual provides a guide to Los Angeles County processes, legal parameters, and protocols that affect the business of County Commissions.

In addition, the manual details information on the role and duties of Commissioners when conducting meetings, developing agendas, advocating on legislative issues, and provides information on resources available while representing the County Board of Supervisors.

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Disclaimer: This manual contains general information, county policies and practices to be used as a commissioner guide. Contents within the guidelines are subject to change anytime without notice.

## PREFACE

Welcome to the County of Los Angeles. We thank you for your dedication to public service in facilitating the important work of the County of Los Angeles through County Boards, Commissions, Committees, Oversight Boards, Task Forces, Working Groups, and Special District Agency Boards (collectively referred to as Commissions). This manual will outline your responsibilities and obligations as a Commissioner, on how to communicate your recommendations and findings to the Board of Supervisors (Board), and on other practical information in the conduct of your service.

Please take time to read through this manual to understand how business is handled by the various Commissions and the Board. You are expected to attend meetings regularly and to conduct the business of the Commission in a transparent, efficient, and professional manner. As you advocate for the community you represent, please remember your expertise is a valued, important, and essential factor in assisting the Board to reach their goals and strategic priorities for the County and the communities they serve.

## I. ROLE OF COMMISSIONS IN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Commissions serve a vital role in county government by gathering and analyzing public input and recommending options to the Board. The guiding principle of any Commission recommendation to the Board is that of addressing the overall public benefit. Some Commissions are authorized by the Board to take independent action (e.g., Regional Planning Commission, Civil Service Commission, Business License Commission, etc.); others serve in a fact-finding or advisory role and are not authorized to take action. These Commissions are advisory to the Board; therefore, may not take an official position for the County which has not been approved by the Board. *(See also Section VI. Legislation and Public Officials)*

### A. Establishment of Commissions

Commissions were established to assist the Board with the varied duties and responsibilities of local government, and encourage citizen involvement, expertise and participation.

Commissions may be created by:

- State or Federal Law
- County Ordinance or Charter
- Action by the Board of Supervisors

Commissions are organized into seven categorical roles:

1. **Citizen Advisory Commissions** are local, state or federally mandated bodies whose primary role is to provide feedback and recommendations to the Board and/or County Departments on proposed or existing policies, procedures, programs and services.
2. **Administrative Board and Committees** are bodies tasked with providing essential administrative functions on behalf of or in conjunction with government entities.

3. **Authorities of the County** are decision making bodies that approve funding for specific County projects, equipment and facilities.
4. **Interagency Coordination Committees** are entities that are concerned with inter-organizational coordination of policies, regulations, services and programs to better serve the needs of residents in specific subject areas.
5. **Joint Power Authorities and other agencies** are comprised of a group of bodies that are primarily concerned with the direct delivery and management of government services, programs, and public infrastructure.
6. **Special Districts** are independent government entities that provide specialized functions for clearly defined geographic areas.
7. **Ad-Hoc Committees and Task Forces** are temporary, special purpose committees that are created by the Board and/or other government entities to address pressing County matters.

## II. COMMISSIONER RESPONSIBILITIES

### A. Role and Responsibilities of a Commissioner

- Commissioners are encouraged to take an active role in helping the Commission fulfill its goals and objectives.
- Commissioners are responsible for attending meetings regularly to ensure a quorum, and to facilitate the business and meet the goals of the Commission.
- It is the responsibility of Commissioners to provide advance notice to the Chairperson, Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff, if they cannot attend a meeting.
- Commissioners are also responsible for reviewing meeting materials in advance of a meeting, and complying with the Ralph M. Brown Act (Brown Act) as set forth in state and local laws regarding public meetings.
- Commissioners should also have knowledge of the County's Strategic goals and the vision and priorities of the Board. (See Appendix Section XII C. [2016 -2021 County Strategic Plan and County Strategic Priorities](#))

### B. Public Statements by Commissioners to Media and Other Organizations

Prior to responding in your capacity as a Commissioner to any inquiry from television, magazines, newspapers, or any other media outlets, the request should be discussed with the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff to ensure Departmental policy and protocols are followed to respond to media inquiries.

When speaking to the media, Commissioners should not imply they are speaking on behalf of the Commission without prior approval from the body. Commissioners affiliated with non-county organizations should proactively clarify with reporters that they do not speak on behalf of the Commission and are only commenting as an individual affiliated with an outside organization. Commissioners comments (verbal or written) as a private citizen solely reflect your personal position and not as a representative of the Commission.

### C. New Commissioner Orientation

All newly-appointed Commissioners are encouraged to attend an orientation session coordinated by the Executive Office of the Board relating to the County's Governance, legislative process and the Brown Act.

### D. State Mandated Ethics and Other Trainings

[California Government Code sections 53235 and 53235.1](#) require that any newly appointed local agency official and certain Commissioners receive two hours of training in local government ethics within one year of assuming the position and once every two years thereafter. The Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff will notify you if your Commission is required to complete this training.

Citizen Advisory Commissioners are also required to complete the Cultural Diversity Awareness and Sexual Harassment and Prevention Training and the County Policy of Equity Training. The Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff will notify you of your scheduled trainings.

### E. Conflicts of Interest and Statement of Economic Interests (Form 700)

Commission members must keep their personal interests separate from their Commission duties and responsibilities, and avoid conflicts of interest. A conflict of interest occurs if Commission members allow their personal relationships, money (or the promise of money), or other outside factors to influence how they perform their Commission duties and responsibilities. A conflict of interest also exists if Commission members use information acquired in their capacity as Commission members for personal gain.

To avoid potential conflicts or the appearance of any conflicts, Commission members may not participate in discussions, deliberations, or recommendations regarding issues in which they have a personal or financial interest. In addition, they may not accept gifts from lobbyists or anyone doing business with the County or who may come before the Commission. This is against County policy and may be illegal.

Some Commissioners are required to complete and sign conflict of interest documentation (Statement of Economic Interests - Form 700) prior to commencing their Commission duties. Not all Commissioners are required to file a Form 700, because the filing requirement is based upon the authority and responsibilities of the Commission. If you have questions about whether or not you need to file, please contact your Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff.

### F. Service at the Will of the Board of Supervisors

Generally, Commissioners serve at the pleasure of the Board and can be removed at any time.

### G. Process for Resigning from a Commission

Letters or email of resignation can be submitted to their appointing authority and Board Office. Copies of the resignation should also be provided to the Chairperson, Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff.

### H. Process for Filling Vacancies

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors to give public notice of vacancies on Commissions and actively recruit qualified candidates. Vacancy information along with the Commission qualifications found on Commission's Fact Sheet is available on the Commission Services Membership Roster webpage at <http://bos.lacounty.gov/Services/Commission-Services/Membership-Roster>. Commissions are encouraged to forward letters of interest along with a biography, to the Board.

## III. COMMISSION OFFICERS

### A. Chairperson's/President's Duties

The duties of the Chairperson/President or Co-Chair if applicable, generally shall include, unless otherwise established by the bylaws, operating rules and/or ordinance of the Commission:

- Working with the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff to prepare the meeting agenda to comply with Brown Act standards and timeframes.
- Presiding over all meetings by:
  - Calling the meeting to order at the scheduled time.
  - Verifying the presence of a quorum.
  - "Processing" all motions including (stating the motion prior to discussion, restating the motion just prior to the vote, and announcing the result of the vote, specifying who voted in favor, who voted against, and any abstentions and recusals).
  - Facilitating meetings by staying on track and adhering to time constraints.
  - Conducting the meeting in a fair and equitable manner.
  - Restraining the members when engaged in debate, within the rules of order to enforce the observance of order and decorum among the members.
  - Maintaining neutrality to facilitate debate.
  - Ensuring the work of the Commission is consistent with its intended purpose and mission.
- Be familiar with and conduct the meetings according to the Robert's Rules of Order, and/or bylaws and ordinance. (See *Appendix Section XII E. County of Los Angeles Procedural Rules for County Commissions and Committees Based on [Robert's Rules of Order \(Abridged\)](#) and in Compliance with the Brown Act*)
- For issues related to business processes, contact the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff.

### B. Vice Chairperson's/President's Duties-if applicable

The Vice Chairperson's/Vice President's duties shall generally include, unless otherwise established by the bylaws, operating rules and/or ordinance of the Commission:

- Assuming the role of the Chairperson/President, in the absence of the Chairperson/President.
- Working in collaboration with the Chairperson/President.

### C. Election of Commission Officers

As indicated in the Commission's bylaws, Ordinance, or Board Directive, each body should organize the election of its Officers (Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Treasurer, etc.). The Commission's bylaws or operating rules should contain the duties of its elected officers.

## IV. ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENTS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS, COMMISSION LIAISONS, AND COMMISSION STAFF

### A. Executive Directors, Commission Liaisons, Commission Staff

Administrative support provided by the assigned Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff who is responsible for providing leadership to the Commissions and assisting the Commissions with annual goals and objectives that align with the Board and/or Department priorities. The Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff serve as the point of contact for your Commission. Commissions are generally administratively assigned to County Departments as mandated by legislation, ordinance or Board order.

### B. Relationship with Departments

County Departments may be a resource for Commissions to answer questions, provide data on the impact of issues being considered, clarify County policy, and generally keep Commissions current on issues related to the County's budget, legislation endorsed by the County, and information on available services.

## V. COMMUNICATING WITH THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

The Board is always interested in facilitating the work of Commissions and welcomes any suggestions. Board members value information that alerts them to upcoming issues and concerns allowing them to respond proactively.

Commissions have various avenues of communicating and reporting their collective recommendations and findings to the Board, including an annual report to the Board of its activities and accomplishments. Another avenue for communication with the Board is through Commission approved correspondence. Commission approved letters/memos can be submitted to the Board to relay information or to obtain guidance on matters of Commission concern.

### A. Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors

Recommendations approved by the Commission as a whole can be submitted to the Board via memos or written correspondence for consideration. It is recommended that you consult with your Executive Director, Commission Liaison or Commission Staff regarding correspondence guidelines and protocols for your respective departments when submitting memos or written correspondence on behalf of the Commission.

### B. Consulting and Engaging with Board Offices

Commissioners may communicate with their District's assigned Board offices. However, protocol suggests that Commissioners work within the framework of the Commission and the Chairperson when information needs to be conveyed to or obtained from the Board as a whole, or to an individual Supervisor.



### C. Commission Annual Reports

Each Commission should provide an update to the Board about its activities through an Annual Report. The Annual Report is to be completed by each Commission and approved at a regular Commission meeting. The Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff will transmit the Annual Reports to the Board. (See Appendix Section XII A. Annual Report Template and Instructions)

It is the Commission's responsibility to write its Annual Report. Some Commissions assign this task to a committee or a particular Commissioner, who will prepare a draft for Commission review. Once the content is approved by the Commission, the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff can prepare the final documents and forward to the Board.

### D. Sunset Review Evaluation

Every four years, a Sunset Review is conducted for each Citizen Advisory Commission, and others as designated as indicated on the Commission's Fact Sheet that can be accessed on the Commission Services Membership Roster webpage at <http://bos.lacounty.gov/Services/Commission-Services/Membership-Roster>. The Sunset Review will provide an opportunity for Commissions and stakeholders to evaluate their work and accomplishments, as well as allows Commissions to periodically review their ordinance and scope of work. The Sunset Review analysis is forwarded to the Audit Committee for assessment and recommendations to the Board for extension to the sunset review date and any changes to the Commissions' ordinances. (See Appendix Section XII B. Sunset Review Evaluation Questionnaire and Instructions)

## VI. LEGISLATION AND PUBLIC OFFICIALS

### A. How to Obtain Information on the Board of Supervisors Legislative Positions

Each year, the County's State and Federal Legislative Agendas are developed based on the political and economic climates in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Through the County's Legislative Program, the Board adopts legislative goals and policies, enabling the County's advocates in Sacramento and Washington D.C., to effectively respond to legislative proposals that could significantly impact the County's finances or programs. The Legislative Agenda includes general principles and positions, as well as policy statements regarding issues of major County interest. These documents are updated annually, after consultation with County departments, the Board offices, the County's legislative representatives, and commissions and advisory boards. The Legislative Agendas are presented to the Board for consideration in December or January and once approved, provide a framework for ongoing advocacy throughout the year.

You can request a copy of the County's State and Legislative Agenda via the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff, if applicable. Also, for additional information and status updates of bills for which the County has taken a position on, you may also review the State and Federal Legislation of County Interest report available through the Chief Executive Office (CEO) Legislative Affairs and Intergovernmental Relations office or website at [http://ceo.lacounty.gov/igr/leg\\_info.htm](http://ceo.lacounty.gov/igr/leg_info.htm). For information on State legislation information, visit <http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/>.

### B. Recommending a position of Commission Interest to the Board of Supervisors

Commissions may not take an official position for the County which has not been approved by the Board. County Commissions and other advisory bodies seeking a position on legislation or State Budget items are required to submit their recommendations to the CEO for review to determine if they are consistent with existing policy prior to taking an advocacy position. Upon completion of the review, the CEO will provide a copy of the review findings to be attached to the document containing the Commission's recommendations transmitted to the Board.

### C. Engaging with other Jurisdictions and Elected Officials

Commissions can work with the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff when engaging other jurisdictions, such as other counties, cities and elected officials in the work of the Commission when needed. Commissions should notify Board Offices before inviting or if they are informed that a state, or federal, or other local elected official will attend a Commission meeting, event or County facility.

## VII. TYPES OF MEETINGS

### A. Regular Meetings

Commissions hold regular meetings to conduct business, such as receiving and filing reports, discuss and take action on recommendations and vote to forward recommendations to the Board or other entities as deemed appropriate. The agenda for a regular meeting must be posted 72 hours in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Brown Act. The Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff attending the meetings assist the Commission Chair.

### B. Special Meetings

The Chairperson/President or a majority of the appointed Commissioners may call a special meeting if deemed necessary and will coordinate with the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff regarding availability of staff and a meeting room. The agenda of a special meeting must be posted 24 hours in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Brown Act and distributed to interested parties that have requested notification.

### C. Planning Meetings

Commissions may work in coordination with the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff to schedule to meet in planning sessions to develop their annual goals, review bylaws, and focus on Commission issues. These meetings are subject to the Brown Act and will be properly noticed, agendized, open to the public and require a quorum of members in attendance to conduct business.

## VIII. COMMISSION MEETINGS

### A. Process for Developing the Meeting Agenda

The Chairperson/President works with the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff to coordinate the meeting agenda; however, the method by which the agenda is developed varies according to the procedures of the individual Commissions. A Commissioner may request that an item be placed on the agenda by submitting a request to the Chairperson. The Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff, in collaboration with the Chairperson, will ensure that the agenda follows standard formatting and language guidelines and Brown Act requirements.

### B. Ralph M. Brown Act (Brown Act)

Commission meetings are subject to the Brown Act, which guarantees the public's right to attend and participate in Commission meetings. Agendas must be physically posted at the meeting site and accessible to the public. It is also highly encouraged for Commissions with websites to post current agendas and minutes online for public view. The agenda must include all items which will be discussed or acted upon by the Commission. Generally, the Commission cannot discuss, deliberate, or take action on any item not included on the agenda. Commissions must allow a member of the public to address the Commission on any agenda item before or during consideration of that item. Members of the public are also given the opportunity to address the Commission on any matter not on the agenda which is within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission. (See Appendix Section XII E. County Counsel Guide to the Brown Act)

### C. Quorum Determination

A quorum is the minimum number of members who are required to be present at the meeting in order to conduct business. Generally, a quorum is a majority of the members of the body, unless otherwise established. Statute or bylaws may specify a higher (but not a lower) number.

### D. Attendance Reports to the Board of Supervisors

Attendance information is maintained by the Executive Office of the Board, Commission Services Division and is provided to the Board quarterly for their review.

## IX. COMMITTEES

A Commission may choose to create standing and/or ad-hoc committees that report to the full Commission to assist with Commission business and priorities.

### A. Standing Committees

Standing committees have a continuing subject matter and have a meeting schedule fixed by formal action. Standing committees may not include a quorum of the entire Commission membership. All standing

committees are subject to the Brown Act and must be properly noticed, agendaized, and open to the public, and have a quorum of the committee membership present to meet.

### B. Ad-hoc Committees

Ad-hoc committees are established by the Commission for a limited purpose and time. The Chairperson/President can appoint Commissioners to serve on ad-hoc committees or an ad-hoc committee can be established by Commission vote. An ad-hoc committee may not include a quorum of the entire Commission membership.

## X. CONDUCTING MEETINGS

### A. Business Conducted at Commission Meetings

The application of Parliamentary Procedure is the best method to enable Commissions to determine the will of the Commission. The Procedures help create a balance between the rights of persons in the minority on specific issues to be heard with the rights of persons holding the majority position to prevail. All meetings should be conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order to aid in conducting meetings in a fair and equitable manner. (See Appendix Section XII E. County of Los Angeles Procedural Rules for County Commissions and Committees Based on [Robert's Rules of Order \(Abridged\)](#) and in Compliance with the Brown Act)

The meetings are called to order by the Chairperson/President or Vice Chairperson/President in the absence of the Chairperson/President. If neither is in attendance, the Commission selects a Chairperson Pro Tempore to conduct the meeting.

### B. Public Comment

Pursuant to the Brown Act, before or during consideration of each agenda item, the public must be given an opportunity to comment on the item, and have a right to comment on any agenda item or items that are within the jurisdiction of the Commission. The Chairperson/President establishes the amount of time public speakers are authorized to speak on each item. Generally, speakers fill out Request to Speak Forms, which will be provided to the Chairperson to call on speakers. A member of the public is not required to identify themselves, but must provide identifiable information allowing the Commission the reasonably call upon them to address the body. Also, a member of the public may record (audio/video) the meeting including their testimony before the Commission.

### C. Distribution of Materials and Meeting Accommodations

The Brown Act states that documents being distributed by the Commission during meetings must be made available for review by the public. This applies to documents distributed prior to the meeting. Any material that is not prepared by the County or a Commissioner and is distributed during an open meeting must be made available for public inspection as soon as possible after the meeting. For example, if a member of the public submits a document to accompany his/her public comment statement, Commission staff retain the document as part of the meeting records, provide a copy of the document to the Commissioners following the meeting, and have it available upon request following the meeting.

## XI. MISCELLANEOUS

### A. Travel Expense Reimbursement

Commissioners can consult with their Executive Director, Commission Liaison or Commission Staff to determine whether they are authorized by County Code to travel on Commission related business (other than commission meetings) and are eligible for reimbursement of expenses incurred while conducting Commission business. Commissioners authorized to travel must make all air travel reservations through as mandated by the Board (See [County Code Section 5.40](#) and [Fiscal Guidelines Chapter 13](#)).

### B. Mileage Reimbursement

Commissioners can consult with their Executive Director, Commission Liaison or Commission Staff to determine whether they are eligible pursuant to County Code to receive mileage reimbursement for Commission business. A Commissioner who uses their private vehicles for travel on County Business, if eligible, may become certified as a Mileage Permittee for reimbursement of mileage at the current established rate. Mileage claim forms are provided by the Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff. Claims for mileage reimbursement are required be submitted within 30 days of County business conducted.

### C. County Issued Materials

If applicable, County Commission Business cards may only contain information concerning the Commission, not personal business information. Commissioners may not use County-issued materials such as business cards and letterhead for personal correspondence purposes. If a "Commissioner" title is used for information purposes, you must include a disclaimer that you do not speak on behalf of the County of Los Angeles or the Commission for which you are a member.

### D. Commissioner Parking

The Executive Director, Commission Liaison or Commission Staff will inform commissioners of available parking for commission meetings.

### E. Commission Publications

Commissions may develop or produce informational and educational materials for distribution in hard copy or for inclusion on the Commission's website relating to their roles, responsibilities and meeting information. Material and information shall be in compliance with enabling legislation, federal and state laws, County Codes and Board policies.

### F. Commission Webpages

Available Commission Websites are linked on the Executive Office Membership Roster website <http://bos.lacounty.gov/Services/Commission-Services/Membership-Roster> as the central location to obtain commissioners rosters, fact sheets and websites. To ensure that the County's commissions

website are consistent with information that various stakeholders have indicated they would like to access, it is recommended that at least the following information be included:

- A current agenda and past minutes
- An annual regular meeting schedule
- A description of the commission and its mission with creating authority (link to ordinance, board order, state or federal mandate establishing the body)
- Commission’s annual report (if applicable)
- Commission members and officers

## XII. APPENDIX

### A. Annual Report Template and Instructions

A Template and Instructions on completing and submitting the Annual Report is attached

### B. Sunset Review Evaluation Questionnaire and Instructions

A Template and Instructions on completing and submitting the completed questionnaire is attached.

### C. County Strategic Plan and Major Priorities

A copy of the [County Los Angeles Strategic Plan](#) is attached; Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Major Priorities can also be accessed at <http://priorities.lacounty.gov>.

### D. Commission Bylaws, Ordinances, and/or Board Directives

See your Executive Director, Commission Liaison, or Commission Staff for additional information specific to your Commission.

### E. Parliamentary Procedures

The following are attached:

- County of Los Angeles Procedural Rules for County Commissions and Committees Based on [Robert’s Rules of Order \(Abridged\)](#) and in Compliance with the Brown Act
- [County Counsel Guide to Brown Act Requirements](#)