

# **BOARD OF COWLITZ COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

## **RULES OF PRACTICE**



**January 25, 2022**

## I. COUNTYBOARD

Cowlitz County shall be governed by the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners shall comply with the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act Chapter 42.30 RCW.

## II. CHAIR, VICE-CHAIR AND BOARD ASSIGNMENTS

A. The Board of County Commissioners shall elect a Chair according to RCW 36.32.100 which requires the Board, following the general election to select one of its number to preside at its meeting and conduct County business as the statutory Chair of the Board. The Board of County Commissioners also shall elect a Vice Chairman.

B. The Chair shall preside over Board meetings. In case of the absence of the Board Chair, the Board Vice-Chair shall preside.

C. At a regular Commissioner Conference or Work Session in January of each year the Board will determine Committee assignments. The Board may review committee assignments at any other time during a regular public meeting.

## III. BOARD MEETINGS

### A. General information.

(1) Dates and times of the Commissioners' regular meetings are described in these Rules of Practice. All meetings are subject to cancellation or rescheduling, and special meetings may be held with proper legal notice. Executive Sessions may also be scheduled or held during these meetings, including the beginning.

(2) Final action may be taken in any regular or special meeting in accordance with the law.

(3) Two members constitute a quorum. A quorum shall be necessary for final action unless otherwise provided for by law.

(4) Any member of the Board may attend any Board meeting or public hearing by telephone or video conferencing; provided, however, that adequate audio-visual equipment is available at the location of the Board meeting so as to allow all present at the meeting, including the Clerk of the Board and the attending public, to hear the conferencing member's voice and for the conferencing member to hear the other speakers at the meeting.

(5) Minutes shall be kept for all regular and special meetings of the Board. Minutes will not be kept for Executive Sessions. Minutes shall be open and available for public inspection. Minutes will reflect the following:

- i. Date, time and location the meeting convened
- ii. Attendees from Governing body and Staff
- iii. General Nature of the business discussion
- iv. Action taken – not what was said.

(6) Special Meetings of the Board may be requested by any County Commissioner as provided by the provisions of RCW 42.30.080. Adjournments and continuances shall be governed by the provisions of RCW

42.30.090 and 42.30.100. Any request shall be made to the Clerk of the Board and shall specify the time, place and reason for such meeting. Upon receipt of the request, the Clerk will notify the other Commissioners and Chief of Staff.

(7) The Board may meet in Executive Session to discuss matters set forth in RCW 42.30.110 and RCW 42.30.140 including, but not limited to pending litigation, site acquisition of real estate and the price thereof, and certain personnel matters. Executive Sessions may be called during any regular or special meeting. No final action will be made during Executive Sessions.

(8) Public participation – Public attendance is always welcomed and encouraged by the Board. Citizens are welcome to make comment during the Commissioners' regular formal public meeting. In accordance with RCW 42.30.040, citizens are not required to identify themselves unless otherwise required by law. Public comment at all other regular and special meetings of the Board will be at the discretion of the Chair on a case by case basis depending on the agenda and subject matter of the meeting. These sessions provide the Board information on topics of interest, update the Board on pending issues, provide pertinent policy making information, or provide for a final review of matters to come before the board at a future meeting or public hearing. These meetings also allow the Board the opportunity to interact with staff and each other to discuss pending matters of county business in a less formal setting.

(9) The Chair shall conduct meetings generally following Robert's Rules of Order. The rules of the Board may be suspended upon approval of a motion. Interruptions or disturbances may be handled by the Chair in accordance with RCW 42.30.050.

(10) The Clerk of the Board and County Chief of Staff, or designee, shall be responsible for reviewing all Board meeting agendas prior to posting.

B. **Regular Meetings**

**Regular meetings shall be held in person, with a virtual component, whenever practicable, thus allowing for remote participation.**

(1) **Commissioners' Formal Public Meeting Pre-Conference.** The regular pre-conference shall convene every Tuesday at 8:45 am; fifteen minutes prior to the Commissioners' regular formal public meeting. The meeting is to establish a quorum of the Board and provide an opportunity to answer any last minute questions related to the meeting agenda.

(2) **Commissioners' Regular Formal Public Meeting.** The regular formal meeting shall convene every Tuesday at 9:00 a.m. All such meetings shall be held in the third floor Hearing Room of the Administration Building, Kelso, Washington, with a virtual component, unless otherwise legally noticed.

A. Agendas for these meetings should provide for the following:

- i. Acknowledge Board Members
- ii. Pledge of Allegiance
- iii. Special recognition (if applicable)
- iv. Minutes
- v. Consent Agenda
- vi. Public Comment on items not on the agenda
- vii. Regular Agenda
- viii. Public hearing matters (if applicable) or timed items
- ix. Bid awards (if applicable)

- x. Appointments
- xi. Board of Health quarterly
- xii. Other items at the discretion of the Board
- xiii. Adjourn

B. Departments must submit completed regular formal meeting agenda items in Agenda Quick by 6 pm the prior Tuesday. Approvals in Agenda Quick and a copy of the agenda item (additional copies if the Department requires a signature back) should be delivered to the Commissioner's Office by 4:30 pm the prior Wednesday and received no later than the time of Agenda publication.

C. The meeting agenda for regular and special board meetings shall be noticed in accordance with RCW 42.30.080.

D. Any Commissioner may request that an item be removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion. An item removed from the Consent Agenda will be considered as a separate item of business by the Board. Approval of the Consent Agenda will be by a simple majority voice vote of the Board.

E. Agenda items may be placed on the consent agenda after review by the County Chief of Staff and Clerk of the Board as part of the weekly agenda review process.

(3) **Commissioners' Work Sessions.** Regular Work Sessions are scheduled for the Commissioners as needed every Wednesday at noon. The Clerk of the Board and Chief of Staff will manage the scheduling of Commissioners' Work Sessions. Work Sessions are scheduled for the purpose of providing the Board of Commissioners information on topics of interest that will update the Board on pending issues, provide pertinent policy making information, and/or provide for a final review of matters to come before the board at a regular formal meeting or public hearing. Work Sessions will be held, unless noticed otherwise, in the General Meeting Room in the Administration Building. Whenever practicable, in person meetings also will have a virtual component, thus allowing for remote participation.

(4) **Commissioners' Conference.** Regular Commissioners Conference meetings are held as needed every Tuesday at 1:30 pm. These meetings allow Commissioners the opportunity to interact with staff and each other to discuss pending matters of county business in a less formal setting. Commissioner Conferences will be held, unless noticed otherwise, in the General Meeting Room in the Administration Building. Whenever practicable, in person meetings also will have a virtual component, thus allowing for remote participation.

(5) **Commissioners' Staff Meeting.** Regular Commissioner Staff meetings are held as needed on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday at 8:30 am. These meetings offer an opportunity for all Directors, Managers and Elected Officials to interact and share information regarding important county organizational changes and projects. Staff Meetings will be held unless noticed otherwise, in the General Meeting Room in the Administration Building.

(6) **Elected Officials' Meeting.** Regular Elected Officials meetings are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of each of month at noon. These meetings offer an opportunity for Elected Officials to interact and share information regarding important county organizational changes and projects. Elected Officials' Meetings will be held, unless noticed otherwise, in the General Meeting Room in the Administration Building.

(7) **Board of Health.** The Board of Commissioners also sits as the Board of Health. Meetings are held quarterly the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of January, April, July and October at 10:00 a.m. The Cowlitz County Health Department was established effective January 1, 1994. These meetings are held in the third floor Hearing Room of the Administration Building, Kelso, Washington, in addition to a virtual component, unless otherwise legally noticed.

#### IV. FILLING VACANCIES

A. Appointments to fill vacancies will be presented to the Commissioners by the Clerk of the Board. The Commissioners' appointments shall be approved by a majority at any regular meeting.

B. Any recommendation for an appointment must be made with an application to serve. Applications are required for re-appointments.

C. Ad hoc, special committees, and/or task forces may be established as determined and recommended by the Board or in accordance with state law. They will cease to function when they have completed their duties and have made their final reports. Appointments to these groups shall be communicated to the department involved.

D. Elected Official vacancies will be filled following state law.

#### V. COUNTY OPERATIONS

A. Resolution No. 17-040 explains the policy and procedure for office hours. Office hours are on file with the Clerk of the Board of County Commissioners and published on the County's web site, which sets forth the specific business office days and hours for specific County offices and departments:

<http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/>

B. Pertinent policies and procedures relating to salaries; employee benefits; general, sick and various other types of leave; holidays; hours of work; physical examinations; retirement; and all such matters of personnel and employee relations are cited in the Cowlitz County Human Resources Policy Manual, located on both the intranet and internet <http://intranet/commissioner/> and <http://www.co.cowlitz.wa.us/Index.aspx?NID=166> . All reference pertaining to such matters should be made thereto and inquiries made to the Director of Human Resources.

C. A Commissioners' use of staff time beyond the Clerk of the Board or Chief of Staff should be approved by the Board.

D. A Commissioners' concerns regarding county employees shall be referred to the Chief of Staff or the Director of Human Resources for investigation and follow up.

#### VI. APPOINTMENT, EVALUATION AND REMOVAL OF DEPARTMENT HEADS

A. The County Chief of Staff will appoint all non-elected County department heads with approval by the Board of Commissioners.

B. The County Chief of Staff shall supervise and evaluate all appointed department heads under the jurisdiction of the Board of Commissioners.

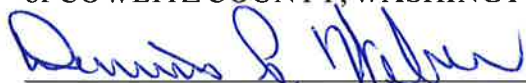
- C. Removal of any non-elected County department head shall be made by the County Chief of Staff with approval of the Board.
- D. When a department head position is vacant, the County Chief of Staff, or designee, shall be authorized to perform those duties and execute documents for the department.
- E. In accordance with Board policy, appointed department heads shall report to the Board of Commissioners through the County Chief of Staff.
- F. The County Chief of Staff, with the approval of the Board chair, may designate a person to fulfill the duties during an absence.
- G. When the County Chief of Staff position is vacant, the Board of Commissioners will appoint an interim County Chief of Staff.

#### VII. COUNTY BOARD MEMBER EXPENSES

Cowlitz County Commissioners may be reimbursed for long distance travel expenses when incurred in the course of official county business in accordance with County Policy.

Adopted this 25th day of January, 2022.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
of COWLITZ COUNTY, WASHINGTON

  
Dennis P. Weber, Chairman

  
Arne Mortensen, Commissioner

  
John Jabusch, Commissioner

Attest:   
Tiffany Ostrem, Clerk of the Board

