

Introduction to The New Arlington County Advisory Group Handbook

January 2014

Why A New Handbook?

- Last version created in 1997
- PLACE project identified key principles and expectations for civic engagement
- We heard from many folks that commission support should be a priority

- 34 Commissions
- 19 External Groups
- 3 County Manager Groups
- 8 Review Boards with “judicial” role
- 62 civic, citizen, and homeowners associations
- Over 100 community service organizations

Arlington County Advisory Groups

Associated Departments report to the County Manager



Advisory Groups and County Manager report to the County Board

- Aquatics
- Sports
- Out of School Time
- Parks and Rec
- Urban Forestry

Associated With



Parks & Rec

- Disability
- Status of Women
- Human Rights



Human Rights

- Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission



Emergency, Police & Fire

- Civil Service



Human Resources

- Aging
- Long Term Care Residences
- Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families
- Community Service Board



Human Services

Associated With



Community Planning & Housing Development



Economic Development



Technology Services



Management & Finance



Environmental Services

- Planning
- Tenant Landlord
- Crystal City Citizen Review
- Housing
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Historic Affairs
- Public Facilities Review Committee
- Community Development Citizens Advisory Commission

- Arts
- Economic Development

- Information Technology

- Industrial Development Authority
- Fiscal Affairs

- Environment and Energy Citizens Commission
- Traffic Calming
- Transportation

What's In The Handbook?

- Membership Processes
- Expectations
- Legal Requirements
- Roles and Responsibilities
- Communication Protocols
- Guidance for Effective Meetings and Outreach
- Preparing the Charter
- Links, resources, contacts

- Expectations
- Framework for Civic Relationships
- Legal Requirements
- Communication
- The Charter

- **Commitment** reflects our common support for substantive input and effective process.
- **Clarity** requires that we establish clear and transparent goals and direction.
- **Connections** recognizes the diversity of our community and the desire to engage all voices in our work.

- **Communication** helps us to ensure we listen and engage in dialogue to exchange and evaluate ideas and to deepen our understanding of the entire community.
- **Civility** underscores our desire to ensure that mutual respect supports all interaction.
- **Capacity** reflects our belief in continuous learning.



Framework for Civic Relationships

Voices Joined to Achieve Arlington's Vision

	COMMUNITY	STAFF	BOARD
Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We are a caring community We seek and stay informed about issues that affect the whole community We get involved We take initiative in problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We value the community's ideas We actively seek community input to our projects and decisions and plan meetings for broad participation We design processes that provide the activities and time needed for meaningful engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We nurture the partnership between community & gov't. We believe that good ideas can come from anyone We support processes to make better decisions
Clarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We identify opportunities to improve Arlington, and provide input into decision processes We strive to build consensus around possible solutions to issues and concerns We define consensus as outcomes that most can live with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We specify at the start of a process the opportunities for public input and influence We provide transparency on decision making processes We give feedback on how we considered community input We respect and report diverse viewpoints We define consensus as outcomes that most can live with 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We strive for clarity of everyone's roles and responsibilities We identify values, facts and policies that underpin issues We define consensus as outcomes most can live with
Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We reach out to new residents and other parts of the community We seek to include and engage all residents We share information via a variety of forums We initiate and organize meetings/forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We design processes and do outreach that engages and provides access to all interested parts of the community We speak many languages We engage people from their point of view We initiate and organize meetings and forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We ensure that all voices in our community have the chance to participate and be heard We value diversity
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We voice our opinions and listen to each other We advocate for policies, resources and programs to improve the community We generate new ideas to solve and/or address concerns We provide timely feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We listen to our community We provide in a timely manner the information needed for meaningful engagement We advocate for policies, resources to improve community We generate new ideas to solve and/or address concerns We support latest technology and more traditional formats 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We clearly communicate our decisions and rationale We listen to all concerns
Civility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We respect and value all participants' ideas and opinions We value all participants' time and are respectful of timelines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We value and respect people's time We design and facilitate process based on civil dialogue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not shy away from conflict, but respectfully discuss our differences
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We contribute our talents, skills, energy & time We build on our existing community resources and assets (non financial) We actively seek to build our understanding of how the County conducts our business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We contribute our skills and ideas We provide staff with training needed for civic engagement We measure our success in transparent ways We learn from each process and refine our approaches We help people join our processes at any point We actively seek to build our understanding of how civic work contributes to our business 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We assure access to the resources and educational opportunities needed for everyone to participate

- Provide clear guidance
- Ensure timely consideration of all policy recommendations
- Assign a Board Liaison
- Consider the group's advice at Board meetings
- Give regular feedback
- Actively recruit and support new members
- Give the opportunity to provide specific budget advice

Expectations for Advisory Groups

- Provide direct recommendations and advice
- Bring matters to the Board's attention related to policy implementation or the need for new or revised policies
- Ensure that all external communication is vetted with the County Board Liaison
- Be ambassadors within the community to encourage understanding
- Convene community dialogues, as appropriate, to help educate the Arlington community
- Work cooperatively with staff

- Provide subject matter expertise
- Identify upcoming County Board agenda items that may be of interest or concern
- Assist with communication to the County Board
- Assist with outreach to the broader community
- Orient new members
- Support meetings administratively and logistically

- Work within the group's specific mission
- Understand the role of "policy advisor"
- Commit to attendance and preparation
- Practice civility and collaboration
- Communicate and seek understanding of the community's perspectives as one means of identifying effective and acceptable solutions
- Work effectively with County staff

- Rules apply when 3 or more advisory group members get together – formally or informally, in person or electronically:
 - Meetings publicly posted at least 3 working days ahead
 - Must be open to the public, with a very few legal exceptions
 - At least one copy of all agenda packets and materials made available for public inspection
 - Written minutes made publicly available
 - Permit public to photograph, film, record, or otherwise reproduce any portion of a meeting
 - No voting by secret or written ballot

- Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), if requested, advisory group members are required to produce all information, including any emails or notes related to the topic in question
- Arlington County's Custodian of Records reviews all documents prior to release to ensure compliance and redacts information that is not responsive to the request

- Applies to all citizen advisory groups appointed to make non-binding recommendations to the Arlington County Board or the County Manager
- Potential conflict if you or your immediate family members expect to receive \$10,000 or more annually from a property or business, own an interest greater than 3 percent in a business, or own more than a \$10,000 interest in real or personal property that may be affected by the actions of your group

- Work closely with Board liaisons
- Work closely with staff liaison
- Coordinate with groups with related work
- Ensure that Clerk receives all communication
- Only Chair or designated spokesperson speaks to the media, keep all other comments as personal, not the opinion of the board

- All groups ensure that current information is on the group web site
- Be responsive to community requests for information
- Help the broader community understand your work and deliberations
- Post meeting summaries promptly
- Connect with broader community (use the IAP2 Spectrum for guidance as to level)



- Charters are being refined to ensure that all charters are up to date and in a consistent format
- Seeking to have revised charters in place for all commissions by 7/1/14
- This is an opportunity to review, refine, and recalibrate your work and ensure that all members share a common understanding and approach to the work
- Work closely with your Board and staff liaisons