Dear Commissioner:

Thank you for agreeing to become a member of an Arlington County Advisory Group. You’re joining an illustrious group of Arlingtonians stretching back to the 1940s who, through their personal and collective efforts, have helped make Arlington the great place it is today. You’ve been selected and appointed by the Board because you bring the skills, talents, knowledge and perspectives needed to help your group achieve thoughtful dialogue and advice related to the group’s mission.

Arlington’s civic success is rooted in its vision and has been supported by years of citizen activism. It builds from a belief that good ideas can come from anywhere; that collaboration among community members, businesses, County staff and the County Board typically leads to better results than working alone; and that strategic decisions stand the test of time when developed through robust, creative, respectful civic conversations. Our success has always been a work in progress - open to evaluation and improvement.

Advisory Group discussions and activities are at the center of Arlington’s civic engagement culture and provide a bridge between the broad community and County policy. They help ensure that the Board is receiving thoughtful and timely policy advice. Our advisory groups also surface minority concerns that may arise during discussions.

Advisory Groups and their members recently made contributions like these:

- From 2010-2013, the development of our Community Energy Plan was guided by Arlingtonians who served on County Advisory groups or were part of our business and non-profit sectors in collaboration with staff and outside experts.
- Columbia Pike neighbors and business owners worked together with staff for a decade to develop two Columbia Pike redevelopment plans as well as the accompanying proposal for transit enhancement through a streetcar line.
- Each year, many Advisory Groups provide advice to the County Board on the Manager’s proposed budget – highlighting impacts and opportunities.

As County Board members, we count on our Advisory Groups, assisted by County staff, to frame challenges, identify potential conflicts, discuss relevant issues, and conduct analysis and evaluation. Where advisory groups are able to find consensus is very important to us. Where consensus cannot be reached, we still benefit from the discussion as it guides our questions, requests for more information or our need to defer to a later date in order to ensure the best decision to achieve overall community good.

Advisory groups and their members have tremendous opportunities to be part of important community-shaping decisions. We know that you come to this task willing to spend the time needed, willing to share what you will learn with others in the community and willing to work collaboratively with us, the County staff and your fellow Arlingtonians. We look forward to the work ahead and to the contributions you will make as an Advisory Group member.

Chair
Arlington County Board
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INTRODUCTION TO ADVISORY GROUPS IN ARLINGTON COUNTY

This handbook is designed to provide assistance to those working on County Board-established Advisory Groups (commissions, committees, boards and task forces). These groups are at the heart of Arlington’s civic engagement and focus directly on community needs and issues within a particular area.

The desire to update this handbook and improve support to Arlington’s advisory groups came from the work of the PLACE program. In 2012, the County Board launched PLACE (Participation, Leadership and Civic Engagement) to update The Arlington Way for the 21st century by engaging all community voices – residents, businesses, civic organizations, advisory groups, Board and staff – to achieve the County’s vision. The importance of advisory groups and the desire to improve the work of these groups was a major outcome. A brief overview of PLACE can be found in Appendix A.

The main web site for Arlington County advisory groups can be found at http://commissions.arlingtonva.us/

A complete list of all of these groups are provided in Figure 1 with a brief description of each of the Commissions in Appendix B.

In addition to providing input to the Board, advisory groups work in cooperation with County Government to explore and discuss their work. Figure 2 shows the major Advisory Groups in Arlington County and how they relate to the various functions of County government. Figure 3 identifies the meeting schedules for each of the major commissions.

It should be noted that Arlingtonians also devote countless volunteer hours to our more than 62 civic, citizen and homeowners associations and more than 100 community service organizations. Each of these groups also regularly communicates with and provides feedback and advice to County government and the County Board.
Figure 1. List of Arlington County Advisory Groups

**Commissions**
- Arlington Commission for the Arts
- CIP Working Group
- Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing
- Commission on Aging
- Arlington Commission on Long-Term Care Residences
- Commission on the Status of Women
- Community Development Citizens Advisory Committee
- Community Housing Finance Corporation Board
- Community Services Board
- Crystal City Citizen Review Council
- Disability Advisory Commission
- Economic Development Commission
- Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission (includes Local Emergency Planning Committee)
- Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2)
- Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission (FAAC)
- George Mason University Arlington Campus Advisory Board
- Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB)
- Human Rights Commission
- Industrial Development Authority
- Information Technology Advisory Commission (ITAC)
- Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee
- Neighborhood Complete Streets Commission
- Arlington Partnership for Children, Youth and Families Park and Recreation Commission
- Planning Commission
- Public Facilities Review Committee
- Sports Commission
- Tenant-Landlord Commission
- Transportation Commission
- Urban Agriculture Task Force
- Urban Forestry Commission
- Western Rosslyn Area Planning Study Working Group

**External Groups with County Board appointed members**
- Arlington County Fair Board
- Arlington Volunteers of America Assisted Living Residence, Inc.
- Arlington Sister City Association
- Aurora House Citizen’s Advisory Committee
- Ballston Business Improvement District (BID) Board of Directors
- Board of Directors for Arlington Independent Media (AIM)
- Clarendon Alliance Board of Directors
- Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO) Board of Directors
- Criminal Justice Coordinating Council
- Crystal City Business Improvement District (BID) Board of Directors
- GMU Arlington Campus Advisory Board
- Health System Agency Board of Directors
- Northern Virginia Community College Board
- Northern Virginia Conservation Trust
- Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority
- Out-of-School Time Advisory Council
- Retirement Board
- Rosslyn Business Improvement District (BID) Board of Directors
- Ten-Year Plan to End Homelessness
- Potomac Watershed Roundtable
- Workforce Investment Board

**County Manager Appointed Advisory Groups**
- Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Community Energy Plan Implementation Review Committee
- Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Transit Advisory Committee

**Review Boards**
- Arlington Solid Waste Authority
- Board of Equalization of Real Estate Assessments
- Building Code Board of Appeals
- Civil Service Commission
- Finance Board
- Fire Prevention Code Board of Appeals
- Fire Trial Board
- Health Center Commission
- Police Trial Board
- Police Contract Towing Advisory Board
- Trespass Vehicle Towing Advisory Board
Figure 2. Arlington County Policy Advisory Groups and Corresponding County Departments

<table>
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<th>Commissions &amp; Advisory Groups</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Aquatics</td>
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<td>- Planning</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tenant Landlord</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Out of School Time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Crystal City Citizen Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Parks and Rec</td>
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<td>- Housing</td>
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<td>- Urban Forestry</td>
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<td>- Neighborhood Conservation</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Disability</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Historic Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Status of Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Public Facilities Review Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Human Rights</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Community Development Citizens Advisory Commission</td>
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<td>- Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Civil Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Aging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Long Term Care Residences</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Information Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families</td>
<td></td>
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<td>- Industrial Development Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Community Service Board</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Fiscal Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Human Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Environment and Energy Citizens Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associated With</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parks &amp; Rec</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Rights</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emergency, Police &amp; Fire</td>
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<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<td>Human Services</td>
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<td>Community Planning &amp; Housing Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management &amp; Finance</td>
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<td>Environmental Services</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>+Planning Commission</td>
<td>+Planning Commission</td>
<td>Transportation Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#Civil Service</td>
<td>Community Development Advisory Committee</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#Industrial Development Authority</td>
<td>!*Citizen Advisory Commission on Housing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>!* Citizen Advisory Commission on Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>Economic Development (bi-monthly) Human Rights</td>
<td>Long-Term Care Residences</td>
<td>Commission for the Status of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Crystal City Citizens Review Council #</td>
<td>Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>*Commission on Aging Partnership for Children Youth and Families</td>
<td>Disability Advisory Commission</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tenant-landlord Commission</td>
<td>*Sports Commission</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Public Facilities Review Committee</td>
<td>*Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Community Services Board</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board</td>
<td>Urban Forestry Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>*Commission on Aging Environment &amp; Energy Conservation Committee</td>
<td>Park &amp; Recreation Commission</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Commission for the Arts</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission</td>
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<td>(last Wednesday)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Information Technology Advisory Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td></td>
<td>Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quarterly</td>
<td>Out-of-School Time Advisory Council</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>As Needed</td>
<td>Crystal City Citizen Review Council</td>
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# as needed
(one or the other)
+as needed for follow up
! week before monthly County Board meeting
PART I: ORIENTATION FOR ALL MEMBERS

I-1. Becoming A Member of an Advisory Group

Recruitment
To help assure that diverse voices are present in Advisory group deliberations, the County Board strives to appoint Advisory group members from various backgrounds, walks of life, and neighborhoods. Ongoing outreach is done by Board members, advisory group members, and staff using a variety of communication channels.

All Advisory Group meetings are open to the public. Members of the public who are interested in serving on an Advisory Group are welcome to observe the group’s open meetings. This is a good way to see if a particular advisory group is a good fit. Some advisory groups have committees where any member of the public may participate.

Advisory Group members are formally appointed by the Board, but staff and advisory group members often identify and recruit possible members.

Application
Applications can be submitted by U.S. Mail (side note: in 5 years, we have never once had an application submitted via us mail) or through the on-line advisory group application portal on the County website. The portal includes a link to each group's webpage as well as general information about the meeting schedule. In addition, information is available in a brochure that supports recruiting activities.

The online application can be found at: [http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/commissions/forms/application.aspx](http://www.arlingtonva.us/departments/commissions/forms/application.aspx)

Applications submitted to the County Board office receive a response outlining ways to get involved prior to actual appointment. Terms on most advisory groups are staggered, and open slots are filled as they come up in the normal group cycle. There are no guarantees that openings will be available or that applicants meet the current needs of the given board to maintain a broad range of community interests and expertise.

Prior to appointment, the applicant will be contacted by the Advisory Group chair, an aide to a County Board member, and/or a County Board member. The purpose of the conversation is to respond to any questions the applicant may have, and to be sure the applicant has a sound understanding of the group’s role and work, including the likely time commitment and other potential duties.

Appointment
Appointments to advisory groups are made by the County Board and coordinated through the County Board office. One County Board member serves as a liaison to each advisory group. The Board makes appointments monthly at its Recessed. Upon appointment, the list of appointees are posted on the County Board webpage and the applicant will receive a letter from the County Board Chair and a packet of orientation materials.

Although there are some notable exceptions, such as the Planning Commission, Advisory Group chairs are generally appointed by the County Board.

Orientation
New advisory group members should review the on-line orientation materials prior to attending their first meeting.

In general, new members are oriented to the advisory group's subject matter responsibilities by the Chair and the Staff Liaison.
I-2. Civic Engagement Expectations
Robust civic engagement requires active participation from the community, county staff, and the County Board. The Civic Relationship Framework (Figure 4) was adopted by the County Board in 2013 as part of the PLACE initiative. It identifies six key aspects of shared decision-making and outlines key expectations for all participants across those aspects.

- **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.

These expectations are implemented in the advisory group process in the following ways.

**The County Board expects advisory groups to:**
- Provide direct recommendations and advice on specific agenda items coming before the Board or policy matters. To the degree the broader views of the community are brought to the table the conversation and advice to the Board is enriched.
- 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 of key civic decisions and actions.
- Convene community dialogues, as appropriate, to help educate the Arlington community about important decisions and actions facing the County.
- Work cooperatively with, and serve as a sounding board for, staff as ideas and proposals are developed.

**Advisory Groups expect the County Board to:**
- Provide clear guidance on missions and roles, including effective ways to raise issues to the Board.
- Ensure timely consideration of any policy recommendations from the group.
- Assign a Board member to serve as the Board’s Liaison.
- Consider the group’s advice at Board meetings, including providing an opportunity to present the group’s recommendations as part of pertinent agenda items.
- Give regular feedback through the Board Liaison regarding the group’s advice and how that advice was used as the Board framed any decisions.
- Actively recruit and support new members.
- Give the opportunity to provide specific budget advice as part of the annual budget or biennial capital planning process.

**Advisory Groups expect the County staff liaison to:**
- Provide subject matter expertise, including arranging access to subject matter experts from other County Departments.
- Identify upcoming County Board agenda items that may be of interest or concern.
- Assist with communication to the County Board, including the development of reports, recommendations, or letters.
- Assist with outreach to the broader community.
- Orient new members.
- Support meetings administratively and logistically with, at a minimum, agenda development, legal notification, website and minute maintenance.
## Framework for Civic Relationships

**Voices Joined to Achieve Arlington’s Vision**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>COMMUNITY</th>
<th>STAFF</th>
<th>BOARD</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Commitment</strong></td>
<td>● We are a caring community</td>
<td>● We value the community's ideas</td>
<td>● We nurture the partnership between community &amp; govt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We seek and stay informed about issues that affect the whole community</td>
<td>● We actively seek community input to our projects and decisions and plan meetings for broad participation</td>
<td>● We believe that good ideas can come from anyone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We get involved</td>
<td>● We design processes that provide the activities and time needed for meaningful engagement</td>
<td>● We support processes to make better decisions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● We take initiative in problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Quality</strong></td>
<td>● We identify opportunities to improve Arlington, and provide input into decision processes</td>
<td>● We specify at the start of a process the opportunities for public input and influence</td>
<td>● We strive for clarity of everyone's roles and responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We strive to build consensus around possible solutions to issues and concerns</td>
<td>● We provide transparency on decision making processes</td>
<td>● We identify values, facts and policies that underpin issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We define consensus as outcomes that most can live with</td>
<td>● We give feedback on how we considered community input</td>
<td>● We define consensus as outcomes most can live with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Connections</strong></td>
<td>● We reach out to new residents and other parts of the community</td>
<td>● We design processes and do outreach that engages and provides access to all interested parts of the community</td>
<td>● We ensure that all voices in our community have the chance to participate and be heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We seek to include and engage all residents</td>
<td>● We speak many languages</td>
<td>● We value diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We share information via a variety of forums</td>
<td>● We engage people from their point of view</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● We initiate and organize meetings/forums</td>
<td>● We initiate and organize meetings/forums</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>● We voice our opinions and listen to each other</td>
<td>● We listen to our community</td>
<td>● We clearly communicate our decisions and rationale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We advocate for policies, resources and programs to improve the community</td>
<td>● We provide in a timely manner the information needed for meaningful engagement</td>
<td>● We listen to all concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We generate new ideas to solve and/or address concerns</td>
<td>● We advocate for policies, resources to improve community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We provide timely feedback</td>
<td>● We generate new ideas to solve and/or address concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Civility</strong></td>
<td>● We respect and value all participants' ideas and opinions</td>
<td>● We value and respect people's time</td>
<td>● We do not shy away from conflict, but respectfully, discuss our differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We value all participants' time and are respectful of timelines</td>
<td>● We design and facilitate process based on civil dialogue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Capacity</strong></td>
<td>● We contribute our talents, skills, energy &amp; time</td>
<td>● We contribute our skills and ideas</td>
<td>● We assure access to the resources and educational opportunities needed for everyone to participate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We build on our existing community resources and assets (non financial)</td>
<td>● We provide staff with training needed for civic engagement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● We actively seek to build our understanding of how the County conducts our business</td>
<td>● We measure our success in transparent ways</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● We learn from each process and refine our approaches</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● We help people join our processes at any point</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>● We actively seek to build our understanding of how civic work contributes to our business</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Adopted by the Arlington County Board, March 19, 2013*
I-3. Effective Advisory Group Participation

Accepting an advisory group appointment puts one in a position to work directly with the local government, on behalf of the community, to shape county policies and enrich community life. The greater the members’ participation in the work of the group, the greater the group’s effectiveness will be in carrying out its charge and ultimately improving the community.

Advisory groups through their regular meetings and hearings help set the tone for civic participation in the County. They provide civic and civil venues for constructive engagement on issues that matter for all Arlingtonians.

The chief role of the advisory groups (advisory groups, committees, task forces, boards and ad hoc groups) is to provide the County Board with policy advice. Because group members typically come from every corner of the County and are selected and appointed by the Board to provide a broad range of skills, talents, knowledge and perspectives, their comments and recommendations regularly represent the diverse needs and interests of people living and working in Arlington.

Working Within the Board-Adopted Group Mission
Each advisory group serves a specific purpose as defined in its mission and charge from the Board. All potential new topics or activities raised by members should fit within the mission of the group and be vetted with the group leadership and the Board.

Advisory groups help the Board frame challenges, identify potential conflicts, discuss all relevant topics, and on occasion conduct analysis and evaluation in collaboration with staff. Individual members often serve as ambassadors to their neighbors and peers on issues that are under discussion by the group.

Where advisory groups are able to find consensus it often signals broad community agreement. Where consensus cannot be reached, the Board still benefits from the discussion as it guides questions, requests for more information or the need to defer to a later date in order to ensure the best decision to achieve overall community good.

Attendance and Participation
Working on an advisory group is a significant commitment. Should attendance at regular meetings or participation in other ways become a problem for individual members, the Advisory Group Chair should alert the County Board liaison.

Advisory Group members are expected to:
- Fully participate in the meeting and take full advantage of meeting materials provided in advance of the meeting.
- Participate in subcommittee and other activities outside of regular monthly meetings to the extent possible.
- When meetings are missed, contact staff or the Chair to catch up.

Transparency, Communication, and Outreach
Advisory groups seek to identify and work through difficult issues and diverse opinions in order to communicate clearly to the board areas of consensus and disagreement. This requires all members to provide honest and robust input to the process in a timely manner.

In general, the Advisory Group Chair has the responsibility for managing the group’s communication both inside County government and with the broader community. The Chair should rely on the staff liaison’s assistance particularly when it comes to holding hearings or using other community engagement techniques. Official positions of the group should always be shared with the Board liaison before being publicly released. For more details please see section III-2. Each member is expected to:
• Share findings, views and concerns as clearly as possible with the group.
• Communicate effectively with other members of the group - and with interested community members and organizations where possible - to help ensure full understanding of the issues being discussed and assure consideration of diverse community views.
• Work collaboratively - listening to other viewpoints, identifying areas of agreement and seeking a deeper understanding where there is disagreement.
• Defer to the Advisory Group Chair who is responsible for representing the group to the community and to the media. See Section III-2 for additional information.
• Comply with all legal requirements as laid out in Section I-4.

Civility and Collaboration
Advisory groups set the tone for civic engagement throughout Arlington. Advisory group members work in a collegial and collaborative manner with one another. Mutual respect should underlie all advisory group activities.

Working with County Staff
Each Advisory Group has a designated staff liaison from the appropriate County department who attends meetings and coordinates agenda development and follow-up with the Advisory Group chair.

Professional staff from various County Departments also support the Advisory Group process by providing information, expert analyses and advice on an as-needed basis. Advisory Groups can also serve as a conduit of community concerns to staff. Advisory Groups should be sensitive to the difference in staff and commission roles and responsibilities and be mindful of staff’s need to balance their support of the advisory group with other work responsibilities when making requests for analysis and follow-up on issues. All requests to County government for information and support should be submitted by the Advisory Group Chair and processed through the staff liaison.

The Board recognizes that staff and community recommendations will not always align, but expects that each will be crafted in light of the other in order to illuminate the reasoning and implications of the differing views.
Governance 101: What Does it Mean to “Advise the Board on Policy?”

As a commissioner supporting the Board, it is important to understand the difference between:

1. **Setting and monitoring the implementation of policy** (the job of the Board), and
2. **Implementing policy** (the job of the County Manager and County staff).

Three important jobs for the Board are:

1. Setting the vision for the County and then providing clear policies with goals and standards that support achieving the articulated vision,
2. Allocating resources in support of the vision and goals,
3. Ensuring that the County Manager and County staff implement the policy in keeping with the Board’s direction.

It would be nice to say that a bright line exists between the Board’s role and the staff’s role. However, it wouldn’t be true! In reality, the line moves based on the needs of the community as articulated by the Board and good arguments can be made that, on any particular issue, the Board retains a greater level of direct control than might be labeled “pure policy”.

That being said, the following example is provided to give Advisory Group members a basic understanding of the difference between the Board’s policy work and the staff’s implementation responsibility.

**Policy:** Liveable and Walkable Community  
**Implementation:** Complete Streets

That Arlington should be a liveable and walkable community is clearly a Board level policy. How to make Arlington liveable and walkable includes both additional policy (the board’s job) and policy implementation (the professional staff’s job).

For example, one way to implement that policy is to encourage neighborhoods to be involved in deciding how best to improve their area. Therefore, we have the Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC) with representatives from most civic associations. NCAC leads the development of neighborhood plans and recommends neighborhood-initiated capital improvements for funding by the County Board. Improvements include sidewalks, street beautification, pedestrian safety projects, street lights, and parks.

An NCAC project to improve pedestrian safety could, for example, evaluate how to best slow traffic in the area. Selecting the ultimate method to slow traffic is a policy question that will come to the Board. However, this question is one to be evaluated and discussed by both professional staff and the people who will live with whatever is decided. A citizen commission (in this case the NCAC) is ideally positioned to advise the Board on this question.

Once that lower-level policy decision is made with consideration of staff and public input (let’s say speed bumps in this case) it now becomes an implementation question for the professional staff. That is, there are many kinds of speed bumps and ways to install them and decisions about where and how many should be installed. The implementation of the policy includes these decisions and actually installing the speed bumps, which is work for professional engineers and traffic managers, not citizen volunteers or an elected board.

However, the policy work is not complete once the work is implemented. The Board’s job is also to ensure that policy implementation works as intended. The citizens living with the speed bumps are ideally positioned to give feedback to the Board about how they think the particular speed bumps are working for the community. Again, the NCAC would be ideally suited to provide this feedback. Often there can be differences of opinion at this level among citizens and/or between citizens and professional staff. This is what makes “The Arlington Way” so interesting and, at times, frustrating. The better working relationship there is between commissioners and the professional staff of the County, and the better the work process of the commission is managed --- the more easily these differences can be resolved and the better quality advice that can be given to the Board.
I-4. Legal Requirements

As appointed advisors to the Arlington County Board, Advisory Group members are expected to conduct themselves in an ethical manner and to follow appropriate rules and regulations as described in the following section.

Open Meeting Requirements

By definition Open Meeting requirements must be met when 3 or more advisory group members get together – formally or informally, in person or electronically – and public business (i.e. topics associated with the advisory group’s work) is discussed or transacted.

Public access to advisory group meetings is a statutory right of the public pursuant to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act, Section 2.2-3707 of the Virginia Code, as amended. The following are relevant excerpts from that section which apply to advisory group meetings:

- Notice of a meeting must be posted at least 3 working days prior to the meeting on a public bulletin board and in the staff liaison’s office. The notice must state the date, time and location of the meeting. Posting on the web is encouraged.
- All meetings of public bodies, including all advisory groups to the County Board, are to be public, including meetings and work sessions during which no votes are cast or any decisions made. The Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) has limited exemptions from this requirement. Consult with your staff liaison should questions arise.
- At least one copy of all agenda packets and materials furnished to members of an Advisory Group for a meeting shall be made available for inspection by the public at the same time such documents are furnished to the members of the Advisory Group.
- Minutes shall be recorded at all public meetings and must include the meeting date, location and attendees and at least a summary of matters discussed and any votes taken. Such minutes are required to be publicly available.
- Any person may photograph, film, record, or otherwise reproduce any portion of a meeting required to be open. The Advisory Group conducting the meeting may adopt rules governing the placement and use of recording equipment to prevent interference with the proceedings.
- Voting by secret or written ballot in an open meeting is not allowed and is a violation of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act.

Closed Meetings

Advisory groups may close their publicly-noticed meetings to the public only if they are discussing one of the topics expressly authorized by law including, among others:

- A personnel matter.
- Disposition or acquisition of real property.
- Privacy of individuals unrelated to public business.
- Prospective competitive procurements where a public meeting would compromise the county’s bargaining position.
- Consultation with legal counsel.
- Terrorism preventive matters.

Appropriate notice requirements must be met, and the body must adopt a motion specifying the statutory basis for the closed meeting as well as a certification after the closed session has been concluded. All closed meeting discussions are confidential and any actions to be taken based on the closed session must be done only in a reconvened public meeting following the closed meeting.
Electronic Participation
Electronic participation in public advisory group meetings by members is generally not allowed by state statute. However, statute does permit a member to participate electronically for two meetings a year or 25% of the meetings of the body, whichever is less for an “emergency or personal matter”. Should a commission experience an illness or other physical injury that limits physical participation the above limitation does not apply.

Remote participation requires timely notice to the Chair and Staff Liaison so that appropriate arrangements can be made and must comply with the provisions of the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. A quorum of the body must be physically assembled.

Freedom of Information Act Requirements
All written communication among Advisory Group members is subject to the Virginia Freedom of Information Act. While a rare occurrence, this means that, should a member of the public ask to review all deliberations on a subject that the advisory group discussed, advisory group members are required to produce any emails or notes related to the topic. Prior to being released, Arlington County’s Custodian of Records reviews all documents to assure that only those responsive to the request – with redactions should they be necessary – are actually released.

Conflict of Interests
The State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act affects all persons elected or appointed to, as well as employed by, any governmental or advisory agency or group of the Arlington County government. The term "advisory agency" includes citizen advisory groups appointed to make non-binding recommendations to the Arlington County Board or the County Manager.

If you or your immediate family members have a personal interest that may be affected by the actions of your group, you may have a conflict of interest that could either disqualify you from participation or require public disclosure of the conflict before you participate in the matter.

A personal interest exists when you, your spouse, or dependents living with you 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. If your advisory group is considering a matter that relates to your personal interest, you may have a conflict of interest.

The Conflict of Interests Act specifically exempts certain matters or transactions. Such transactions must be identified on a case-by-case basis. Whether you have a conflict or an exception may need to be determined by legal counsel including the County Attorney and the Commonwealth Attorney. Your staff liaison can assist you.

Even if this exception applies, the advisory group member may have to make a declaration of the personal interest on the public record, and the disclosure or the disqualification must be recorded in the advisory agency’s public records. In the event a declaration is required, a disclosure form will be made available by the group’s staff liaison. The form will be kept on file in the Office of the corresponding County Department, and a copy will be forwarded by the agency to the County Board Office to be kept on file for five years for review by the public.

Any knowing and intentional violation of the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act could result in criminal prosecution.

For more detailed information about the topics summarized above including Virginia’s Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and conflict of interest requirements, consult the Virginia Municipal Leagues website at http://www.vml.org/Publications.html.
Any additional questions on potential conflicts of interest can be presented to the staff liaison who will consult the County Attorney.

**Required Disclosure Forms**

As required by the State and Local Government Conflict of Interests Act, Section 2.2-3115 of the Virginia Code or Section 27-9A.4 of the Arlington County Code, most advisory group members are required to file one or more of the following upon appointment and annually by January 15 with the Clerk to the County Board:

- Financial Disclosure Statement, or
- Statement of Economic Interest, or
- Disclosure of Real Estate Holdings.

The appropriate form(s) are sent to new appointees with their appointment letter and must be filed with the Clerk to the County Board prior to attendance at the first advisory group meeting.

**Annual Disclosure Form Due Dates**

Current members receive an annual reminder with the appropriate form from the Clerk to the County Board no later than December 10 of each year. Completed forms are due in the County Board Office no later than January 15 of the following year. Failure to file the appropriate form is a violation of State and County laws and may result in the removal of the member from the advisory group.
PART II: ADVISORY GROUP-SUBJECT MATTER INFORMATION

This section will be inserted by individual advisory groups and will include:

1. Vision and mission
2. Charter/By-laws
3. Key Arlington County documents, policies, laws, and regulations
4. Ongoing issues and projects
5. Current Chair and Vice-Chair
6. Current membership list, terms and contact information
7. Current committees and chairs
8. Conflict of interest and financial disclosure requirements.
PART III: GUIDANCE FOR ADVISORY GROUP LEADERS

III-1. Roles and Responsibilities

Advisory groups provide the most significant forum for communication and interaction between the three key contributors to government decision-making in the Arlington Framework for Civic Relationships—community, staff, and Board. Each of these three contributors are represented on the Advisory Group in the form of the Chair, Board Liaison, and Staff Liaison.

Each of these roles provides crucial leadership and support to the advisory group. Each has very specific responsibilities, with some overlapping. However, it is important to take advantage of what each group is able to do most effectively.

Figure 5 provides an overview of these roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>County Board/Board Liaison</th>
<th>Advisory Group (AG) Chair</th>
<th>County Staff Liaison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify New Members</td>
<td>Yes, both recruit new members and review any applications received</td>
<td>Yes, assisted by AG members</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appoint New Members</td>
<td>Yes, only the Board can appoint new members</td>
<td>AG may request that County Board consider changes to the mission and/or charge. Responsible for ensuring AG work conforms to Charge.</td>
<td>Supports AG Chair in ensuring charge is followed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish/Revise Mission &amp; Enforce Charge/Charter</td>
<td>County Board approves all charges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Orientation</td>
<td>County Board Office to coordinate general AG orientation</td>
<td>Yes, on mission specific information in collaboration with staff liaison</td>
<td>Yes, on mission specific information in collaboration with Commission Chair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Program Planning</td>
<td>Board and/or board liaison may on occasion ask AG to explore a particular topic</td>
<td>Takes lead in developing annual workplan in collaboration with AG members and staff liaison</td>
<td>Provide support and information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Set Meeting Agendas and Distribute materials</td>
<td></td>
<td>Works with staff liaison to set agenda and identify appropriate materials for AG members Keeps staff liaison aware of external information that might be needed of use to the AG's work and deliberations</td>
<td>Responsible for ensuring AG members have ample notice of meeting and access to appropriate materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>County Board/Board Liaison</td>
<td>Advisory Group (AG) Chair</td>
<td>County Staff Liaison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organize Subcommittees</td>
<td></td>
<td>Where authorized by charge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitate Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, others may also facilitate AG meetings</td>
<td>Assist as needed to ensure effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek Public Input at Meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td>If such input is part of regular order of business</td>
<td>Ensures proper notice of meeting with opportunity for public comment is posted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manage Consensus Process</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Assist Chair as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Recommendations &amp; Develop Annual Report</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, may be collaboration with staff liaison</td>
<td>Yes, may be collaboration with AG chair/members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Report to/Coordinate with the Board</td>
<td>Yes, may check in with AG Chair periodically and solicit AG input on major projects</td>
<td>Yes, may check in with Board Liaison periodically to ensure that Board and staff liaisons are aware of issues of concern to the AG that may have broader or media implications</td>
<td>Coordinates with County Board office regarding membership and matters related to AG report to ensure that County Board Office is aware of issues of concern to the AG that may have broader/media implications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinate with County Agencies and Staff</td>
<td></td>
<td>Works through staff liaison to greatest extent possible</td>
<td>Yes, bears primary support for working within County organization to support AG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serve as Spokesperson &amp; Coordinate with Media</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, may designate other members for this purpose as well</td>
<td>Ensures Public Affairs Office is aware of any media interest. Provides support for AG spokesperson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provides Technical Advice and Support</td>
<td>On occasion help facilitate conversations between AG chairs or provide advice and support as an issue develops</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Alerts CMO/CBO that AG is commenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arranges Member Recognition</td>
<td>Yes, for all chairs and long-serving AG members</td>
<td>May develop a system for thanking those who serve shorter terms</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes, provide support as needed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
III-2. Communication Protocols

Communication with the Board
Each Advisory Group has a designated County Board member who serves as Board Liaison to the group. Chairs and Board Liaisons annually work out a reporting/communication schedule – which should include at a minimum an annual report to the Board of activities and recommendations. In addition each advisory group should:

- Schedule an annual meeting between the Board Liaison and the advisory group.
- Copy all reports or communications from the Advisory Group to the Clerk of the County Board as well as the Board Liaison.
- Coordinate with the Board Liaison to determine if pre-clearance is required prior to sending any formal communication to an outside entity.
- Directly contact its Board liaison, or any County Board member as necessary, to discuss issues. Appointments are made through the County Board Office and staff liaisons should be aware of the request.
- Seek legal advice through the Board liaison who will arrange for the County Attorney's review, unless the advisory groups has authorizing legislation providing direct legal counsel.

Communication with the Broader Community
All Advisory Group meetings are required by state stature to be open to the public. See Section I-3 for requirements that must be met. Beyond accommodating observers, groups should take additional steps to promote broad community access to information about their activities and provide opportunities for public input. Such initiatives could include:

- Use the IAP2 Participation Spectrum (found on p 23) to assist in planning community engagement activities.
- Provide a designated time at meetings for public input or comment, and announce the timing and procedures in advance.
- Work with the staff liaison and Board Office to maintain a complete and current web site, including upcoming meeting dates and contact information.
- Provide a clear process for community members to send comments and input to the group.
- Encourage group members to communicate among their neighbors and peers in Arlington to ensure that people know about the work of the group and know they can communicate directly through its members.
- Especially when a major issue is pending, consider holding a special session or workshop primarily to obtain public input.

Communication with the Media
Working with the media is an important way to communicate with the broader community and publicize the work of the group. However, it is important to establish clear guidelines on who may speak for the group and clarify whether the group speaks in an official capacity for the County.

- In general, the Chair is the only person with authority to speak for the group. Commissions may designate a different spokesperson if they wish.
- The best communication is a clear, accurate summary of group action and decisions.
- Any member who chooses to speak to the press should make clear when their comments are their own, not the position of the group. In addition, as a matter of courtesy, the member should inform the staff liaison and the Advisory Group Chair of the conversation with the press.
- For topics not moving forward for Board action, Advisory Groups must be clear on the position of the County Board before making an official statement on controversial issues involving County
policy or program direction. The chairman or staff liaison should contact the County Board Liaison for direction.

- All press releases or official statements should be cleared through the staff liaison to make certain there are no conflicts with County policy or program direction. The Public Affairs Office must be consulted on what is an appropriate news release.
- Advisory group Chairs, members, or staff liaisons should inform the County Board and Press Office when press inquiries are received.

Communication Among Advisory Groups
Advisory Groups are encouraged to stay in touch with other groups working on similar or connected issues.

- Chairs should coordinate issues and agendas with similar groups as appropriate.
- Often, an advisory group will appoint a member as liaison to a related group. It is important to clarify the responsibilities of these liaisons in order to ensure good communications between the groups.
- Consider holding joint meetings at important points in projects or decisions.
- In some cases, it may be important to explore merging groups to streamline the overall process and limit redundancy.

Communication with Arlington Government Departments or other Arlington Agencies
Working directly with Arlington Government agencies is an important part of getting the information and expert advice needed to do work. This needs to be done in a coordinated way to ensure good communication.

- Requests should be specific and coordinated within the group to facilitate the best use of staff time and resources.
- All requests for information and support should come from the Advisory Group Chair and be coordinated thru the Staff Liaison or Board Liaison.
- At the request of the Advisory Group Chair, the staff liaison will set up meetings, draft correspondence, and follow-up on information requests.

Communication with Interested Parties and Other Issue Advocates
There are many individuals and groups who will be interested in communicating with specific advisory groups. It is important that these communications and relationships be managed with care so that people get clear and accurate information and feel respected within the overall process. Consider the following:

- Have a designated individual or committee to manage inquiries and schedule conversations and presentations to the group.
- Individual members need to be clear when communicating with outside parties when they are authorized to speak for the group itself.

Meeting Minutes and Summaries
It is essential, and required by State statute, to capture the information and results from all open meetings to provide a clear record of activity and allow outside parties to follow the work of the group, and missing members to catch up with meetings they have missed.

- Either the staff liaison or another person should be identified to keep notes and create minutes or a detailed summary of information, conversations, and results.
- Minutes are the official record of the meeting and must be made publicly available, preferably on the web, following group approval. Minutes must include the date, time, location and meeting attendees and at least a general summary of the discussion and any votes.
- Portions of meetings may be taped using video equipment, tablets, or similar devices. While these may be useful in
capturing technical or other presentations of information that all
members and the community need, they do not represent the
official record and there is no requirement to take or maintain
electronic records. However, any recordings that are maintained
– i.e. kept beyond an immediate need to prepare the meeting
minutes – are subject to the Freedom of Information Act and
must be made public under those regulations.

Advisory Group Web Sites and other Social Media Tools
Creating and managing a website is important for all advisory groups. Be
aware that the County maintains “Social Media Policy and Guidelines”.
When developing web presence for the Commission, work with your
staff liaison to assure ongoing alignment with the policy. In addition,
consider the following:

- Work with the County Board Office to coordinate the web
  resources available.
- Advisory Group websites are managed by the staff liaison.
- Keep the site simple so that information is clearly accessible.
- Provide background information on the group mission and
  activities.
- Provide a meeting calendar with dates, times, and locations.
- Provide meeting agendas, materials, and minutes so that
  members can access all information easily.
III-3. Managing Effective Meetings

Good meetings don’t just happen. They must be carefully and thoroughly planned ahead of time. The total time and resources needed to plan an effective meeting is almost always greater than expected. This section provides some tips and guidelines to assist in planning for effective advisory group meetings.

A. Planning Ahead

Setting Goals and Expectations
- Clarify and communicate goals and expected outcomes for the meeting ahead of time, including potential agreements.
- Tie the meeting to how it fits into the overall process, including what has come before and what comes next.
- Think through location, room setup, seating, and related arrangements so that they are all conducive to the meeting goals.

Developing Agendas and Managing Time
- Plan agendas to ensure that members receive needed information, engage in discussion of the issues, and have time to explore any agreements being sought.
- Depending on the situation, understand that people will need time to just vent before they are ready to get down to work.
- Provide a specific time to raise additional issues or topics.
- Don’t try to do too much all at one meeting, make sure people have the time to truly understand, relate, and discuss.
- Respect everyone’s time, ask the group what to do with remaining items or permission to extend the meeting.

Planning Appropriate Materials and Presentations

Presenting information is one of the most important functions during a meeting and advisory group leaders need to ensure that appropriate and adequate information is available for members to do the work of the group.
- Provide advance materials and reading but point to specific places in background information that are most relevant or important, try not to simply provide large original documents that participants will rarely have time to read.
- Prepare presenters and presentations to ensure that they will be effective with the planned audience.
- Summarize and explain information in the full context of the decision being made or considered.

B. At the Meeting

Reaching Consensus
The Board generally looks to advisory groups to explore where consensus may exist in the community. The goal is to do the challenging work of seeking as much agreement as possible, instead of accepting the position of an audible majority, however slim, as the will of the community. Seeking broader agreement provides increased incentive to listen to others with an open mind and to explore creative and novel solutions to challenges. A few tips in using consensus:
- **Consensus strives for general agreement but does not make unanimity the requirement for success.** The goal is to get to the point where most, if not all, participants can live with the recommendation or results. Consensus does not give anyone an automatic veto power to keep the group from moving forward. If a group feels that full effort was put forth to hear and consider all perspectives, and concerns have been addressed, then recommendations reflecting general agreement should move forward. Any divergent or dissenting views can often be
acknowledged within a report, in a transmittal letter, or in a minority opinion.

- Full and balanced information is at the heart of consensus-building. A great deal of attention should be devoted to assembling information and developing an education process that allows participants to study the full range of issues and materials.
- Ensuring that all key perspectives are heard is also important. If, for any reason the advisory group is missing important community voices, efforts should be made to consult with that perspective in some other fashion.
- At the core of consensus is dialogue and collaboration, where everyone is approached with respect and an open mind so that together the group is stronger than simply a collection of individuals, and the solutions that result reflect not only the different ideas and perspectives brought forth but the results of a truly collaborative effort.
- In challenging situations, a neutral facilitator can be helpful to the process. This can be a staff person or consultant who does not have a stake in the outcome but whose job is to help the Chair design and implement a fair and open process of agreement seeking.

Effective Communication
Everyone can assist in making communication and dialogue more effective. Some issues to consider include:

- **Draw Participants In.** Many people are hesitant to contribute and need to be encouraged. Keep track of who is participating and call on folks as needed. Establishing relationships with stakeholders ahead of time is essential.
- **Clarify and Define.** Everyone defines things differently. Ask clarifying questions to understand what participants mean, how they are defining terms and language, and what they intend. Help weaker communicators be understood.

- **Build Shared Meaning.** People often don’t ask questions to avoid looking uninformed. If you don’t get it, chances are that others don’t either. Ask for clarification of terms and issues and check with the group for understanding, even if you already know the answer.
- **Seek Balance Between Advocacy and Inquiry.** People want to make their point, but then they don’t pay attention to others. Help people to understand each other even when they are not talking.
- **Enforce Good Listening.** Model effective listening skills such as paraphrasing, summarizing, and clarifying, and help participants to pay attention to each other.
- **Test Stated Assumptions, Judgments, and Beliefs.** Seek to clarify what is fact and what is not. Challenge potentially incorrect assertions that are made with non-threatening questions like “how do we know that is true?” or “do we all agree with this?” Seek additional input to build shared understanding.

Managing Conflict
It is not unusual to be faced with an angry or upset person in an advisory group meeting or within the course of advisory group work. Even in difficult circumstances, it is important to approach people with respect. Some approaches and personal tips to keep in mind include:

- **Clarify Differences.** Identify and clearly define the nature of real differences between participants and quickly clarify those that are based in misunderstanding.
- **Move from Positions to Values and Interests.** Common ground is built on values and interests, which are embedded in the positions we take. Explore why participants hold their positions and make values and interests obvious to all.
- **Explore and Build on Common Ground.** Identify areas where all participants agree, such as facts and data, procedures, values, and the value of relationship and cooperation.
• **Be Calm.** Your own emotions are the most important element in working with an angry person. You need to find a calm center, be neutral, and try to step outside the situation from your own emotional standpoint.

• **Suggest Sitting Down.** Sitting slows behavioral reactiveness and helps maintain effective personal space.

• **Refer to Them by Name.** Using someone’s name personalizes the conversation and reinforces your desire to hear them.

• **Lower Your Voice.** A lower, more measured voice will present a sense of calm. Do not verbally react or match the volume levels of the angry person.

• **Slow Down.** Be patient and provide attention to their desire to be heard. Be careful not to look impatient or bored.

• **Listen.** Validate what the person has to say. This is not agreement, but acknowledgment of the other’s thoughts and feelings.

• **Be Serious.** Avoid using humor or making light of the situation. Show respect.

• **Don’t Argue.** Arguing increases tension and escalates feelings of anger.

**Lateral Thinking**

Many group processes are designed as strict logical sequences. However, most people and groups actually think laterally, generating and connecting ideas together in more random patterns. One of the most powerful advantages of advisory groups is the wide diversity of ideas and perspectives that can be brought to bear in solving problems in creative ways. Many fresh solutions are generated by starting with novel ideas or approaches and by changing the frame of reference in looking at the problem. Group leaders who understand how lateral thinking occurs and how to design processes that encourage and enable groups to think creatively, will be better able to capture the diverse group knowledge, move the process forward, and achieve results.

**Ground Rules**

Ground rules are a common agreement about how all participants will conduct themselves. Ground rules allow us to set common expectations and discourage disruptive behavior without singling out individuals. Ground rules need to be relevant and specific to the advisory group while capturing the overall culture of civic engagement in Arlington. Keep the ground rules short, memorable, and visible.

The five basic behaviors that ground rules should address include:

1. **Civility**
   Example: We will attack the issues, not each other

2. **Respect**
   Example: We will respect the viewpoints of all participants

3. **Listening**
   Example: We will listen with open minds

4. **Cooperation**
   Example: We will work together with a positive attitude

5. **Agreement**
   Example: We will explore common ground wherever possible.

**Facilitation**

Sometimes there is an actual facilitator in the meeting, but more often the role of facilitation falls to the Chair or individuals who understand the value and role of facilitation. When necessary, the Chair should work with the staff liaison to identify additional facilitation resources for the group, including trained County staff and professional facilitators on contract with the County.

The facilitator’s role is to make the meeting work by managing the process and ensure everyone is heard and understood. Some tips for facilitation include:

• Stay emotionally centered, not the center of attention,
• Stay in the meeting, don’t drift,
• Stay positive and calm,
• Encourage everyone equally, by name, and make eye contact,
• Listen intently for shared meaning and reflect back,
• Trust the group to work with good guidance, ask for their help at challenging points,
• Trust yourself, do not give in to those who would have you deviate from facilitative behaviors,
• Acknowledge lapses in group behavior by enforcing groundrules,
• Be flexible, adjust as needed,
• Ask relevant, probing open-ended questions to get at core truths and information,
• Don’t cut people off, help them wrap up,
• Do regular check-ins: remind people why they are here, where they’re going and where things stand,
• Organize, connect, and summarize ideas,
• Capture all key points so everyone can see, provide constructive summaries to clarify what has been achieved.

Voting Processes
The County also recognizes that some advisory groups and some situations are suited to a voting process or are required to vote. In these cases, groups often appreciate the regular order provided by a system such as Roberts Rules. However, even when relying on an ultimate vote, the group should ensure that they seek the same level of information and community representation sought for a consensus process. An abbreviated version of Roberts Rules is included in the Resources. Groups can apply these rules in a fashion that works for them provided that they are consistent. Some things to consider in applying Roberts Rules in the Arlington Way include:
• The formal parliamentary procedures called for by Roberts Rules may have worked well when they were designed in 1870 but do not readily apply to modern community-based dialogue.
• Make sure that the rules are applied in a way to enforce fairness, openness, and full participation, never to squelch opposition or limit access to important information.

• Make every effort to fully vet and discuss issues before calling for a vote.
• Seek to understand and overcome reasons for opposition before final votes are taken.
• All votes must be open and transparent.

C. Engaging the Public

The IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum
This tool, found on the next page and adopted for use in Arlington by the County Board in December 2012, is an excellent guide to use when developing engagement with the broader community.

Arlington uses the IAP2 Spectrum to help identify the appropriate level of civic engagement in an issue by considering the role and potential for public influence on the outcome. Staff throughout the County use it regularly and can assist the advisory group in decisions about how best to conduct public engagement. The IAP2 Spectrum can also help to clarify the role of the advisory group and set expectations among members of the group’s potential influence on any given topic.

The IAP2 Spectrum is shown in Figure 6.
Figure 6. The IAP2 Spectrum

IAP2’s Public Participation Spectrum

Inform
To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.

Consult
To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.

Involve
To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.

Collaborate
To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.

Empower
To place final decision-making in the hands of the public.

Promise to the public
- We will keep you informed
- We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.
- We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.
- We will implement what you decide.

Example techniques
- Fact sheets
- Web sites
- Open houses
- Public comment
- Focus groups
- Surveys
- Public meetings
- Workshops
- Deliberative polling
- Citizen advisory committees
- Consensus-building
- Participatory decision-making
- Citizen juries
- Ballots
- Delegated decision

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Broader Public Input
All advisory groups should look to opportunities to obtain broader public
input on their work to ensure they are considering the full range of
community interests and perspectives in their work. This input can be
obtained in the course of regular meetings, directly by members in the
course of interaction with neighbors and peers, and at special events
designed to gather public input. Some tips to gather input include:

- Encourage all members to talk with their neighbors and peers,
more informal and more in-depth community connections are
the most effective way to gather thoughtful input.
- Provide clear and full background information and context to
help the community provide meaningful and relevant input.
- Advertise opportunities for input ahead of time.
- When obtaining more formal public comment at meetings,
consider the County Board public comment rules as a guide,
establishing a time limit can set clear expectations and allow
everyone a say at the meeting if necessary.

ADA and Translation Services
Arlington is a very diverse community and accommodating all
Arlingtonians is an important aspect of all engagement. Arlington
complies with all laws and has invested in the facilities, technologies, and
staff to ensure that we can deal with all manner of access issues.
Advisory Groups should work directly with the County Board Office and
the staff liaison to identify all access support that might be available for a
given meeting or event and how to access the required facilities and
resources.

D. Recommendations, Reports, and Other Outcomes
All recommendations and guidance of Advisory Groups should be fully
articulated so that the board, staff, and the community can readily
understand the nature and purpose of the decision as well as the full
rationale behind it. To effectively communicate any output of the
Working Group:

- Write clearly and succinctly to get across main ideas.
- Clearly state the problem, charge, and any constraints the group
was working under.
- Fully articulate the rationale of the recommendations being
presented.
- Provide detailed backup information in a clearly organized support
document.
- Consider graphical presentation and organization of information.
- Provide the context for your recommendation so those with little
direct knowledge can understand the intent and challenges
being addressed.
- Relate the issues and recommendations to affected parts of the
community, so that people can fully understand the
ramifications of the choices being evaluated and the
recommendations being presented.
- If testifying before the Board, be concise and provide written
copies of both your remarks and any written report or
recommendations. Do NOT simply read your report. Presume
that Board Members have reviewed it and use your time to draw
their attention to the key findings and recommendations.
III-4. The Advisory Group Charter

All advisory groups work within a Board-approved charter to help define and clarify their activities and guide their work. The mission included in the Charter provides guidance to members and should be used to keep the group focused on issues of importance.

Advisory Groups are expected to review their charters regularly to ensure they continue to accurately reflect the goals and operations of the group and the needs of the community. Should an Advisory Group desire a charter change, that request should be made directly to the Board Liaison. Charters can only be changed by an act of the County Board.

Copies of all charters are maintained in the County Board Office and are available to the public.

Beginning in 2014, all charters will be updated using the standard format in Figure 7. Moving forward, all new group charters should also employ this format.
Introduction: The insert name of group including any acronym is created as an advisory body by the County Board of Arlington County, Virginia. Include any additional context for the creation of the group which you believe is pertinent to its on-going purpose or federal or state requirements that the group must meet.

Mission: The policy advice area should be clearly articulated as well as any obligation to interact with the broader Arlington community.

Governing Documents: List all Board-adopted policy documents that pertain to the advisory group’s mission

Functions and Scope: include annual activity requirements and other tasks or review functions that are part of the group’s work. The insert group name shall keep county, schools (if applicable) and community leadership apprised of issues and actions regarding the insert a few word summary of the mission

Membership: The insert name shall be comprised of insert # members. These members are drawn from insert pertinent information – commissions, neighborhoods, advocacy groups, at large are all categories that have been used. The County Board will appoint and maintain a roster of members including:
- Insert requirements including geographic, and if appropriate, demographic specifics. For example, Members will be appointed for two-year terms, and with reappointment, shall be permitted to serve no more than six (6) consecutive years (unless term limits directed by the State).

All members serve at the pleasure of the Board

Insert Group name members are expected to serve a liaison function to interested parties in Arlington including any group who has formally submitted their name for membership. A member of the Commission who fails to attend three (3) insert Group name meetings in a single year without notice or explanation to the Chair, or staff, may be asked to resign his or her remaining term on the Commission. The County Board Liaison, after consultation with the County Board liaison, shall notify the member if such an action is warranted. Should a vacancy arise mid-term, the County Board may appoint a replacement to serve out the remainder of that departing member’s term.

Chair, Vice Chair (if applicable) and Committees (if applicable): The County Board shall appoint a Chair or per their bylaws, the Group shall elect a chair and forward the name to the Board for formal appointment. Also, one member of the group may be appointed by the County Board or the Group to serve as Vice-chair when the Chair is unavailable.

Committee Membership: Example: The insert group name may create committees, as necessary, to accomplish specific Group Name missions and the Chairman shall appoint committee leadership. Committee membership may include persons who are not on the group name.

Staff Liaison: The County Manager shall appoint a member of staff from the insert department to serve as liaison to the insert name of Group.

Meetings: The Group name will meet as needed to adequately fulfill its role and responsibilities outlined in this charter. Provide guidance on minimum frequency of meetings.

All meetings will comply with Virginia Open Meeting requirements and the Freedom of Information Act. All meetings of the full Commission will be advertised on the County-maintained website of the Commission, with meeting time and location, and are open to the public. All materials distributed to the Commission members, meeting agendas, and meeting minutes will be made available to the public in a timely manner through publication on the Commission website.

The Advisory Group Handbook provides additional information on the conduct of meetings as well as communication protocols that should guide all members in their advisory group work.

Reporting to the Board: The group name will provide recommendations to the County Board about area of responsibility. The group name will at a minimum submit an annual report to the County Board after consultation with the Board Liaison. Group Name may, from time to time, be asked to provide comment at a regular Board meeting or Board worksession. In addition, testimony from advisory groups on budget and capital spending priorities is always welcome. The Chair should consult with the staff liaison and review the published public hearing schedules.

Update of this Charter: From time to time, the group name shall review this charter to assure that it meets current needs. Any requests for changes must be processed through the Board Liaison.
PART IV: RESOURCES

The following information has been organized on the County web site for the use and support of Arlington County advisory groups.

1. Links to Resource Documents
   - Virginia Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
   - Conflicts of Interest guidance and forms
   - Financial Disclosure guidance and forms
   - IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum, [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)
   - Robert’s Rules of Order

2. Links to Advisory Group Information
   - Standing Advisory Groups and links to web sites, [http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/Commissions/CommissionsList.aspx](http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/Commissions/CommissionsList.aspx)
Appendix A. The PLACE Program

In 2012, the County Board launched PLACE (Participation, Leadership and Civic Engagement) to update The Arlington Way for the 21st century by engaging all community voices – residents, businesses, civic organizations, advisory groups, Board and staff – to achieve the County’s vision.

PLACE sought to:
- Expand participation in important County decision-making processes.
- Train interested members of the public and County staff in those processes.
- Improve the quality of County government’s processes and set realistic expectations for broader participation in our decision-making.

Building on Previous Work
PLACE began by looking at the detailed and thoughtful analysis on Arlington civic engagement conducted over the past decade including:
- Mapping The Arlington Way: Understanding the System of Participation in Arlington County (independent research), 2010
- Creating The Arlington E-Way: Enhancing & Improving Community Engagement (IBM Smarter Cities Challenge), 2010

PLACE Accomplishments
During 2012 and 2013, PLACE conducted a wide range of activities and produced a number of significant outcomes, including:
- After Action Reviews to debrief processes to analyze what happened, why it happened, and how it can be done better.
- Arlington County Welcome Kit, an online portal and a six page, self-printable Booklet.
- Civic Engagement Cohort Certificate Program, an intensive seven-day program to prepare employees to be skilled facilitators of civic engagement practices and processes.
- Design Thinking, a high touch methodology for identifying ways to improve community engagement.
- Employee Key Work Expectations now incorporate civic engagement.
- Framework for Civic Relationships that defines how the community, Board, and staff work together.
- PLACE Space, http://arlingtonplacespace.us, the new online tool that gives County staff and community members new ways to engage.
- Community of Practice and Learning creates ongoing learning opportunities for staff.
- County Survey on Civic Engagement to understand what works well and what could be improved.
- Open Door Mondays provides community members informal opportunities each week to meet with a County Board member.

The 2012 PLACE Report, background research, and more information can be found at http://arlingtonplace.us.

Acknowledgements
We owe particular thanks to the many community organizations, individual Arlingtonians and staff who worked tirelessly in supporting the many activities of PLACE. A full list of PLACE contributors are presented below.
PLACE Partners
The Arlington Chamber of Commerce
Arlington Civic Federation
Arlington Committee of 100
Arlington Community Foundation
Arlington County Council of PTAs
Arlington County Government
Arlington Independent Media
Arlington Interfaith Council
Arlington Latino Network
Arlington Partnership for Children Youth & Families
Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment
Ballston BID
Bonder & Amanda Johnson Community Development Corporation
BRAVO
Clarendon Alliance
Columbia Pike Revitalization Organization (CPRO)
Community Volunteer Network
Crystal City BID
Edu-Futuro
(El Comité Hispano)
Inter-Service Club Council
Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee (NCAC)
Leadership Arlington
League of Women Voters of Arlington
LULAC Council 4610
LULAC Council 4609
NAACP – Arlington
NAIOP
National Association of Retired Federal Employees, Chapter 7 - Arlington BID
Tara-Leeway Heights Civic Association
Virginia Coalition of Latino Organizations
Virginia Cooperative Extension

Members of PLACE Working Groups
Stacia Aho, Libraries
Marty Almquist
Rosa Briceno
Katie Brown-Henry, CPHD
Jim Burke
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Hispanic Committee of Virginia
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Ed Hilz
Paul Holland
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Mary Hynes, CBO
Carrie Johnson
Emma Kiendl, HR
Diane Kresh, Libraries
Laiza Otero, CMO
Kathryn McCarty, DES
Inta Malis
Larry Mayer
Bonnie Parker, DES
Melinda Patrician
Jim Pebley
David Remick, Human Services
Cynthia Richmond, AED
Douglas Sarno, Consultant
James Schroll
Matthew Shank
Dr. Alfred Taylor
Shannon Flanagan-Watson, CMO
Edie Wilson
Appendix B. Commission Descriptions

**Arlington Commission for the Arts** meets the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Administers distribution of the County arts resources to arts organizations/artists; assists in developing cultural policy; promotes arts on a county-wide basis.

**Bicycle Advisory Committee** meets the 1st Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Advises the County Manager on issues that affect cycling in Arlington County, including: safety, education, community involvement, awareness and promotion, and the development, operation and maintenance of on- and off-street bicycle transportation and recreation facilities.

**Board of Equalization of Real Estate Assessments** meeting schedule varies. Hears and rules on taxpayer appeals of real estate assessments.

**CIP Working Group** meets as needed. Led by members of the Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission and involves representatives from other Commissions to assist County staff and provide advice to the Board as strategies are developed to systematically address critical capital maintenance needs.

**Citizens Advisory Commission on Housing** meets the 1st or 3rd Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. Advises the County Board on housing policy, studies housing needs, explores housing options, analyzes potential incentives for private developers to provide affordable housing, reviews funding proposals.

**Civil Service Commission** meets the 1st Tuesday of the month at 5:15 pm as needed; the hearing schedule remains flexible. Conducts final level of appeal hearings of employee grievances; represents the public interest in the improvement of County personnel administration; advises the County Board, County Manager and Human Resources Director on personnel policies for the Competitive Service.

**Commission on Aging** meets the 3rd or 4th Monday of the month from 9:00 -11:00 am. Advises the County Board and the Arlington Agency on Aging on budget, legislative, housing, transportation, social and recreational issues for older adults; advocates for older residents; informs the public about services.

**Commission on Long-Term Care Residences** meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm. Seeks to enhance the quality of care and quality of life in long-term care residences; advises public officials about residential long-term care needs; supports access, availability, and affordability in such residences.

**Commission on the Status of Women** meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:00 pm. Serves as a community advocate and resource on the social and economic interests of all Arlington women.

**Community Development Citizens Advisory Committee** meets the 1st Wednesday of the month at 6:30 pm. Reviews grant requests, evaluates programs and makes recommendations to the County Board for the use of Federal Community Development Block Grant and Community Services Block Grant funds.

**The Community Energy Plan Implementation Review Committee** meets at least twice a year and is responsible for advising the County Manager on Community Energy Plan implementation.

**Community Services Board** meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Acts as agent of the County in establishment and operation of community mental health, intellectual disabilities and substance abuse programs and develops a system of related services.
Crystal City Citizen Review Council meets as needed. Provides, with staff support, periodic monitoring, evaluation, and identification of emerging issues and potential solutions on all dimensions of the Crystal City Sector Plan (the “Plan”) to assure achievement of the Plan’s Goals and Objectives over the life of the Plan.

Disability Advisory Commission meets the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 6:15 pm. Advises the County government on ways to meet the needs of persons with physical disabilities.

Economic Development Commission meets bi-monthly on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 8:00 am. Assists the County Board in carrying out Arlington's economic development strategy and provides policy advice about Arlington's economic health.

Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission meets the last Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Provides policy advice to the County Board on Arlington’s emergency preparedness and ability to respond and recover in coordination with Arlington’s schools, civic, commercial, and service communities, as well as other government agencies located in Arlington. The Local Emergency Planning Committee meets annually.

Environment and Energy Conservation Commission (E2C2) meets the 4th Monday of the month at 7:30 pm. Provides advice on a broad range of environmental and energy conservation issues affecting Arlingtonians.

Fiscal Affairs Advisory Commission (FAAC) meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Provides advice to the County Board on fiscal issues including review of the County Manager's Recommended Budget and other financial plans and transactions.

George Mason University Arlington Campus Advisory Board meets quarterly. Officially established in March 2011 by the Arlington County Board and Mason officials to accomplish goals important to both Arlington County as well as George Mason University.

Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) meets the 3rd and 5th Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Identifies, preserves, protects and promotes cultural, social, historical and architectural resources; considers preservation and design issues; recommends local historic district designation to County Board; issues Certificates of Appropriateness (CoA) for exterior renovation in historic districts.

Human Rights Commission meets the 2nd Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. Ensures protection and enforcement of human and civil rights for all people living and working in the County.

Industrial Development Authority meets in the evenings as needed. Promotes industry and develops trade by inducing manufacturing, industrial, governmental, nonprofit and commercial enterprises and institutions of higher education to locate in or remain in the County.

Information Technology (IT) Advisory Commission meets the 4th Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Provides advice on a broad range of technology issues to maintain Arlington as a 21st century information and education center; assist with the regulation of the information industry and provide advice on the security of County IT systems.

Long Bridge Park Design Advisory Committee meets as Needed. Provides public input into the design process of Long Bridge Park and ensures coordination of design work.

Neighborhood Conservation Advisory Committee meets the 2nd Thursday of every month at 7:30 pm. Comprised of representatives from 48 of Arlington County’s 57 civic associations. The NCAC leads the development of neighborhood plans and recommends neighborhood-
initiated capital improvements for funding by the County Board. Improvements include sidewalks, street beautification, pedestrian safety projects, street lights, and parks.

Out-of-School-Time Advisory Council meets at least quarterly. A committee of the Partnership for Children, Youth and Families established to advise the Arlington County Board and Arlington School Board on matters relating to Out-of-School Time policies and programs.

Park and Recreation Commission meets the 4th Tuesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Makes recommendations on coordination, efficiency, safety and quality of park and recreation facilities, programs and services; manages process for small park grants and various recognitions.

Partnership for Children, Youth and Families, Arlington meets the 3rd Monday of the month from 7-9 pm at the Department of Human Services, 2100 Washington Blvd., Lower Level Auditorium. Improves the health, well-being, and safety of children, youth, and families in Arlington through researching young people’s needs, advocating for improved policies and programs to meet those needs, and engaging all members of our community as part of the solution.

Pedestrian Advisory Committee meets 2nd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 p.m. Advises the County Manager on the implementation of the Pedestrian Transportation Plan and other pertinent matters and advocates for the needs of pedestrians in Arlington.

Planning Commission meets the 1st or 3rd Monday and Wednesday of the month. Promotes the orderly development of the locality and its environs. Advises the County Board on planning and land use matters.

Public Facilities Review Committee meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm. Ensures that the highest quality of land use planning, design, transportation planning, and other important community aspects are incorporated into civic projects.

Sports Commission meets the 3rd or 4th Thursday of the month. Makes recommendations on adequacy and efficiency of programs and facilities for sports.

Tenant-Landlord Commission meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at 7:30 pm. Advises the County Board on policy and programs affecting renters; provides information, hears grievances and mediates disputes between tenants and landlords.

Transit Advisory Committee meets most months on the 2nd Tuesday from 7:00 - 9:00 pm. Advises the County Manager and staff on the implementation of the Transit Element of the Master Transportation Plan (MTP) and on issues related to transit in Arlington County, including Metrorail and Metrobus, Arlington transit and STAR.

Transportation Commission meets the 1st Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. Advises on transportation policy per the Master Transportation Plan; comments on all site plan proposals; conducts annual taxi-cab hearing.

Urban Forestry Commission meets the 4th Thursday of the month at 7:30 pm. Advises on programs and policies related to Arlington’s urban forest, including wooded parks, street trees, and outreach to residents for trees on private property.

Workforce Investment Board meets quarterly. To advance workforce development programs and initiatives that achieve sustainable economic growth in the region.