

Portland Housing Advisory Commission

General participatory practices

Expectations of commissioners

PHAC commissioners are expected to adhere to the PHAC's mission and mandate. As the primary public forum for discussion of housing policy, strategy, and resources in the City of Portland, commissioners are expected to commit to furthering the goals of the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB) and the priorities of the Commissioner in Charge. PHAC commissioners accept the responsibility to do their best to remember these big picture outcomes in their role. The PHAC is not a platform for commissioners to advocate for programming or any other specific outcomes for the organization they represent.

Communication

PHAC commissioners can communicate with staff and their fellow commissioners in a variety of ways. Commissioners can call or email the lead PHAC staff person. They can also request a meeting with staff to discuss a concern or issue. Commissioners may also call, email, or meet their fellow commissioners individually or in a small group. However, commissioners should take care to avoid reaching quorum in these interactions. If not, then the interaction is an official public meeting needing all the notification and processes of regular PHAC meetings. PHAC commissioners must remember they are considered public officials and must abide by the public meetings law as detailed in their training. If the intention is simply information sharing, then commissioners can email the lead staff directly and have the information shared via bcc to the group. Email communications that use bcc are one safe guard that staff use to avoid violating state public meetings law. Commissioners can refer to their onboarding materials or talk to staff if they are unsure of a procedure.

Meeting agendas

The monthly agendas for PHAC are generally set from the priorities of the Commissioner in Charge, Bureau Director, the PHAC workplan, and the Chair. Some agenda items must be addressed annually. These include the PHB budget, legislative agenda, and fair housing and have specific months dedicated to them. Commissioners may request items to be included as an agenda item by submitting them to the Chair. These requests will be considered in relation to the general agenda setting procedure, urgency, and other agenda items. Requests should be submitted at least 2 weeks prior to the monthly meeting. Commissioners should be aware that there are times when last minute or time sensitive items need to be brought to PHAC and this could cause an individual commissioners item to be bumped to the following months agenda.

Making information requests

Commissioners may request additional information from staff if they need more context for an item that is brought before them. These requests can be made in meetings or via email to the lead PHAC policy staff. Commissioners may also ask staff to bring in subject matter experts to discuss a particular topic. Staff will consider these request in light of the agenda and any Director or Commissioner in Charge priorities. Staff will do all they can to fulfill commissioner requests, however, staff may not be able to satisfy all requests due to staff capacity or lack of access to the information requested.

Requesting an action or taking a position

Individual commissioners can request a particular action to be taken or that the group take a specific position. Requesting that PHAC take a particular action has traditionally been a consensus-based motion. This is an informal way of engaging in conversation with fellow commissioners. This method can be used to request that the commission ask staff to look in to a new topic or issue area. A more formal process would be asking fellow commissioners to take a position on an item. This action requires taking several

specific steps including making a motion and instigating a vote. While not required, it is a best practice to give advanced notice of the intention to request taking an official position. Advanced notice gives other commissioners time to consider the proposed action and prepare for discussion. It is most common for this type of action to occur following an agenda item presentation. Generally, the steps for this process are:

1. Have a very clear idea of what it is you want to the group to approve (this could mean to support or oppose a particular item)
2. State “I want to make a motion to _____ (approve, oppose) _____ (insert your suggestion)
3. The Chair will acknowledge the motion and ask if there is a second. Getting a second means that one of your fellow commissioner’s must support your motion
4. All that is needed for a second is for a commissioner to simply say ‘second’
5. The Chair acknowledges that there has been a second and then asks if there is any discussion
6. Now is the time for you and your fellow commissioners to discuss the topic at hand
7. When the discussion is complete, the Chair will call a vote (all in favor, all opposed, abstentions) and staff will note the count
8. Majority vote prevails

You made a motion: what’s next?

The typical outcome following a vote is a letter either in favor or opposition to the issue. This is generally drafted by staff and sent to commissioners for edits and revisions. However, another outcome could be that a commissioner is sent to testify on PHAC’s behalf in front of another advisory body or commission.

Contacting PHAC

Community members are encouraged to attend PHAC meetings. They can sign up to testify during meeting on any housing topic that is of interest to them. Attending meetings can also be a good time to try talk to PHAC commissioners in person either before or after the meeting. Members of the community can also review meeting materials online at the PHAC webpage, <https://www.portlandoregon.gov/phb/74054>. Community members may also call or email the Portland Housing Bureau with housing questions, comments, or concerns they have for PHAC. Staff will relay these to the commissioners and obtain their response.