



**CITY OF BOULDER
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM**

MEETING DATE: May 1, 2025

AGENDA TITLE

Agenda Management and Boards and Commissions Program Actions

PRESENTER(S)

Nuria Rivera-Vandermyde, City Manager
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Elesha Johnson, City Clerk

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this item is to provide city council with important updates regarding the city's transition to a new agenda management system and related process improvements along with updates and discussion regarding ongoing work to improve the boards and commissions program.

Agenda Management

The city's agenda management improvement project has two major components: transitioning to a new software platform for producing and digitally sharing agendas and meeting packets and updating memo templates and staff training to enhance the quality of information city council receives. Use of the new software and implementation of the new memo format will take place for the special meeting on July 24, 2025, when city council returns from summer recess. This update is intended to inform council members of the details of these upcoming changes.

Boards and Commissions

Improving boards and commissions has been an ongoing work plan focus since 2021. Recognizing that this body of work spans years and multiple city council terms, this update will refresh council members' awareness of the policy context, progress to date, long term goals, and raise a few specific items for discussion and feedback.

Discussion items include:

- Communication between boards and commissions and city council
- Board and commission work plan and scope expectations
- Approach to seat requirements during recruitment
- Meeting minutes and sharing information

BACKGROUND

Agenda Management

- City council provided extensive feedback on improvements they would like to see in agenda management and memo content during their 2024 retreat.
- On September 5, 2024, [council held a discussion regarding more specific agenda process improvements](#). At that time, a majority of council supported staff's process improvement recommendations.

Boards and Commissions

- Since 2021, a staff team has been working to incrementally improve boards and commissions processes and programming.
- In February 2021, the city's [Racial Equity Plan](#) was finalized with multiple goals impacting boards and commissions including:
 - Goal 1 — Everybody gets it. The city will normalize and operationalize understanding of institutional and structural racism among people who work for or represent the City of Boulder, including city staff, City Council, **Boards and Commissions**, and ongoing program volunteers; and
 - Goal 5 — Representation matters. The city will eliminate barriers and create opportunities to build a diverse workforce across the depth and breadth of local government including elected officials, **boards, commissions** and working groups.
- City council held a Study Session on October 27, 2022, to discuss [Boards and Commissions Process issues](#). The [Study Session Summary](#) was subsequently approved on December 1, 2022. In follow-up to the discussion, the city launched a third-party comprehensive assessment of our Boards and Commission program and procedures that included significant engagement.

- City council held a Study Session on November 9, 2023, to discuss the city's [Boards and Commissions Assessment Findings and Initial Recommendations](#). The [Study Session Summary](#) was subsequently approved on December 21, 2023.
- In September 2024, city council submitted [ballot question 2E to make changes to the city charter regarding boards and commissions](#). The measure would have provided city council with greater flexibility in setting the number of members, term lengths, selection criteria, and powers and duties of advisory boards and commissions not otherwise dictated in the city charter. The measure failed that November by a narrow margin. City council will once again consider taking up the issue during the May 8, 2025, discussion on ballot questions.

ANALYSIS

Agenda Management

The city's current agenda management software, NovusAGENDA is being discontinued by its parent company, Granicus, and replaced by a new system, OneMeeting. The transition to a new system provides an opportunity for significant process improvements in how memos and meeting packets are developed and provided to City Council and the public.

The chart below shares process changes to meeting packet and informational item distribution that city council agreed to during their September 5, 2024, meeting.

Process Component	Current State	Future State
Council Meeting Packet Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preliminary Packet- distributed Fridays, 13 days before each regular or special meeting • Final Packet- distributed Thursdays, 7 days before each regular or special meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One final packet, distributed Thursdays, 7 days before each regular or special council meeting
Study Session Packet Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study Session Packet- distributed Fridays, 13 days before each study session 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One study session packet, distributed Thursdays, 7 days before each study session
Information Item Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information items, Heads Up! Emails, and Boards and Commission minutes distributed as attachments to regular meeting packets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distributed via email, separate from meeting packets.

Benefits of these changes include:

- Council will receive no more than one full packet of meeting materials per week, with a week's time for review. Currently, study session and final packets are distributed at the end of the same week, creating an immense volume of information for council members to read and a strain on staff resources twice per month.
- Separating information item distribution from meeting packets allows for more timely distribution, not dependent on regular meeting schedules. These items, in addition to being provided in real time as they are produced, will also be archived in city records to be easily accessed on demand.
- Reduces total size of meeting packets each week.
- Business rhythms for city staff become more consistent and balanced.

Considerations for staff based on feedback from city council regarding these changes include:

- When an anticipated item coming before council is particularly complex, staff will consider additional opportunities to communicate information to council members further in advance of meeting dates as capacity allows.
- While council members were generally supportive of information items and other communications no longer being attached to meeting packets, some expressed a need to be consistently reminded of where they can find that information online.

In addition to the necessary transition to OneMeeting, the April 3-4, 2024, council retreat garnered extensive feedback on improvements to memo content, including: standard inclusion of a fiscal note and identified racial equity impacts for items, reducing redundancy of information, better identifying outcomes of potential decisions, clearly defining acronyms, demonstrating connections between items and existing plans and programs, and using attachments and links for related information while keeping the memos as concise as possible. New templates for policy memos, study session memos and summaries, and quasi-judicial items have been developed for use when OneMeeting goes live. Staff have also developed a comprehensive memo writing handbook and internal training series to provide enhanced support for all who write memos.

City council members will receive instructions, support guides, and the opportunity for 1:1 training by request to ensure they are comfortable navigating the new system in advance of the July 24, 2025, meeting.

Boards and Commissions

A wide variety of improvements to the life cycle experience of board and commission membership have been developed, refined, and implemented since 2021. For a complete list of recent improvements considered and their outcome or current status, please see **Attachment A**.

Highlights of successful program improvements include:

Recruitment Enhancements

- In 2025, the city held the first centralized boards and commissions recruitment open house event, providing an in-person opportunity for community members to learn about all board and commission openings in one place. Based on attendance and positive feedback, staff plan to hold a similar event annually with iterative improvements building on the successes of this first year.

Application Simplification

- The previous boards and commissions applications had a range of 8-13 questions depending on the board. Every applicant was asked a series of 5 standard questions, and then each board or commission added on 3-7 board specific questions. The total length of the application was a barrier for community members to apply in the first place, and the list of questions included redundancies and asked for some information out of scope for board and commission service.
- For the 2025 recruitment cycle, the application was standardized across all boards and commissions and reduced to three substantive questions. While it is too soon to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the impact of this change, 2025 experienced a year over year increase in the total number of applicants, and the project team has received positive feedback from staff and applicants.

Interview Process

- Prior to 2022, interviews were conducted in a group setting with up to 7 applicants for the same board or commission in the room simultaneously answering questions from city council. This format was a challenging experience for both applicants and council members.
- For the 2022 selection process, staff and city council piloted a new interview process that provided every applicant with an individual, virtual interview.
 - Applicants scheduled their own virtual interview time for direct conversation over Zoom with relevant staff members and at least one council member.
 - Applicants were provided with interview questions in advance to better prepare and be more comfortable during the interview.
 - Applicants were provided with a chance to ask staff and council members questions at the end of their interviews.
 - Interviews were recorded and provided to the full council and the public for viewing and assessment.
- Since the pilot year, staff have continued to refine the logistical approach to the interviews to support the best possible applicant experience and produce a

meaningful body of information for city council members to consider when making appointments.

Orientation and Onboarding:

- Following recommendations from the 2023 consultant assessment of boards and commissions to achieve better attendance, staff expanded the general orientation session options for recent appointees to include virtual and in-person settings, along with weekend and weeknight options. The expectation to attend and options for the orientation sessions were clearly stated in the initial application for service.
- Racial equity and bias and microaggression training is now a mandatory component of board and commission member onboarding. Like the orientation session, this expectation is clearly stated in the boards and commissions application along with the anticipated date/time options for the training.

The Board and Commission Member Experience

- Throughout 2022, board and commission project team members, secretaries, and liaisons worked with iProject LLC, an outside consultant, in a series of workshops to enhance board and commission diversity, equity, and inclusion/belonging. The lead consultant, Angela Davis, in partnership with the staff team, hosted three two-part workshops to develop action plans for individual boards and commissions based on their context and subject matter. The ideas generated through this process have inspired ongoing improvements to the climate and culture of boards and commissions.

In addition to the above highlights, city staff remain committed to continuous improvement and reducing barriers to board and commission service for all community members. As a reminder, there are key recommended improvements that require charter changes to pursue, including:

- Number of members
- Age requirements
- Term of appointment
- Financial compensation
- Meeting frequency
- Appointment by council
- Clarifying cause for removal of board members

City council will once again consider taking up the issue during the May 8, 2025, discussion on ballot questions.

1. Communication between boards and commissions and city council
 - Staff recommendation: Standardize a practice of boards and commissions producing a biannual report to council. One report, produced in a December/January timeframe, would focus on forward-looking priorities of the board or commission that align with the city strategic plan and department workplans. In 2026 and subsequent odd-numbered years beginning in 2027, this report would serve as input for the city council priority-setting retreat. The second report, produced in a June/July timeframe, would focus on progress updates of ongoing work. Staff strongly recommends that boards and commissions staff aid in drafting and managing an efficient report writing process contingent on board or commission approval.
 - If supported by council, city staff will work with the council subcommittee to finalize communications to all boards and commissions requesting the new communications cadence, providing format and length parameters, and describing how the information will be considered by council and staff throughout our ongoing work.
2. Board and commission work plan and scope expectations
 - The city charter and each board or commission's enabling ordinance specifies the responsibilities of each board. However, certain boards over time have pursued work beyond their designated scope from city council.
 - Staff recommendation: The central project team will work with board and commission support staff to promote consistent work planning processes. These will include refreshed board and commission alignment to council priorities and the citywide strategic plan and more consistent consideration and discussion of citywide work such as the annual budget process.
3. Approach to meeting representational requirements during recruitment
 - Staff Recommendation: Make administrative changes to how the city clerk's office ensures the make up of boards and commissions meet representation requirements as dictated by charter and code. Decouple these requirements from specific seats and terms and instead conduct an annual review of the board or commission's requirements to ensure that any given recruitment is as open as possible. This is the current method for how the gender diversity requirement is managed and can be extended to other representational qualities, like profession.
4. Meeting minutes and sharing information
 - In addition to city council's transition to the OneMeeting agenda management software, in 2026 the city intends to roll out use of the

software for all boards and commissions, bringing management of those agendas and minutes into one place for the first time. This move will support the improvement goals of enhancing consistency of minutes and ensuring that records are easy to find.

- Subcommittee Recommendation: Explore opportunities for creating as needed real time summaries of high-interest board and commission discussions that may impact immediate council discussions. These summaries would be separate from the required minutes that must be formally adopted through board and commission approval processes, and they would serve to provide council with more timely awareness of key issues at board and commission meetings.
 - If supported by the full city council, staff would follow up and work with the subcommittee to further define and establish parameters for this work, balancing support for council members with staff capacity.

NEXT STEPS

Agenda Management

Changes will all coincide with full implementation of the OneMeeting software. The first council meeting these changes take effect will be July 24, the first meeting following city council's summer recess.

Staff will bring back a council procedure revision for city council consideration to update the new study session materials distribution deadlines on a consent agenda in May or June 2025.

Boards and Commissions

Pending the outcome of the discussion of the four recommended improvement opportunities, staff will move forward with implementation.

ATTACHMENT

A – Summary List of Boards and Commissions Improvements and Status

Attachment A- Summary List of Boards and Commissions Improvements and Status

The body of ideas to improve boards and commissions is significant and has been an ongoing list for multiple years. Below is a summary of actions and their status since 2022. The items come from several sources including but not limited to staff work, community connector input, third party consultants, community group feedback, current and former board and commissions members, the council boards and commissions subcommittee, and individual council members.

- Continue to appoint new board and commission members to vacancies each spring but develop and provide increased year-long board and commission information on recruitment to the public, with a particular focus on outreach to diverse communities.
 - Status: In progress. The Clerk's Office has improved online information and expanded outreach through city engagement events. Board and commission support staff has also implemented action plan elements following the 2022 DEI in boards and commissions workshops to develop practices that better recruit and retain diverse participants.
- Ensure that materials used for recruitment, applications, training and orientation detail the specific tasks, responsibilities and time commitments of each board or commission.
 - Status: Complete and continuously improving. Incremental improvements have been made annually since 2021, including offering a specific orientation and training to Board and Commission Chairs and Vice Chairs to understand their roles, an expansion of recruitment strategies and general orientation content, applications that now explicitly state year one training requirements, and enhancements to each individual board's orientation and training processes by their relevant city departments.
- Host an annual pre-application session for any interested residents to ask questions or get more information.
 - Status: Complete. In January 2025 staff hosted the first boards and commissions open house. This event afforded members of the public a chance to get to speak with both staff and current members for further information about boards and commissions and the chance to apply for a board or commission at the event. The open house was well attended by the public with positive feedback from many. Staff plan to continue this annual event while keeping in mind process improvements for each iteration.
- Send an invitation to all existing board and commission members to observe City Council's annual retreat.
 - Status: This will be done prior to the next retreat in 2026.

- Ensure that orientation of new board members details the following: the importance of understanding the ordinance that established each board or commission; the specifics of each board or commission's bylaws relevant to the new member; and the importance of the careful review of minutes, agenda packets and other information. Inform new members of their board or commission's role in the overall decision-making process.
 - Status: Complete. The City Attorney's Office has included these topics within their portion of the new boards and commissions members' orientation. Additionally, chairs and vice chairs are provided with more in-depth training by staff, which outlines these topics in greater detail.
- Encourage existing board and commission members to attend occasional relevant meetings of other boards or commissions.
 - Status: Complete. The new member orientation has been updated to encourage sharing of knowledge and information amongst boards and commissions. Staff also demonstrate how to access the online city calendar for information about when other boards and commissions meet.
- Produce bi-lingual information to increase the community's understanding of boards and commissions, the role they play, their work plans, how their decisions impact our community, and how individuals can participate in board and commissions open comment periods.
 - Status: In Progress. The Human Relations Commission produced an application and information in Spanish for the 2022 recruitment cycle as a pilot initiative. The pilot was very successful in that it led to the appointment of the city's first primarily Spanish-speaking board member. Since then, the city has updated our recruitment marketing materials and the standard application to always have a Spanish version available. Staff will continue to identify opportunities to increase language access.
- Create consistency in how board and commission information is portrayed on city webpages.
 - Status: Complete.
- Work with a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion professional with experience in creating positive, effective and welcoming boards and commission environments to develop action items for future implementation.
 - Status: Workshops were completed at the end of 2022, but the impact of the learnings and action plans generated continue to shape boards and commissions each year.

- Ensure orientation includes strong centralized messaging about council priorities, role clarity, open meeting rules (including email and virtual meeting tools), attendance policies and advocacy.
 - Status: Complete. The new member orientation has been updated and now covers these points both in the presentation and in the information booklet provided to new members.
- Address concerns about treatment of members from underrepresented communities from other B&C members – enforce requirement for Bias & Microaggression training, external support, and clear process for addressing when bias/microaggressions come up.
 - Status: This is in progress and several trainings with existing board secretaries have occurred. Required BAM training for all board and commission members will continue.
- Draw from existing community groups to recruit applicants for boards and commissions.
 - Status: In Progress. Staff members reach out to their respective community networks during recruitment. Additionally, Communications and Engagement staff has taken a greater role in relaying recruitment information through various methods such as working with Community Connectors and implementing broader methods of public outreach.
- Support interview preparation for underrepresented community members, including specific feedback for applicants who were not successful to encourage applying again/elsewhere.
 - Status: Complete. Staff offers technological support to applicants during the application window and for interviews. Following appointments, applicants are not only encouraged to reapply but also given information on different volunteer opportunities the city and Boulder County offer.
- Improve the interview and selection process for board and commission applicants.
 - Status: Complete, and open to continuous improvement.
- Establish a council liaison to each board and commission.
 - Status: On hold. In late 2022, city council rejected a recommendation to pursue a one-board pilot council liaison role. Council members provided feedback regarding role definition and capacity concerns.
- Update purpose statements of each board & commission and redefine authority & scope as needed
 - Status: Not Started.

- Work with each board & commission to develop or improve their existing by-laws to govern meetings
 - Status: Not Started.
- Where absent, develop working agreements to support a positive culture, manage conduct and improve meeting efficiency.
 - Status: In progress as capacity of individual boards and commissions allows.
- Develop criteria and a process for City Council review of Boards & Commissions on a periodic basis to determine if Boards or Commissions purposes have been achieved. Consider whether to retire or continue.
 - Status: Not Started
- Develop a process and schedule for developing agendas for boards and commissions.
 - Status: Not Started, coming soon as boards and commissions are onboarded to the new agenda management platform in 2026.
- Reduce term limits and requirements for board and commission member participation (site visits, Council mtg review) where possible
 - Status: Not Started. Requires charter/code changes.
- Consider increasing the number of board and commission representatives that comprise boards and commissions or balance selection process to include opportunities for those to contribute their lived experience/community interest as an equal qualification for appointment.
 - Status: Not Started. Requires charter/code changes.
- Differentiate application requirements for quasi-judicial boards and Advisory Boards
 - Status: On hold. Instead, staff developed a universal, simplified, and more user-friendly application for all boards and commissions.
- Simplify application questions
 - Status: Complete as of the 2025 recruitment.
- Include staff from relevant departments in interviews to assist with answering applicant questions.
 - Status: Complete.
- Shift board and commission member appointment process to City Manager or Department heads to de-politicize member selection

- Status: Not Started, requires further discussion with city council and charter/code amendments.
- Host a community board and commission leadership academy or introductory sessions to educate residents about the board and commission program, cultivate future members and build trust about participating in government.
 - Status: Not Started
- Institute a more proactive board and commission recruitment process to meet the community where they're at (churches, community organizations, public events, etc.) and provide informational meetings, info booths.
 - Status: In progress. Boards and commissions recruitment information has been brought to a couple of specific community events by invitation, but current resources have not yet been available to support a more proactive approach.
- Offer small monetary stipends and other benefits for those that need it to incentivize volunteer service on boards and commissions
 - Status: Not started. Stipends have not been explored yet because the city charter currently prohibits financial compensation for board and commission members.
- House the Boards & Commissions program within the City Clerk's Office to support standardization of fundamental program elements and provide resources to support departments. Continue to utilize embedded resources (staff) support for regular program administration across city departments
 - Status: Initial stages are complete but opportunities for refinement remain.
- Review staffing levels needed in the City Clerk's office and departments to support boards and commissions.
 - Status: Not started due to budget constraints.
- Offer orientation options that are onsite, virtual and recorded video for future use.
 - Status: Completed.
- Enhance Board orientation to include elements related to conduct and meeting effectiveness and use of the racial equity instrument
 - Status: Completed.
- Develop a Staff orientation/training to support staff in managing Boards & Commissions and share best practices & lessons learned
 - Status: Not started. In workplan for Q3 2025

- Develop both a Boards-Commission Handbook and Staff Liaison Handbook including policies, procedures and processes to provide consistent program delivery
 - Status: In Progress.