

## Information for Co-Chairs of District Advisory Committees

### **Effective Leadership**

- The co-chairs must ensure that meetings are orderly.
- Become familiar with basic meeting procedures (see separate section below), the committee's bylaws or charter, and the district's Communications and Visitors Guidelines ([https://www.austinsd.org/sites/default/files/dept/advisory-bodies/Communications-Visitor-Requirements\\_rev-091019.pdf](https://www.austinsd.org/sites/default/files/dept/advisory-bodies/Communications-Visitor-Requirements_rev-091019.pdf)), and ensure that all of these are followed.
- Establish an expectation for timeliness – consistently start and end meetings on time.
- Monitor the amount of time given to each agenda item, or appoint a timekeeper.
- Prior to discussion, inform members that the time given to them to speak may be limited to allow others an opportunity to speak.
- If the time being spent on an item becomes overly long and you need to move on in the agenda, inform members that discussion will need to conclude and you will only be able to take a few more comments.
- Do not allow discussion of items not posted on the meeting agenda (see separate section below).
- If a member departs from the agenda, makes comments not related to the subject at hand, interrupts another speaker, or becomes discourteous, rule the member out of order.
- The presiding co-chair must treat ex officio members, staff members, and visitors who may be present with the same expectations for order.
- Assign one co-chair to preside over each item on the agenda – this prevents any confusion over which co-chair recognizes a member to speak or which co-chair may need to make other efforts to keep order – it also allows the non-presiding co-chair to more freely participate in the discussion without undermining the impartiality and objectivity a presiding co-chair should demonstrate.
- The co-chairs are certainly allowed to vote and take part in discussions, but as indicated in the above point, the presiding co-chair should be primarily ensuring order and facilitating equal opportunities for members to speak, and should strive to demonstrate impartiality and objectivity – but this is not to say that the presiding co-chair can never express an opinion, so long as that opinion is not presented with any impression of carrying more weight than any other member's opinion.

### **Basic Meeting Procedures**

- "Robert's Rules of Order" are a widely accepted reference for parliamentary procedure, however they are not actually rules. And, they are very long and detailed, designed for use by large bodies such as the U.S. Congress and state legislatures – only a few basic procedures are necessary for meetings of district advisory committees. Therefore, committee bylaws and charters make no reference to Robert's Rules.
- The preferred method of decision-making for district advisory bodies is consensus approval – the presiding officer simply asks if anyone objects to approving something or moving forward with something – if there is no objection, then consensus is reached, but if any member objects, then a majority vote is necessary. (However, advisory committees should infrequently need to vote. Other than approving minutes and voting for co-chairs, only occasionally would a committee vote to forward recommendations, or vote on items required by law or requested by the administration or Board of Trustees.)
- Before there is a vote, the presiding co-chair asks for a motion and second. (Note that a second does not necessarily indicate agreement with the motion, only that the motion warrants consideration.)

- After the motion is seconded, the presiding co-chair asks if there is any discussion – the presiding co-chair recognizes members who wish to speak.
- If there is no discussion, or after discussion concludes, then the presiding co-chair will call for a vote.
- If a member feels that discussion is going on too long or is not necessary, a motion may be made to “call the question,” or to end the discussion immediately and take a vote – for this particular motion, a 2/3 vote is required rather than a majority. (If the presiding co-chair feels that discussion is going on too long or is not necessary, the presiding co-chair may suggest or request a motion to call the question.)
- A member may move to amend a motion that is already on the floor – amendments may be in the form of changing the existing motion or making a substitute motion.
- Once seconded, an amended motion is also subject to discussion and vote – voting is in inverse order, such that amended motions are voted on first, then the original motion.
- A member may move to “table” discussion, to either consider the matter later in the meeting or at a later date (usually to move on to other items on the agenda).
- A member may move to “postpone indefinitely” the discussion, which means the matter cannot be reintroduced at that meeting, but may be taken up at a later date (this is often done in hopes of killing a motion).
- If a motion has several parts, a member may move to divide the motion to vote differently on the parts.
- If a member feels that something is not germane to the matter at hand or that something is being done incorrectly, a “point of order” may be raised to be addressed by the presiding officer.
- Members are expected to follow the standard code of conduct included in all bylaws and charters. If a member becomes rude or abusive, the presiding co-chair should first remind the member of the code of conduct – if this behavior persists, the presiding co-chair may need to ask the member to leave the meeting and, afterwards, consider whether disciplinary action needs to be taken, in consultation with the Coordinator of District Advisory Bodies. (Note that courtesy and respect are also expected of visitors.)