Introduction to The New Arlington County Advisory Group Handbook
Why A New Handbook?

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

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

Associated Departments report to the County Manager

- Aquatics
- Sports
- Out of School Time
- Parks and Rec
- Urban Forestry
- Disability
- Status of Women
- Human Rights
- Emergency Preparedness Advisory Commission
- Civil Service
- Aging
- Long Term Care Residences
- Partnership for Children, Youth, and Families
- Community Service Board

Associated With

Parks & Rec
Human Rights
Emergency, Police & Fire
Human Resources
Human Services

Associated With

Community Planning & Housing Development
Economic Development
Technology Services
Management & Finance
Environmental Services

Advisory Groups and County Manager report to the County Board

- Planning
- Tenant Landlord
- Crystal City Citizen Review
- Housing
- Neighborhood Conservation
- Historic Affairs
- Public Facilities Review Committee
- Community Development Citizens Advisory Commission
- Arts
- Economic Development
- Information Technology
- Industrial Development Authority
- Fiscal Affairs
- Environment and Energy Citizens Commission
- Traffic Calming
- Transportation
What’s In The Handbook?

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

• Expectations
• Framework for Civic Relationships
• Legal Requirements
• Communication
• The Charter
Civic Engagement Expectations

• **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.
Civic Engagement Expectations

- **Communication** helps us to ensure we listen and engage in dialogue to exchange and evaluate ideas and to deepen our understanding of the entire community.

- **Civility** underscores our desire to ensure that mutual respect supports all interaction.

- **Capacity** reflects our belief in continuous learning.
# Framework for Civic Relationships

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

<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; gov’t.</td>
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<td>• We seek and stay informed about issues that</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>
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<td>affect the whole community</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>• We get involved</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• We take initiative in problem solving</td>
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<td><strong>Clarity</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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<td>• We seek to include and engage all residents</td>
<td>• We speak many languages</td>
<td>• We value diversity</td>
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<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 and forums</td>
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<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>
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<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>
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<tr>
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<td>• We generate new ideas to solve and/or address concerns</td>
<td>• We advocate for policies, resources to improve community</td>
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<tr>
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<td>• We provide timely feedback</td>
<td>• We generate new ideas to solve and/or address concerns</td>
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<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>
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<td>• We value all participants’ time and are respectful of timelines</td>
<td>• We design and facilitate process based on civil dialogue</td>
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<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>
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<td>• We build on our existing community resources and assets (non financial)</td>
<td>• We provide staff with training needed for civic engagement</td>
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<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>
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<td>• We learn from each process and refine our approaches</td>
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<td>• We help people join our processes at any point</td>
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<td>• We actively seek to build our understanding of how civic work contributes to our business</td>
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Expectations for the County Board

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

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

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

• Work within the group’s specific mission
• Understand the role of “policy advisor”
• Commit to attendance and preparation
• Practice civility and collaboration
• Communicate and seek understanding of the community’s perspectives as one means of identifying effective and acceptable solutions
• Work effectively with County staff
• Rules apply when 3 or more advisory group members get together – formally or informally, in person or electronically:
  – Meetings publicly posted at least 3 working days ahead
  – Must be open to the public, with a very few legal exceptions
  – At least one copy of all agenda packets and materials made available for public inspection
  – Written minutes made publicly available
  – Permit public to photograph, film, record, or otherwise reproduce any portion of a meeting
  – No voting by secret or written ballot
• Under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), if requested, advisory group members are required to produce all information, including any emails or notes related to the topic in question.

• Arlington County’s Custodian of Records reviews all documents prior to release to ensure compliance and redacts information that is not responsive to the request.
• Applies to all citizen advisory groups appointed to make non-binding recommendations to the Arlington County Board or the County Manager.

• Potential conflict if you or your immediate family members expect to receive $10,000 or more annually from a property or business, own an interest greater than 3 percent in a business, or own more than a $10,000 interest in real or personal property that may be affected by the actions of your group.
Communication Protocols

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

• All groups ensure that current information is on the group web site
• Be responsive to community requests for information
• Help the broader community understand your work and deliberations
• Post meeting summaries promptly
• Connect with broader community (use the IAP2 Spectrum for guidance as to level)
• Charters are being refined to ensure that all charters are up to date and in a consistent format

• Seeking to have revised charters in place for all commissions by 7/1/14

• This is an opportunity to review, refine, and recalibrate your work and ensure that all members share a common understanding and approach to the work

• Work closely with your Board and staff liaisons