

Councilmember Liaison Job Description

Definition of Liaison

“Liaison”: a person who establishes and maintains communication for mutual understanding and cooperation (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).

Duties and Expectations of a Council Liaison

- 1 A Councilmember acting as a liaison to a Council advisory committee or other body (a “Committee”) is not a member of the Committee. Rather, the Councilmember is a positive resource to support the Committee in the completion of its work subject to the rules stated below.
- 2 A Councilmember liaison is acting as a representative of the full Council and, as such, has no authority to provide any direction or guidance to the Committee other than direction or guidance that clearly represents direction or guidance of the full Council.
- 3 Generally put, the Councilmember liaison shall not attempt to influence the work or recommendations of the Committee. More specifically,
 - the Councilmember shall not take part in the Committee’s deliberations or discussions unless (a) the Committee requests the Councilmember’s participation in a particular discussion (in this situation, the Councilmember must expressly state that she or he is speaking for her or himself, not for the entire Council) or (b) the Councilmember determines that he or she must speak up in order to remind the Committee of Council direction, City policies, or laws including the Open Public Meetings Act and the Public Records Act; and
 - the Councilmember shall not take part in any votes or decisionmaking of the Committee.
- 4 The Councilmember liaison shall work to ensure that the Committee is only taking actions or doing work that is within the scope of the Committee’s work as determined or approved by Council. The liaison can do this by, for example, reminding the Committee as needed of the scope of work that the Council set for the Committee.
- 5 The Councilmember liaison shall bring to the Council any requests from the Committee, such as the following:
 - (a) questions raised by a Committee about the Committee’s scope of work;
 - (b) requests from the Committee to change the Committee’s scope of work;

- (c) requests for expenditures of City resources to further the Committee's work (money, staff time, or other resources); and
- (d) requests from the Committee to place an item on a Council meeting agenda.

- 6 The Councilmember liaison shall work to ensure that the Council is regularly updated on the work of the Committee. To that end, the Council shall on a quarterly basis revisit the work plan of each Committee and hear from each Committee's liaison a report on the Committee's progress on the work plan.

Committee Governance and Oversight

If a Committee member or member of the public feels that there is a problem with the manner in which the Committee is being managed or governed, the Committee member or member of the public should speak with the Committee Chair first. If the problem is not resolved by the Chair to the Committee member or member of the public's satisfaction, then the Committee member or member of the public can speak to the Councilmember liaison about her/his concern(s).

At that juncture, the Councilmember liaison's duty is to bring the concerns to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor rather than attempt to resolve the problem on her or his own. The Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and liaison shall then decide on what steps to take, if any. These steps could include, for example, deciding that they do not agree that there is a problem; discussing the issue with the Committee Chair; or bringing the issue to the full Council for discussion and a possible Council decision.

Governance Manual Provisions

Section 3.2.6 Council Liaison

With Council approval, a Councilmember may serve for a calendar year as the Council's Liaison (i.e. representative), to an organization. A Liaison is responsible for facilitating communication, collaboration and coordination with the designated organization, and with regular reporting and accountability to the Council. There are typically Councilmember Liaisons to four types of organizations:

- A county-wide or regional policy or governing body or intergovernmental organization (such as the Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council)
- A community organization (such as an arts, business, or social service organization)
- A governing or inter-agency board functioning in the city (such as the Parks Board or the Intergovernmental Working Group – IGWG); and
- A citizen board, commission, or committee of the City, whether or not the charter calls for an ex officio Council member (such as the Utility Advisory Committee or Lodging Tax Advisory Committee)

Exhibit B, section (c) Liaison Procedures

Individual members of the Council may be assigned as liaisons whose duties involve keeping current with a group or activity by either attending meetings or conferring with members, and keeping Council informed. Liaisons may advocate Council actions on behalf of their assigned group or activity. Care must be taken to avoid an Appearance of Fairness Doctrine violation, or conflict of interest possibilities (i.e.: in the unusual case of a quasi-judicial proceeding). Liaisons' functions and duties may be further defined and/or directed by the Mayor or Mayor Pro Tem with concurrence of Council.