



The Research Bureau

## Bureau Brief—Serving on Worcester's Boards and Commissions

The City of Worcester's 'Boards and Commissions' play a key role in local governance by allowing residents to participate in their community and provide essential ideas and opinions on a number of topics. Each of these groups consist of city residents who have been appointed to manage, advise, and lend their expertise for a variety of areas of concern. The City Manager, as Worcester's Chief Executive Officer, is responsible for appointing members of municipal boards, commissions, and advisory committees. Nominations to certain committees do require City Council approval, but in general the City Manager solicits feedback on appointments from the Citizen Advisory Council. Boards and Commissions are detailed in Sections 3-3 and 3-4 of the Worcester's City Charter.

### *How are Boards and Commissions Classified, and How are Members Chosen?*

The Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) recruits and vets potential candidates among the City's residents for appointments to the majority (but not all, like the Retirement Board, Airport Advisory Committee, or Library Board of Directors) of Worcester's Boards and Commissions. The CAC then submits recommendations to the City Manager for appointment; the City Manager must obtain a list of names before making most appointments or recommending appointments to the City Council. Each board or commission is categorized as one of three types:

- Advisory committees provide non-binding advice to the City Council, School Committee, and City Manager; nominees require confirmation from a majority of the City Council to be appointed.
- Executive boards develop policies for City departments, or in some cases act in the nature of a City department.
- Regulatory commissions enforce laws and regulations, which includes the power to adjudicate disputes, issue permits or licenses, and hear appeals. The City Manager appoints all members to executive and regulatory boards and commissions.

### *Are There Specific Membership Qualifications?*

The most basic eligibility requirements for appointments are to be residents of Worcester. Most boards have other requirements. For example, to be eligible for membership on a regulatory or advisory board:

- An individual must have resided in the relevant district for at least one year prior to the appointment
- Members cannot be City employees, with the exceptions of *ex-officio* members (members that are members by means of their official City position).
- There are generally no extraordinary or technical skill requirements, but some do ask members to have a background and competence in a particular subject.
- *Ex-officio* members are deemed residents for appointment purposes.

Members serve for the period of time indicated in the charter, law, or ordinance, but may not serve on the same board or commission for more than two consecutive full terms or ten consecutive years. Depending on the size of the Board or Commission, there are limits on the number of residents from each District that can serve.

In Worcester there are currently 34 Boards and Commissions (the newest, the Community Preservation Committee, was created on April 11, 2023), with a variety of vacancies from each district. While not every board and commission has a vacancy, there are several with seats waiting to be filled, allowing the community and city residents the opportunity to become involved and share their expertise and viewpoints on issues of local concern.

The remaining pages of this brief detail the various boards and commissions that are present in the City of Worcester, including a table of current members by district (as of April 26, 2023) on page 7. **There are frequently vacancies on a variety of boards.** For more information, including *current vacancies*, please make sure to check the [City's website](#).

## Worcester’s 34 Boards and Commissions: A Brief Set of Descriptions

- Accessibility Advisory Commission
- Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees
- Board of Election Commissioners
- Board of Health
- Cable Television Advisory Committee
- Citizen Advisory Council
- Civic Center Commission
- Commission for the Preservation of Historic Artifacts, Relics, and Military Memorials
- Commission on Elder Affairs
- Commission on Latino Affairs
- Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
- Community Preservation Committee
- Conservation Commission
- Green Worcester Advisory Committee
- Historical Commission
- Hope Cemetery Commission
- Human Rights Commission
- License Commission
- Mayor Thomas J. Early Scholarship Committee
- Off-Street Parking Board
- Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Liability Trust Fund.
- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Planning Board
- Retirement Board
- Status of Women Advisory Committee
- Trust Funds Commission
- Urban Forestry Tree Commission
- Worcester Airport Advisory Committee
- Worcester Arts Council
- Worcester Ballpark Commission
- Worcester Housing Authority
- Worcester Public Library Board
- Worcester Redevelopment Authority
- Zoning Board of Appeals

Click [here](#) for more information about each board. Summaries and expectations, including how often they may meet, of each board follow. Actual meeting schedules may vary. Titles link to their web page.

### [Accessibility Advisory Commission](#)

The Accessibility Advisory Commission is a three-year advisory council of seven regular members and five associates. Meetings are held monthly. The Commission is tasked with assessing the city's progress in achieving the Americans with Disabilities Act Transition Plan, analyzing handicap parking and accessible taxicab data, and providing advice on sidewalk accessibility renovations. In addition, the Commission examines local applications before the MA Architectural Access Board, provides community training on disability-related issues, and selects groups to hold free fundraising events in Union Station's Grand Hall.

### [Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees](#)

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees is an executive board comprised of nine members elected for two-year terms. The board advises the City on the construction of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income households. The Board of Trustees is legally allowed to receive and accept donations to the trust fund and oversees its financial operations.

### [Board of Election Commissioners](#)

The Board of Election Commissioners is a regulatory board responsible for overseeing municipal elections. The Board’s five members serve four-year terms and meet monthly to establish election policies, draw district lines, register voters, and create polling places. The Board operates under Section 16A of Chapter 51 of Mass General Laws and Article 7 Section 7-1 of Worcester's Home Rule Charter. Members must consist of representatives from all districts.

### [Board of Health](#)

The Board of Health is an executive-level committee of five members with five-year terms. The Board meets monthly to promote and protect public health via the use of data-driven and evidence-based procedures and regulations. Members must attend and actively participate in all regular meetings and must be well-versed in state and local public health regulations.

### [Cable Television Advisory Committee](#)

The Cable Television Advisory Committee is an advisory committee consisting of seven members serving three-year terms. The Committee counsels the City Manager regarding cable services. Members must conduct listening sessions to collect public feedback on cable television services in the city; certain basic cable services must be provided to city residents by law.

### [Citizen Advisory Council](#)

The Citizen Advisory Council is comprised of eleven members, of which two are drawn from each district and one is at-large. The Council meets every month. Members are appointed by the City Manager and serve three terms, but no member can serve more than two consecutive terms. The Council is responsible for advertising vacancies on Worcester’s boards, commissions, and advisory committees. The Council seeks nominations, interviews individuals, and suggests board members to the City Manager for an appointment, all while ensuring the process is open to all residents of the community. Knowledge of MCAD (Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination) interview laws and a background in Human Resources is an advantage for members of the Council.

### [Civic Center Commission](#)

The Civic Center Commission is an executive committee of five members serving five-year terms. The Commission meets monthly. The Commission suggests, evaluates, and authorizes general plans, contracts, and DCU Center requests. CCC Board members typically have experience in business, planning, law, engineering, or event management, and a keen interest in the growth of the DCU Center.

### [Commission for the Preservation of Historic Artifacts, Relics, and Military Memorials](#)

The Commission for the Preservation of Historic Artifacts, Relics, and Military Memorials is an executive commission consisting of five members serving five-year terms. The commission's responsibility is to identify, classify, manage, and conserve the City's historic items and memorialize the people of the city who served in

the United States military forces and intelligence communities during times of war or other armed conflict and whose sacrifices allowed us all to enjoy the blessings of liberty. A maximum of three board members may be veterans; of those veterans, a majority, if it can be discovered, will be descendants of honorably discharged soldiers who served the country during the Civil War.

### [Commission on Elder Affairs](#)

The Commission on Elder Affairs is an executive commission consisting of fifteen members of all ages that serve three-year terms. The Commission supervises the Worcester Senior Center; assesses and approves program budget allocations; makes recommendations on senior concerns; and collaborates closely with staff to support operations and outreach. The Commission collaborates with the Executive Office of Elder Affairs of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and determines the relevant requirements of the community's elder population. The Commission meets monthly from September to June.

### [Commission on Latino Affairs](#)

The Commission on Latino Affairs is an advisory committee consisting of seven members serving three-year terms. The Commission promotes, supports, and monitors city policies and procedures to guarantee Latino residents have equal legal protection, equal access to all public services, and full enjoyment and exercise of their civil rights. Members should have proper awareness of issues that are vital to Worcester's Latino community.

### [Community Development Block Grant \(CDBG\)](#)

The Community Development Block Grant is an advisory committee consisting of ten members serving three-year terms. The committee meets every three weeks between November and February. The committee submits yearly recommendations to the City Manager on agencies and programs eligible for grant funding under the federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program.

Community Preservation Committee

The Community Preservation Committee is an executive board established in 2023, consisting of nine members that will, after the staggered terms of the first members, ultimately serve three-year terms. The Committee advises the City Manager and Administration in accordance with the terms of the Community Preservation Act, and will make recommendations to the Manager and City Council on the use of the Community Preservation Fund for projects related to the act.

Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is a regulatory commission consisting of seven members serving three-year terms. It meets twice monthly. The Commission manages wetlands protection measures and offers suggestions on conservation and passive recreation property development, acquisition, and maintenance. Besides attending meetings, members conduct site visits and examine all applications, reports, and plans. Members are often educated in biology, environmental science, construction, or a related subject.

Green Worcester Advisory Committee

The Green Worcester Advisory Committee is an advisory committee consisting of seven members serving three-year terms. The Committee allows for information exchange between the City and its community on sustainability and resilience issues. Members are responsible for examining and commenting on the Department of Sustainability and Resilience's quarterly Green Worcester Plan Progress Reports, examining and commenting on the department's yearly Green Worcester Plan Reports, and evaluating and advising the city on the municipal sustainability and resilience programs and initiatives.

Historical Commission

The Historical Commission is an executive commission made up of seven members and two alternates that serve three-year terms. Members meet twice a month. The commission oversees protecting, promoting, and developing the city's historic treasures. In addition, it reviews proposed changes to sites in local historic areas and enforces the City's Building Demolition Delay Law.

Hope Cemetery Commission

The Hope Cemetery Commission is an executive commission consisting of five commissioners serving three-year terms; the Commission meets as needed. The Commission is responsible for maintaining, promoting, examining, and suggesting policies, methods, rules, regulations, and fees for cemetery administration.

Human Rights Commission

The Human Rights Commission is an executive commission consisting of nine members. The Commission is empowered to conduct investigations, hold hearings, and conduct mediation regarding the denial of equal access to employment or public services; the violation of the enjoyment of civil rights; and the presence in the city of prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, discrimination, and the like. The Commission may also issue orders and reports following its investigations, review departmental policies and disciplinary actions, and make other policies or recommendations to the City.

License Commission

The License Commission is a regulatory commission consisting of three members with four-year terms that meet twice monthly. The commission evaluates applications for on-premises and off-premises liquor outlets, entertainment, food service, lodging houses, and associated activities, awards licenses to the same, and imposes penalties for regulation violations.

[Mayor Thomas J. Early Scholarship Committee](#)

The Mayor Thomas J. Early Scholarship Committee is an executive committee consisting of five members serving three-year terms, and, in addition, includes the Superintendent of the Worcester Public Schools. The Committee reviews and evaluates Bancroft Scholarship and Early Scholarship applications.

[Off-Street Parking Board](#)

The Off-Street Parking Board is an executive board consisting of five members that serve five-year terms. It meets as needed. The Board is responsible for overseeing municipal open-air parking lots and parking garages, including setting rates and policies for off-street facilities. The Board works with businesses to improve customer and employee parking conditions.

[Other Post-Employment Benefits \(OPEB\) Liability Trust Fund](#)

The Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) Liability Trust Fund is an executive committee consisting of nine trustees serving five-year terms. It meets monthly. The Commission's main responsibility is to manage, invest, and reinvest in the OPEB Fund.

[Parks and Recreation Commission](#)

The Parks and Recreation Commission is an executive commission consisting of seven members serving three-year terms. It meets monthly. The Commission is tasked with promoting, reviewing, and recommending policies, processes, rules, regulations, and fees for public park management. Members should take care to focus on all parks in the community rather than just one or two.

[Planning Board](#)

The Planning Board is a regulatory board consisting of five members serving five-year terms. It meets twice per month. The Board evaluates site plans, parking plans, and subdivision plans of construction projects, and proposes zoning ordinance modifications.

[Retirement Board](#)

The Retirement Board is an unclassified commission consisting of five members. It is responsible for administering the City’s retirement system, including retirement rights, benefits, and restrictions, for all City of Worcester and Worcester Housing Authority workers, excluding teachers. It meets twice a month. It is not subject to the Citizen Advisory Council appointment process.

[Status of Women Advisory Committee](#)

The Status of Women Advisory Committee is an advisory committee consisting of fifteen members serving for three-year terms. The Committee is responsible for encouraging, promoting, and monitoring policies and programs related to the status of women in the city, including concerns regarding equal protection of the law, equal access to all public services, and the exercise of civil rights. It submits a report annually to the City Manager concerning its work and the status of women in the City. In addition, the Committee annually organizes an awards event to recognize both an adult and a young "Woman of Consequence."

[Trust Funds Commission](#)

The Trust Funds Commission is an executive commission consisting of three members serving three-year terms. It holds meetings quarterly. The Commission largely handles all trust money granted or bestowed for the benefit of the people of Worcester.

[Urban Forestry Tree Commission](#)

The Urban Forestry Tree Commission is an advisory commission consisting of five members serving five-year terms. The Commission is charged with assisting the DPW&P, Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Tree Warden with research, the tree census, and tree campaigns to expand and conserve Worcester’s tree canopy and overall urban community forest.

### [Worcester Airport Advisory Committee](#)

The Worcester Airport Advisory Committee is an advisory committee consisting of nine members with three-year terms: four from Worcester, two from Leicester, and three from Massport. It meets at least twice a year. Its members, unlike those of other boards, are not subject to the Citizens Advisory Council nominating process. It reviews decisions made by Massport regarding the operation and development of Worcester Airport, in accordance with the 2008 Master Plan, and communicates with Worcester and Leicester over ongoing developments.

### [Worcester Arts Council](#)

The Worcester Arts Council is an executive council consisting of nine members serving a three-year term. The Council advertises the City of Worcester's cultural affairs, conducts studies and research, gathers community input on the City's arts and cultural granting priorities, reviews and approves grant applications, and allocates state funds for cultural projects, programs, and activities.

### [Worcester Ballpark Commission](#)

The Worcester Ballpark Commission, an executive commission consisting of seven members serving five-year terms, is responsible for tasks related to the governance and operation of the Ballpark Facilities. The Commission monitors and oversees the implementation of the facilities’ governance documents, including the Ballpark Lease Agreement and the financial health of the facilities. Additionally, the Commission is responsible for establishing reasonable rules and regulations for the use and operation of the Ballpark Facilities and can authorize the use of the facilities for City events.

### [Worcester Housing Authority](#)

The Worcester Housing Authority is an unclassified board that establishes policies to regulate operations, approve budgets, and set the course of existing and future initiatives of housing in Worcester. It consists of five members, each serving a five-year term, and meets monthly.

### [Worcester Public Library Board](#)

The Worcester Public Library Board is an advisory board consisting of twelve directors that serve six-year terms and meets monthly. It is assisted by a trained head librarian. The Board develops service-oriented library policies that adhere to the principles of equal access to information and the free exchange of ideas, supervises the library administration, and upkeep the library's facilities and assets. It is not subject to the Citizen Advisory Council appointment process.

### [Worcester Redevelopment Authority](#)

The Worcester Redevelopment Authority is an unclassified board consisting of five members serving five-year terms. It meets monthly. The Authority recommends, examines, and approves general plans, contracts, and requests that affect its assets and/or projects. The board members are accountable for using a range of urban regeneration measures, programs, and policies to enhance the local economy.

### [Zoning Board of Appeals](#)

The Zoning Board of Appeals is a regulatory board consisting of seven members, serving five-year terms. It meets twice per month. The Board is entrusted with exercising judgment in evaluating when to authorize discretionary uses or provide exceptions from specific zoning laws, including hearing appeals related to Building Commissioner judgments. Members of the Board typically perform site inspections on their own time.

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<b>Boards and Commissions Subject to Citizen's Advisory Council Appointment, by Member District of Residence (as of 4/26/2023)</b>										
<i>Boards and Commissions</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>District 1</i>	<i>District 2</i>	<i>District 3</i>	<i>District 4</i>	<i>District 5</i>	<i>ExOfficio or Other</i>	<i>Current Members</i>	<i>Possible Members</i>	<i>Vacant Seats</i>
Accessibility Advisory Commission	Advisory	2	2	1	1	3		9	12	4
Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees	Executive	1	1	2	1	1	1	7	9	2
Board of Election Commissioners	Regulatory	1	1	1	1	1		5	5	0
Board of Health	Executive	1			1	2		4	5	1
Cable Television Advisory Committee	Advisory	1		1	1	3		6	7	1
Citizen Advisory Council	Unclassified	2	2	2	1	1		8	11	3
Civic Center Commission	Executive	3	1			1		5	5	0
Commission for the Preservation of Historic Artifacts, Relics and Military Memorials	Executive	2		1	1	1		5	5	2
Commission on Elder Affairs	Executive	3	2	4		4		13	15	2
Commission on Latino Affairs	Advisory	2	1	1	2	1		7	7	0
Community Development Block Grant Advisory Committee	Advisory	1	1	2	2	2		8	10	2
Community Preservation Committee	Executive							0	9	9
Conservation Commission	Regulatory	2		1	1			4	7	3
Green Worcester Advisory Committee	Advisory	2	1	1	2	1		7	7	0
Historical Commission	Executive	2	1	1	1	2		7	9	2
Hope Cemetery Commission	Executive	2		2		1		5	5	0
Human Rights Commission	Executive	1	4	2	1	1		9	9	0
License Commission	Regulatory		1	1		1		3	3	0
Mayor Thomas J. Early Scholarship Committee	Executive		2	2				4	5	1
Off-Street Parking Board	Executive			2	1	1		4	5	1
Other Post-Employment Benefits Board of Trustees	Executive	2					4	6	9	3
Parks and Recreation Commission	Executive	2	1			3		6	7	1
Planning Board	Regulatory	1	1	1	1	1		5	5	0
Status of Women Advisory Committee	Advisory	1	1	1		2		5	15	10
Trust Funds Commission	Executive				1	1		2	3	1
Urban Forestry Tree Commission	Advisory	1	1	1	1	1		5	5	0
Worcester Arts Council	Executive	4	3			2		9	9	0
Worcester Ballpark Commission	Executive	2	1	1		3		7	7	0
Worcester Housing Authority	Unclassified	2	1		1	1		5	5	0
Worcester Redevelopment Authority	Unclassified	3				1		4	5	1
Zoning Board of Appeals	Regulatory	2	2	1	1	1		7	7	0
<b>Total Members from Each District (as of 4/25/2023)</b>		<b>48</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>49</b>

Source: City of Worcester City Manager’s Office. Note: Some vacancies represent boards that have current members with expired terms that are awaiting replacements, and other vacancies represent seats with no representation whatsoever. The Retirement Board, Worcester Airport Advisory Committee, and the Worcester Public Library Board are not subject to the Citizen Advisory Council appointment process, and as such are not included in this table. All figures here are as of 4/26/2023, and are subject to change regularly.