



# West Linn's Neighborhood Association Program

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# West Linn's Neighborhood Association Program: Suggested Best Practices and Guidelines

## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to offer general advice and guidance to Neighborhood Associations. It is meant to be a resource and support tool with a variety of potential applications, including onboarding new officers and members; transitioning members to new roles; explaining the role and function of Neighborhood Associations to laypersons; and as a handy reference for specific questions.

The City offers this document as one of many resources meant to help Neighborhood Associations, which are powered by volunteer labor, run smoothly, be effective stewards of the public interest, and comply with local and state regulations. Although the City Administration's recommendations and suggested best practices may be found here, this is not a binding document, nor is it a rulebook. In West Linn, Neighborhood Associations are independent bodies separate from the City government. They are not managed by City staff but are accountable to City Council.

Neighborhood Associations are one of the best ways for the public to organize around local issues, stay informed of City business, grow strong neighborhood connections, and have a voice in local government. City staff, Council, and the entire West Linn community are grateful for the donated labor of participants, which ultimately benefits everyone.

## What is a Neighborhood Association?

Neighborhood associations (NAs) are one of the recognized channels for community participation in West Linn. The City encourages community members to be involved in the decisions that affect the health and quality of their neighborhood. Eleven recognized NAs offer an opportunity for the community to participate in decision-making in the geographic area in which they live. These volunteer organizations bring neighbors together to improve the livability of West Linn's neighborhoods. Participation in a NA is voluntary and open to all community members who live, own property, or a business within its boundary.

All NAs are unique and may adopt their own bylaws and goals. For instance, NAs may sponsor social events that strengthen neighborhoods, such as neighborhood festivals, block parties, crime prevention activities, and upgrading neighborhood parks. NAs may also be concerned with issues that affect the quality of life in the community, making recommendations on zoning regulations, traffic improvements, and services. Neighborhood members elect boards to represent their views before the City Council, Planning Commission, and other advisory boards to maintain ongoing communication with City government.

NAs may also play an important role in building a sense of community within their geographic area. This involves building positive relationships amongst neighbors and working together for the common good of the neighborhood. Holding block parties, ivy removals, cleanups, and helping elderly or disabled residents are all possible parts of this role.

There are 11 NAs ranging in size from around 400 to 6,500 community members. NAs are formally recognized in [West Linn Municipal Code Section 2.100](#) and in order to be a recognized NA, the NA must satisfy the standards listed in the Code.

NAs play an important communications role within the City. In order to make informed recommendations on issues impacting the neighborhood, NAs may provide channels to share this information with members in a timely manner.

NAs are advisory to Council and other City Boards and officials on matters affecting their neighborhoods. NAs may recommend action, policy or comprehensive plan amendments relating to the livability of their neighborhood. NAs may become informed of neighborhood needs and desires and maintain communication with their neighborhoods on plans, proposals, and activities affecting their neighborhood. NAs may submit to the City requests or proposals for projects or activities needed in their neighborhood.

Contact, event, and meeting information for each recognized NA can be found on the individual NA page, accessed from the [Neighborhoods Home page](#). A designated NA email is used to communicate with the officers (i.e., land use notifications) in the neighborhood for distribution to their members. The City requests NAs only use the City-issued email to conduct neighborhood business for public records purposes. If a personal email is used, it opens up the personal email to public records law and may be requested by members of the public. The purpose of the neighborhood contact is to identify potential issues or conflicts regarding a proposed application so that they may be addressed prior to filing. This contact is intended to result in a better application and to expedite and lessen the expense of the review process by avoiding needless delays, appeals, remands, or denials.

### Why organize a Neighborhood Association?

Only recognized NAs receive support services and benefits from the City.

- Information from the City on all issues (transportation, development, etc.) that may occur in their neighborhood.
- Land use appeal fees are waived.
- Become part of the City network that works together to create the type of community it wants.
- May testify at public hearings with additional time limits not given to individuals.
- The City helps inform members of upcoming neighborhood meetings.
- Receives annual training from the City.
- Are invited to pre-application conferences for projects occurring in their neighborhoods.
- Receive an NA grant from the City and a debit card to use for NA expenses. The most current policy and procedure for making neighborhood grants was established by [Resolution 2019-14](#) (see Exhibit C).

One of the roles of NAs is to provide two-way communication between neighborhood members and the City. The City also requires neighborhoods to provide notice of its annual meeting to all members of the association. In order to promote open communication and encourage community involvement, the City provides recognized NAs a City email and the City posts the meeting agendas and minutes on the City's NA website.

## Neighborhood Plan Development and Implementation

Neighborhood Planning is one of the core functions of the City's NA program. Seven neighborhood plans have been adopted. These plans describe the neighborhood's unique characteristics within the City and serve to articulate a neighborhood's collective vision for its future and outlines the policies and actions desired to achieve that vision. Plans are not simply a way to freeze the neighborhood in time; they are a way to accommodate our changing demographics and additional population, impact global warming, identify opportunities to accommodate different types of housing choices for different types of families, maintain or alter neighborhood character, build community, and provide quality lifestyle choices for all types of people. Creating a plan provides the opportunity for neighbors to look into the future and describe what the neighborhood should look like in 20 years. How should it change? How should it stay the same? How is the region changing? How can our neighborhood play a positive role in making our region a fantastic place to live, work and play? All neighborhood plans are adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Staff will work with recognized NAs to develop new plans, implement, or update previously adopted plans.

## Meeting Requirements

### Meeting Notification

All NA meetings are subject to strict compliance with the [public meeting laws](#) of the State of Oregon. Because of state requirements, meetings must be held within the city limits of West Linn, open to the public, may not be held in a place where discrimination is practiced, and must be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible. Per recent House Bill 2560, all meetings must now allow the public the ability to attend and access the meeting by remote means. This includes the opportunity to give oral testimony remotely and to submit written testimony electronically. City staff do not monitor or ensure NAs are following public meetings law. If an NA chooses not to abide by public meetings law or has any questions, they can retain an attorney for legal guidance. The City's attorneys cannot provide legal advice to NAs directly, but NAs may use their stipends for legal fees if they choose.

### Neighborhood Signs

NA signs may be posted one week prior to the meeting date and must be removed by the morning following the meeting, per city code. They may be posted in at least two prominent locations in the neighborhood. Placing the signs in consistent locations can be helpful to neighbors looking for them.

More information regarding City code requirements for temporary sign placement can be found here: <https://westlinnoregon.gov/planning/guide-temporary-signs>. Neighborhoods may expand their meeting notification strategies to include posting on the association website, blog or Facebook page; email the neighborhood email list; door-to-door flyers; or any other strategy they wish to employ.

### Meeting Agenda

Best practices for complying with state public meetings law are the following: The agenda should include the neighborhood name, date, time, location of the meeting, remote attendance options, and items that will be discussed. The agenda should be emailed to City staff at least 12 days in advance for posting. A meeting exists when a quorum is present. If members are unable to be there in person, they may attend via telephone, internet, etc. All NA Meetings are open to the public.

### Quorum

Each NA is responsible for calculating quorum according to their individual bylaws and documenting the presence or absence of a quorum. If the members in attendance do not constitute a quorum within

fifteen minutes of the scheduled start time, best practices dictate the meeting should be cancelled, the room vacated, and all topics automatically added to the agenda for the next regularly scheduled meeting. No votes should be taken without a quorum to avoid risk of violating public meetings law. Educational presentations and similar non-voting business may continue at the NA's own risk.

## Minutes

State law requires *either* detailed written minutes are taken at public meetings *or* meetings may be recorded. Best practices dictate minutes should contain the following information:

- (a) roster of members present;
- (b) documentation of presence or absence of a quorum;
- (c) motions, proposals, resolutions, orders, ordinances and measures proposed and their disposition;
- (d) results of all votes and the vote of each member by name (votes at public meetings cannot be private per state law);
- (e) the substance of any discussion on any matter; and
- (f) a reference to any document discussed at the meeting.

Although staff will help archive minutes and agendas for retention as public records, they do not review minutes for compliance with the above public meetings guidelines. Staff advise the following:

- Minutes should give a true reflection of the matters discussed at the meeting and the views of the participants;
- Minutes should welcome the viewpoints of all neighborhood members and record all majority and minority positions;
- Final minutes and any materials distributed during the meeting should be sent to the City for permanent retention as soon as possible.

## Annual Work Plan

Work plans allow NAs to review past successes, develop a shared set of values as a group, plan activities for the upcoming year, and discuss ways to improve any challenges the group may be facing. The City suggests NAs take some time to outline expectations and objectives in advance and establish a plan to accomplish them. When NAs elect new board members, this is a good time to discuss everyone's interests in serving on the board. The following are some suggestions to help guide discussion and the development of a work plan.

Some example questions to get you started:

- Why did you become a board member?
- What have been the association's biggest successes/challenges?
- What could be done to improve the association and overcome challenges?
- What is the neighborhood's purpose, role, and obligation to the neighborhood and City?
- What are the core projects and activities the association would like to pursue this year?

For each project or activity:

- What is the purpose of this activity?
- Is there a need for it in the community?
- What are the tasks involved?
- How much time is needed to plan and accomplish the task?

See [Exhibit A](#) for a Sample Annual Work Plan

## Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Board

As neighborhoods and priorities change over time, the City suggests periodically checking-in and evaluating your effectiveness as a group. Time devoted to board cultivation, support and evaluation can build the strong roots NAs need to achieve their purpose and sustain their efforts.

Board members may be encouraged and provided with opportunities to provide feedback on how the board is working during the course of the year. Members ideally should feel free to express both pride in accomplishments and frustration with the process. The City finds that an open dialogue where questions can be asked honestly is of the utmost importance to our other groups.

In addition to the creation of a supportive, open board atmosphere, NAs may consider setting aside time for a board retreat each year. Retreats are an opportunity for the board to get to know one another and focus on successes and challenges. You can use the retreat as an opportunity to reach new agreements about board roles and develop realistic plans about how goals will be achieved that year.

See [Exhibit B](#) for a sample questionnaire to help you analyze how your board operates and to find areas for improvement.

## Cultivating Strong Board Dynamics

Based on the City's experience facilitating public groups, we recommend the following practices: Celebrate successes and recognize accomplishments. Be thankful and give thanks where they are due. If something isn't successful, acknowledge that the work was done with the best intentions and that no effort is without honor. It's important that board members support one another on a regular basis. People like to be recognized in different ways, vary your efforts to ensure that recognition is meaningful to your members.

### *Recognition Ideas*

- Personal recognition: verbal thank you or personal note.
- Formal or organizational recognition: a card signed by each board member, an article on the NA website, or certificates or awards presented at an association meeting.
- Multi-volunteer recognition: annual volunteer recognition event to celebrate the accomplishments of several individuals as well as the neighborhood as a whole.

## Running Effective Meetings

Consider planning out your agenda at least two weeks in advance, asking board members for agenda items and sorting through any requests for time on the agenda that you may have. Contact presenters to make sure they will be in attendance. Be prepared to discuss any items that were tabled from last month's meeting. Email the agenda to City staff at least 12 days in advance for posting. Review minutes from the previous meeting to see if there are any items that were tabled or left unresolved. Were tasks assigned that must be reported? Also, set a predetermined ending time for the meeting. This will both help your presenters mentally prepare for the time allotted for their item and generate interest from the public to attend your meeting.

### Points to Consider when Preparing an Agenda:

- Honor everyone's time! Keep the agenda as short as possible. It's a great idea to appoint a timekeeper to stay on time and assist the chair with interrupting or directing someone to wrap up a comment or presentation.

- When drawing up the agenda, determine the time needed for each topic. You will know which topics will need more time than others. Be sure to take into consideration the time that will be needed for discussion and any action needed. Place “time allocated” right next to each agenda item.
- Plan the agenda so that important items, big decisions, and votes are at the beginning with informational presentations and other elements later in the meeting. Don’t save big decisions until the end of the meeting, as people will likely be tired.
- Ask for additions at the opening of the meeting, before the agenda is approved.

### Meeting Ground Rules

In order to create a more successful meeting environment and productive group, it may be helpful to create a set of guidelines or ground rules.

If an NA opts to develop ground rules, we recommend the entire board, not just the chair who facilitates the meeting, helps to develop the rules. The list of ground rules can be developed at a regularly scheduled board meeting. Brainstorm a list of ground rules and when reviewing each rule, make sure everyone in the group understands what is meant by the proposed rule. Once the list of ground rules is developed and there is full acceptance by the group, write the list up on a large piece of display board paper. Post the ground rules at every NA meeting and point to them or read the list out loud, if needed, so that everyone in attendance knows that they will be held accountable to the group’s rules. It’s important to establish ground rules before a conflict arises. You can be proactive and develop ground rules as a tool to ensure that the group functions in a healthy and effective manner.

### Sample Ground Rules

Here’s a list of suggested ground rules to build upon. Rules will have the most impact and buy-in when they are developed out of a group process.

- Treat everyone with courtesy and respect.
- Listen actively – respect others when they are talking.
- Listen to others with an open mind.
- No side conversations and no cross talk - one person speaks at a time.
- Be aware of your own and other’s participation.
- Share your own experiences and opinions with “I” statements, rather than generalizing with “We” or “They” comments.
- Respectfully challenge an idea, not a person.
- Speak to the topic at hand.
- Respect the groups’ time and keep comments brief and to the point.

### Make Your Meetings Welcoming

There may be easy ways to make your meetings more appealing to new members. Here are a few simple suggestions to consider:

- Provide signage at the meeting site directing members to the meeting room. It’s a good idea to have a sign on the door where people will be entering the building to let them know they’re in the right place and a sign or two in the hallways directing people to the appropriate room. It’s also a nice touch to have a sign on the door outside of the meeting room. For example, “Old Town Neighborhood Association Meeting Here! Welcome Neighbors!”



- Have a greeter who will make a point of introducing themselves to new members, provide them with some brochures about your group and check in to answer any questions about the discussion at the meeting.
- Provide welcome packets or neighborhood information sheets. These can equip new members with basic information about your NA's meetings, board members, and upcoming events. This is especially handy at meetings when you may not have time to share all this information. Packets can be tailored to the needs of your NA to offer a combination of information and warmth to members. This will not only save a lot of time for both you and the new member but also increase the chances of helping them become an involved member.
- Welcome new members at the beginning of each meeting. Make introductions a standard agenda item at the beginning of the meeting. Consider incorporating icebreakers or appreciations of volunteers as part of their opening activity.
- Be Considerate of New Members. Don't assume that everyone in the room knows how the meeting will run. Go over the agenda, explain any ground rules and allow time for questions to ensure that everyone understands the process. Give background information to bring members up to speed on pertinent issues.
- Allow Social Time. Provide 10-15 minutes before or after the meeting to allow an opportunity for members to network and get to know one another. Getting everyone to know your neighbors and board members is the key to working smoothly and with respect.
- Follow-up with New Members. Use the information gathered in the sign-in sheet to call or email new members. Check in to see how their first meeting experience went, find out particular interests or issues of new members and potentially generate involvement in the board, committees or an upcoming event. Ask if they have any questions.
- Make Meetings Accessible to ALL Members. Meetings should comply with Oregon Public Meetings Law, and cannot be held in locations where any person attending the meetings would face discrimination on the basis of race, religion, color, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, disability, legal citizenship, national origin, income, or political affiliation. Per House Bill 2560, all meetings must allow the public the ability to attend and access the meeting by remote means.

### Meeting Facilitation for Chairs

The key to meeting facilitation is keeping people on time, on task, and on board as a group. Meeting facilitation takes time and practice in order to find your best leadership style. Don't worry if you have little experience facilitating meetings, fellow board members are there to help. Ask for feedback and suggestions on ways to improve your meetings. Ultimately, running on-time and effective meetings will help your NA make decisions and also show that you respect the time and energy of your volunteers.

**Be Organized and Stay on Time.** It may be helpful to assign the role of timekeeper to another board member so that time will be better monitored and conversation can be ended more easily.

**Direct the Discussion and Keep People on Topic.** Remind the group that there will be time for new business at the end of the meeting. If people are being repetitive, recap information for the group. If a decision needs to be made, call for a motion from the group.

**Facilitate Voting and Decision-Making.** Never assume an agreement has been reached without a vote. Encourage all members to participate and minimize long-winded conversations.

**Always Maintain your Role as Chair.** Facilitate the group's discussion, making sure all are being heard. Do not abuse your position and monopolize the floor. Limit your own opinions and stay neutral.

Mediate Arguments. Give each side the chance to state their point of view. Remain impartial and fair.

Wrap-up at the End of the Meeting. Review all discussions, decisions to be made and tasks to be assigned. Make sure there is clarity by the end of the meeting.

Follow Up After the Meeting. Offer help to other board members as needed and contact new members.

### **Basics of Robert's Rules for Small Group Meetings**

In small group meetings, only a few motions are typically used.

One person moves to adopt a motion and another person seconds that motion before the meeting chair calls for a vote.

A person may move to amend the motion and another person seconds the amendment. The board will vote on accepting the amendment. If the amendment is not approved, the vote is held on the original motion.

### **Ways to Make Sure Everyone Feels Heard and Participates**

- Minimize cross talk and consider the needs of different personalities and cultures in your meetings.
- Have discussions that mix large and small groups when appropriate. Be flexible and allow time for questions to ensure understanding.
- Control the flow of discussion and guide your group to making decisions and reaching consensus.
- Summarize the discussion, so far, so that others have a sense of conclusion, i.e. "So far, what I've heard you say is...? Is that accurate?"
- Address disruptive influences and make meetings more accessible, welcoming, and productive for all in attendance.
- Don't allow others to take over the meeting through intimidation, anger or outrageous behavior.
- Set boundaries, but validate participants' contributions. "I see that you are frustrated that this issue is not on the agenda and that it is important to you. Perhaps a few of us would be willing to stay after the meeting and set a good time for having this discussion."
- Offer solutions and ask the group for support.

### **Dealing with Challenging Situations**

- Anticipate possible challenging situations. Plan ahead for how you will handle them. Practice how you would react to particular situations. Arrange for support from fellow board members to control the meeting.
- It's Not Your Fault – Don't Take it Personally. People display challenging behavior because of who they are personally, not because of you. It's not personal; so don't react as if it's a personal attack. Remember, your role is to run the meeting and protect everyone at the table.
- Really listen to the person speaking.
- Agree when possible and ask questions to help you to understand their perspective.
- Think about what you are going to say first, before speaking.
- Speak slowly and evenly, without raising your voice.
- Address the person by name, if possible and look them in the eye.
- Express your perspective firmly, but not confrontationally.

- Confront the issue at hand, not the person.
- Stay on topic and remember not to lose your temper.

#### What Causes People to be Difficult

- Negative feelings from previous interactions or situations.
- Inaccurate or incomplete information.
- Seemingly incompatible goals.
- Different styles of communication.

### Decision-Making Tools

#### Decision by Consensus

- Unanimity can be achieved.
- Repetitive process may continue until a majority agree (see 5 finger tool below for assistance).
- May take a long time to reach decision, or agreement may not be possible.

#### The Five Finger Consensus Tool

The following tool can be used to gauge the level of support amongst your NA members. If you are working to reach consensus, you can take an interim poll to assess how your decision is progressing, and then continue discussion as needed. Your NA can decide what level of support is necessary to move forward.

1 finger: I can say an unqualified yes to the decision. I am satisfied that the decision is an expression of the wisdom of the group.

2 fingers: I find the decision perfectly acceptable.

3 fingers: I can live with the decision even though I'm not especially enthusiastic about it.

4 fingers: I do not fully agree with the decision and need to register my view about why. More discussion is needed.

5 fingers: I do not agree with the decision and feel the need to stand in the way of this decision being accepted.

#### Decision by Consent

- Unanimity should be sought but not at the expense of timely and relevant decision-making.
- Every member must manage some individual disappointment to achieve a robust and mutually supportable outcome.
- Members are expected to suggest well-reasoned alternatives to support the objectives of the decision.
- Key questions are: "What alternatives can you propose?" And "Can you live with this?"

#### Voting by Majority

- This approach uses a simple majority voting model.
- The advantage is in quickly reaching a decision.
- A disadvantage is ending up with winners and losers.

### Land Use Planning

Land use planning, or long-range planning, is the decision-making process for how we use land to meet a future vision. This includes what types of development (housing of different types, schools, parks, businesses, etc.) we have, what it looks like, how we provide transportation connections between these uses, and how we protect the undeveloped areas that make up our natural environment. Good planning meets a community's needs for the short-term without compromising its well-being in the long-term. West Linn makes its land use decisions within a system that was established by the State of Oregon to ensure individual communities make thoughtful choices about land use that help to preserve productive farmland, protect our ecosystem, foster economic opportunity, and create livable communities for all community members. These strongly held values create a framework for the future that translates to city policies and regulations that are adopted as legislative amendments. Part of a neighborhood association's role is to participate with the City regarding land use decisions to help create a future vision for the community. Neighborhood Associations are permitted to appeal land-use decisions without cost, and participate in land-use hearings.

Legislative decisions are made by the City Council on proposals that have broad implications for the whole community, involving the creation of new laws or policies. Approval requires compliance with the City's Comprehensive Plan, and local and state planning rules. Examples: Neighborhood plans, Comprehensive Plan or Map changes, Community Development Code changes.

### Development Review

When a property owner proposes to development their property under the rules and regulations adopted through the legislative land use planning phase, it is known as development review. There are many different levels of development review, and a NA's opportunity to respond varies accordingly. All development review decisions are made based on the criteria outlined in the City Code and Comprehensive Plan.

**Ministerial Development (No discretion)** Applications are reviewed against a checklist of measurable criteria from the City Code. If an applicant meets the requirements of the applicable codes, they will be issued a permit. There is no notice provided to neighbors for this type of permit. Examples: Building permits, lot line adjustments, most single family home construction.

**Minor Development (Limited discretion)** Staff makes these types of decisions. Public notices are provided to the NA, and property owners within a 300 foot radius. Public input is invited during the 14-day public comment period prior to staff issuing a decision. There is opportunity for a hearing on appeal. Examples: Variances, partitions, subdivisions, accessory dwelling units.

**Major Development (Considerable discretion)** Decisions are made on the use or development of individual properties based on facts and evidence presented in a public hearing similar to judicial hearings in a courtroom. Staff prepares a report with a recommendation to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission holds a public hearing and issues the decision. Examples: Planned development, Conditional use permits, Zone changes.

**Pre-application Conferences** These are meetings between land use applicants and staff at the "rough draft" stage of a development application. The purpose of the meeting is for staff to review the application process and requirements, and the applicable criteria against which their application will be evaluated. NA representatives are invited to attend each of these meetings. The NA's role is to listen and bring information back to the association, constructively raise any neighborhood concerns, and start building a positive relationship with the applicant.

[Neighborhood Meetings](#) City Code requires that applicants for partitions, subdivisions, and major development hold a meeting for adjacent neighbors (within 300 feet) and the neighborhood association. The meeting is held to inform the community about the proposed project and take comments and questions. Meeting minutes must be submitted with the application. The NA may submit their own version of meeting minutes to the City planner in charge of reviewing the application. Specific requirements for the neighborhood meeting can be found in the City Code.

[Opportunities to Respond in Writing to Staff](#) For all minor and major development applications, there is a 14-day public comment period between the time at which the public is given notice of the complete application, and when the staff report is written. NAs may provide their comments to be considered in the staff report/decision or recommendation and become part of the official record.

[Opportunities to Give Public Testimony](#) Your NA may select representatives to give comments to the public body (Planning Commission or City Council) during the public hearing. Recognized associations are given up to 10 minutes to testify. Remember to state the level of support for your testimony, i.e. the NA on DATE held a board meeting and voted 8-2 to support this position. Both majority and minority reports are required.

## Appeals

Formally recognized NAs may appeal land use decisions made by the Planning Director or Planning Commission to the appropriate bodies without cost if the Planning Director finds:

- (i) Community Development Code Appeal Procedures, Sections 99.140 and 99.240 through 99.300, are followed;
- (ii) The association submits a copy of the membership minutes and vote taken supporting the appeal;
- (iii) The neighborhood association appeal is related to the property within the association's recognized boundaries.

An association may appeal without cost on behalf of an individual or group with standing who is not represented by a recognized association if these criteria are met and the NA finds the issue(s) are of City-wide concern related to the Comprehensive Plan or Community Development Code.

## [Tips on responding to development proposals: written comment and public testimony](#)

Staff, City Council, and the Planning Commission emphasize that letters are very important to them as they make decisions. A well-written letter can be influential.

### Preparation

- Read the staff report and other background materials (for public hearings, the staff report is available online 10 days before the hearing).
- Contact the city planner listed on the staff report with any questions you have about the staff report or the applicable approval standards and criteria as soon as possible to make sure you receive the most timely and accurate information.
- Talk with your neighbors.
- Know the decision-making criteria (for public hearings, staff report will include a full list of the applicable criteria; for staff decisions, contact the staff person).

- Brainstorm a list of the points you wish to make. If you represent a group, ask other people for ideas and add their input to the list.

### **Basic Information to Include**

- Include your name, address, phone number and e-mail.
- State the case you are writing about, including a land use number, if applicable.
- State your interest in the case and whom you represent (if you're writing on behalf of your NA, say that; if you are speaking for yourself, state that as well).
- Briefly state early in the letter whether you'd like staff or the hearing body to approve, deny, or approve the application with specific conditions.

### **Making Your Case**

- Make your arguments around the facts and applicable criteria stated in the staff report. While you may have personal concerns about the project, the hearing body or staff is required to make their decisions based on whether or not the application meets the criteria.
- Provide information that reveals gaps or errors in the application material or the analysis, or introduce new information.
- Cite specific, measurable impacts.
- Avoid emotional language and remain objective and respectful. Remember that your letter will remain a permanent part of the public record.
- Do not use unfounded information or worst case scenario statements; use facts.
- Cite the broadest base of support you have for your position, such as a petition or letter signed by neighbors, an approved neighborhood plan, or an annual neighborhood opinion survey.
- Submit your testimony as soon as possible to ensure staff and decision makers have sufficient time to read and consider your testimony.
- Specifically request notice of receipt if you expect it and provide contact information.

### **General Tips on Letter Organization**

- In the heading, identify the subject and state if you are in favor, opposed or neutral.
- Provide reference to page numbers in the staff report, and/or sections of the code.
- Use bullet points or numbered lists to outline your points.
- Keep it short (one or two pages).

### **Common Mistakes**

- Suggesting substantial modifications at the time of the public hearing without discussing them in advance with the applicant or staff. It's difficult for the hearing body to incorporate substantial modifications without time to review them in advance.
- Straying from the facts in the case or addressing issues that are not related to the decision at hand.
- Addressing issues that are outside the influence/responsibility of the hearing body or staff.
- Stating inaccurate facts, or relying on rumors.
- Making assumptions.
- Using too much emotional or personal language.
- Not acknowledging whom you represent.
- Writing too much.
- Making threats or name-calling.

- Forgetting to include your name, address, phone number, or email.
- Illegible handwriting, spelling errors, disorganized information.
- Requests for large amounts of information to be included in the record without reviewing it for relevancy. The larger the record is, the more difficult it is for the reviewing body to effectively consider all information. If you want information to be added to the record, be sure you have reviewed it beforehand and select documents pertinent to the issues you are raising.

**Making Your Case:** Your case will be conveyed most powerfully if you can make it in one short and succinct statement. Most of us can't write a great statement like this the first time. Try this technique for developing one:

- 1) Write down everything in your head. Focus on "what" you want the reviewing body to understand (you will address the "why" later).
- 2) Set that aside.
- 3) With a new sheet of paper, write down your main point again.
- 4) Examine what you have written and identify the most important point. Eliminate repetition.

**Decision-making Criteria:** These are the applicable standards and criteria that staff or the hearing body must use when they make a decision. The criteria are listed in the staff report at the beginning and then are explained in more detail in each section. If you can't find the criteria or have questions, call the staff person who wrote the report and ask for help. The specific code sections listed in the staff report are available on the City's web site: [Municipal & Community Development Code \(CDC\) | City of West Linn Oregon Official Website](#)

Where to Find the Staff Report? Case files for planning applications can be found on the City's website. Staff reports for public hearings are posted 10 days before the public hearing. Staff reports for administrative decisions by staff are posted on the day of the decision: [Development Review and Legislative Projects Webpage](#)

### Testifying at a Public Hearing

Your presence at a public hearing can be a powerful statement. Use the following techniques to organize your thoughts so that your words will make a powerful statement too.

- 1) Make sure you understand the issue that is before the hearing body (Is it a development proposal, annexation, or a rezoning?) Contact the assigned staff person if you have questions about the application or need clarification.
- 2) Bring a written statement of your comments to organize your thoughts.
  - a. Review the staff report.
  - b. Understand the decision-making criteria.
  - c. Create a short (one to two sentences) statement that summarizes what you are asking the hearing body to do.
- 3) Use facts and make sure your facts are right. Avoid assumptions or reliance on rumors.
- 4) Make a bulleted list of your main points. It will be easier to read.
- 5) Practice your testimony before you arrive.
- 6) Time yourself. Testimony is limited to 5 minutes for an individual or 10 minutes if you are representing a recognized NA.
- 7) If attending with others, limit repetitive testimony by assigning different topics to each individual planning to testify.

## When you Arrive at a Hearing

You will find testimony cards on the table with the agendas. Fill out a card (don't forget to include your address!) and hand it to the clerk or staff person. Then wait for your name to be called during the hearing. Prior to opening a public hearing, the chair of the hearing body will read the procedures.

**Giving Testimony At the Microphone:** The purpose of your testimony is to focus the hearing body's attention on the connection between your testimony and their decision-making criteria.

- 1) State your name and where you live, followed by your position (For, Against, or Neutral) and whom you represent (yourself or a group).
- 2) Address the issue that is before the hearing body, such as a proposed ordinance or land use case file. Refer to it by name and case file number.
- 3) Have your thoughts written down. Simply read your written testimony if necessary. Many times this is much more effective. You don't lose your train of thought or forget important details.
- 4) Keep it short and to the point. Avoid bringing up background or peripheral matters.
- 5) Observe time limits.
- 6) Provide examples if you can of the points you make.
- 7) Provide new information or evidence of which the hearing body might not be aware. If you have substantial modifications to propose, bring these to the applicant or staff in advance of the hearing.
- 8) Provide realistic alternatives for the hearing body to consider. Focus on suggestions for new conditions or modifications to conditions being proposed by staff or the hearing body.
- 9) Don't be afraid or intimidated. Appointed and elected officials are volunteers who want to hear what you have to say. If you are upset about the issue, it is all right to convey that, but without personal attacks and/or accusatory language.
- 10) Remember that the people you are addressing are your neighbors and they may already be on your side.

### **Other Advice**

- Avoid repetition. There is nothing wrong with simply saying "I agree with the testimony of previous speaker..." In the interest of time management, the hearing body chair may ask you to step down if the same testimony is being repeated multiple times.
- Avoid threatening language, no matter how emotionally charged the topic. Be respectful and professional. Don't get personal or overly emotional.
- Stick to the topic and try not to ramble. Be respectful of the length of the meeting and all the other people who may wish to speak.
- Use facts; not rumors, fears or speculation.
- As a member of the audience, do not clap or shout out from the room. This takes from other people's time and is disrespectful.
- Only those people that testify either orally or in writing prior to the decision by the hearing body will have standing to appeal the decision

## Common Land Use Processes

### **Conditional Use**

A Conditional Use is an activity that requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) in order to operate. Conditional uses cannot be permitted outright in a zone because of some characteristics that are not entirely compatible with other uses allowed in the zone. A hearing body reviews the conditional use and, if necessary, imposes conditions to insure that the proposed use will be as compatible as practical



with surrounding uses and meets all applicable code criteria. Conditional uses common in residential zones include schools and churches.

### **Development Review**

Development Review is a formal application process to review building and site designs for certain types of development. It is generally required for exterior modifications to, or new construction of, commercial, industrial, institutional, public and multi-family residential structures, attached single-family residential development with three or more units, and construction of any type of structure that is located in a special design district.

### **Lot Line Adjustment**

A Lot Line Adjustment LLA is a minor adjustment to one or more existing common lot lines between abutting lots of record. A Lot Line Adjustment does not result in the creation of a new lot.

### **Partition**

A partition is the division of a tract of land into two or three parcels within a calendar year.

### **Accessory Dwelling Unit**

An Accessory Dwelling Unit is one additional dwelling unit located on a lot already containing a primary dwelling. An Accessory Dwelling Unit may be in a detached structure or may be located within, or attached to, the primary dwelling.

### **Subdivision**

A subdivision is the division of an area or tract of land into four (4) or more lots within one calendar year. A subdivision can be processed with or without a Planned Development Overlay, which is a site-specific zoning overlay that encourages variety in development patterns, conservation of natural resources, and creative approaches to aesthetics in exchange for exceptions to certain zoning standards.

### **Variance**

A Variance is an exception granted to a property owner to provide relief from certain zoning regulations when a property has unique physical constraints or circumstances. There are two types of variances – a Class 1 variance is a small change from the Code requirements which will have little or no effect on adjacent property or users. A Class 2 variance is a significant change from the Code requirements which is likely to create impacts on adjacent property or users. The types of variances that qualify as Class 1 or Class 2 and the approval criteria for each are listed in [Chapter 75 of the CDC](#).

## EXHIBIT A

### SAMPLE ANNUAL WORK PLAN

#### Association Goals for 2022

1. Recruit 3 new board members at next year's election
2. Increase attendance at general membership meetings to 50 people.
3. Hold one neighborhood social event.
4. Hold one invasive species removal party at neighborhood open space.

#### Activities

1. Hold a National Night Out Ice Cream social
  - a. Set date and location.
  - b. Fill out [Special Event permit](#) or [Park Shelter Reservation](#) form, if necessary.
  - c. Invite police officer to attend.
  - d. Make publicity plan and assign responsibility (signs, website, emails, hand delivered, etc.)
  - e. Assign responsibilities for refreshments, materials, etc.
  - f. Socialize with your neighbors and generate interest in becoming involved in the NA.
2. Hold an Invasive Species Removal Party
  - a. Assign board member responsible.
  - b. Contact the Parks Department to discuss idea and timing. Set date and time.
  - c. Develop a plan for volunteer recruitment (neighbors, students from neighborhood school, boy/girl scouts, churches, etc.)
  - d. Invite organizations to participate.
  - e. Make publicity plan and assign responsibility (signs, website, emails, hand delivered, etc.)
  - f. Assign responsibility for refreshments, tools, etc.
3. Create a Good Neighbor Guide
  - a. Brainstorm ideas to share with your neighbors such as:
    - i. Promote planting native species, include a list of native plants.
    - ii. Ask neighbors to think about the ultimate height of trees they are planting and take into consideration the views of their neighbors.
    - iii. Encourage neighbors to talk to next door neighbors about major remodels to discuss opportunities that could mitigate impacts on privacy (i.e. window placement).
  - b. Develop a timeline to produce the guide.
  - c. Assign responsibility to draft and design the guide.
  - d. Ask City staff to review for compliance.
  - e. Present the guide to the board and NA for approval.

## EXHIBIT B SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Who attends your NA meetings?
  - New people each month
  - The same group of people each month
  
2. Do you feel comfortable offering ideas to the board for discussion and consideration?
  - Yes
  - No
  
3. When an event or project is suggested, do people:
  - Volunteer enthusiastically
  - Only agree to help out of a sense of obligation
  
4. Do you think people would describe your NA as:
  - Open and friendly
  - Cliquish and cold
  
5. Your board has defined:
  - Shared Values
  - Goals & Strategies
  
6. Is there a forum for dialogue outside of meetings to engage community members?
  - Yes
  - No
  
7. Do members get together and celebrate accomplishments outside of meetings?
  - Yes
  - No
  
8. Do board members work well together and communicate in a respectful manner?
  - Yes
  - No
  
9. Remember your first experiences with the NA, did you feel welcomed by the group?
  - Yes
  - No
  
10. Were you given information about the NA's purpose, core values, and goals?
  - Yes
  - No
  
11. Did someone engage you at the meeting or follow up to address any questions or concerns?
  - Yes
  - No

EXHIBIT C

RESOLUTION 2019-14

A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING A POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR MAKING NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION GRANTS

WHEREAS, citizen involvement and neighborhood association involvement are priorities of the West Linn City Council;

WHEREAS, the City Council may allocate funds to West Linn's neighborhood association groups during the biennial budget process;

WHEREAS, these neighborhood association grants are intended to be used to support community identification, education, communication and participation in civic, land use, and legislative activities;

WHEREAS, neighborhood associations are required to operate in conformance with section 2.100 of the West Linn Municipal Code;

WHEREAS, an administrative policy on neighborhood association grants has been in effect since 1993 with amendments in 2008 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, Council desires to formally adopt a policy and procedures for making neighborhood association grants to provide clarity and ensure fiscal responsibility and accountability by neighborhood associations.

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF WEST LINN RESOLVES AS FOLLOWS:

The City of West Linn Neighborhood Association Grant Policy, included as Attachment A to this Resolution, is hereby adopted.

This resolution was PASSED and ADOPTED this 6<sup>th</sup> day of August 2019, and takes effect upon passage.

RUSSELL B. AXELROD, MAYOR

ATTEST:

KATHY MOLLUSKY, CITY RECORDER

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

CITY ATTORNEY

## Attachment A

### NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION GRANT POLICY

#### 1. PURPOSE

- The City of West Linn provides grants to Neighborhood Associations (NAs), operating in conformance with Chapter 2.100 of the Municipal Code. These grants are intended to be used to enhance community identification, education, communication, and participation in civic, land use, and legislative activities.

#### 2. POLICY

- NAs are eligible for grants from the City of West Linn during each fiscal year, subject to the budget appropriation of funds.
- NA officers are accountable for using funds in accordance with city, state, and federal guidelines and laws. NA grant spending should be approved by the membership.
- Grant funding which was budgeted and appropriated may be spent on a variety of neighborhood activities, events, or projects that conform with this policy's statement of purpose. Examples of eligible activities include, but are not limited to:
  - Holding an annual membership meeting or event (potluck, picnic, etc.);
  - Neighborhood improvement, clean-up day, or beautification projects;
  - Informing NA members of City and/or NA information and events (City Council may choose to additionally budget separately for other NA programs, such as one annual postcard mailing per NA);
  - Educational events; and/or
  - Emergency preparedness activities.

#### 3. PROCEDURE

- During the biennial budget process, the City shall determine the total amount of grant funding to be distributed among the NAs.
- Annually on July 1, each "active" NA will be distributed funds based on size. These funds will be distributed on a percentage basis of the total annual budgeted stipend for all NAs, as shown below. Percentage allocations will need to be readjusted if NAs have a change in size or combine as provided by the West Linn Municipal Code (WLMC).  
Reserve: 5% of the annual budgeted stipend for all NAs will be held in reserve;  
Small NA (0-5% of City population): 7.4% of the annual budgeted NA stipend;  
Medium NA (6-10% of City pop.): 9.0% of the annual budgeted NA stipend;  
Large NA (11-20% of City pop.): 10% of the annual budgeted NA stipend;  
Extra Large NA (20% or higher of City pop.): 13.4%
- Active NA Definition:
  1. The NA held at least one meeting during the past fiscal year that conformed to Oregon Public Meeting Law, including sending agendas and minutes to the City by email or other means. In case there is insufficient attendance at any meeting for a quorum, it still counts toward the minimum requirements for an active NA. Minutes must be submitted even if quorum is not met; and
  2. There was a budget item on the agenda for at least one of these meetings; and
  3. There was an election meeting per the NA bylaws; and

4. The NA has an acting board of at least three officers; and
  5. All requirements in this policy have been met, including submittal of an annual report and a detailed accounting of grant spending.
- An NA may choose not to receive funds. Funds not received by choice or not claimed due to NA inactivity will return to the NA reserve.
  - Any NA, active or not, may request reserve funds by submitting a proposal to the City, which includes a description of the intended use. Two weeks prior to requesting reserve funds, the requesting NA must send an email to the Presidents of all NAs (via contact information on the City website), stating the intent to request reserve funds. The Presidents of the NAs have no responsibility in allocating this budget, but are given the opportunity to check with their membership and comment to the City about the release of funds. The primary purpose of reserve funds are to assist NAs to become or remain active or to help cover unexpected expense in line with their charter, though it is entirely up to the City whether or not to accept a proposal.
  - On or after July 1st, any remaining prior year NA reserve funds that have not been distributed are allocated to the active NAs using the same size-based percentages stated above.

#### **4. FINANCIAL/DEBIT CARDS**

- All purchases made using the debit card will be subject to online account tracking privileges, which will be granted to the City of West Linn and to the designated NA applicants.
- In no case shall the debit card be used for the following purposes:
  - Cash withdrawals or "cash back;"
  - Alcoholic beverages or tobacco products;
  - Donations; political advocacy, election campaign activities, or any related items;
  - Service or activity contrary to federal, state or local statute, ordinance or regulations.
- Upon request by the City of West Linn, NAs must provide a full accounting of expenditures including actual receipts/invoices with written stated purpose for any debit card transactions or expenditure of City funds. Receipts/invoices must be kept for a minimum of 3 years.
- Any equipment or materials purchased with the City debit card shall remain the property of the City or NA and shall not be converted to personal use or benefit.
- NAs are required to provide an annual report to the City Council in a format approved by Council, this format will include details on prior and planned spending of grant funding, and an update on NA goals and accomplishments. As part of annual reporting, all NA officers with access to City funds must sign an affidavit stating that all City funds have been spent in accordance with this policy. NAs failing to submit an annual report or signed affidavit will not receive funding in the next fiscal year.
- NAs may choose to carry a balance from prior years.
- Any NA person found to be using the debit cards in violation of law or this policy will be subject to investigation and will forfeit their right to use a City debit card.

## Recognized Neighborhood Associations

BHT (Barrington Heights, Hidden Creek Estates & Tanner Woods) established by [Resolution 02-26](#), dated 8/7/02 and Bylaws adopted (updated 10/22/20). No Neighborhood Plan. ~719 residents. Quorum is 5.

Bolton established by [Resolution 85-17](#), dated 6/26/85. [Bylaws](#) adopted 3/19/01 (updated 8/1/15). Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1536](#), dated 5/10/06. ~2,603 residents. Quorum is 7.

Hidden Springs established by [Resolution 94-32](#), dated 8/8/94. [Bylaws](#) adopted 4/2011. No Neighborhood Plan. ~3,900 residents. Quorum is 10.

Marylhurst – established by Council vote [7/14/76](#). [Bylaws](#) adopted 3/27/07. Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1550](#), dated 7/9/07. ~733 residents. Quorum is 8.

Parker Crest established by [Resolution 00-29](#), dated 8/14/00. [Bylaws](#) adopted 7/25/00. Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1553](#), dated 10/8/07. ~2,006 residents. Quorum is 10.

Robinwood established by [Resolution 1111](#), dated 12/10/80. [Bylaws](#) adopted 4/8/14 (updated 5/8/18). Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1567](#), dated 5/12/08. ~2,514 residents. Quorum is 10.

Rosemont Summit (originally Serango) established by [Resolution 95-09](#), dated 3/27/95. [Bylaws](#) adopted 5/21/01. No Neighborhood Plan. ~2,076 residents. Quorum is 5.

Savanna Oaks (originally Tanner Basin) established by [Resolution 96-21](#), dated 7/8/96. [Bylaws](#) adopted 2016. Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1561](#), dated 3/10/08. ~2,615 residents. Quorum is 10.

Skyline Ridge established by [Resolution 94-31](#), dated 8/8/94. No Bylaws or Neighborhood Plan. ~431 residents.

Sunset (originally Villa Roma) [Resolution 93-29](#), dated 12/13/93. [Bylaws](#) adopted undated. Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1580](#), dated 11/10/08. ~2,645 residents. Quorum is 10.

Willamette established by [Resolution 1131](#), dated 10/28/81 and [Bylaws](#) adopted (updated 2/11/16). Neighborhood Plan adopted by [Ordinance 1519](#), dated 5/23/05. ~6,505 residents. Quorum is 5.

## Links:

Name Change Procedure - [Resolution 08-40](#)

Boundary Change Procedure – [Resolution 08-41](#)

Neighborhood Association Main Page: <https://westlinnoregon.gov/neighborhoods>

Neighborhood Associations Map: <https://westlinnoregon.gov/maps/neighborhood-associations-map>

Neighborhood Association Presidents Meeting Information:  
<https://westlinnoregon.gov/neighborhoods/neighborhood-association-presidents-group-home>

Neighborhood Grant Policy – [Resolution 2019-14](#)