

Guidelines for Community Councils in Anchorage

Compiled by Community Council members in January and February 1978. Adopted by the Federation of Community Councils in March 1978. Presented to the Municipal Assembly and approved March 21, 1978. (Assembly Memorandum AM 250-78)

The Municipal Charter states “The Assembly by ordinance shall provide for establishment of community councils to afford citizens an opportunity for maximum community involvement and self-determination.” The purpose of community councils is to provide a direct and continuing means of citizen participation in government and local affairs.

- I. There shall exist between community councils and government a cooperative relationship.
 - A. The Municipality will give community councils timely, adequate and proper notification of all land use, social and economic proposals which will have a significant impact on all or a substantial portion of council residents. Emphasis should be placed on the initial planning stages of proposals. Adequate response time for community councils will be provided.
 - B. The Municipality will ensure that community councils are provided an opportunity for input and that community councils are aware that they have an opportunity for input.
 - C. It shall be recognized that the first concern of councils is local issues, those having significant impact within the boundaries of the individual community council. Because local concerns are numerous and because of the volunteer nature of the community council effort, it may be necessary from time to time for councils to prioritize these concerns. Of second concern to community councils is areawide issues. The primary contact for a community council on an issue affecting it will be those Assembly members directly representing that area.
 - D. It shall be understood that although community councils have a cooperative relationship with the government, they are not a branch or layer of government.
 - E. The community councils shall maintain credibility by not allowing misuse of the council organization by, including but not limited to, the following:
 - i. Special interest groups
 - ii. Withholding of information
 - iii. Personal financial or political gain
 - iv. Intentional non-representation of a cross section of opinion
 - v. Non-representation of a minority as well as majority opinionIt shall be recognized that councils are not regulatory or legislative bodies and are politically non-partisan.
 - F. It is the responsibility of councils to educate their citizens with information concerning their government.
 - G. Councils are obligated to be as truly representative of their area as possible through:
 - i. The development of an effective communication system to their people.
 - ii. Attempting to obtain council leadership from a cross section of the council.
 - iii. Continually seeking the involvement of other service, neighborhood and business organizations within the council boundaries.
 - H. Councils are obligated to keep written records of their proceedings. Councils are also obligated to keep the legislative body informed of council action and concerns. The

legislative body is as equally obligated to concern itself with the issues and interests of councils.

- II. Community councils shall give the people within their geographical boundaries opportunities to work together for expression and discussion of their opinions, needs and desires in a manner that will have a significant impact on their community's development and services.
 - A. Councils shall inform their people and solicit their peoples' input on matters requiring Municipal attention, whether those items are Municipally initiated or council initiated.
 - B. Community councils shall take available to their people all information on all political candidates, issues and balloted items and shall urge increased voter participation at the polls.
 - C. Councils shall widely publicize to their people the council activities and the results of those activities. If governmental action on an issue is not acceptable to the council, the matter shall be diligently pursued until all resources are exhausted.
 - D. Councils shall generate public interest and participation in community matters, activities, projects, problems, planning or any other matter originating within the council area.
 - E. Councils shall gather the opinions (both minority and majority) or its people and convey these opinions to the appropriate person or agency in a timely manner.
 - F. Councils shall be encouraged to provide the opportunity for their people to participate in long range planning within their area.

- III. Community councils shall increase their effectiveness through the opportunity to share common interests, ideas and needs.
 - A. Community councils shall be afforded a medium of exchange of the above through council participation on a board of directors composed of representatives from each community council wishing to participate. The board can facilitate communications between councils and foster personal contact between members of participating councils.
 - B. Councils will benefit through mutual participation in workshops and training sessions.
 - C. Councils (residents and government) will benefit through the exchange of news and activities made available through a council wide newsletter, community council page and other use of media (TV, radio and newspaper).
 - D. Councils need to have a centrally located resource center, resources including but not limited to:
 - i. Materials (including published materials)
 - ii. Equipment
 - iii. Personnel

This resource center would serve as:

 - 1. Communication center
 - 2. Facility center for office equipment
 - 3. Office and meeting space\
 - 4. Historical center for community councils
 - 5. Information and guidance center
 - 6. Assistance to organizing and reorganizing councils and recognized councils
 - 7. Public relations center