

COMMUNITY COUNCILS 101

*Relationship Building * Non-Partisan/Non-Political * Educate * Civility * Don't Make It Personal * Respect Everyone's Time * Listen * Be Welcoming * Be Inclusive*

What are Community Councils?

Community councils are independent, nonprofit, voluntary, self-governing associations composed of residents, property owners, business owners, nonprofits, and other entities located within geographical areas (districts) designated by the Assembly. Community councils serve an advisory function to the Assembly, the Mayor and the Administration. The purpose of community councils is to provide a direct and continuing means of participating in the government process and local affairs. Community Councils are recognized in Anchorage's Home Rule Charter, and the Assembly authorizes each council by ordinance. While community councils are not part of local government, they are an important part of the local government process.

Anchorage Municipal Charter

ARTICLE VIII. COMMUNITY COUNCILS*

Section 8.01. Establishment and procedures

"The assembly by ordinance shall provide for establishment of community councils to afford citizens an opportunity for maximum community involvement and self-determination. The ordinance shall include procedures for negotiation between the local government and each community council with respect to the duties and responsibilities of the community council."

Anchorage Municipal Code

Chapter 2.40 COMMUNITY COUNCILS*

2.40.020 Purpose of chapter

"The purpose of this chapter is to implement the charter by providing a direct and continuing means of citizen participation in government and local affairs. Community councils are intended to give:

- A. The people a method by which they can work together for expression and discussion of their opinions, needs and desires in a manner that will have an impact on their community's development and services.
- B. Governmental agencies a method for receiving opinions, needs, desires and recommendations of residents and groups.
- C. Local governing bodies an improved basis for decision-making assignment of priorities for all programs affecting community development and individual well-being."

**While the code and Charter reference "citizens", you do not have to be a U.S. citizen to be a member of a community council, or to serve as a council officer or board member.*

Federation of Community Councils

The Federation of Community Councils, Inc. (FCC) is recognized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 exempt organization, and receives the majority of its operating revenue thru a grant from the Anchorage Assembly. The FCC provides services to the independent community councils in Anchorage. The FCC is not recognized in the charter or municipal code; the organization is granted money by the Assembly to provide support to the community councils. The FCC is governed by a board composed of representatives of each community council. There is no statutory relationship between the community councils and the FCC, or between the FCC and the Municipality of Anchorage.

Recognition of Community Councils

AMC 2.40.035. A. *Recognition of community councils.* Upon request of one or more voluntary associations and after public notice and hearing, the assembly may recognize by ordinance any one voluntary association as the community council for a given district. To qualify for and maintain recognition, an association must establish that it:

1. Includes residents, non-resident property owners, business owners and nonprofit organizations within geographical areas established as community council districts under this chapter;
2. Has a policy and practice of open membership and meetings which will encourage participation of persons from all segments of the community;
3. Is committed to affording citizens an opportunity for maximum community involvement and self-determination through community council membership and does not engage in practices contrary to the provisions of this chapter;
4. Has, in the opinion of the assembly, the capability to represent the community council district membership;
5. Has held at least two meetings in the district which resulted in a determination to seek recognition as a community council. Such meetings must have been subsequent to public notice through publication, school distribution and other means adequate to inform most, if not all, district residents of the meeting; and
6. Has adopted and implements bylaws consistent with this chapter governing the organization, operation, and proceedings of the community council.

Community Council Bylaws

AMC 2.40.036.E. Community council bylaws shall include provisions consistent with these requirements:

1. Definition of the boundaries of the community council as set forth in section 2.40.040D and [2.40.090](#); identification of boundaries by code reference and associated map number under [section 2.40.040](#) is sufficient and preferred.
2. Definition and eligibility for community council membership consistent with affording residents maximum community involvement and self-determination under the charter and meeting the requirements of this chapter.
3. Regular meetings of the council at least four times in a calendar year and at least once each calendar quarter; special meetings at the call of designated officers or executive board members, and by petition from a designated number of council members, to address community council business, including the accommodation of community council responsibilities under municipal code section 21.03.020.C.
4. The election of officers, term of service, and the designation of an executive board to receive notice and conduct the business of the council between meetings. Community council officers and executive board members with financial or fiduciary responsibility must be 18 years of age or older at the time of service. A community council, in its discretion, may designate non-fiduciary and non-signatory roles to younger members for leadership training, and may extend voting eligibility to residents 16 years of age and older in the adoption of community council bylaws.
5. The duties and responsibilities of officers, their removal or replacement when a vacancy occurs, and criteria for eligibility to hold an office with the council.
6. A record shall be made by minutes or an electronic recording of all regular and special meetings. Upon request, the record will be made available within a reasonable time determined by the community council.
7. The management of the council's finances including regular status reports and an annual report to the council members on the council's finances or a compilation of treasurer's reports.
8. The dissolution of the council, and for the disposition of the council's property upon dissolution.
9. That the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, shall apply in all instances, matters, and proceedings not covered by the bylaws.
10. Procedures for amending the bylaws.
11. Meeting and member attendance rosters shall be used only for council business.
12. Eligibility to vote.
 - a. Community council bylaws may require prior attendance at one community council meeting in the preceding 12 months as a prerequisite to voting eligibility. For the election of officers and executive board members, community council bylaws may require prior

attendance at one but no more than two community council meetings in the preceding 12 months prior to election. Prior attendance is demonstrated by the meeting and member attendance roster. Bylaws shall not otherwise restrict eligibility to vote by members in attendance.

b. Only one vote shall be granted to any member: Each resident, non-resident property owner, business, and non-profit organization shall have one vote. If a person meets the qualification of member in more than one category or for more than one property, the member shall have one vote.

13. Conflict of interest. Community councils shall not endorse a candidate for federal, state or municipal elected office.

14. The community council shall not charge dues, or require other financial contribution as a condition of membership or participation. A community council may receive gifts, grants, contributions, or in-kind donations from members or others to meet the costs of its operations, including voluntary dues, provided that membership, participation, and voting privileges shall not be predicated upon payment.

Community Council Functions

AMC 2.40.050: Community councils shall have the following advisory functions:

A. In regard to the Anchorage comprehensive plan and its adopted elements as described in municipal code [section 21.01.080](#) and listed in Table 21.01-1:

1. Evaluate compliance with the plan, alerting municipal officials to, or proposing appropriate action regarding any inconsistencies with the plan; and
2. Conduct a continuing review and study of the plan to determine its workability in each district and to advise municipal officials of, or propose any appropriate action regarding proposed modifications or additions to the plan.

B. Assume leadership and propose action in regard to enforcement of existing laws or ordinances, pursuit of rights under existing laws or ordinances, desired or opposed changes in or additions to laws or ordinances, or any matter of policy regulation.

C. Respond to local government proposals submitted to community councils pursuant to [section 2.40.060](#).

D. Work with local government and other governmental entities, as well as with persons and groups outside the government, to accomplish district goals, including goals which may have an areawide impact.

E. Receive and review notices to community councils from municipal departments including notice under:

1. Section 2.30.120.C. (alcohol beverage control board license applications);
2. [Section 10.55.030](#) (permits for teen nightclubs and cultural performance venues);
3. Section 21.03.020.H. (land use proposals);
4. [Section 24.35.020](#) (national security road closures);
5. Section 25.30.025.E. (disposal of municipal land requiring voter approval);
6. [Chapter 10.80](#) (licensing and regulation of marijuana establishments);
7. Other code provisions deemed appropriate by a municipal department.

F. Participate in the community meeting process under municipal code section 21.03.020.C when notice from a developer is timely.

G. Advise the assembly of the community council's annual priority list of capital improvement projects by filing with the municipal clerk within the timeframe established by the administration, a copy of the list as submitted to the administration. The municipal clerk will prepare an assembly information memorandum to submit the community council annual priority lists to the assembly. The assembly information memorandum will be presented at the next assembly meeting following the end of the submission period, or as soon as practicable after receipt by the municipal clerk.