

Disability Rights Commission Meeting Procedure

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) must follow Madison General Ordinances [33.01](#) and [39.04](#) and Wisconsin Open Meeting Law ([Wis. Statue, Chapter 19, Subchapter V](#)). For more information see: [Wisconsin Legislative Council IM-2020-18](#).

Responsibilities

The Disability Rights Commission:

1. Recommends policy to the Mayor, Common Council and Department of Civil Rights in all areas that affect people with disabilities and their families.
2. Studies and makes recommendations to City departments, committees and commissions for better access to facilities and services for people with disabilities and their families.
3. Monitors and reports violations of disability-related city ordinances and state laws.
4. Engages with the community regarding concerns and solutions that advance access.
5. Establishes close working relationships with other City Boards, Commissions and Committees (BCC) on disability issues.

Members

The DRC has 13 members. One Common Council member and 12 residents. All members are knowledgeable of the needs, rights, and collective desires of residents with disabilities. Our goal is to have leaders with diverse identities represent the diversity of Madison's disability community.

All members of the DRC must follow the [Elected and Appointed Official Code of Ethical Conduct](#).

Terms

Commissioner terms are three years (except for Alders). Commissioners can serve up to four terms (12 years). The Common Council must approve service longer than 12 years.

Positions

The DRC must have the following positions:

- **Chair:** Sets the agenda with support from the Co-Chair and staff. They facilitate the meeting. The chair only votes when there is a tie.
- **Co-Chair:** Supports the Chair. Acts as Chair if the Chair is unavailable.
- **Liaison:** A Commissioner that brings information to the DRC from other BCC or project and initiative groups. The Liaison reports updates at DRC meetings. Where appropriate, they bring DRC feedback to the BCC or other group. By ordinance, the DRC must have a Liaison for the Transportation Commission and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award Commission. The DRC may create other liaison positions as needed.

Elections for Chair and Co-Chair happen annually in April. A Chair or Co-Chair may be reelected.

Liaison roles do not have terms. Commissions may stay in their role as long as they are available or until the project is over. The Commission may vote to remove or replace a Liaison if they are not doing their job.

Staff

The Disability Rights and Services Specialist supports the DRC but is not a member. They:

- Help the Chair set the agenda
- Clarify rules of the DRC when needed
- Recommend new members when there is a vacancy. The Mayors and Common Council must approve recommendations. Commissioners are then appointed by the Mayor.

Attendance

Commissioners should plan to attend each meeting. Commissioners will let staff know ahead of time if they cannot make it to the meeting.

A Commissioner who is absent for three meetings in a row or five meetings within a year will be removed.

Quorum

The DRC must have at least seven members present to hold a meeting. If seven Commissioners are not present by 5:15 p.m., the meeting will be canceled. The members present cannot discuss business. They can set a time for the next meeting.

No more than three Commissioners can discuss DRC business outside of a meeting without public notice. This does not include social gatherings. Public notice can be given for community events involving DRC business so that everyone who wants to can attend.

Meetings

The DRC must meet at least once a month. Regular meetings are scheduled on the 4th Thursday of each month from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. November and December meetings will held on the 3rd Thursday. The meetings are held on Zoom and are open to the public. The Commission may vote to change the meeting date or to have additional meetings if needed.

Practices for Inclusive Meetings

The DRC has adopted [Practices for Inclusive Meetings](#). This helps ensure that everyone has access to materials and discussions.

Agendas

Agendas must be posted at least the Friday before the meeting. We post agendas so the public knows what the Commission will be discussing at the meeting. This holds the DRC accountable to the agenda and ensures that we don't leave members of the public out of discussions that are important to them.

Agendas include:

- **Call to Order/Roll Call:** The Chair starts the meeting, takes attendance, and makes announcements.
- **Approval of Minutes:** The Commission reviews and approves the notes from the last meeting. Commissioners can request changes by making a motion to “amend” if something is not correct.
- **Public Comment:** Members of the public are welcome to share comments at meetings. Comments can be given in writing or at the meeting when a person

registers to speak. Members of the public have three minutes to give their comments. Additional time will be given as an accommodation or when someone uses an interpreter (usually 6 minutes).

Comments can be about disability-related topics not on the agenda. Comments about an agenda item can be given when the item is being discussed. The DRC allows for a more free-flowing discussion with the public.

- **Disclosures and Recusals:** If a Commissioner will benefit personally from an item on the agenda item, they must let the DRC know. A “disclosure” means sharing about a personal relationship to the topic. A “recusal” means that the Commissioner will opt-out of the discussion or vote because they cannot be objective.
- **New Business:** During this portion of the meeting Commissioners can discuss, ask questions, and make motions related to the agenda item. The DRC is committed to ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be heard in discussions. We value diversity of ideas and communication needs.

Some examples of “New Business” are:

- Referrals from the Common Council and other BCC. “Referrals” are issues where the DRC is being asked to vote and/or give recommendations. For more information see: [Robert’s Rules Tips and Reminders for Disability Rights Commission](#)
- Recommendations or actions a DRC Commissioner would like the DRC to adopt.
- Presentations and reports from City Staff or community partners on issues important to the disability community.
- **Reports:** Liaisons and staff share reports. Commissioners may ask questions or make comments related to the report. No motions can be made.
- **Future Topics:** Commissioners may request new topics be added to a future agenda. They may describe the topic but should not engage in back-and-forth discussion or conduct business.
- **Adjournment:** The Commissioners vote to end the meeting.

Helping Meetings Run Smoothly and Leaving No One Behind

Commissioners and staff are empowered to use any of the tools below at any point in the meeting:

- **Point of Order:** Commissioners may ask for a “point of order” at any time if they feel the discussion has veered away from the agenda item. The Chair will determine if the discussion needs to be brought back to the agenda item.
- **Time Check:** Commissioners may ask for a “time check” if they feel a discussion is going on too long and are worried about being able to cover other agenda items. The Chair will help move the discussion forward or propose some items be “tabled” to the next meeting.
- **Access Needs:** If at any point in the meeting a Commissioner has an access need, they may let staff or the group know. The business at hand will be paused until the access need is met. If the need cannot be met, the DRC may consider rescheduling the meeting. This ensures that Commissioners can meaningfully participate in discussion.
- **Jargon Busting:** The DRC is committed to accessibility. Commissioners may ask for terms of art, technical language, or city-speak to be explained in plain language at any time. Not only does this benefit the DRC, but also members of the public.
- **Sharing Gratitude:** As a body of Disabled people, the DRC practices gratitude for community members and allies. Regular acknowledgments and appreciation of each other and guests to the meetings are encouraged.

Motions and Voting

A “motion” is a request for body decide or take an action. Any member except the Chair and an Alder can make a motion. Any member except the Chair and an Alder can second the motion. All members can discuss the motion.

Historically, the DRC has made decisions by consensus. This means it is rare that members of the DRC disagree.

During discussion a member may ask for a change to the motion. This is called “amending the motion.” When changes are minor or have broad support, the Chair can ask if there is any objection to the amendment without requiring a motion and a second.

After discussion, the body votes. The Chair asks for those who agree with the motion to say “yay” and those who disagree to say “nay.” If there is no objection the motion passes unanimously. If any members vote no, it is reflected in the vote tally. A roll call vote is recommended if more than one member objects.

Motions must be passed by at least a majority of the members present and a majority of the quorum. Secret Ballot voting can only be used in elections.

For more information see: [Robert’s Rules Tips and Reminders for Disability Rights Commission](#)

Records

DRC meetings are recorded. In addition, “minutes” or notes of what happens at the meeting are taken. The minutes must include attendance, topics discussed, motions and voting results.

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