

City of Decorah



APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

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CITY OF DECORAH

APPOINTED BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Introduction

Citizen boards and commissions are established by the City Council to assist in its efforts to meet the needs of the community. Most are created to meet ongoing needs and continue to exist for as long as they provide assistance to the Council. Some are mandated by state law. The structure, duties, and responsibilities of these bodies vary depending on each one's specific purpose or mission. However, all have one feature in common—they were established to improve the quality of life for the citizens of Decorah. Thus, by serving on one of these bodies, residents have an opportunity to join with local government and administrative staff to ensure that the needs of Decorah citizens are served.

Serving on a board or commission is a significant and meaningful way to participate in civic life. As a member, you can share your expertise while directly participating in shaping your community. Many people choose to serve on boards and commissions as a means of gaining new skills, sharing diverse viewpoints, or to “step out of a comfort zone.” Some might also choose to utilize their seats as a means to attain higher leadership positions, appointed or elected.

The City of Decorah is looking for diversity of experiences and skills on its boards and commissions. Most often, a person is appointed to a board or commission because of a particular skill, interest, or expertise. Others may have a general background in a subject, such as health care or the environment, and be selected to serve on a board with responsibilities related to that subject.

Specific expertise is not a requirement to apply for all boards and commissions. Do not hesitate to get more information about a board or commission that interests you. Use this booklet as a guide, contact the city clerk or city administrator at 563-382-3651, or check out the city's website at www.decorahia.org for more detailed information.

City of Decorah

VISION STATEMENT

TO PROVIDE, in partnership with the community, an outstanding City in which to live, work, play and visit.

TO PROVIDE quality service in an efficient, effective manner.

TO IMPROVE the livability of our community through personal dedication, integrity, accountability, innovation and sensitivity.

TO ENSURE an even better community for future generations.

**PO Box 138
400 Claiborne Drive
Decorah, Iowa 52101**

www.decorahia.org

**Phone (563) 382-3651
Fax (563) 382-6525
Office Hours 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
Monday – Friday**

City Government

The Mayor is elected to a four-year term. The Mayor presides over Council meetings and also appoints the Chief of Police with Council approval and one Council member to act as mayor pro tempore. The Mayor can be contacted at the numbers above.

The Decorah City Council has seven members representing five wards, plus two at-large members. Members have staggered four year terms with each member serving on numerous committees as assigned by the Mayor.

The council appoints the following positions: City Manager, City Clerk, Treasurer, Deputy Clerk, Water and Sewer Superintendent, Assistant Water and Sewer Superintendent, Street Commissioner, Assistant Street Commissioner, Waste Water Treatment Plant Superintendent, and Park and Recreation Director. Appointments are made at the first meeting after the biennial City election as mandated by City Code.

The Council may also appoint a City Engineer and City Attorney.

Selection and Appointment to Boards / Commissions

In general, all board or commission members are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the City Council. Selection criteria varies depending upon the purpose, mission and requirements of each body. The following characteristics, however, are common to all board or commission members:

- **An interest in the board's / commission's area of concern**
- **The ability and willingness to work**
- **The ability to work with other people in a tactful and cooperative manner**
- **The time to carry out the board's/commission's duties / responsibilities**
- **A community point of view**

Prior to accepting a position on a board or commission, citizens should be aware of that body's meeting schedule to ensure they will be able to make the necessary time commitment. Citizens who accept a position on a board or commission also accept responsibility for committing a portion of their time to preparing for meetings.

How to Apply to Serve on a Local Board/Commission

The application for all appointed city boards and commissions is on the city website (in fillable format) at www.decorahia.org.

Interested citizens may complete and submit an application for any of the boards/commissions at any time. Applications can be submitted on line, or an applicant may copy and complete the application attached and turn in to the city administrative office. Applications are kept on file at the city administrative office.

Also, when there is a vacancy on a board or commission, notice is given to the public via local media. At such times, new applications received and those on file are considered to fill the open position/s.

Learning About Boards and Commissions

Learning all you can about boards and commissions is critical to making a decision to commit to serve. You want to fully understand the function, purpose, and mission of any board or commission before seeking an appointment.

Contact the city administrative office or log onto www.decorahia.org to obtain more information and descriptions of the city's various boards and commissions. Look up the ordinance, law or enabling statute that established the board's/commission's existence and mandate.

Review the board's / commission's meeting minutes, strategic plans, annual reports, or newsletters.

Attend a meeting of the board/commission or an event they sponsor to form an impression of how the body operates.

Talk to current members serving or those who have served in past on the board / commission. This is perhaps the best way to learn what commitment is expected or needed as part of an appointment. You can find lists of those currently serving on the city website at www.decorahia.org and checking under City Administration, Boards and Commissions.

Serving on a board or commission is a significant and meaningful way to participate in civic life.

Self-Assessment

It may help to take a self-assessment of your experiences, interests, qualities and strengths that you have to offer your community.

What are your skills and work experiences?

What volunteer experiences have you had?

What is your education or training?

What honors or awards have you received?

What compliments or feedback from others do you hear about yourself?

From your responses above, select any that may pertain to a board or commission that exists in your community and / or that interests you.

What descriptive qualities below do you possess?

Analytical	Flexible	Organized
Calm	Goal-Oriented	Reliable
Confident	Innovative	Resourceful
Cooperative	Knowledgeable	Self-Directed
Creative	Leader	Self-Motivated
Decisive	Well-Connected	Team Player
Fair	Logical	Tolerant

Reflecting on these experiences, qualities, skills and interests will help strengthen your application to the selected board or commission and help you explain how you will be an asset. Also identify and be ready to offer a name or names of people who could serve as a reference for you in the application process, if needed.

General Procedures

Most board / commission meetings follow rules and procedures contained in Robert's Rules of Order and the established rules and procedures in the body's by-laws (if there are by-laws). In addition, the following procedures help in conducting business in a timely and productive manner:

- **Start the meeting on time with a roll call**
- **Focus on issues at hand**
- **Follow agenda and order of business**
- **Follow rules and / or by-laws for public participation**
- **Allow time at end of meeting to review and evaluate meeting progress and decisions.**

How to Handle a Motion

- **Address the chair**
- **Get recognition**
- **Make a motion (Say “I move . . .)**
- **Second the motion**
- **Clearly state the motion**
- **Discuss the motion**
- **Restate the motion**
- **Vote on the motion**
- **Announce the results**

Meeting Minutes

Meeting minutes are public documents that are written by an appointed secretary from among the members on the board / commission. To maintain uniformity, keep these points in mind:

- Write what is done; summarize what is said
- Write minutes in third person and use past tense
- Begin all minutes with the name of the board / commission, the date, the location, time of day, and members present
- State whether the meeting is regular or special
- List the chairperson of the meeting, and the secretary
- State whether the minutes of the previous meeting were read and approved or dispensed with (approved without reading)
- Write out all main motions, including both those adopted and those denied
- State the name (at least last name) of the person making a motion and the person seconding the motion
- Record sustained and overruled points of order and appeals
- Summarize reports of committees, work groups or staff
- Record all appointments of committees and election of delegates
- Record the number of votes on both sides during formal voting
- During roll call vote, state the name of each person and their vote
- Record the time of adjournment
- The recording secretary signs the minutes.

Minutes are approved at a subsequent meeting at which time corrections may be made.

Always keep personal opinions of praise or criticism out of these public documents.

A signed copy of meeting minutes is filed with the city clerk and available for public review.

Open Meetings

All meetings of boards / commissions shall be open to the public, unless a closed meeting is needed and rules for such are followed. Chapter 21.5 of the Code of Iowa outlines rules for closed meetings.

Notice of all meetings shall be given at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. The notice must give the time, date, place of meeting, and tentative agenda. If 24-hour notice cannot be given, the reason must be stated in the minutes.

Members of a board / commission must consult applicable rules or codes of law regarding conflict of interest (*Section 68B.2A of the Code of Iowa*), liability, gifts, and / or purchasing. The board / commission chair, city clerk or administrator, or city attorney can be consulted to answer questions or provide needed clarifications.

Decorah's Appointed Boards and Commissions



The City of Decorah is looking for diversity of experiences and skills on its boards and commissions.

City Planning and Zoning Commission

Appointed by Mayor with Council Approval. Meets the 2nd Monday of each month at city hall council chambers at 7:00 p.m. There are seven (7) members who serve 5 year terms.

Commission was created in Chapter 2.26.010 of the City Code.

Summary of Powers:

A. To make such surveys, studies, maps, plans or plats of the whole or any portion of the city and of any land outside thereof which . . . bears relation to a comprehensive plan. . .”

B. To prepare a comprehensive plan regarding the height, number of stories and size of buildings and other structures; the percentage of ground that may be occupied; the size of yards, courts, and other open spaces; the density of population; and the location and use of buildings, structures and land for trade, industry, residence or other purposes; and to this end shall prepare a preliminary report and hold public meetings thereon and after such meetings have been held, to submit its final report and recommendation to the city council;

C. To recommend to the city council from time to time, as conditions require, amendments, supplements, changes or modifications in the comprehensive plan prepared by it;

D. To make recommendation to the city council in every instance where the city of Decorah proposes to sell city-owned real estate. Said recommendation must be made to the city council prior to the sale of any city-owned real estate.

Board of Adjustment of Zoning

Appointed by Council and Mayor. Meets first Monday of each month at city hall council chambers at 5:00 p.m. Five (5) members serve 5-year terms.

Chapter 17.28.010 Continues the Board of Adjustment and Zoning

Re: Powers and Duties: The board of adjustment shall have the following powers and duties: to hear and decide appeals where it is alleged there is error in any order, requirement, decision, or determination made by the zoning administrator in the enforcement of this title.

Re: Special Exceptions:

A. The board of adjustment shall hear and decide such special exception cases as it is specifically authorized to pass on by the terms of this title; to decide such questions as are involved in determining whether special exceptions should be granted, to grant special exceptions with such conditions and safeguards as are appropriate under this title, and to deny special exceptions when not in harmony with the purpose and intent of this title. A special exception shall not be granted by the board of adjustment unless and until [certain] . . . requirements are met.

B. In granting any special exception, the board of adjustment may prescribe appropriate conditions and safeguards in conformity with this title. Violation of such conditions and safeguards, when made a part of the terms under which the special exception is granted, shall be deemed a violation of this title and punishable under Chapter 1.24 of this code. The board of adjustment shall prescribe a time limit within which the action for which the special exception is required shall be begun or completed, or both. Failure to begin or complete such action within the time limit set shall void the special exception.

Re: Variances:

The board of adjustment may authorize upon appeal in specific cases such variance from the terms of this title as will not be contrary to the public interest where, owing to the special conditions, a literal enforcement of the provisions of this title would result in unnecessary hardship. A variance from the terms of this title shall not be granted by the board of adjustment unless/until [certain] . . . requirements are met.

Re: Decisions of the Board:

A. In exercising the above-mentioned powers, the board of adjustment may, so long as such action is in conformity with the terms of this title, reverse or affirm, wholly or partly, or may modify the order, requirement, decisions or determination as ought to be made, and to that end shall have powers of the zoning administrator from whom the appeal is taken. The concurring vote of three members of the board shall be necessary to reverse any order, requirement, decisions or determination of the zoning administrator, or to decide in favor of the applicant on any matter upon which it is required to pass under this title, or to effect any variation in application of this title; provided, however, that the action of the board shall not become effective until after the resolution of the board, setting forth the full reason for its decision and the vote of each members participating therein, has been filed. Such resolution, immediately following the board's final decisions, shall be filed in the office of the board, and shall be open to public inspection.

B. Every variation and exception granted or denied by the board shall be supported by a written testimony or evidence submitted in connection therewith.

Airport Commission

Appointed by Mayor with Council Approval. Meets 2nd Monday of each month at city hall council chambers at 7:00 a.m. Five (5) members serve 6-year terms.

Established in Chapter 2.24.010 of the city code, members of the Airport Commission “shall be bona fide residents of the city of legal age who have an active interest in the promotion of aviation in the Decorah community.

The airport commission shall have and exercise all of the powers with respect to airports granted to cities by the Code of Iowa except the power to sell airport real estate.

The board shall have power to make rules and regulations for the use of the airport or other facilities or for the conduct of airport functions, subject to the approval of the rules by the council.

Library Board of Trustees



Appointed by Mayor with council approval. Meets 2nd Thursday of each month at the Decorah Public Library at 4:00 p.m. Nine (9) members serve 6-year terms.

Purpose outlined in Chapter 2.20.010 of the city code, Eight of the members of the board shall be bona fide citizens and residents of the city and shall be over the age of eighteen. One of the members of the board shall be a bona fide citizen and resident of Winneshiek County and shall be over the age of eighteen.

Re: Powers and Duties:

The board shall have and exercise the following powers and duties:

- A. To meet and elect from its members a presidents, a secretary, and such other officers and committees as it deems necessary;**
- B. To have charge, control, and supervision of the public library, its appurtenances, fixtures and rooms containing the same, and to fix the rental rates of any property not immediately required for library purposes;**
- C. To direct and control all affairs of the library;**
- D. To employ a librarian, and authorize the librarian to employ such assistants and employees as may be necessary for the proper management of the library, and fix their compensation; provided, however, that prior to such employment, the compensation of the librarian, assistant sand employees shall have been fixed and approved by a majority of the members of the board voting in favor thereof;**
- E. To remove by a two-thirds vote of the board the librarian and provide procedures for the removal of assistants or employees for misdemeanor, incompetency or inattention to duty, subject, however, to the provision of Chapter 70, Code of Iowa;**
- F. To select or authorize the librarian to select and make purchases of books, materials, furniture, fixtures, stationery and supplies for the library within budgetary limits set by the board;**
- G. To authorize the use of the library by nonresidents of the city and to fix charges therefore;**

H. To make and adopt, amend, modify or repeal rules and regulations not inconsistent with ordinances and the law for the care, use, government and management of the library and the business of the board, fixing and enforcing penalties for violations;

I. To have exclusive control of the expenditure of all funds allocated for library purposes by the council, and of all moneys available by gift or otherwise for the erection of library buildings and of all other moneys belonging to the library, including fines and rentals collected, under the rules of the board;

J. To accept gifts of real property, personal property, or mixed property, and devises and bequests, including trust funds; to take the title to such property in the name of the library; to execute deeds and bills of sale for the conveyance of such property; and to expend the funds received by them from such gifts, for the improvement of the library;

K. To keep a record of its proceedings;

L. To make and send to the city council, on or before the tenth day of July in each year, an estimate of the amount necessary for the improvement, operation, and maintenance of the library for the coming fiscal year, the amounts expended for like purposes for the two preceding years and the amount of income expected for the next fiscal year from sources other than taxation;

M. To have authority to make agreements with the local county historical associations, where such exist, and to set apart the necessary room and to care for such articles as may come into the possession of the association. The trustees are further authorized to purchase necessary receptacles and materials for the preservation and protection of such articles as are in their judgment of a historical and educational nature and pay for the same out of funds allocated for library purposes.

Civil Service Commission

Appointed by Mayor with council approval. Three (3) members serve 6-year terms.

Established in Chapter 2.28.010

Re: Qualifications:

The commissioners must be citizens of Iowa and residents of the city for more than five years next preceding their appointment. No person while on said commission, shall hold or be a candidate for any office of public trust.

Re: Powers:

The commission shall have and possess the following powers, and such other powers as may be incidental to the successful carrying out of the powers vested in it herein or such as may be expressly conferred upon it by law:

- A. To carry out all the duties prescribed by law;
- B. To prescribe rules and regulations for the conduct of their work and for the examination of the applicants;
- C. To hold original entrance examinations and promotional examinations;
- D. To certify to the council a list of personnel qualified for civil service appointment;
- E. To hear appeals involving the suspension, demotion or discharge of civil service personnel.

***Learning all you can about boards
and commissions is critical to making
a decision to commit to serve.***

***Talk to current members serving or those who have
served in past on the board / commission.***

Low Rent Housing Agency

Appointed by Mayor with council approval. Five (5) members serve 2-year terms.

Chapter 2.32.010 created the low-rent housing agency.

Re: Board—Duties:

The board of commissioners shall exercise all powers and duties granted to the low-rent housing agency by Chapter 403A of the 1975 Code of Iowa and those delegated to it by the city council.



Decorah Tree Committee

Appointed by city council. Meets the last Thursday of each month at city hall council chambers at 7:00 p.m. Seven (7) members serve 3-year terms.

Chapter 12.40.090 Established the tree committee.

The tree board shall work with the city forester, park and recreation commission, private organizations and others to promote the planting and care of trees in Decorah in accordance with regulations and procedures approved by the council and filed in the office of the city clerk.

Re: Powers and Duties:

The primary task of the tree board is to facilitate the planting and care of trees in Decorah through a variety of means. The board shall have and exercise the following powers and duties:

- A. Advise the mayor and council concerning trees and related issues by means of annual and special reports.
- B. Pursue funding opportunities and grants to supplement a tree line item in the city budget.
- C. Develop, review annually and update as necessary a five-year plan for the replacement, maintenance and addition of trees to the City of Decorah including a special program to assist residents in planting boulevard trees.
- D. Coordinate activities with city/county personnel and private organizations whose job also involves trees such as the city forester, park and recreation director, city street department, utility companies, schools, Luther College and Upper Explorerland Regional Planning Commission.
- E. Provide Decorah residents with information about the value of trees to individuals, families and the community, and about the proper planting, mulching, watering, pruning and maintenance of trees.
- F. Work with utility companies and city departments to pursue proper pruning procedure to maintain tree beauty and health.
- G. Review, update and implement the report, "*Tree Assessment for the Community of Decorah*," prepared by the urban forestry program of Iowa DNR insofar as it is consistent with the city's five-year plan.

Cable TV Commission

Appointed by Mayor with council approval. Five (5) members serve 4-year terms. Meetings are held as deemed necessary and called by commission resolution or by the member serving as chair.

Re: Qualifications: Commissioners must be citizens of Iowa, eligible electors and residents of the city.

Re: Duties and Powers generally: The powers and duties of the commission shall include the following:

- A. Review compliance by the cable television franchisee with terms of the Decorah cable television ordinance and franchise.**
- B. Evaluate the service provided by the cable television franchisee to subscribers.**
- C. Review and compare programming and services offered by the cable television franchisee with programming and services offered in other communities.**
- D. Compare the charges and services of the Decorah cable television franchisee and telecommunication providers with charges of cable systems and telecommunications providers in other communities.**
- E. Bring subscriber complaints to the attention of the cable television franchisee and assist in complaint resolution.**
- F. Advise the city council regarding recommended changes in the Decorah cable television regulatory ordinances, franchises or agreements.**
- G. Monitor cable television and telecommunications industries regarding technology, advancements, opportunities and challenges for the industry and the city of Decorah.**
- H. Assist the Decorah City Council and the Decorah School Board in formulating policies governing access to the fiber-optic facility located at the Decorah High School.**
- I. Facilitate communication with cable television and other telecommunication providers by inviting providers to commission meetings to keep current regarding future plans. Pricing and servicing.**
- J. Oversee the creation and maintenance of Decorah Community Websites.**

K. Perform such other advisory services in the cable television and telecommunications areas as may be assigned by the Decorah city council.

L. To submit an annual report to the city council regarding: 1.) The state of cable regulation; 2.) The state of cable services and technologies; and 3.) Any recommendations it may have for the future of cable in Decorah.

Human Rights Commission

Appointed by Mayor with council approval. Meets 1st Tuesday of each month at city hall council chambers at 5:30 p.m. Seven (7) members serve 3-year staggered terms.

Chapter 2.50.010 Establishes the purpose of the Human Rights Commission.

The purpose of this chapter is to establish a human rights commission consistent with the Iowa Civil Rights Act (Chapter 216, Code of Iowa); to recognize the authority of the Iowa Civil Rights Commission and foster use of its procedures and programs; to increase awareness, understanding and appreciation of diversity within the community; and to promote the interests, rights and privileges of all citizens by proclaiming a public policy of nondiscrimination which secures freedom from discriminatory practices, protects human dignity and ensures the full productive capacities of all for the safety, health and general welfare of Decorah. The city of Decorah is fundamentally concerned about the practice or policy of discriminating against individuals and families for reasons of age, color, race, ethnicity, national origin or ancestry, creed or religious belief, disability, sex or sexual orientation, organizational affiliation, marital status or familial status, or public assistance or source of income. Such discrimination threatens not only the rights and privileges of individual citizens but also the foundations and institutions of a democracy.

Historic Preservation Commission

Appointed by Mayor with council approval. Meets 2nd Monday of each month at city hall conference room at 7:30 p.m. Seven (7) members serve 3-year staggered terms.

Chapter 2.54.010 establishes the Historic Preservation Commission: The purpose of [the Historic Preservation Commission] is to:

- A. Promote the educational, cultural, economic and general welfare of the public through the recognition, enhancement and perpetuation of sites and districts of historical and cultural significance;**
- B. Safeguard the city's historic, aesthetic and cultural heritage by preserving sites and districts of historic and cultural significance;**
- C. Stabilize and improve property values;**
- D. Foster pride in the legacy of beauty and achievements of the past;**
- E. Protect and enhance the city's attractions to tourists and visitors and the support and stimulus to business thereby provided;**
- F. Strengthen the economy of the city;**
- G. Promote the use of sites and districts of historic and cultural significance as places for the education, pleasure and welfare of the people of the city.**

Re: Powers of the Commission:

- A. The commission may conduct studies for the identification and designation of historic districts and sites meeting the definitions established by this chapter. The commission may proceed at its own initiative or upon a petition from any person, group or association. The commission shall maintain records of all studies and inventories for public use.**
- B. The commission may make a recommendation to the state historic**

preservation officer for the listing of a historic district or site in the National Register of Historic Places and may conduct a public hearing thereon.

C. The commission may investigate and recommend to the city council the adoption of ordinances designating historic sites and historic districts if they qualify as defined herein.

D. Other Powers. In addition to those duties and powers specified above, the commission may, with city council approval:

- 1.) Accept unconditional gifts and donations of real and personal property, including money, for the purpose of historic preservation.
- 2.) Make recommendations to the city council to acquire by purchase, bequest or donation, fee and lesser interests in historic properties, including properties adjacent to or associated with historic properties.
- 3.) Make recommendations to the city council to preservation, restoration, maintenance and operation of historic properties under the ownership and control of the city.
- 4.) Make recommendations to the city council to lease, sell or otherwise transfer or dispose of historic properties subject to rights of public access and other covenants and in a manner that will preserve the property.
- 5.) Make recommendations to the city council as to contracts with the state or the federal government or other organizations.
- 6.) Cooperate with the federal, state and local governments in the pursuance of the objectives of historic preservation.
- 7.) Provide information for the purpose of historic preservation to the governing body.
- 8.) Promote and conduct an educational and interpretive program on historic properties within its jurisdiction.

E. The commission shall be governed by the administrative personnel, accounting or budgetary policies of the city.

**For more information about
any city board or
commission, log onto
www.decorahia.org
or contact the city clerk
or administrator at
563-382-3651.**