

Letter to the Editor: The Importance of Serving on City Boards and Commissions

In the past few weeks, we have been hearing many positive and negative comments about how the City of Keokuk functions. This letter is being written to address one of the negative comments. It has been said that all the City Boards and Commissions have the same old people on them and that's why nothing ever changes. Out of twenty-four Boards and Commissions for the City of Keokuk, there are only 6 people that are on more than one. It is a requirement that a member of the Human Rights Commission is also a member of the Building and Housing Advisory Board. It is a requirement that one member of the Board of Adjustment is a member of the City Planning Commission. That means that out of 146 people serving on these boards and commissions, there are only four members serving on more than one board.

Serving on a board or commission isn't just about attending meetings, its about shaping the future of our community. Members review policies, offer recommendations to the City Council, and provide valuable input that reflects the needs and voices of our residents. It's an opportunity to learn how local government works, meet neighbors who care about the same issues, and make a real difference close to home.

You don't have to be an expert, just someone who cares. Whether you're new to town or have lived here for decades, your perspective matters. Volunteering on a board is one of the best ways to give back and help keep our community strong, vibrant, and inclusive.

Our city runs best when our residents are engaged, informed, and willing to share their time and talents. One of the most meaningful ways to do that is by serving on a city board or commission. These groups help guide decisions on everything from parks and planning to economic development, public safety, and community events.

If you've ever thought about getting more involved, now is the time. Check the city's website or contact City Hall to learn about current openings and how to apply. Your voice and ideas can help shape the decisions that impact us all. Below is the list of openings for the City of Keokuk's Boards and Commission.

Board of Adjustment needs 1 member.

(A city board of adjustment hears and decides appeals related to local zoning ordinances, which includes granting variances for situations where strict enforcement would cause hardship, and approving special or conditional uses not normally permitted. They also act as an administrative review body to correct errors made by zoning officials.)

Building and Housing Advisory Board needs 1 member (must be a plumber)

(The building advisory and appeals board shall have the power to hear and decide appeals where it is alleged that there is an error in any order, requirement, decision or determination made by the building official, in the enforcement of the building code.)

City Planning Commission needs 1 member.

(A city planning commission advises the city council on a wide range of issues related to the physical, social, and economic development of a city, and it reviews and makes recommendations on proposals for land use, development, and zoning. Its duties include reviewing site plans, helping to create and update the general plan, holding public hearings, and reviewing zoning ordinances, conditional use permits, and subdivision applications.)

Historic Preservation Commission needs 1 member.

(In Iowa, a Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) identifies, protects, and promotes historic properties through actions like surveying historic resources, reviewing projects for appropriateness, recommending historic districts, and creating preservation plans. HPCs work to safeguard a city's or county's cultural and architectural heritage by making recommendations to city councils and helping property owners with preservation, renovation, and reuse activities.)

Keokuk Area Convention and Tourism needs 1 member.

(The Keokuk Area Convention and Tourism Bureau acts as an information hub for travelers, promoting the region's attractions, events, and history. It assists visitors with planning their trips by providing information on local sights like the Chief Keokuk Monument, the Keokuk-Hamilton Dam Museum, and the George M. Verity Riverboat Museum. Additionally, the bureau highlights recreational opportunities and organizes or promotes community events, such as the Eagle Days, Geode Festival, and Big Dam Street Festival, which helps to boost local commerce and tourism.)

Keokuk Public Library Board needs 1 member

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

- [(1) Meet and elect from its members a president, a secretary and such other officers as it deems necessary.
- (2) Have charge, control and supervision of the public library, its appurtenances, fixtures, rooms and grounds containing the same.
- (3) Direct and control all the affairs of the library.
- (4) 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, assistants and employees shall have been fixed and approved by a majority of the members of the board voting in favor thereof.
- (5) 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 provisions of Chapter 70, Code of Iowa.

(6) Select, or authorize the librarian to select, and make purchases of books, pamphlets, magazines, periodicals, papers, maps, journals, other library materials, furniture, fixtures, stationery and supplies for the library within the budgetary limits set by the board.

(7) Authorize the use of the library by nonresidents of the city and to fix charges therefor;

(8) 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.

(9) 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.

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

(11) Keep a record of its proceedings.

(12) Enforce the performance of conditions on gifts, donations, devises and bequests accepted by the city by action against the city council.]

If any of these openings is something of interest to you, or if you have any questions, please call Deputy City Clerk Amy Bension or Mayor Kathie Mahoney at 319-524-2050. Feel free to stop by at any time.