

VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE
Report for the Village Council Meeting
9/2/2025

SUBJECT:	SUBMITTED BY:
Boards and Commissions Discussion	Dave Fieldman Village Manager

SYNOPSIS

Boards and Commissions Discussion.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

The Strategic Goals include *Exceptional Municipal Services*.

FISCAL IMPACT

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

At the recommendation of the Village Council.

BACKGROUND

At the August 12, 2025 meeting, the Village Council will meet to discuss Boards and Commissions. The purpose of the meeting is to provide direction on how the Boards and Commissions will be engaged by the Council and staff.

Report Contents

This report contains information intended to assist Village Council members in providing policy direction. The report consists of the following sections:

- Current System of Board & Commission Engagement
 - Key Operating Concepts
 - General Information and Roles & Responsibilities
 - Communicating and Reporting
 - Appointment Process
 - Removal Process
- Board & Commission Appointments, May 2019 to Present
- Desired Outcomes for 2025-27 and Beyond
- Strategies and Actions to Help Achieve Desired Outcomes

Current System of Board & Commission Engagement

The Village has 14 Boards & Commissions. Each board has its own powers and duties enumerated in the Village Code.

Key Operating Concepts

The current engagement of Boards and Commissions is based on the following key operating concepts:

Operate Efficiently - Boards and Commissions meet only when there are agenda items to warrant a meeting. Generally speaking, meetings are scheduled when a petition for an action is submitted or when the Village Council refers an item to a board for consideration. B&C's are rarely asked to generate their own agenda items. This approach minimizes the amount of staff time dedicated to B&C related activities and minimizes the number of topics and items that the Village Council considers. In 2024, the Village held 77 B&C meetings (excluding the Library). If all B&C's (except the Library Board and Building Board of Appeals (BBA)) were to meet monthly, there would be 144 meetings per year.

Board & Commission Meetings, 2024

Board & Commission	Number of Meetings
Board of Police and Fire Commissioners	4
Plan Commission*	8
Zoning Board of Appeals*	2
Planning & Zoning Commission*	3
Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Board	11
Environmental Concerns Commission	7
Liquor Commission	11
Community Events Commission	2
Transportation & Parking	4
Police Pension	5
Fire Pension	5
Historic Preservation & Design Review Board	6
Stormwater Floodplain Oversight	1
Building Board of Appeals	0
Human Service Commission	8
Technology Commission	0
Total	77

*NOTE: In 2024, the Plan Commission and Zoning Board of Appeals were combined to form the Planning & Zoning Commission (PZC). The PZC began operating in November 2024. The commission met once in November and twice in December.

Provide Advice to the Village Council - With a few exceptions where certain B&C's have final decision making authority (PZC for certain variations to the Zoning Ordinance, BBA, HPDRB for compliance with downtown design guidelines on certain projects), B&C's serve as advisors to the Village Council, providing recommendations on actions that will be considered by the Village for final action. Under this approach, B&C's are generally not considered "working boards" charged with completing tasks or specific work products. Staff is charged with completing tasks and work products which are presented to B&C's for their review and formulation of recommendations.

Provide a Venue for In-Depth Discussions - B&C's are tasked with considering agenda items at a detailed level, spending significant time receiving and considering input from petitioners, the public and staff. This approach provides residents an opportunity to engage with the Village on a detailed level. B&C's produce a detailed record of the discussion for Village Council review during their consideration of the issue.

Reflect a Cross-Section of the Community - The appointees are intended to result in each B&C consisting of residents who reflect a variety of different backgrounds, skills, topic matter knowledge and experiences. This approach is intended to have the B&C discussions and recommendations reflect the discussions and decisions that the Village Council is likely to have and make. For example, the Transportation and Parking Commission does not consist of only traffic engineers and residents who are advocates for certain traffic and parking outcomes or positions. TaP currently consists of residents who are all interested in the topic matter and have a variety of different backgrounds and experiences.

Provide Opportunities for Many Residents to Participate - B&C's provide an opportunity for many residents to participate in the Village of Downers Grove government. To increase the number of participating residents, Mayor Barnett has chosen to informally limit the number of successive terms residents may serve on B&C. This approach is designed to create turnover on B&C's and increase the number of residents who are afforded the opportunity to serve on B&C's over time.

Staff as Subject Matter Experts and Liaisons - Under the current system, staff members act as subject matter experts providing data-driven analysis and recommendations to B&C's, responding to technical questions and explaining the legal framework and regulatory context of agenda items. Currently there are one or more staff members with expertise relevant to the subject matter of every B&C.

Staff serve as liaisons working directly with petitioners to help prepare them for B&C meetings. They also provide information to B&C's about Village Council policies, plans and actions. The Village Code describes staff's role as follows:

Each board or commission shall be assigned a Village staff member, appointed by the Village Manager, to assist such board or commission. Such staff member shall furnish information and advice respecting such matters as the board or commission may reasonably require in order to fulfill its purposes as set forth in this Article, including copies of any relevant ordinances, plans or other data, and in so doing, may obtain information and advice from the Village Manager, Village Attorney, and other officers, departments and agencies of the Village. The Village shall employ a secretary to prepare and keep minutes and records for each board and commission.

Council Member Participation Discouraged - Village Council members are discouraged from participating in B&C meetings. Under this approach, all Village Council members have the same information about the results of B&C meetings and meeting participants address B&C members (as opposed to Council members). Council member attendance at such meetings may limit the discussion or may influence the opinion of B&C members who may be concerned about meeting the expectations of the Council member and can create an environment of information disparity within the Council itself.

General Information and Roles & Responsibilities

The table below provides general information about each of the Boards and Commissions. A more detailed summary is attached to this report. The Village website includes a [webpage](#) providing information about Boards & Commissions and providing a simple, on-line application form.

Summary of Boards & Commissions

	Members are appointed by:				Agenda Generation		Other
Board and Commission	VC	Mayor w/ VC confirmation	Mayor	Other membership requirements	Applicant submission	Council-directed	Required by Statute
Planning & Zoning Commission		X		X	X	X	X
Stormwater and Floodplain Committee		X			X	X	X
Police Pension Board			X	X	X		X
Fire Pension Board			X	X	X		X
Board of Fire and Police Commissioners		X			X	X	X
Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Board				X			X
Library Board of Trustees	X						X
Building Board of Appeals				X	X		X
Historic Preservation & Design Review Board		X		X	X	X	
Community Events Commission		X		X	X	X	
Environmental Concerns Commission		X			X	X	
Human Service Commission		X		X	X	X	
Liquor Commission		X			X		
Technology Commission		X				X	
Transportation and Parking Commission		X			X	X	

Most board appointments are made with staggered terms; allowing on average 2 positions available each year.

Communicating and Reporting

Communication between the Village Council and B&C's is accomplished through staff in the form of written and verbal reports and the preparation of meeting minutes. B&C meetings are not televised or broadcast. Therefore, the Village Council relies primarily on the minutes of B&C meetings to understand the proceedings. In addition, staff provide written and verbal reports to the Village Council about certain B&C meetings. On some occasions, staff meet with Village Council members individually to discuss B&C meetings.

Staff liaisons to B&C's provide written and verbal reports to B&C members about Village Council plans, policies and actions that are relevant to B&C roles, responsibilities and actions.

Appointment Process

The process for appointing residents to B&C's is guided by the [Village Council policy](#). The policy, last updated in 2009, provides details on the appointment process, summarized below:

- Staff shall provide and manage Profile Sheets which serve as applications for residents to serve on B&C's.
- Staff shall identify B&C members with expiring terms and inquire if they are interested in continuing to serve.
- Staff shall facilitate the screening of applicants by the Mayor. The Mayor may delegate part or all of the screening process as the Mayor deems appropriate.
- The Mayor and staff shall circulate to the Village Council the proposed nominees for appointment.
- Council members shall review the proposed nominees and contact the Mayor or Village Manager with any comments, questions or concerns.
- The Mayor shall submit nominations to be formally approved or rejected by the Village Council at a Council meeting.
- The policy includes a schedule for the appointment process. The schedule calls for the appointments to be made in August.
- The policy is non-binding and serves as a general guideline. To enhance the involvement of Council members in the appointments, Mayor Barnett's most recent process includes the creation of a "short list" from which Council members assigned to certain B&C's select applicants for appointment.

Removal Process

The Village Code authorizes the removal of Board and Commission members (see Section 2.53.1 below).

Sec 2.53.1 Removal Of Boards And Commissions Members

- *Members of any board or commission serve at the pleasure of the appointing authority and may be removed as provided in this section.*
- *Unless otherwise specified, where removal from a board or commission is governed by statute, such statute shall control.*
- *The Mayor shall have the authority to remove any member of a board or commission where such member is appointed by the Mayor, or appointed jointly by the Mayor and Village Manager.*
- *The Village Council, by a vote of not less than four (4) members, shall have the authority to remove any member of a board or commission where such member is appointed by the Village Council; appointed by the Mayor with concurrence of the Village Council, or appointed by the Village Manager with the concurrence of the Village Council.*
- *The Village Manager shall have the authority to remove any member of a board or commission where such member is appointed by the Village Manager.*

(Ord. No. 4011, 3/9/98; Ord. No. 4582, 4/20/04; Ord. No. 4877, 6/5/07) (Ord. 5702, Amended, 06/12/2018)

Board & Commission Appointments May 2019 to Present

Since May 2019, 168 appointments and reappointments have been made by the Mayor, the Mayor with Village Council consent and by the Village Council.

Desired Outcomes for 2025-27 and Beyond

At the August 12, 2025 meeting, the Village Council will be asked to discuss desired outcomes related to the engagement of B&C's.

Strategies and Actions to Help Achieve Desired Outcomes

Strategies and actions to help achieve the desired outcomes will likely be discussed by the Village Council at the August 12, 2025 meeting.

Boards & Commissions Summary

[Planning and Zoning Commission](#) - The Planning and Zoning Commission is required by state law. It consists of nine voting members and three non-voting, ex-officio members; one from the Park District, Sanitary District and the local school districts. In addition, the mayor is an ex-officio member of the Planning and Zoning Commission. All ex-officio members are not entitled to vote and are not counted in determining whether a quorum of the Planning and Zoning Commission is present at any meeting.

THE PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION HAS THE FOLLOWING POWERS AND DUTIES:

- To prepare and recommend to the corporate authorities a comprehensive plan for the present and future development or redevelopment of the Village.
- To recommend to the Village Council, from time to time, such changes or specific in the comprehensive plan as the Planning and Zoning Commission may deem necessary.
- To initiate, study and make recommendations regarding matters dealing with the planning of the community and in contiguous territory outside of the corporate limits of the Village and distant not more than 1 ½ miles from such limits not included in the Village.
- To exercise such other powers germane to the above powers as may be conferred by the Village Council.
- To recommend, subject to consideration and approval by the Village Council, reasonable standards of design for subdivisions and for resubdivisions of unimproved land and of areas subject to redevelopment in respect to public improvements.
- To review preliminary and final plans for planned unit developments pursuant to the requirements of the Zoning Ordinance of the Village and to consider and recommend approval or disapproval of such plans to the Village Council, including any specific conditions of any recommended approval.
- To consider and approve certain lot reconfigurations that do not require a subdivision plat, pursuant to DGMC Section 20.601 of the Village Code.
- To consider and make recommendations to the Village Council concerning any request for a waiver or variation of any requirement of DGMC Section 19.14(b) for construction of public improvements as a condition of obtaining a permit for access across a parkway to Village right-of-way.
- To hear, consider and recommend to the Village Council matters dealing with amendments to the Zoning Ordinance.
- To hear, consider and recommend to the Village Council matters dealing with the granting of special uses.
- Notwithstanding the provisions of DGMC Section 2.59(a) of this Code, to hear and decide on an application for any variations or exceptions from the terms of the Downers Grove Zoning Ordinance and/or the Downers Grove Subdivision Ordinance, subject to their terms.
- To designate, subject to consideration and approval of the Village Council, land suitable for annexation to the Village and the recommended zoning classification for such land upon annexation.

- To hear and decide appeals from, and to make modifications to, any order, requirement, decision or determination made the Community Development Director responsible for the enforcement of the Downers Grove Zoning Ordinance.
- To hear and decide on all matters referred to it or upon which it is required to pass under the Downers Grove Zoning Ordinance.
- Any additional powers granted by the Illinois Municipal Code.

Stormwater and Floodplain Oversight Committee - The Stormwater Committee is required by DuPage County Ordinance. The Committee consists of seven members and has the following powers:

- To hear any appeal from any requirement, application, interpretation or determination made by the Administrator in the enforcement of this Ordinance or from the inclusion therein of any special condition.
- To hold public hearings and make decisions or recommendations regarding appeals and proposed variations to this Ordinance
- To review and recommend amendments to this Ordinance.
- To perform such other duties and functions as the Village Council may from time to time direct.

Within sixty (60) days after the close of each calendar year, the Committee shall report in writing to the Village Council. Such annual report shall describe the activities of the Committee for such year and shall include an estimate of the expenses of the Committee anticipated for the next succeeding fiscal year. The Committee is authorized to make such other and further reports and recommendations to the Village Council as it shall deem necessary or desirable. From time to time, the Village Council may also request the Committee to make recommendations with respect to particular matters.

Police Pension Board - The Police Pension Board is required by State law and operates according to the State statute. The Board consists of five members. Two of the members are appointed by the Mayor. The other members consist of two active police officers and one retired officer. The Village Treasurer is an ex-officio member. The Police Pension Board manages the police pension fund.

Fire Pension Board - The Fire Pension Board is required by State law and operates according to the State statute. The Board consists of five members. Two of the members are appointed by the Mayor. The other members consist of two active firefighters and one retired firefighter. The Village Treasurer is an ex-officio member. The Fire Pension Board manages the fire pension fund.

Board of Fire and Police Commissioners - The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners is required by State law and consists of three members appointed for staggered terms of three years each. The personnel, duties, tenure of office, powers, and qualifications are established by ordinance or State law. Members of the Board are appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Village Council. Qualifications for membership on the Board are provided by ordinance or State law.

The Board of Fire and Police Commissioners derives its power and authority from the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners Act of the Illinois Municipal Code, and from the home rule powers of the Village, as provided in the State Constitution. The powers and duties of the Board are as follows:

- To conduct examinations for and appoint all firefighters and police officers in the Village's Fire and Police Departments, except the Fire Chief, the Chief of Police, the deputy or assistant chiefs of each department, battalion chiefs, division chiefs, auxiliary police officers, and civilian employees of the respective departments.
- To conduct examinations and certify candidates for promotion in the Village's fire and police departments.
- To conduct hearings and impose discipline, including demotions.

- To adopt, enforce, administer and amend the Rules and Regulations of the Board of Fire and Police Commissioners.
- To take such other action as the Village Council may from time to time expressly authorize or direct.
- The Board shall not have the power or authority to make any rule to govern the operation of the police or fire department or the conduct of its members.

[Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Board](#) - The Foreign Fire Insurance Tax Board is required by State law and consists of four firefighters; one from each fire station. Members are elected to their positions by firefighters assigned to each fire station. The Fire Chief is an ex-officio member. Terms are two years.

The Board manages all funds that the Village receives from foreign fire insurance taxes. The Board adopts a final budget for the collection and expenditure of the Foreign Fire Insurance Tax, to be approved by ordinance passed by the Mayor and Village Council. The Board approves all expenditure of monies from the Fund for the maintenance, use and benefit of the Department.

[Library Board of Trustees](#) - The Downers Grove Public Library is a component unit of the Village. It is an autonomous entity with its own six-member Board of Trustees. Board members are appointed by the Village Council to terms of four years. The Library Board is required by State law. More information about the Downers Grove Public Library is available [here](#).

[Building Board of Appeals](#) - The BBA is required by the building codes and consists of seven members who are qualified by experience and training to pass upon matters pertaining to building construction. The members and the chair are appointed by the Village Manager with confirmation by the Village Council. Members consist of an architect, structural engineer, and an engineer or contractor with experience in fire protection, electrical, plumbing, mechanical or general contracting.

The BBA is the decision making body on appeals related to the application of building codes.

[Historic Preservation Design Review Board](#) - The HPDRB consists of seven members appointed for staggered terms of three years each. Two members must be architects, one member must be an attorney, one member must be a representative of the Downers Grove Historical Society and three (3) members are citizens from the general public.

Powers and duties consist of:

- Administer the historic preservation provisions of the Village Code
- Perform such additional duties as the Village Council may direct
- Review certain downtown projects for compliance with downtown design guidelines

The HPDRB is required to meet at least quarterly to maintain the Village's Certified Local Government designation.

[Community Events Commission](#) - The Community Events Commission makes recommendations to the Village Council regarding the use of public property for community events by reviewing special event temporary use applications.

The commission consists of seven members. The members, including the designation of the chairperson, are appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Village Council. Members are appointed for staggered terms of three years each. Each member must either reside within the corporate limits of the Village; or be an employee, officer, manager or owner of a business which has one or more business locations within the corporate limits of the Village. In addition, the Manager of the Downtown Management Corporation or his/her designee and the President of the Economic Development Corporation or his/her designee serve on the Commission as non-voting, ex-officio members.

The Community Events Commission has the following powers and duties:

- To make recommendations to the Village Council regarding issues that will affect public community events that involve the use of public property and/or services in Downers Grove.
- To review and evaluate new and existing events and requests for other events that utilize public property and/or public services and make recommendations to the Village Council concerning their value as a community event.
- To review various documents that pertain to the planning of, or which govern the operation of, a specific event.
- To coordinate, supervise, publicize and encourage the widest possible participation in any community wide celebration that the Village Council may decide to support.
- To evaluate any community event and to provide the Council with an evaluation and/or recommendation.
- To establish reasonable rules and regulations governing the functions of the Community Events Commission, consistent with the powers and duties set forth herein.
- To perform such functions and activities in addition to the foregoing as the Village Council may from time to time direct.

[Environmental Concerns Commission](#) - The ECC consists of seven members appointed for staggered terms of three years each. Members are appointed by the Mayor, including the designation of chairperson, subject to confirmation by the Council.

The ECC has the following duties:

- To develop, prepare and review plans for the prevention, abatement, or control of environmental pollution, including but not limited to: air, water, land, and noise as directed by the Council and Village Manager.
- To develop, prepare and review plans encouraging the conservation of energy, materials, and natural resources by private citizens and public agencies in the Village as directed by the Council and Village Manager.
- To promote and encourage close cooperation between the Village and private citizens and public agencies interested in conducting natural resource, conservation, and/or environmental activities so that all such activities may be promoted and coordinated in a manner to secure the greatest benefit to the public welfare.
- To recommend the adoption of policies or ordinances and amendments or additions to existing ordinances that would encourage conservation of materials, energy and/or natural resources and aid in environmental control.
- To promulgate and effect a program of publicity and educational programs relating to environmental pollution and energy/material conservation.
- To investigate and review environmental and conservation programs and services available to residents of the Village from various State and local agencies, public and private, and to establish a method of communicating this information to the public.
- To seek, through education and dissemination of information, to achieve voluntary compliance with the policies and objectives of Article IV of Chapter 13 of this Code, from all persons in the Village whose activities may have a material impact on environmental pollution.
- At the direction of the Council or Village Manager, to conduct studies, investigations and research into matters affecting environmental quality control and energy management.
- To take such other action as the Council may from time to time expressly authorize or direct.

[Human Service Commission](#) - The HSC consists of seven members appointed for staggered terms of three (3) years each, and an ex-officio member representative of a Downers Grove unit of local government. The HSC has the following powers and duties:

- To review and evaluate matters of social concern in the Village, including issues related to youth, senior citizens, families, minorities and other social groups.
- To consider such matters of social concern as may be referred to them by the Village Council and to recommend the adoption of policies or ordinances or the taking of other actions in the best interest of the Village as a whole.
- To consider the benefits to individuals and the public of proposed policies and actions and to consider the public and private costs and sources of revenue to support such policies and actions.
- To hear and investigate any matter referred to it by a court pursuant to the procedures set forth in DGMC Section 13A.24 and DGMC Section 13A.25 of the Fair Housing Article, Chapter 13A.

[Liquor Commission](#) - The Liquor Commission consists of seven members appointed by the Local Liquor Commissioner (Mayor) with confirmation by the Village Council. The chairman is designated by the Local Liquor Commissioner for the purpose of presiding over meetings conducted at the direction of the Local Liquor Commissioner.

The Liquor Commission shall have and exercise the following powers and duties:

- Upon referral of applications for liquor licenses by the Local Liquor Commissioner, to review applications and the investigation of applicants for liquor licenses, and to submit findings and recommendations to the Local Liquor Commissioner setting forth its conclusions respecting such applications.
- To conduct disciplinary hearings at the request of the Local Liquor Commissioner and to submit findings and recommendations to the Local Liquor Commissioner setting forth its conclusions respecting the existence and nature of any violation of this Chapter.
- To keep written records of its meetings and proceedings which shall be open for public inspection during regular business hours at Village offices provided that such public records shall not include matters concerning the applicants or licensees which would result in an invasion of privacy.
- To assist the Local Liquor Commissioner in the performance of the powers and duties as requested by the Local Liquor Commissioner or Village Council.
- At the Local Liquor Commissioner's request, to review recommended revisions to this ordinance. Said reviews and recommendations shall be advisory only and shall not prevent the Local Liquor Commissioner and the Village Council from taking whatever action he/she deems appropriate or necessary.

[Technology Commission](#) - The Technology Commission consists of seven members appointed for staggered terms of four years each. The members, including the designation of chairperson, are appointed by the Mayor, subject to confirmation by the Village Council.

The Commission is generally charged with evaluating, advising and providing recommendations to the Village Council regarding options and alternatives for the purchase, upgrade, configuration and use of technological facilities, including computers, telecommunications and the internet. This includes developing, and updating as needed, a long term strategic plan for such technological facilities. The Commission is to evaluate current and anticipated future technological needs and resources, and provide guidance regarding the most responsible use of technology within the mission and limitation of the Village. The Commission also performs such functions and activities in addition to the foregoing as the Village Council may from time to time direct.

[Transportation and Parking Commission](#) - The Transportation and Parking Commission consists of seven members appointed for staggered terms of three years each. Members are appointed by the Mayor, including the designation of chairperson, subject to confirmation by the Council.

TaP has the following powers and duties:

- To receive, investigate, evaluate and report to the Council on requests made by the Village Council, by the Village Manager or through a completed petition respecting transportation activities on public property. These transportation activities will encompass the following:
 - Transportation of people and materials
 - Parking
 - Traffic, including control, daily trends and abatement
 - Commuter bus system
 - Pedestrians and non-motor vehicle traveling persons
 - Traffic signage
- To conduct public meetings on proposed policies and plans when considered necessary by the commission, Village Council or as required by ordinance, State or federal law or regulation.
- To conduct public meetings respecting any such request; and to submit written findings and recommendations to the Village Council, setting forth its conclusions and recommendations respecting such matters or recommending alternatives thereto.
- To conduct such other meetings as it may deem necessary or appropriate, and to investigate such other inquiries, studies or other matters as the Village Council or Village Manager may from time to time refer to the commission.