



# Handbook for Boards and Commissions Members

*[www.storycountyiowa.gov](http://www.storycountyiowa.gov)*

Updated May 2020

Story County, Iowa - 900 6th Street - Nevada, Iowa 50201



# WELCOME!

Thank you for your willingness to serve Story County. Your participation personifies citizen involvement in the governing process. We rely on our members of the boards and commissions to research issues, reach out to our citizens, and make recommendations that are aligned with our mission and goals.

This Handbook was prepared as a reference for those residents who volunteer to serve on our numerous boards and commissions. This handbook is intended to provide you with information about the organization of Story County as well as the functions of the advisory boards.

Our boards and commission members play a vital part of the overall deliberative process in Story County. Being a member of a board or commission may not be an easy task, but, if done well, it can be very rewarding.

It is with sincere appreciation and gratitude that we thank you for volunteering your time and effort to serve Story County.

**“Active community participation is key to building an empowered community.”**

**- J. Norman Reid**



# INTRODUCTION

Story County encourages, promotes and welcomes the participation of citizens in the decision-making process. We have a number of standing citizen commissions, committees and boards who provide public input into Story County government.

Boards and commissions serve as an important link between the citizens and Story County by communicating values, attitudes and needs of Story County within the special area of their group's assignment. They are an integral part of the process which contributes to sound government. Approximately 70 citizens presently serving Story County on a board or commission give generously of their time. We benefit from the expertise and energy of these special individuals.

This Handbook offers a brief description of Story County and the organization and general responsibilities for all board/commission members, requirements for becoming a board/commission member, meeting procedures, and legal requirements. The purpose of this Handbook is to provide all board/commission members with a resource to successfully fulfill their valued role as a volunteer with Story County.

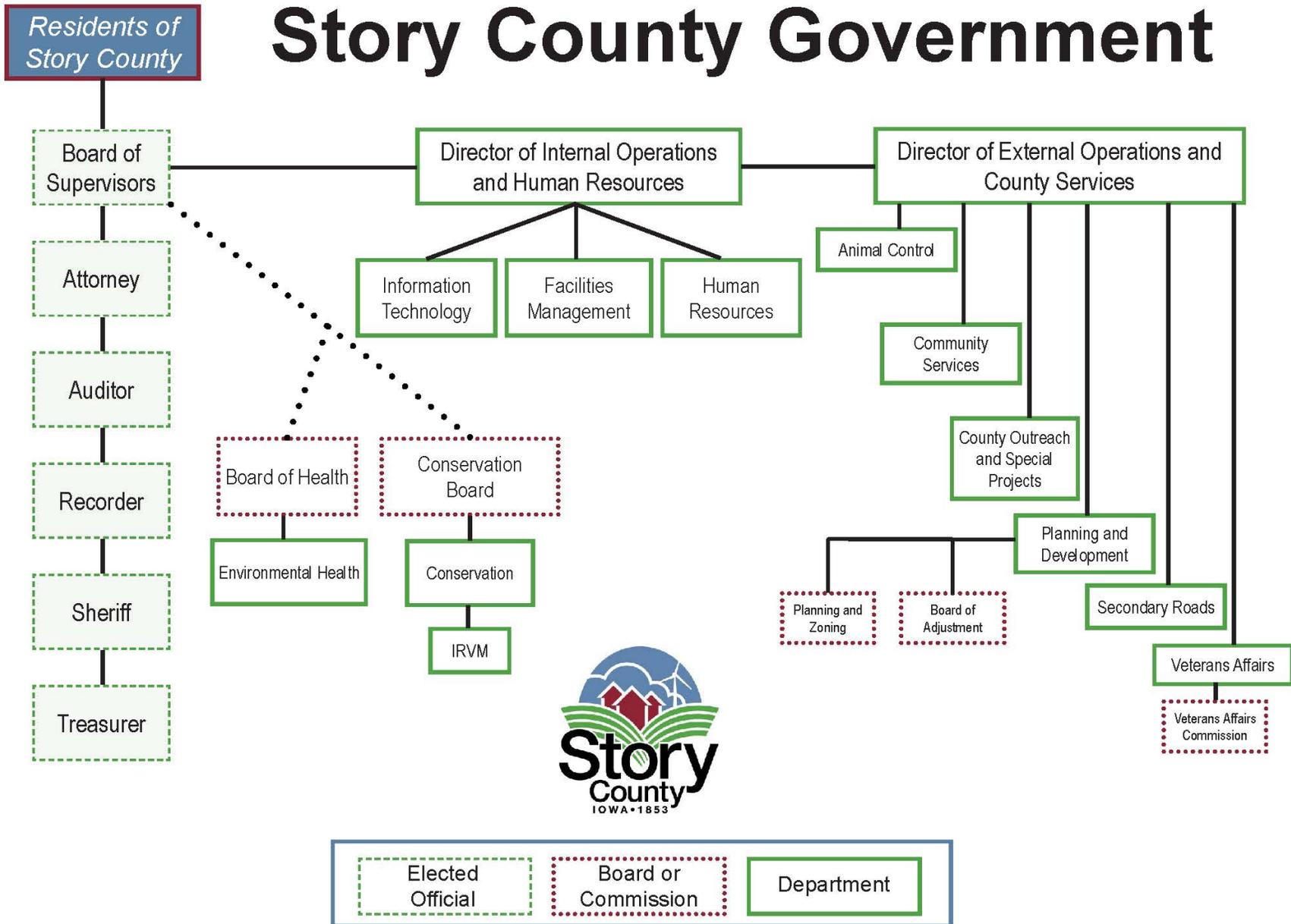
If you have any questions after reviewing this Handbook, please contact the staff liaison for the board or commission to which you have been appointed, or call the Director of External Operations and County Services at 515-382-7243.

*For a listing of Story County Boards and Commissions please visit the county's website: [www.storycountyiowa.gov](http://www.storycountyiowa.gov).*

## Story County Boards and Commissions



# Story County Government





# ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND THE APPLICATION PROCESS

## Eligibility Requirements/Qualifications

Unless otherwise specified, applicants for all boards and commissions appointed by the Board of Supervisors are required to be legal residents of Story County.

Story County encourages qualified individuals with disabilities to apply for appointment to boards and commissions. In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), if an individual needs special assistance to participate in a County meeting, reasonable accommodations and arrangements will be made through the Board of Supervisor's Office. Please contact the County ADA Coordinator at (515) 382-7204.

## Applications and Vacancies

- Any legal resident interested in serving on board or commission is invited to complete an application form and submit it to the Board of Supervisor's Office. Applications remain on file for one year.
- When a vacancy occurs, it is publicized, and applications of persons interested in serving on the particular body are accepted.
- Annually, the Board of Supervisors places the upcoming appointments for the new year on the Board's organizational meeting agenda.
- Scheduled vacancies are those created by the scheduled expiration of a term on a board, commission, or committee. These vacancies are publicized annually by August, with applications due early fall.

A commission, committee, or board member serves at the pleasure of the Board of Supervisors and can be removed by a majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. If a commission, committee, or board member finds that he/she cannot perform the duties of the office due to any reason, he/she shall submit a written resignation to the Chair of the Board of Supervisors. The Board will then proceed with the application process for an individual to fill the unexpired term on that group. A member who relocates his or her residency outside of the County shall immediately notify the Chair of the Board of Supervisors to determine if it affects his/her ability to remain on that board, commission, or committee.



# Examples of CLASSIFICATION OF ADVISORY BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

| Board or Commission              | Sets Policy/Decision Authority | Recommending Capacity |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------|
| ASSET                            |                                | ✓                     |
| Board of Adjustment *            | ✓                              |                       |
| Board of Health ^                | ✓                              | ✓                     |
| Civil Service Commission         | ✓                              | ✓                     |
| CICS Advisory Committee          |                                | ✓                     |
| Commission of Veterans Affairs + | ✓                              |                       |
| Condemnation Compensation Board  | ✓                              |                       |
| Conservation Board ^             | ✓                              | ✓                     |
| Planning and Zoning Commission   |                                | ✓                     |

\*Decisions are appealable to District Court.

+Decisions are appealable to the Board of Supervisors.

^Board sets policy in regards to administrative matters, however fiscal and regulatory decisions are adopted by the Board of Supervisors.



# IOWA OPEN MEETINGS LAW

Board and commission members appointed by the Board of Supervisors are subject to the provisions of Chapters 21 and 22 of the Iowa Code – the open meetings and records or “sunshine” laws. These chapters attempt to ensure that Iowa government at all levels is as transparent and accountable to the public as possible.

The first sentence of Chapter 21 says explicitly that the goal of the law is to guarantee, through open meetings of governmental bodies, “that the basis and rationale of government decisions, as well as those decisions themselves, are easily accessible to the people.” The law also says that any ambiguity should be settled in favor of openness.

In other words, there is a legal presumption that meetings of government bodies should be open to the public except in limited circumstances, spelled out in Chapter 21.5. Even then, the law says that “nothing in this section requires a governmental body to hold a closed session.”

Governmental bodies are required to give adequate notice of the time, date and place of a meeting, and post a tentative agenda (Chapter 21.4). They must keep minutes of their meetings (Chapter 21.3), which then become public records. Items not included on the agenda should not be discussed at a meeting, unless there is an emergency item that cannot be deferred for 24 hours.

A governmental body that wishes to hold a closed meeting must follow certain procedures, spelled out in Chapter 21.5, including taking a public vote and citing which exception allows closure. Discussion in closed meetings is limited to the reason why the meeting was closed. The governmental body must go back into open session to take any final action.

Government bodies are not required to allow public comment at open meetings, though many do. They are allowed to enforce reasonable rules to ensure meetings are orderly. Members of the public are allowed to use cameras and recording devices at open meetings, so long as they are not disruptive.



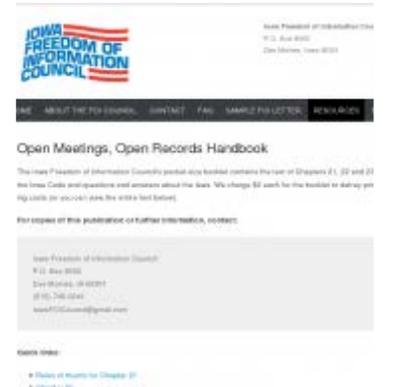
*The IPIB is a resource to answer questions or address concerns regarding Chapters 21 and 22, Iowa’s open meetings and public records laws. Their website at [www.ipib.iowa.gov](http://www.ipib.iowa.gov) provides information regarding Iowa’s open meeting and record laws as well as training information.*



# IOWA OPEN MEETINGS LAW

The **Open Meetings, Open Records Handbook** prepared by the Iowa Freedom of Information Council is an exceptional resource and tool for board and commission members. It outlines the requirements of Chapters 21 and 22 of the *Code of Iowa*. In it, the introduction provides the following three points to help understand *Code* requirements.

- ◆ **Iowa law assumes that meetings and records are open.** Iowans do not have to make a case to attend a governmental meeting or to see a public record. To the contrary, meetings must be open and records must be available for inspection unless the case for closure is specified in law. The Iowa Supreme Court has been adamant on this point, citing, for example, 22.8(3), which notes that most records are open to public inspection, “even though such examination may cause inconvenience or embarrassment to public officials or others.”
- ◆ **The laws are relatively brief, general and written for public understanding and use.** The sunshine laws of many states are longer and more complex than Iowa’s. Many other laws try to anticipate almost every conceivable issue that might arise. Iowa laws provide a general approach – that of assumed openness – and establish guidelines regarding when a meeting can be (not must be) closed and what records are confidential. The laws provide a framework to help reasonable people ensure that public business is conducted in the public eye.
- ◆ **The laws provide a framework for managing business by public agencies.** The provisions for posting tentative agendas, keeping minutes of meetings, and dealing with personnel issues, and other matters, are instructive for any organization, public or private. The laws also provide a mechanism for an aggrieved citizen who believes a governmental agency has improperly denied access to a meeting or record.



*Open Meetings, Open Records Handbook—Iowa Freedom of Information Council—16th Edition*



# HOLDING PRODUCTIVE MEETINGS

To keep your meetings productive and on track, here are some handy tips.

- ◆ Study any background materials beforehand, but don't make up your mind. Additional information may be presented at the meeting. You will want to keep an open mind so you can fairly consider all the facts.
- ◆ Before a board or commission can start the business at hand, it must have a quorum, which means a majority of members present. You submitted the application form for the board or commission, and in doing so, indicated you were willing to give of your time. Attendance at meetings is crucial so that meetings can be held and decisions reached.
- ◆ The Chair is responsible for moving the meeting along. Other members should assist with getting to the heart of an issue so a conclusion can be reached in a reasonable amount of time.
- ◆ The board or commission may establish and publicize general guidelines governing the length of presentations and public participation. Generally, fifteen minutes is usually enough time for the main presentation, and three to five minutes has become a standard time limit for members of public.
- ◆ After the presentation and public participation, board and commission members may want to ask questions. This time should be limited to the questions only, with discussion for or against an issue held until a motion has been presented.
- ◆ After questions are answered, a voting member should make a motion. After the motion is seconded, the Chair can open the floor to board and commission discussion, making sure each member keeps comments short and to the point.
- ◆ The Chair should try to keep members focused and moving to a conclusion. One way is for the Chair to occasionally summarize what is being discussed. When the Chair thinks the debate has been brought to a close, he/she should "call for the question" or ask members if they are ready to vote. Other board and commission members can also call for the question.





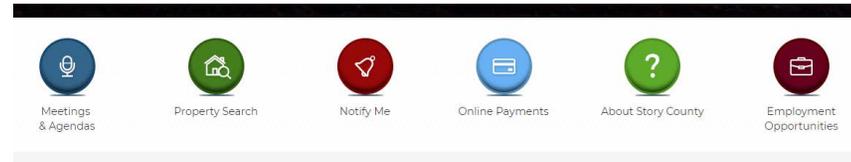
# Sign-Up for Notify Me!

Just follow the instructions to the right to sign-up for “Notify Me” on our website. Once you do, you will receive bid postings, alerts, agendas, news flashes, and much more from Story County.

## Notify Me Instructions

**Step 1:** Go to the website: [www.storycountyiowa.gov](http://www.storycountyiowa.gov).

**Step 2:** Click on "Notify Me" in the Citizen Help Center.



**Step 3:** Enter your email address in the appropriate box and select either 'text' or 'email' notification by clicking on the appropriate symbol next to each type of alert.

**Notify Me** Available Lists

1. Type your email address in the box and select Sign In.  
 2. If you want to receive text messages enter your phone number and select Save.  
 3. To subscribe or unsubscribe click  and/or  next to the lists to which you wish to subscribe/unsubscribe.

Fill out the [Job Interest Card](#) to be notified of Employment Opportunities.

**Please sign in to subscribe, unsubscribe, or manage your subscriptions**

Email Address

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**Notify Me**

| METHOD  | LIST NAME                | DESCRIPTION                                   |
|---|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Job Interest Card        | Job Notification                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Sheriff's Press Releases | Media releases from the Story County Sheriff. |

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**Alert Center**

| METHOD  | LIST NAME                 | DESCRIPTION   |
|---|---------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Auditor & Elections       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Emergency Alerts          | Be notified of important county-wide alerts that could affect your personal safety or property. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Holidays & Closures       | Scheduled holidays & closures for Story County Government offices.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Severe Weather Warning    | Click here to be notified on severe weather in the Story County area.                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> | Treasurer's Office Alerts | Be notified of important Property Tax and Motor Vehicle dates and information.                  |

**Step 4:** You will receive a verification email after completing these steps. Click on the link in this email to complete the process.



# THANK YOU!

Thank you again for volunteering for a  
Story County Board or Commission.

If you have additional questions,  
please contact the County staff liaison

identified to provide staff assistance to the board or  
commission on which you are a member or contact  
the *Director of External Operations and County Services* by  
phone at 515-382-7243 or via email at  
*sking@storycountyiowa.gov*.