



Tips for serving on a local board or commission

While it can be frustrating seeing the lack of forward movement in environmental issues in our State government, serving on a local board or commission is a great way for YOU to affect change at the local level!

All cities and counties have boards and commissions, though each is different. They are typically appointed, volunteer-based bodies that advise on a range of issues that impact our everyday lives and environment. You don't need special training to serve, as these really are made up by everyday folks just like yourself. Your community needs fresh input and ideas, so what are you waiting for?

The application process

- Every community organizes and manages boards and commissions differently, so get to know the process. Some will announce openings as they are available, others take more digging to find opportunities. Some don't announce openings at all, only take applications on a rolling basis and contact applicants on an as-needed basis. Check out www.mountaintrue.org/local-leadership/ for information, and your town or county clerk should be able to demystify the process for you.
- Make sure to find out what happens after you fill out your application. There may be an interview or nominations may happen at a public meeting of your Town/City Council or County Commissioners where you may be able to speak.

Make yourself stand out!

- Look at the list of boards and commissions to see what makes sense for you. Once you know which board(s) and commission(s) you are interested in, attend a couple of meetings to listen to the issues, see how they work, and see who is involved.
- You should introduce yourself to the commission chair and ask to meet with them to learn more how the commission works, what issues they wrestle with, and what their priorities are for the coming year, etc.
- You want to come across as credible, thoughtful, informed, and unaligned with a particular agenda. It's important to represent the whole county and its best interests, not any one particular subset (like builders/developers or neighborhoods, etc).
- When you apply, submit your resume along with the application, even if it's not requested. You should also send these documents to the elected officials responsible for making appointments with a short note saying why you've applied to serve, what skills and talents you bring, and that you would be grateful for the opportunity to serve. If there is an elected official who acts as a liaison to the specific commission you are interested in, reach out to them and introduce yourself.

We're here to help! Contact Joan Walker for support: Joan@mountaintrue.org, 828-258-8737