- Citizen Advisory

Everybody talks about government...

YOU CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT . . .
HERE IN LARKSPUR . . . WHERE IT ALL STARTS . . .
BY SERVING ON A BOARD OR COMMISSION.

Citizen participation in local government is the foundation of the American democratic system. Few other major countries in the world encourage residents to contribute their time and good sense to shaping the policies of local government.

Thanks to the farsighted men and women who first settled our country, the concepts that society's goals are best set by public discussion and that government should be open and accountable to the public in every step of the planning process prevail throughout this country.

Participation is an ongoing process. Citizen advisory boards and commissions are critically important in maintaining communication with divergent groups, in maintaining local standards, and preserving the intrinsic character of Larkspur.

Pressing issues provide continued challenges to those participating in the government system. Some of those issues include the preservation of our historic structures, enrichment of the educational, cultural and recreational
environment, improvement of transportation systems, and the protection and improvement of the neighborhoods and commercial areas.

The Larkspur Municipal Code empowers the City Council to form boards and commissions to assist the City Council in legislating and managing the affairs of the City. Currently there are four permanent Boards and Commissions. From time to time citizen advisory committees are appointed to meet a specific topic and need. Their varied roles provide significant opportunities for formulating City policy and for creating public forums for meaningful community participation.

This section of the City's website is designed to acquaint residents of Larkspur with the various boards and commissions and the way to assist in shaping the future of Larkspur. Board and commission members are an active part of local government.

**APPLICATION AND SELECTION PROCESS**

- All recruitment for Board and Commission members is open and published in the Independent Journal, Twin Cities Times and on this website. The City accepts applications from interested persons throughout the year.
- Applicants will be sought from all segments of the community, representing various interests and groups.
- Appointment is made by the City Council. Each application is carefully reviewed by the City Council. Applicants are interviewed by the full City Council prior to an appointment being made.
- Incumbents are considered for reappointment at the conclusion of their terms.
- Terms are four years, expiring on June 30, and the terms are staggered.

**HOW DO I GET AN APPLICATION?**

Applications may be obtained from the City Clerk's office at City Hall or by clicking on the appropriate button at the top of this screen. Information on vacancies and/or specific recruitment periods may be requested by phoning the City Clerk at (415) 927 5002 or by using the "Send a Message" button at the top of this screen. An official application form must be completed for each position.
They are kept on file for two years for consideration upon any vacancy.

ARE THERE ANY TIPS TO IMPROVE MY CHANCES OF BEING APPOINTED?

- Fill out a separate form for each board or commission in which you are interested. It is to your advantage to tailor each application to the specific board or commission for which you are applying. Emphasize different aspects of your background to match those needed for a particular board or commission.
- Emphasize your talents. Clearly indicate how your particular talents, skills, training, or experience will benefit the board or commission for which you wish to be considered. This is your opportunity to "toot your own horn".
- Become familiar with the appropriate board or commission. Attend meetings, talk with board or commission members, or read documents they have developed to acquaint yourself with their work. Talk with the department head responsible for staffing the specific board or commission in which you are interested.

Board and Commission members may be required to wear "different hats" at different times. The ability to suitably perform the varied roles requires specialized skills and knowledge. Qualification for service can be divided into four general areas.

LONG-RANGE INTEREST IN THE COMMUNITY

The ability to conceive and be concerned with the impact of current decisions on future citizens is paramount. Board and commission members are required to analyze issues, to listen to public comment through formal hearings or informal discussion, to interpret and apply mandates of the General Plan, and to analyze all the pertinent data before arriving at objective decisions which will be in the best interests of the community as a whole.

FAIRNESS, COMMON SENSE, HONESTY AND GOOD CHARACTER

Keeping the public interest in mind, a board member will
be called upon to use everyday good sense in balancing the need of public and private groups. Controversial issues do arise, and the ability to make decisions based on merit rather than personalities is a must. Other traits such as imagination and flexibility and the ability to act in a judicial vs. legislative capacity.

**KNOWLEDGE OF THE COMMUNITY MARKETPLACE, PROCESS, OBJECTIVES, AND LAWS**

A first-hand knowledge of economic systems, the general operation of government, and a basic understanding of the legal process is important. This knowledge will be of tremendous value when board members are required to conduct public hearings, analyze and receive testimony and make meaningful decisions.

**TIME TO SERVE IN APPOINTED CAPACITY**

The amount of time that a board or commission member devotes to his/her duties varies with each board or commission. Before making a personal commitment, a prospective applicant should honestly evaluate whether he/she has adequate free time to attend the meetings, to review and be familiar with meeting materials, and to communicate with the public as well as with department staff.

**STATEMENTS OF ECONOMIC INTERESTS / CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

Members of the Planning Commission, Heritage Preservation Board and ReStore Committee are required to file Statements of Economic Interest. Board and Commission members are required to refrain from participation in matters where they have the potential for conflict of interest. (See below for City Council's policy on Conflict of Interest)

**FURTHER QUESTIONS?**

Cynthia Huismans is available to assist you in this process. You may contact her at (415) 927-5110 or by using the
"Send A Message" button at the top of this screen.

Larkspur is a small, closely knit community where trust and confidence in our City government is of paramount importance. This need to maintain community trust is so vital to the City Council that this public policy was written to clearly define the City's position regarding conflict of interest

Government Code §87100 * contains the statutory rules for elected and appointed officials and defines when a conflict occurs. The regulations are issued by the State Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC). The City does not have leeway nor latitude in interpreting the FPPC rules. Generally stated, any elected or appointed official has a conflict of interest if he or she has a financial interest in a project before the City and/or when compensation is received from anyone seeking approvals from the City. There are some exceptions but, generally, elected or appointed officials are prohibited from voting on projects where a conflict exists. A conflict of interest also occurs when officials live within a certain distance from a project (usually 300 feet). Even if a legal conflict does not exist, it may be inappropriate to participate in a decision for personal reasons to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest. As an example, there could be a conflict if your good friend has a matter before your board, and you do not feel that it would be appropriate for you to voice an opinion in your "City" capacity. While the latter case is not defined by the Fair Political Practices Commission as a conflict, it could be perceived as a conflict, and then stepping down is appropriate.

It is the policy of the Larkspur City Council that, in addition to strictly adhering to the FPPC rules, all elected and appointed officials conduct themselves in a manner that does not raise a reasonable perception or belief that there is a conflict of interest or an abuse of your position. Please be aware that the City Council believes that avoiding the appearance of conflict is extremely important.

The conflict of interest policy is simple. The City Council has adopted a strict policy that if in your business you intend to represent clients or friends before city bodies (whether paid or not), you should not at the same time serve on a city board or commission. This policy has been adopted to provide the public the assurance of fairness and integrity in the public decision-making process. This may seem to be a harsh policy, but it does work well for Larkspur. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask the City Manager for clarification.

* Caveat: Refer to State Law. This is not a full nor complete statement of the law.
Effective Communication and Citizen Involvement

Effective Approaches for Getting the Word Out to Citizens

- Introduction
- Convenient, Comfortable Settings and Informal Meeting Formats (living rooms, shopping malls...)
- Speaker’s Bureaus and Presentations to Existing Groups
- Reaching Citizens Through Technology (Cable TV, phone hold announcements, video libraries, and e-mail notification)
- Reaching Citizens Through Web sites
- Citizen Guides, Brochures and Orientations
- Newsletters, Columns, and Flyers
- Civic Education for Youth
- Citizen Education
- Staff Training
- Recommended Articles

Governance Tools & Resources

- Governance Links
- Local Government Policy Research Organizations and Institutions
- Robert’s Rules of Order
- 2001 City & County Population by County
- Online Journals and Magazines of Interest to Local Governments
- Statistical Resources for Washington Local Governments
- New MRSC Library Acquisitions

MRSC Tools & Resources

- Library Index to Ordinances, Articles and Contracts