

BAY LOWER LIBERTY HEIGHTS  
NORTH END EAST FOREST PARK  
OUTER BELT HUNGRY HILL



MAPLE HIGH/SIX CORNERS

ATWATER PARK

SOUTH END

FOREST PARK

OLD HILL

INDIAN ORCHARD

PINE POINT

EAST SPRINGFIELD

ARMOURY QUADRANGLE

SIXTEEN ACRES

MCKNIGHT UPPER HILL

# Springfield, Massachusetts Neighborhood Council Guidebook



# Acknowledgements

This document is the first edition of the City of Springfield Massachusetts Neighborhood Council Guidebook. It was funded by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds and researched and developed by a team of volunteers representing the city's various Neighborhood Councils and Associations: Armoury Quadrangle Civic Association, Atwater Park Civic Association, Bay Area Neighborhood Council, Concerned Citizens for Springfield, East Forest Park Civic Association, East Springfield Neighborhood Council, Forest Park Civic Association, Hungry Hill Neighborhood Council, Indian Orchard Citizens Council, Lower Liberty Heights Neighborhood Council, Maple High-Six Corners Neighborhood Council, McKnight Neighborhood Council, New North Citizens Council, Old Hill Neighborhood Council, Outer Belt Civic Association, Pine Point Community Council, Sixteen Acres Civic Association, South End Citizens Council, Upper Hill Residents Council; and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission staff Catherine Ratté, Ken Comia, and W. Kyle Finnell under contract and with oversight by the Office of Planning and Economic Development, and City staff Tina Quagliato-Sullivan and Ed Whitley.

This is a living document that is intended to offer best practices and stable resources for neighborhood councils and associations to consider in structuring and operating their organization. Individual groups are encouraged to adopt and adapt this resource to meet the needs of their neighborhood. Please send suggestions for improvements to Ed Whitley, *Deputy Director of Neighborhood Services*, at [ewhitley@springfieldcityhall.com](mailto:ewhitley@springfieldcityhall.com).

Portions of the City of Springfield Neighborhood Council Guidebook were adopted from the following resources:

- City of Boise, Idaho: *Energize our Neighborhoods: Neighborhood Association Toolkit*.
- City of Mankato, Minnesota: *Neighborhood Association Handbook*.
- City of Round Rock, Texas: *Neighborhood Organizational Handbook*.
- City of Sioux Falls, South Dakota: *Neighborhood Association Handbook*.
- City of Southfield, Michigan: *Neighborhood Associations' Resource Guide*.

Information was compiled in March 2023.

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## Introduction

In Springfield, a diverse City where neighbors work together to make a better community, neighborhoods are the places where residents organize to share their needs and wants for their community. Springfield has a long history of residents organizing, and each of the city's 17 distinct neighborhoods have some organized body representing residents. The City refers to these neighborhood organizations broadly as "Neighborhood Councils", although the groups may call themselves "civic associations", "citizen councils", or "resident councils".

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*Springfield's Neighborhood Councils and Associations work with residents and businesses to come together on vital neighborhood interests that enhance the quality of life, strengthen the character and vitality of the community, and support effective local government.*

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Neighborhood Councils (NCs) are the organizations that collect neighbor voices and elevate them to the City government—both elected officials and the professionals hired by the city to direct and implement the work of city government. The City of Springfield values NCs for their service in lifting resident voices and in engaging residents as participants in the city's civic life. The City believes that increasing citizen participation benefits the whole community by creating a positive environment of shared responsibility and collaboration.

To better support these citizen groups, the City has collaborated with NCs to design this Neighborhood Council Guidebook. The guidebook is a resource to help residents focus their efforts and organize their neighborhoods for action. Guidance and resources for effectively structuring your organizations and maintaining success are included. Best practices are presented throughout the sections on organization structure and management, along with examples from NCs and additional resources. An appendix of templates and sample forms is also included.

The guidebook is accessible to all NCs, regardless of size or expertise, and intended to be customized to best serve your NC. The guidebook offers instructional information for the smooth and effective functioning of these important resident-led groups. The contents of the guidebook are for reference and are fully optional, and not intended to be prescriptive or required. Your neighborhood council is encouraged to select items of interest, change them to fit your needs, or feel free to create and develop your own unique system for your NC. It is designed to grow to meet your needs while the City's Department of Neighborhood Services maintains the latest version of the Guidebook for reference.

## Know your Neighborhood

When organizing your neighborhood, it helps to understand how the people who live there relate to the neighborhood council and to each other. Each neighborhood is unique and, as a structured social group, has its own personality. Assessing what those special features are is essential to developing the type of neighborhood council that will work successfully with its residents. Getting to know your neighborhood will build the broadest vision of your community and the needs of its members.

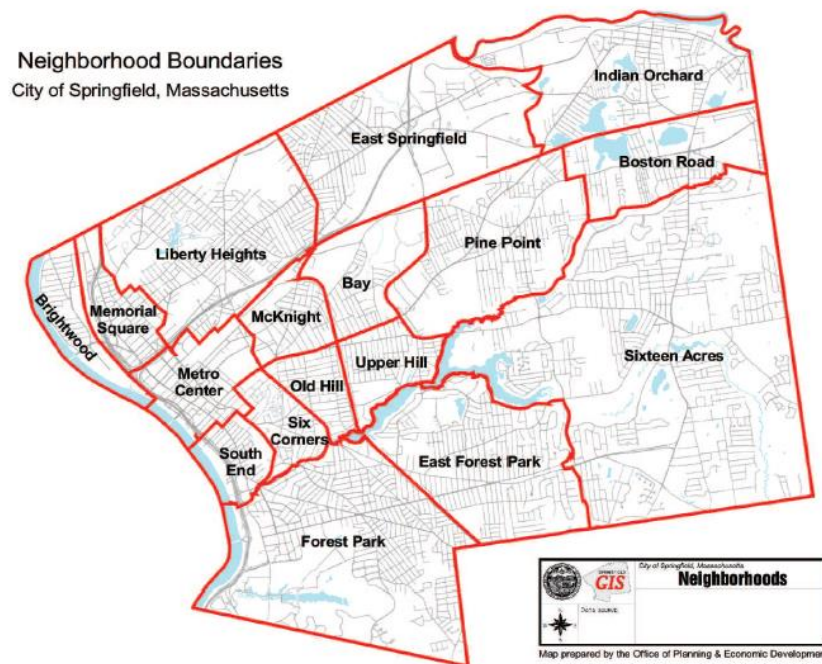
### Getting to Know your Neighborhood

Become familiar with the components that make up your neighborhood: people, places, businesses, etc. Look around your neighborhood and talk to people. Explore the landscape and learn the boundaries of the neighborhood. Determine the assets currently in your neighborhood. Consider the needs of the residents that exist in your community. Be inclusive when gathering as many perspectives as possible.

When organizing your neighborhood council, try to apply the following suggestions:

- **Establish a Purpose:** What do you want to accomplish as a Neighborhood Council? What is important to you and your neighbors?
- **Talk to Your Neighbors:** Talk to people about your shared concerns. Find people on your block, in churches, at the schools. Most people would love an opportunity to talk about the issues they see in their neighborhood.
- **Explore Your Neighborhood's Boundaries:** Know where your neighborhood ends, and adjacent neighborhoods begin. What are the major roads, highways, parks, railroads, and landmarks that define the boundaries of your neighborhood? The city's 17 neighborhoods have changed little in terms of area and boundaries over the years.

### City of Springfield Neighborhoods



## Springfield Data Atlas

The City of Springfield engaged their regional planning agency, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) to produce the Data Atlas to provide community-based advocacy and service delivery organizations, residents, and city government with health, economic, and educational information on each of the city's 17 neighborhoods. The Data Atlas is a foundation for strategic decision-making and provides city-wide data in the following categories:

- Children and Youth
- Education
- Health and Safety
- Economic Security
- Housing
- Environment

The Springfield Data Atlas is a resource for better understanding your neighborhood and identifying areas to focus the efforts of your neighborhood council or organization. The Data Atlas is accessible online at:

<https://pvpc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PublicGallery/index.html?appid=f3a49e3aaf654fcf95bed50f3fafec9f&group=f67937d676774bc085022a6ef44b609d>



## Neighborhood Councils and Local Government

Along with a commitment to bettering the lives of its residents, the City of Springfield has a responsibility to its residents and various stakeholders, including the Neighborhood Councils that lift the voices of Springfield residents. The NCs and the City government, the elected officials, appointed boards, and professional staff, all have a role in improving the quality of life in Springfield. By examining these roles, the relationship and collaboration between NCs and the City is strengthened.

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*Neighborhood Councils pride themselves on being welcoming and dynamic organizations. Through leadership, action, and partnership, the Neighborhood Councils serve as a link with city government on matters affecting the community. NCs facilitate neighborhood unity by providing programs, enabling civic engagement for all community members on issues of their interest, and engaging people in activities that create and sustain a vital neighborhood. – NC Strategic Vision*

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### Role of Neighborhood Councils

The purpose of neighborhood councils is to consider and appropriately act upon citizen needs. The main function of neighborhood councils is to encourage citizen participation and broaden communication between its neighborhood and various organizations and individuals concerning matters affecting neighborhood livability. Neighborhood councils should be open to everyone within the boundaries of that neighborhood and should be representative of those citizens who call the neighborhood “home”.

Neighborhood councils play a vital role in representing the interests of residents and enhancing the local community. A well-organized group of neighborhood volunteers can have a significant impact on the quality of life for all in the neighborhood. The residents of Springfield have demonstrated a great willingness to dedicate time and energy as volunteers in their neighborhoods. NCs, as networks of committed residents and business-owners, play a valuable role in shaping the regulation, development, and City services that directly impact members’ quality of life.

Often, residents are consulted on city-wide programs and specific development projects and NCs frequently create an opportunity for the sharing of member opinions. The Office of the Mayor has historically collaborated with NCs in the administering of City services, primarily interacting through the City’s Office of Neighborhood Services. The City’s Office of Planning and Economic Development, along with the Planning Board and other City Boards and Commissions, value NCs’ consultation for various permitting requests. NCs are also invaluable to implementing neighborhood-friendly development projects, as they have the means to mobilize residents in support or opposition to proposals before City administrators, boards and commissions, and elected officials. NCs also have the means to gather the

needed number of registered voters needed to petition amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance, as outlined in Section 13.

### *Staying Informed*

Keeping your NC connected with the City is the first step to staying informed of available services and upcoming projects impacting your neighborhood. By regularly updating the City with your NC's contact information, the City will be able to provide timely notifications of public meetings and various programs that may directly affect your NC.

Visit the online form to update your NC's contact information with the City at:

<https://www.springfield-ma.gov/comm-dev/council-updates>

By keeping neighborhood groups informed of possible actions that will affect the livability of a neighborhood, the City actively invites the Neighborhood Councils to engage with the planning efforts and other business of the city. NCs interface with the Department of Neighborhood Services regarding available funding sources, and technical assistance. Additionally, various City departments, boards, and commissions are important resources for bringing about change for neighborhood groups.

Additional contact information for municipal resources is included in the "Community Partners" section of this document on page 28.

### *Role of Local Government*

The preservation and maintenance of an area's quality of life is a shared responsibility. Local government is responsible for ensuring that the common good is protected and public services are carried out in an orderly and efficient manner. The City believes that increasing citizen participation benefits the entire community by creating a positive environment of shared responsibility and collaboration. Sharing information on the structure of City government, roles and responsibilities of its various branches, and overview of annual budgeting cycle is critical to increasing civic participation in the process of City government and achieving the goal of improving the quality for all of Springfield.

### *Organizational Structure Overview*

**Mayor:** The City is governed by the Massachusetts Plan "A" form of government, by which voters elect a "strong" Mayor with broad powers to supervise City departments and to appoint their managers. Beginning with the November 8, 2015 election, the Mayor is now elected to a 4-year term.

**City Council:** Legislative powers of the City are vested in the City Council, which consists of five members elected Citywide and one from each of the City's eight wards, elected for two-year terms. Annually, the council elects one of its thirteen members as president. If a Mayoral vacancy occurs, the Council President becomes acting mayor until a new mayor is elected.

### ***Examples of NCs collaborating with City Government:***

- Letter of Support (or Opposition) for Community Preservation Committee (CPC) applications
- Letter of Support (or Opposition) for Planning Board decisions
- Letter of Support (or Opposition) to the Liquor Commission
- Proposing street and sidewalk improvements to DPW
- Hosting monthly Community Police Management Team meetings

The Council holds hearings, passes ordinances, approves financial orders and resolutions, votes on the budget, and must authorize the sale of bonds. Another important power of the Council is land-use regulation through zoning ordinances and the granting of special permits. Although the Council focuses on policy review, members can also discuss and question the policies of the Mayor's administration and review the performance of City departments. Members serve on standing committees, which study and review these matters. The Council also elects the City Clerk for a three-year term and must confirm the appointment of the Director of Internal Audit.

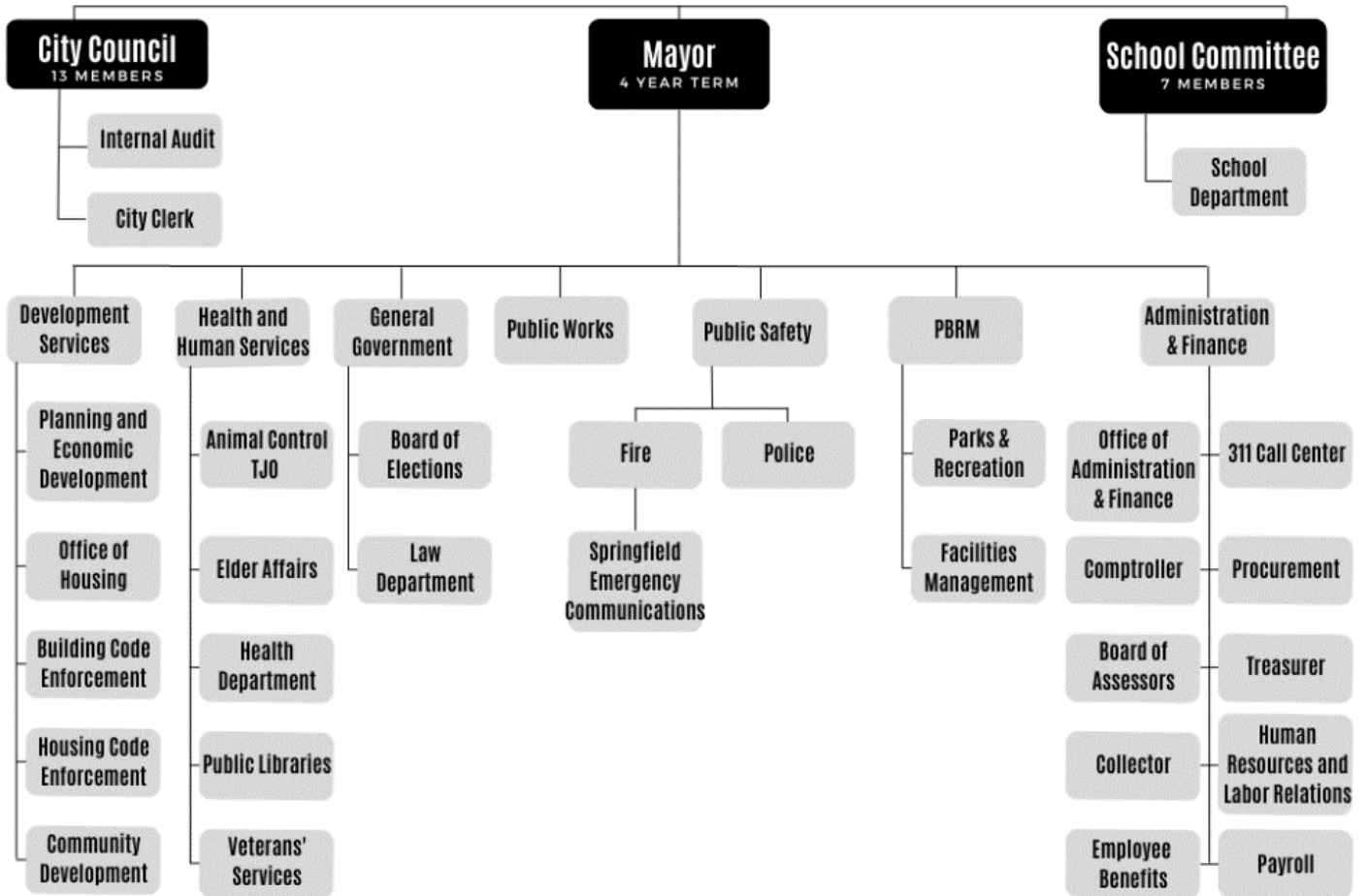
**School Committee:** The School Committee has authority and oversight over the public schools of the City. The Committee is comprised of seven members with the Mayor serving as the chairperson, by charter. The members are elected at large for two-year terms. The city charter vests in the School Committee the power to appoint and terminate a Superintendent of Schools.

**Chief Administrative and Financial Officer (CAFO):** On January 9, 2009, the Commonwealth enacted Chapter 468 of the Acts of 2008. This legislation included a series of governance changes, including the creation of a Chief Administrative and Financial Officer (CAFO). The CAFO is responsible for the overall budgetary and financial administration of the city. The CAFO is appointed to a term of no longer than three years and reports directly to the Mayor. The Board of Assessors, Treasurer, Collector, Budget Director, Comptroller, Chief Information Officer, Chief Procurement Officer, Director of Human Resources/Labor Relations, Director of Capital Asset Construction, Director of Employee Benefits and any other positions or departments approved by the Mayor are under the direction of the CAFO. Additionally, the business and financial services of the School Department are under the authority of the CAFO.

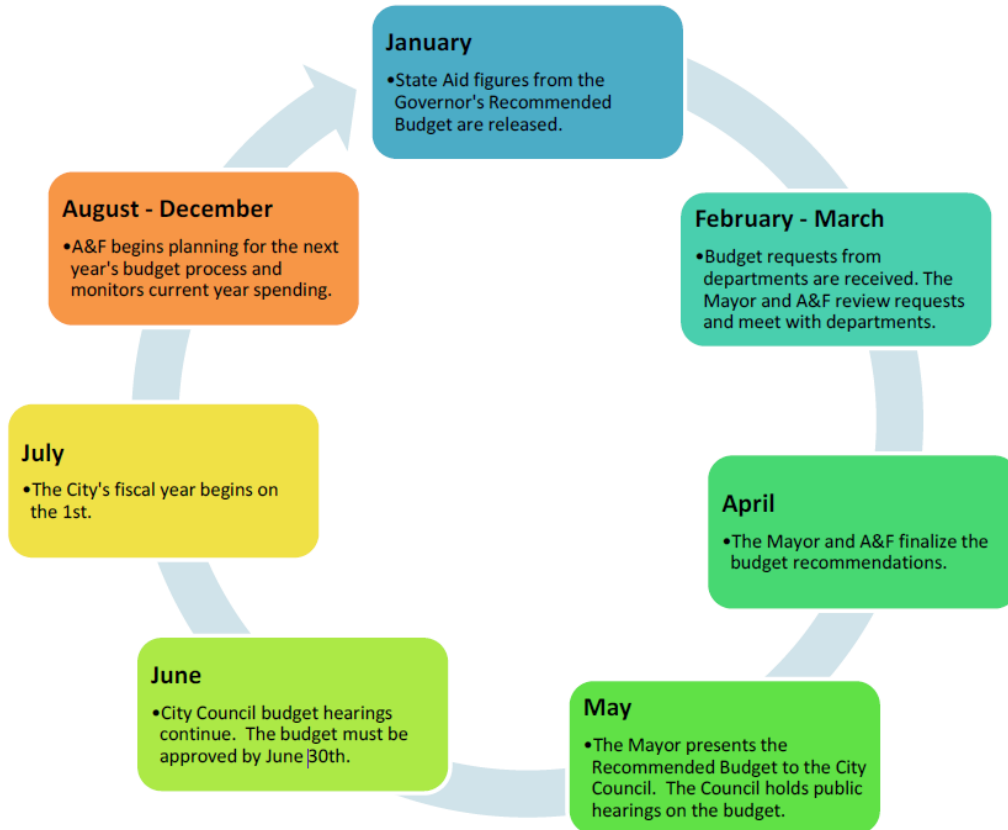
**Boards and Commissions:** The City government is also comprised of various boards and commissions. The size, responsibility, and source of authority of the boards and commissions vary. Several board members serve as a function of their position in the City government, while others are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The City's many boards and commissions can be found at the following link: <https://www.springfield-ma.gov/cos/boards>

**City Departments:** City Department Heads are appointed by the Mayor and report directly to the Mayor, with the exception of the City Clerk and the Director of Internal Audit, who are appointed by and report to the City Council. The departments are responsible for the direction of citywide programs and delivery of services in accordance with local, state and federal regulations and priorities.

## CITY OF SPRINGFIELD ORGANIZATION CHART



## City of Springfield Budget Cycle



Neighborhood Councils are encouraged to stay aware of the city budget process to assure you take advantage of funding opportunities and so that your NC budget cycle syncs with city timelines, deadlines, and requirements.

## Structuring your Neighborhood Council

Any neighborhood group requires a base degree of organization and structure to find sustainable success. This Section presents the essential components to structuring your NC for engaged action. Depending on the needs of your neighborhood and goals of the members, a NC can be any more or less formally structured.

When considering adopting a more formal structure, that the organization's relationship with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the Federal Government will change and additional requirements for reporting and registering the actions of the NC can be expected. With greater involvement with government services, NCs do gain access to expanded government services and funding opportunities. Consult fellow NCs and groups for lessons learned and helpful tips. Resources and links are included throughout this section to best support NCs in considering the most appropriate structure for your organization.

### Membership

Neighborhood Councils require resident involvement, commitment, planning, and organization. Neighborhood groups should include a broad membership of all the neighborhood residents and consider special membership for students, business owners, and other voices in the neighborhood. The members should have a long-term commitment of time and energy and always be open to new voices in the neighborhood.

#### Customizing Your Council

NCs can expand the definition of “**member**” within their bylaws. NCs like McKnight NC may choose to limit voting membership to residents, while Armoury Quadrangle Civic Association includes businesses as voting members.

Any person who is a resident or property owner within the neighborhood council boundaries, or who meets the criteria outlined in your organization bylaws, is a prospective member. Members can participate fully in your association and cast votes in the annual election of officers. Neighborhood Councils are strongly encouraged to define the qualifications for voting and non-voting membership within the organization's Bylaws.

### Bylaws

Neighborhood councils generally need to have bylaws describing how they will do business. Bylaws simply establish the rules governing a group. They serve as a constitution that establishes the legal requirements for the association. They also govern the way the association functions as well as the roles and responsibilities of its officers. They should be taken seriously because they are important to the maintenance of order and credibility in the organization.

Writing and revising bylaws can be a tedious procedure for organizations, but they are very important to the success of the organization. They help members clearly define and understand the purpose, procedures, and role of their neighborhood council.

A sample outline from a set of bylaws can be found in the appendix. It contains information that you may consider including in writing your own your bylaws. The sample outline is very inclusive, so do not feel your association must have every article or section. When designing your bylaws, use only those

areas you are going to need. It is important to customize your bylaws to meet the needs of your group. Be specific, but still allow flexibility within your association. The bylaws will be part of your neighborhood council for a long time.

Once bylaws are written, they should be reviewed periodically to assure that the association's purpose has not changed. Reviewing bylaws on a regular basis ensures the rules are continuing to meet the needs of the group. Whenever bylaws are updated, they should be shared with all members.

### Procedures

Many neighborhood associations also find it helpful to adopt "operating procedures" separate from the bylaws. These rules generally are easier to amend than bylaws. The purpose of such rules is to record agreements of a particular board or set of members about how to conduct meetings and other activities. Such rules should never conflict with the bylaws. Instead, they should address more detailed procedures that are not covered in the bylaws, such as how your NC makes decisions—by consensus or by voting, etc.

### Code of Conduct

A policy clearly expressing the shared expectations for member behavior and communication is a valuable inclusion for your organizations Bylaws and Procedures. An accompanying procedure for resolving disputes and coming to shared consensus is also a recommended consideration.

### Conflict of Interest

Often people are unaware that their activities or personal interests conflict with the best interests of the neighborhood organization so a goal for many groups is to simply raise awareness, encourage disclosure, and discussion of anything that MAY be a conflict, and constantly encourage a culture of candor.

A policy governing conflicts of interests is perhaps the most important policy a neighborhood organization can adopt. To have the most impact, the policy should be in writing, and the board and staff should review the policy regularly. A policy on conflicts of interest should (a) require those with a conflict (or who think they may have a conflict) to **disclose** the conflict/potential conflict, and (b) **prohibit interested** board members **from voting** on any matter in which there is a conflict.

### Board of Directors

A Board of Directors should be elected annually by the voting members of your neighborhood council. These Officers will handle the business of the neighborhood council throughout the upcoming year. Your association's bylaws should specify the positions, associated responsibilities, and the general framework of your electoral process including length of terms. Descriptions of each should outline the responsibilities of the board and other individual officer positions, all while preparing for succession of leadership and longevity of the NC.

#### How to find people for your board

- Recruit from existing volunteer pool
- Take recommendations from current board members
- Ask people in the neighborhood
- People who regularly attend meetings
- People who work on special projects (party's, cleanups, etc.)
- People with special skills like photographers, graphic design for flyers or website



There are several duties and responsibilities involved in operating an organization. It is important to have enough people on the board to delegate the many tasks that need to be completed. The following positions are generally considered to be the minimum needed for the governing board of your association:

#### *President or Chairperson*

This person is responsible for the overall leadership of the association board and sets the agenda and facilitates all meetings. It is important for this person to be objective and judicial. A chairperson should never dominate discussions. The chair keeps the meeting running smoothly while allowing participation and is the person who makes sure people keep to the agenda, both in content and timing.

#### *Vice-President or Vice-Chair*

This person assists the chairperson. The person serves in an advisory capacity to the Chair. In absence of the chairperson, the vice-chairperson conducts the meetings and exercises all of the usual duties of the chairperson. The Vice Chairperson should also be a person with strong leadership qualities.

#### *Secretary or Clerk*

The secretary records the minutes of the meetings and makes sure that copies of the minutes, agendas, and other records are available for the board and the public.

#### *Treasurer*

The treasurer is responsible for the funds of the neighborhood council. Someone should be selected that will take the duties of the position very seriously since the fiscal condition of the association is crucial to the future wellbeing of the group.

#### *Auxiliary Board Positions*

Many Neighborhood Councils choose to have more than the standard Officers serve on their Board of Directors. These board members are often given general responsibilities for supporting the Officers and/or specific project-related responsibilities, often acting as facilitators for special committees. Each neighborhood organization is different and will need unique committees to address issues in the neighborhood. Some of the more common auxiliary positions are as follows:

- **Publicity/Communications Officer/Chair** – The person has overall responsibility for overseeing production and distribution of the neighborhood organization’s newsletter, maintaining active social media accounts, and connecting with broader media outlets to promote the organization.
- **Events Officer/Chair** – The events chair would be responsible for coordinating neighborhood events, such as community clean-ups, Holiday celebrations, and block parties. This board member can also coordinate with broader city-wide celebrations to ensure the neighborhood organization stays engaged with members and other neighborhood organizations.
- **Public Safety Officer/Chair** – Board member who acts as liaison between Neighborhood organizations and Springfield Police Department representatives.



## Committees

Committees play an important and vital role in neighborhood organizations. Each neighborhood association will need unique committees to address issues in their neighborhoods. The president and/or the board of directors have the authority to establish committees and task forces needed to carry out the functions of the association. Standing committees continue from year to year, while special committees are appointed for specific assignments. The role of the committee chairperson is to head a small group that studies findings, reports, makes recommendations, or acts on specific issues.

### Examples of standing committees:

- Nominating
- Social
- Welcoming
- Beautification/Neighborhood Cleanup
- Crime Watch
- Traffic/Neighborhood Safety
- Public Relations/Newsletter
- Events

The committee chair:

- Is usually the first person appointed to the committee.
- May be elected by other committee members or the president.
- Meets regularly with their committee and reports its activities to the group.

## Formal Structure

Beyond the essentials of organizing your Neighborhood Council, there are additional steps that your organization may want to consider. By developing a more formal structure for your organization, you expand the relationship of your group with both the State and Federal Government. While there are benefits to many of these options, there are additional reporting requirements to several agencies throughout a given year. Neighborhood Councils are encouraged to explore each topic in depth and come to the best conclusion for your own group. Many Neighborhood Councils have chosen to adopt a more formal structure and are great resources to consult.

The City of Springfield cannot direct neighborhood councils on how they are to meet their legal obligations; however, this guidebook and the shared experience of the city's Neighborhood Councils are invaluable resources available for support.

### *Tax Identification Number*

Neighborhood councils should have a federal tax identification number. The number acts as a Social Security number for organizations. The number can be used to open bank accounts, file IRS tax forms, apply for tax exempt status, etc. Organizations do not need to be incorporated to receive a tax identification number.

NCs will need to file a SS-4 for an Employer Identification Number (EIN), which is a Federal tax ID number used to identify a business entity.

Conveniently, this application process can be done online by visiting the IRS tax identification page at <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/apply-for-an-employer-identification-number-ein-online>.

You should receive your tax ID number in six to eight weeks. If you need to use the number before you receive it in the mail (for bank accounts or non-profit status), simply state that you have applied for it, but have not received it yet.

IRS contact information: Phone: 1-800-829-4933

Website: [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)

### *Incorporation*

Incorporation is optional to all organizations and may be beneficial to your neighborhood council. When a non-profit organization incorporates, it helps define the group and the organization is deemed trustworthy. Incorporation also protects the personal liability of group members. If your organization decides to incorporate, file non-profit Articles of Organization with the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There is a \$35.00 filing fee along with annual reporting requirements for incorporating as a non-profit with the Commonwealth.

More information and relevant forms for non-profit incorporation can be found at:

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/divisions/corporations/filing-by-subject/corporations/corporations-domestic-non-profit.htm#sts=Articles%20of%20Organization>

### *Tax Exempt Status*

In order to apply for tax exemption, a group must first be incorporated. The federal government may grant tax-exempt status upon proper application to the Internal Revenue Service. Obtaining tax-exempt status may permit tax-deductible donations depending on the category of non-profit your neighborhood council chooses. Depending on your organization's tax-exempt status, the lobbying and political activities of the neighborhood council may be restricted.

For more information about applying for and maintaining tax exempt status, visit:

<https://www.irs.gov/charities-non-profits/applying-for-tax-exempt-status>

For more information about the differences of 501c3 and 501c4, visit:

<https://donorbox.org/nonprofit-blog/501c3-vs-501c4#what-is-the-exact-difference-between-a-501c3-and-501c4>

*NOTE: Processing the tax-exempt status application usually takes about six months.*

### *Unique Entity Identifier*

To verify entities eligible for federal contracts and grants, the US government now uses the "Unique Entity Identifier" (UEI). The 12-character identifier is provided via the federal System for Award Management (SAM). In order to receive federal grant monies, Neighborhood Councils must create a SAM.gov account and apply for their UEI. A prerequisite for the SAM.gov application is for the entity to be incorporated. Once a neighborhood council submits a completed application, the approval process could take three to four weeks.

Find more information, visit: <https://sam.gov/content/entity-registration>

### **Customize your Council**

Many Springfield neighborhood councils have received tax-exempt status as either a **501c3 "Charitable Organization"** or **501c4 "Social Welfare Organization"**. While both offer exemption from federal income tax, the classifications differ regarding receiving tax-deductible donations and political activity.

***Explore both options by following the links provided or sharing with other NCs.***

### *Liability*

A fear many board members have is being held liable for board actions. When organizations incorporate, individual board members can be protected from becoming financially liable because of board service. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 231 Section 85K limits the liability certain charitable organizations and their board members face as they conduct the business of the organization, providing minor protections for officers of 501c3 organizations.

**It is considered best practice and highly recommended that all neighborhood councils and organizations carry liability insurance.**

Additionally, for a low additional annual fee, several individual homeowners' policies may provide coverage for policyholder's volunteer activities. Check with your insurance agent to see what volunteer coverage is available.

## Maintaining a Successful Neighborhood Council

Organizing and structuring your Neighborhood Council for success is only part of the ongoing work of maintaining the organization and operations of committed members. Acknowledging the voluntary contributions of all members as foundational to the continued activity of the NC, this section of the Guidebook provides suggestions to engage with members, cultivate leadership, and conduct the business of the NC. Operating a sustainable neighborhood council is a process that takes practice and perseverance, and with the many neighborhood groups operating across the city there is a wealth of experience and knowledge available among the Neighborhood Councils.

### Engaged Membership

A neighborhood council must maintain active membership, which is open to any resident within the recognized boundaries of the neighborhood. The bylaws of each individual neighborhood council may determine whether individuals residing outside the neighborhood boundaries will be eligible for membership.

### *Recruiting New Members*

Finding new members to engage is crucial to keeping neighborhood councils alive. While many people appreciate what the group is doing for their neighborhood, they may not attend meetings or even come in direct contact with the neighborhood council.

Neighborhood councils often inadvertently restrict their numbers by having membership forms and sign-up sheets only at meetings. Undertake a membership drive that directly reaches every household within your neighborhood boundaries.

### *Keeping Members Active*

Getting new members is only half the battle. The other half is keeping them involved. For every member who is active in the association, there are probably two who would be involved if they were properly motivated. The following ideas can be useful.

### Working with Volunteers

Remember that all members, including officers, of the Neighborhood Council are volunteering their time, energy, and resources to organize alongside each other. A diverse group of residents brings diverse strengths and limitations to the organization. When collaborating with volunteers, consider the following do's and don'ts:

#### DO

- Involve each member in each step of organizing.
- Invite all residents within the boundaries to be part of the group.
- Be realistic about what the neighborhood association can do.
  - How much time is needed?
  - How many people are needed for this project?
  - What other projects are underway?
  - Is it feasible to take on a new responsibility?
- Bring all activities to discussion and vote before the full membership before committing the group to a new project.

## DON'T

- Have one person or a small group make the decisions for the entire group.
- Try to do everything yourself. The leadership of the neighborhood association is not the neighborhood association.
- Drop projects without a good reason. Make sure everyone knows why the project is being dropped.
- Scare off new members by asking them to volunteer for life. Start small.

## *Volunteer Burnout*

To prevent volunteer burnout, the positive feeling one has must remain high despite the many hours devoted to the work involved. This is especially true in neighborhood councils which often demand great commitment from their workers. Here is some insight into the causes of volunteer burnout and ways to prevent your association members from succumbing.

### Why People Burnout

- The association is lacking in clear goals and direction.
- There is too much work to be done. People are afraid to say “no,” thinking that it won’t get done otherwise.
- There is a popular notion that if you work for a public interest association (such as your neighborhood council), you have to give selflessly for the cause. People see it as a measure of their worth.
- There are often few rewards or recognition for a job well done in volunteer associations.
- All work and no play makes everyone tired and burned out!
- Too few people are involved.

### **Tips for Preventing Burnout**

- Recognize people for a job well done.
- Develop coherent operating plans.
- Recognize different abilities.
- Remind people that the quality of their work is what’s important, no quantity.
- Organize fun events for your members.

## Effective Leadership

Leading by example, shared vision, and integrity are the hallmarks of effective leadership. The contents below are tools for your NC to facilitate effective leadership with a goal of making sound decisions, while empowering and motivating others, both by performing tasks and demonstrating the qualities and characteristics to help your NC move toward shared goals. In many existing NCs the “president/chair” serves to maintain order and advise during discrepancies, assuring essential actions such as capturing in the minutes all votes and decisions.

### *Election of Officers*

Elections are the process by which members select a group of people to represent them. The leadership of the neighborhood council will be decided by the membership. Well run elections that guarantee the representation of a diverse membership are crucial since the Board of Directors is responsible for overall decisions and the ongoing activities of the neighborhood council.

Neighborhood councils can run its elections in a variety of ways. Before you plan elections, consult your bylaws to make sure the procedure you use is consistent with them. Voting and candidate eligibility should be outlined in your bylaws. Early in your election planning, decide whether members will vote at your annual meeting or vote on a special neighborhood election day. This should be dictated by the physical size of your neighborhood and the needs of the members and the association.

The Board of Directors of the neighborhood council will represent your neighborhood with government officials and business and community leaders. Make sure you elect leaders who are truly interested in your neighborhood and who will be the best representatives of the residents in the neighborhood.

### *Successful Boards*

As elected officers of the neighborhood council, the board of directors holds the trust of members of the neighborhood council. A successful board will help lead their organization to reach successful outcomes and resolve resident concerns. Some helpful tips can lead to successful boards:

- Have a strong, dedicated membership.
- Members know and carry out their roles.
- Recruit new members to join or run for board positions.
- Know how to deal with conflict and member inactivity.
- Create strategic plans.
- Thank and reward volunteers and members.
- Have fun!

### *Conflict Resolution*

At no time will all members of your neighborhood councils agree on everything. That is the uniqueness of democracy, and the opportunity to be heard is the basis for all neighborhood councils.

Here are three options to resolving neighborhood conflicts:

- I. Option One - Hear out the objectors
  - Use dissent and disagreement to resolve neighborhood conflicts.
  - Ask for disagreement openly, it gives people the feeling that they have been heard.
  - Know where the objectors are and what their objections are.

- Listen attentively to both arguments.
- Understand the arguments of both sides.
- II. Option Two - Sit down and work it out
  - Have the two people who most vocally oppose each other sit down and work out a common approach.
  - Focus on the areas upon which they agree.
- III. Option Three - Establish common ground
  - Defuse the argument by focusing on those things upon which there is agreement.
  - Play down the areas of disagreement and play up the areas of agreement.

### Effective Meetings

Regular meetings are important so that members are informed of current and future issues and projects, as well as the accomplishments of the group. It is also an excellent opportunity to give recognition to members and committees who have contributed a lot of their time to the group.

One thing to remember about meetings is that it isn't always necessary to call a full group meeting to make minor decisions. When minor decisions need to be made, using an executive committee or board is better. Most groups have a board meeting once a month unless something important requires an additional meeting. In order to prevent member burnout, meetings should not be longer than one hour.

If a regular meeting is scheduled, but there really isn't anything important to discuss, then create something. This can be done by inviting a guest speaker, organizing a neighborhood tour, or having a potluck. Don't cancel the meeting altogether because it is important for groups to have contact on a regular basis.

### Types of Meetings

**Business Meetings** – Initiate items or proposals; facilitate action of the group; follow an agenda; know parliamentary procedures (Robert's Rules)

**Round Table Discussion** – Help group get acquainted; state the problem; stimulate and direct discussion; promote participation; encourage; summarize; bring the group to a conclusion and plan of action.

**Brainstorming** – Problem is stated; session is freewheeling; fast-moving succession of ideas; no one criticizes or comments; all ideas accepted as stated or improved upon by subsequent speaker; record is kept of all ideas; suggestions are evaluated and the grain separated from the chaff.

### Massachusetts Open Meeting Law

The purpose of the Open Meeting Law is to ensure transparency in the deliberations on which public policy is based. The Open Meeting Law requires that most meetings of public bodies be held in public, and it establishes rules that public bodies must follow in the creation and maintenance of records relating to those meetings. It also seeks to balance the public's interest in witnessing the deliberations of public officials with the government's need to manage its operations efficiently.

Neighborhood Councils and other neighborhood organizations are volunteer organizations and not a part of City government.

As such, NCs do not qualify as “public bodies” and the Open Meeting Law does not pertain to meetings of neighborhood organizations. At the same time, it is extremely important that NC business is open and transparent to all members of the neighborhood.

### *Setting the Agenda*

An agenda states the purpose, time, and goals of a meeting. It outlines each topic to be covered and designates the amount of time allotted to each subject. List who is responsible for each topic and the type of action needed to clarify the goals and direction of the meeting.

When listing agenda items, it’s always good to put a time limit down. It’s possible that you’ll go over or under the limit on some items, but at best you’ll have a frame of reference. Also, word the items so that people making reports will know what is expected of them.

When possible, send out your agenda in advance so people know what is expected of them and what will happen at the meeting.

### *Note*

*Don’t overload your agenda. Try to stay within 1 to 1.5 hours and allow some time for coffee drinking, cookie eating, and mingling. Since most community meetings are held at night, the energy level of many members might be low.*

### *Meeting set up*

Arrange the meeting room in such a way that it encourages people to talk. Set chairs in a semi or full circle so that everyone can be seen. Use tables only when needed to hold drawings or literature because they can form barriers to communication. However, a large table with everyone sitting around it can be used if people need to write. Hold the meeting in an appropriately sized room. Rearrange the room according to how many people attend. Ensure the meetings happen in the same location on a set day of the month to facilitate maximum participation and where possible provide snacks and water or other healthy drink options.

It may also help more people to attend if you can offer childcare and if the meeting is located on a bus route. You will need to decide if you want to hold your meeting in person, virtually using a video meeting platform such as Zoom, or using a hybrid approach, which many NCs have switched to following the COVID-19 pandemic. Consider which format works best for engaging your NC’s members.

### *Running a Meeting*

Start the meeting on time. Don’t penalize those on time by making them wait for latecomers.

Although Robert’s Rules of Order are effective for “getting things done” they shouldn’t be used in community meetings unless everyone in your group understands them. If everyone is comfortable with Robert’s Rules of Order, then by all means use it (condensed versions can be found at most libraries).

If a group is not comfortable or is inhibited by Robert’s Rules of Order, a special effort should be made to ensure that a vote truly represents the will of the group. Keep meetings orderly and democratic. Allow plenty of debate on important issues, but don’t be afraid to set time limits. End each meeting with some concrete action.



### *Interpretation and Translation*

In order to create a more inclusive neighborhood council and to ensure a more engaged membership, interpretation and translation services are important considerations for the many neighborhoods in Springfield. Surveying the membership of your NC will provide insight into the native languages spoken by your neighbors. Often bilingual members will help with translation of printed communications and interpretation during in-person or virtual meetings. The City supports interpretation and translation as much as possible, with this document also being made available for online translation and in Spanish.

The City of Springfield has previously contracted with City Gate Language Services, LLC for translation services. <https://www.documenttranslationserviceusa.com/>

Many local Community Development Corporations (CDCs) also provide limited interpretation and translation services; more information can be found in the “Community Partnerships” section on page 30.

### *Concluding the Meeting*

Concluding the meeting with all agenda points addressed in some way, either to resolution or by tabling until a future meeting. Ensure that the next meeting time is announced. Follow-up with the Secretary/Clerk to ensure minutes are prepared promptly and shared with members before the next meeting.

### *Responsible Finances*

All neighborhood associations encounter a sum of money for one reason or another. A management system needs to be in place for dealing with any funds handled by the association. The best thing to do is to open a bank account for the group. What kind of bank account should be opened and how do you go about opening an account for your organization? These are questions that should be made by the board of directors on behalf of the entire membership.

Whether your association chooses to become a corporation or if you decide to designate a person, either can open a bank account for the group. If you are a corporation and you also have nonprofit status, you may be eligible to receive free or reduced fee banking privileges at some banks. Check with several banks to get the best option for the group. If there is a bank in or near your neighborhood approach them about becoming a member of your association.

### *Account Types*

With so many different types of accounts available, how do you know what kind of account to set up? Research needs to be dedicated to finding out the benefits of certain types of accounts and a decision can be made on an account that will be most beneficial for the group. Check with several banks to get the best deal for the group. Whether you are a corporation or just a designated person, either can open a bank account for the group. If you are a corporation and have nonprofit status, you may be eligible to receive free or reduced fee banking privileges at some banks.

*Two things to consider when determining the type of bank account for your neighborhood association are:*

- How often will you withdraw money?
- The amount of money your association needs to deposit.

### Checking Accounts

Any checking accounts open to individual customers are open to neighborhood associations. The least expensive usually have minimum deposit requirements. The association should obtain pre-numbered checks. The use of non-numbered checks is not an acceptable practice for neighborhood associations.

### Savings Accounts

If the association will make limited withdrawals, the association might be better off with a savings account rather than a checking account. The best arrangement is often a saving account with checking privileges. These, however, usually require a minimum balance.

### Fundraising

Neighborhood associations need to raise funds for regular operations and special events and projects. The ways that a group raises funds are limited only by the members' imaginations. Funds can be raised by the group itself, private donations, or private and government grants.

A fund-raising committee should be selected to prepare a budget and to oversee projects. Often people who are well known and liked in the community are successful project leaders. This person should also have good contacts in your local business area. Most importantly, the person should have the time to dedicate to fundraising.

### Grant Writing

Grant writing is the process of applying for funding provided by a private, corporate, or government grant maker. In general, grant proposals can ask for financial or in-kind support for a nonprofit organization. While a bulk of grant writing consists of crafting a compelling grant proposal, grant writing also requires researching possible grants, connecting with funders, maintaining grant calendars, managing active grant proposals, and reporting on how accepted grants were used.

### Effective Outreach

Communication is one of the most important functions of a neighborhood association. People are interested in what is happening in their neighborhoods and need to know about activities as well as recent accomplishments. The exchange of information between the members of your group is crucial to the long-term success of your association. Good publicity will inform your neighbors about the next scheduled meeting, a current issue, upcoming events, or the completion of a successful neighborhood improvement project.

Publicizing your neighborhood association's activities is very important. You will be planning several great programs for your neighborhood, so don't keep them a secret. Share them with as many people you can. This will help others in the neighborhood join your efforts and take part in making a difference. Publicity is also an easy way to increase membership participation in your association. There are different resources that can be used for publicity that groups should take advantage of, including but not limited to text messaging, emailing, social media posts, etc. A good publicity network is important to make people aware of their activities and projects and to keep members informed.

### Branding

Finding a unified voice among your diverse NC membership is to be expected. By engaging with a branding process NCs create shared goals, a clear purpose, and standards for communicating (both verbally and visually) and better refine the NC's messaging and outreach. The process of developing a brand for your NC will be unique to your group and will produce a unique message for your group. For more information, reference the resource provided and consult other NCs to hear their stories.

<https://www.neighborworks.org/Community/Revitalization/Stable-Communities/neighborhood-marketing-guide>

### Newsletters

A newsletter is probably one of the most common formal ways to share information. It is a great way for communicating with your neighbors. Newsletters may be published monthly, quarterly, annually, or any frequency that works for your neighborhood. Funding for the production and mailing of newsletters may be raised from dues collected from residents, donations from local businesses, grant funds, advertising in the newsletter, and a variety of other sources. Your neighborhood could also consider distribution by hand by area residents. A block captain system often works well for distributing information.

Another excellent option is to create an electronic newsletter that can be emailed to residents. If there is someone within the neighborhood that has some computer expertise, an electronic newsletter can be created basically free of charge and emailed to your membership contact list.

### Websites

A website is a great place to share information about your neighborhood group, post contact information, bylaws (if any), photos, and information regarding future meetings and events. Placement of the website address in emails, flyers, and social media provides convenience for your neighbors to access and share the website with other fellow neighbors. To make sure your neighborhood groups' website is functioning optimally, it is important to follow some of the following suggestions:

- Content should be concise and informative with plenty of graphics and photos
- Ensure that all hyperlinks are active and accurate.
- Delete or change any outdated information regularly.
- Make your most important content easy to find.

When crafting a brand unique to your NC, consider adopting **Core Values**: Many NCs share some of the following:

- Welcoming
- Empowerment
- Accountability
- Flexibility
- Collaboration
- Engaging
- Partnership
- Respect

### Social Media

Social Media is critical to promoting your neighborhood council and is a great way to reach members who currently aren't involved. There are an ever-increasing list of options for engaging members through social media, and no single strategy is best. Consider using a limited number and coordinating across your selected platforms. Following the City of Springfield and its official social media accounts is a positive first step to keeping your NC connected with the activities of the City.

### *Flyers*

Flyers are a great way to catch attention at local businesses in your neighborhood or within proximity. Flyers can also be posted at community centers, schools, local libraries, or parks. For flyers to be effective they should be eye-catching, informative yet easy to read, and well organized.

Some suggested places that flyers could be placed include:

- Local businesses
- Libraries
- Supermarkets and Stores
- Local restaurants
- Waiting rooms in Dentist/Doctor's offices
- Coffee shops

Regardless of how eye-catching your flyers may be, certain information is critical to include for members:

- Meeting/Event & Purpose
- Date/Time and Location
- Contact Information

### *Survey tools*

Conducting a neighborhood survey is a quick and easy way to determine shared interests and issues. City Staff can help neighborhoods come up with appropriate questions, or common questions used to gather baseline data about neighbors and neighborhood concerns. Free software is available for creating and sharing your survey once its ready. Google Forms and SurveyMonkey have free options available for use, with Survey Monkey offering more extensive analytic features through a paid, premium version.

## Community Partnerships

Neighborhood Councils are rich in the experience and expertise of members, but NCs cannot achieve all their goals alone. To better fulfill the purpose of bettering the quality of life in your neighborhood, consider developing partnerships with municipal and county departments, community-based organizations, and other neighborhood councils. By partnering with these groups and coordinating efforts, a better outcome can be achieved for all.

## Municipal Resources

The following municipal resources are a condensed list of some of the more important partnerships available to your NC. The list is not exhaustive but presents the key contacts within the City government for Neighborhood Councils to connect with to foster collaboration and support.

### *Department of Neighborhood Services*

Within the City's Community Development Department, the Department of Neighborhood Services is the primary resource for Neighborhood Councils and associations. The Department facilitates working groups of NC representatives and provides technical assistance to NCs needing to navigate local government. Whether updating your contact information or inquiring of available funding sources, NCs are encouraged to establish and maintain an active relationship with the Department.

<https://www.springfield-ma.gov/comm-dev/neighborhoodcouncils-1>

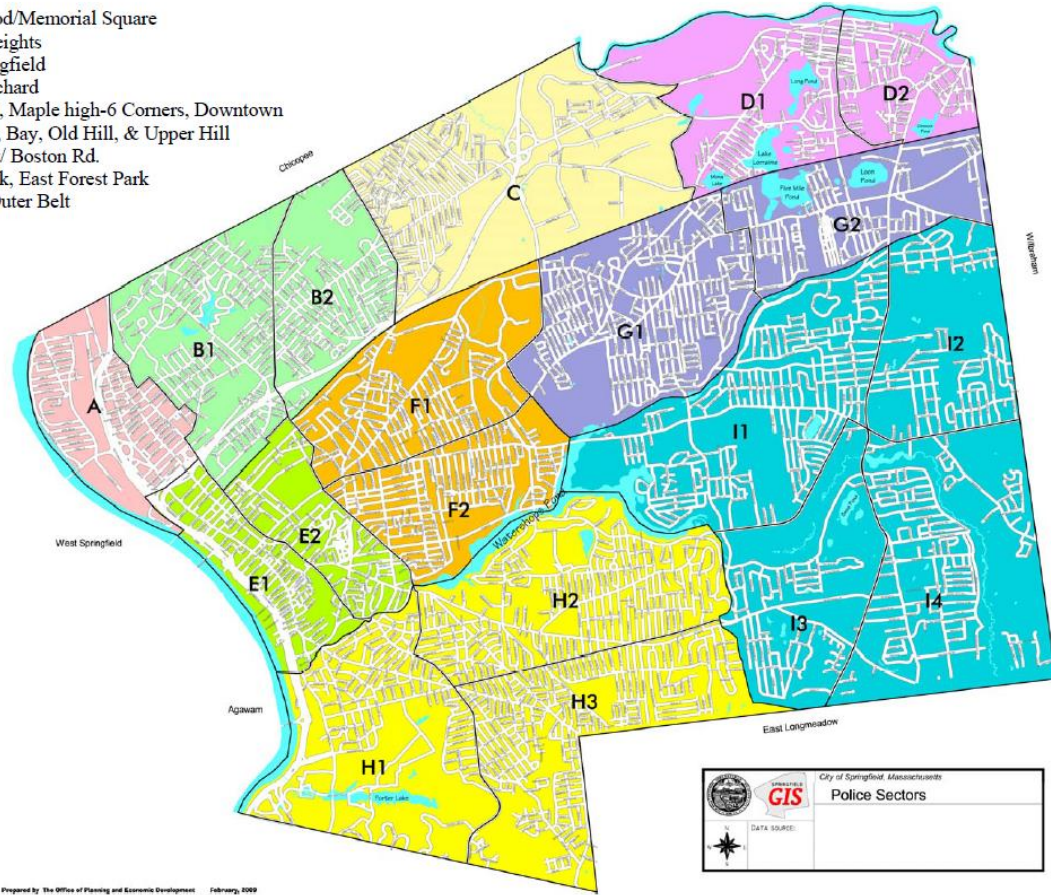
### *Springfield Police Department*

The Springfield Police Department prioritizes community-based strategies to addressing issues of crime, disorder, and public safety across the city. To do so, the SPD focuses on neighborhoods as the basic building block for its organizational structure and its community policing strategies.

Community Police Management Teams (sometimes by a different name) in each police sector facilitate police and community communication and information sharing. Meetings are usually held monthly to share information, identify issues, and work towards developing solutions. This partnership between police and community is critical to enhancing public safety and protecting, improving, and preserving quality of life. Some neighborhood councils play a leadership role in these meetings.

The SPD Beat Management Teams have volunteer chairpersons. Neighborhood councils often find a benefit to having representation at the Beat Management Team meetings and some neighborhood councils play a leadership role in these meetings, strengthening the relationship between residents and officers.

- Sector A- Brightwood/Memorial Square
- Sector B- Liberty Heights
- Sector C- East Springfield
- Sector D- Indian Orchard
- Sector E- South End, Maple high-6 Corners, Downtown
- Sector F- McKnight, Bay, Old Hill, & Upper Hill
- Sector G- Pine Point/ Boston Rd.
- Sector H- Forest Park, East Forest Park
- Sector I- 16 Acres/Outer Belt



Prepared by the Office of Planning and Economic Development February, 2009

The Springfield Community Policing Partnership maintains “The Good Neighbor Handbook”, a guide to quality-of-life regulation in the city. The latest version of the guide can be found at:

<https://springfieldmapolice.com/good-neighbor-handbook/>

### *3-1-1 Citizens Service Center*

The City of Springfield’s 3-1-1 Citizens Service Center grants easy access to all of Springfield’s government services. Residents can request non-emergency services such as tree removal, snow plowing, and recycling pick-up, as well as report violations of City ordinances.

Residents can also email inquiries at [311@SPRINGFIELD CITY HALL.COM](mailto:311@SPRINGFIELD CITY HALL.COM) and download the “Springfield 311” app for their mobile device. More information can be found at: [www.springfield-ma.gov/311](http://www.springfield-ma.gov/311)

### County Resources

County agencies and elected officials provide additional public services for various community groups, including NCs. Many programs available to Neighborhood Councils focus on public safety and crime prevention, which may support your NC’s vision for a safe and welcoming neighborhood. General resources are presented in the following section along with contact information.



### *Hampden County Sheriff's Office*

The Hampden County Sheriff's Office administers several community engagement initiatives dedicated to promoting public health and safety. The Sheriff's Office coordinates its Neighborhood Watch program along with the Springfield Police Department's B-Management and C3 Policing meetings.

Hampden County Sheriff's Office Website                      <https://hcsoma.org/>

### *Hampden District Attorney's Office*

With a goal of creating a safer environment for all citizens of Hampden County, the Community Safety and Outreach Unit has established various educational and prevention programs with community partners and maintain collaboration with multi-disciplinary teams that have an emphasis on assisting high-risk youth or victims of violence, including women, children, elders, and persons with disabilities.

Hampden District Attorney's Office Website                      <https://hampdenda.com/>

### Community-Based Organizations

Many other organizations may be active in your neighborhood. These community-based organizations are non-profit organizations, religious groups, social clubs, business associations, and more. Many provide invaluable services for community members and residents, and they can act as crucial partners for NCs.

### *Community Development Corporations*

Community development corporations (CDCs) are 501c3 non-profit organizations that are created to support and revitalize communities. CDCs can be involved in a wide range of community services that meet local needs such as affordable housing, education, job training, healthcare, commercial development, and other social programs. There are six CDCs currently working in the city of Springfield.

**Home City Development, Inc.** - <https://homecitydevelopment.org/>                      (413)785-5312

- IDAs/Matched Savings Programs
- Financial counseling/coaching
- Real Estate Development

**Hope CDC** - <https://hopecommunitydevelopmentcorp.org/>                      (413)949-0432

- Small Business Technical Assistance & Lending
- Community Programs
- Leadership Development

**Revitalize CDC** - <https://www.revitalizecdc.com/>                      (413)788-0014

- Housing Services
- Home Improvements
- Community Programs
- Agriculture/Food Programs
- Improving Resident Health

**Springfield Neighborhood Housing Services** - <https://www.springfieldnhs.org/> (413)739-4737

- Small Business Technical Assistance & Lending
- Housing Services
- Assistance to Homebuyers/Homeowners
- Financial Stability Services
- Financial Counseling/Coaching

**Way Finders** - <https://www.wayfinders.org/> (413)233-1500

- Small Business Technical Assistance & Lending
- Housing Services
- Rental Housing Stabilization
- Receivership or Consulting Assistance
- Youth/Elder Programs

**Wellspring Cooperative** - <https://wellspringcoop.org/> (413)522-2204

- Small Business Technical Assistance & Lending
- Workforce Development
- Resident/Community Engagement & Organizing
- Agriculture/Food Programs
- Other Training and Assistance

*Places of Worship and Religious Groups*

Places of worship and other faith-based institutions (churches, synagogues, mosques, etc.) are often congregations of active, dedicated community members. Many places of worship have had a long-term presence and impact on the neighborhoods they call home. Many NC's keep an ongoing list to facilitate efficient communication and maintain an active relationship with these community groups.



## Appendix

### Meeting checklists

There is a lot to think about when conducting a meeting. Use this checklist as a guide to help you conduct meetings more effectively:

- Plan your meeting
- Start on time
- State the purpose of the meeting clearly on the agenda
- State ideas positively and show their relation to the overall issue
- Watch the pacing – keep it moving
- Find background information ahead of time or invite resource people to come to the meeting
- Get everyone to contribute
- Get points of view by questioning or restating as you go along
- Make frequent summaries during the discussion
- Stress cooperation, not conflict
- Assign tasks and delegate responsibility as the meeting proceeds and record in the minutes
- Guide the meeting from problem to solution
- Wrap up the meeting:
  - \* Point out differences not yet resolved.
  - \* Summarize the decisions reached.
  - \* Outline future actions, next steps to be taken.
  - \* Set deadlines and review task assignments.
  - \* Set the next meeting date, time, and place.
- Evaluate the meeting

AGENDA

XYZ NEIGHBORHOOD

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 12, 1996

XYZ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL LIBRARY

7:00 PM

1. Introductions and greetings - Pam Davis (7:00 PM)
2. Purpose of the meeting - John Green
3. A description of what a neighborhood council is and what kinds of things a neighborhood council can do in a community - Gene Bradley
4. Outline of organizing and goal setting steps to date - Ike Schecter
5. Refreshment break (7:45 PM)
6. Community needs as understood so far - Sue Wise (8:00 PM)
7. List residents' concerns - Rev. Paul Newman
8. Question and answer period - Rev. Paul Newman
9. Volunteers for neighborhood surveys
10. Schedule next meeting date - Pam Davis
11. Adjourn (8:45 PM)

## Minutes TEMPLATE

### **[Name of Association]**

### **Meeting:** [DATE]

Meeting was called to order at 7 p.m. at the Oak View Library Meeting Room C. Quorum was established.

### **Attendees Present:**

President Robert Williams, Secretary Nolan Wilson, Vice President Katrina Jones, Treasurer Claire Thomas, Association Attorney Benz & Biller, Association Manager Jerry Anderson.

### **Absent:**

Jim Johnson, member excused.

### **Approval of Minutes:**

Motion to approve minutes from June 1 board meeting.

### **Vote:**

Unanimous approval.

### **Resolved:**

The minutes of the January 9, 2005, meeting are approved as corrected and entered into the association records.

### **Reports:**

1. Treasurer's report given by Claire Thomas.
2. Management report given by Jerry Anderson.
3. Collections report given by legal firm Liège & Johansson.

Written reports presented and maintained in the association's records.

### **Business:**

**Motion:** Hire Big Splash Pools, resurface pool for \$26,000.

**Vote:** Motion disapproved—one in favor, two opposed, one abstaining.

**Motion:** Accept Lawrence's Landscaping Company's written proposal (maintained in the association's records) to maintain the association's common property, subject to the association's attorney's review of the contract.

**Vote:** Motion approved—three in favor, one opposed. Discussion of recognition that Lawrence's Landscaping was the highest bidder, but the consensus is that a good history with the company, justifying renewing the contract.

**Resolved:** That the association accepts Lawrence's Landscaping written proposal to maintain the association's common property, subject to the association attorney's review of contract.

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be the \_\_\_\_\_, (“Association” for short) a non-profit organization organized and existing under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The objectives of this Association shall be:

Section 1: To provide a medium through which the members of the community can improve and promote the general welfare of the community through joint action arrived at by free and open discussion.

Section 2: To achieve a high quality of life for those residing in (name of neighborhood) \_\_\_\_\_ through joint effort.

Section 3. To foster effective measures to improve common services, i.e. snow removal, trash removal, police protection etc.

ARTICLE III. FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the Association shall be 1 May to 30 April. The annual budget shall cover the fiscal year and shall be prepared on the basis of dues payable for the coming fiscal year.

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Any resident of \_\_\_\_\_ shall be eligible for membership in the Association.

Section 2. Active members shall be those adults over 18 who have accepted the By-laws of the Association and paid their annual dues, and any special dues approved by the Association.

Section 3. All members of the Association shall abide by Deed Restrictions applying to (name of Neighborhood), recorded in the Office of Recorder of Deeds in and for Hampden County, as may be from time to time amended.

Section 4. Only those members whose dues are paid for the current fiscal year are eligible to vote. Only a single vote per individual household is allowed. In cases of multiple votes per household, each vote will be counted as a fraction of one vote, i.e. two persons voting in one household count as one-half vote each.

ARTICLE V. DUES

Section 1. The annual Association dues shall be xxxx dollars (\$XX.00) per household, payable to the Treasurer during the annual membership drive from April 1 to April 30. In addition to levying annual dues, the Association may levy special dues as the occasion merits with the approval of members voting in person or by proxy at a special meeting called for that purpose. Annual dues shall be decided upon at the Spring meeting of the Association by the majority of voting members present, or by proxy.

#### ARTICLE VI. ELECTION OF OFFICERS OF THE ASSOCIATION

The Officers of the Association shall be chosen by a majority of the members voting in person or by proxy at the Spring Meeting.

#### ARTICLE VII. OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of the Association shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. These officers constitute the Executive Committee.

Section 2. The President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer shall serve a term of one (1) year commencing May 1<sup>st</sup>.

Section 3. In case of a vacancy in any office, except for the President, the office shall be filled by an appointment by the Executive Committee. In the event the President can not fulfill his/her entire term of office, the Vice-President will assume his/her responsibilities for the remainder of his/her term.

#### ARTICLE VIII. DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

Section 1. The President shall be the chief executive officer and the official spokesperson of the Association, and shall have general supervision of the affairs of the Association. The President, or his/her designee, shall preside at all meetings of the Association and the Executive Committee. They shall have the power to appoint committees to investigate any matters of common interest to the members or the board of directors, and be ex-officio a member of all such committees. Shall see that orders and resolutions of the Board of Directors are carried out. Shall sign all notes and checks along with the Treasurer, and all other written instruments

Section 2. The Vice-President shall fill the office of President at any time that the President may be absent or unable to fulfill the duties of his/her office, and shall perform such other duties as may be directed by the Board of Directors.

Section 3. The Secretary shall keep an accurate written record and a synopsis of the minutes of all meetings. The Secretary shall issue all notices of meetings and any other such notices. He/She shall prepare and keep on record a file of all the Association's members and their addresses. The Secretary shall record and keep a record of all votes.

Section 4. The Treasurer shall keep full and accurate records of receipts and disbursements in books belonging to the Association. A full report on the Association's financial status will be required at each meeting of the Board of Directors. The Treasurer shall deposit all monies to the credit of the Association in a suitable banking institution and shall disburse funds as approved by the Board of Directors. The Treasurer, together with the President or Vice-President, shall sign all checks and vouchers. The Treasurer shall also receive and keep current records of all dues collected.

#### ARTICLE IX. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall consist of the Officers of the Association, plus 3 regular members of the association, elected at the annual meeting for one-year terms.

Section 2. The property, affairs, business and concerns of the Association shall be vested in the Board of Directors. Vacancies shall be filled temporarily until the next association meeting by a majority vote of the Board of Directors present and voting.

#### ARTICLE X. MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular meetings of the Board of Directors shall be held monthly or as needed. Special Board of Directors meetings can be called as needed, with the purpose stated in the call for the special meeting. All business to be considered at a special Board meeting shall be stated in the call. At least seven days notice of the time and place of all Board meetings shall be given. The majority of the Board of Directors shall constitute a quorum at any meeting of the Board of Directors.

Section 2. The regular meetings of the Association shall be for the purpose of receiving reports from the officers and standing committees; for the receiving of reports from ad hoc committees; for establishing programs and budgets in furtherance of the objectives of the Association; and for any other business that may arise. The regular annual meetings of the Association will be held three times per year (Spring, Fall, and Winter) with notice being given to the members at least

one week in advance of the meetings. A simple majority of voting members present or by proxy, shall be considered sufficient to transact business at the regular meetings.

Section 3. The annual meeting for the election of officers shall be held in April of each year.

Section 4. Special meetings of the Association shall be called by the Board upon written request of one-fourth or more of the voting members of the Association. No less than one week notice of a special meeting shall be given, and only that business specified in the call may be transacted.

Twenty per cent of the voting members shall constitute a quorum at any special meeting of the Association thus called. The Board shall have the power to call special meetings of the Association whenever it seems necessary.

#### ARTICLE XI. COMMITTEES

Section 1. The Board of Directors shall appoint an Auditor or Auditors at the regular Winter meeting. The Auditor(s) shall examine the books of the Association to be provided by the Treasurer and shall submit a written statement for the regular Spring meeting of the Association.

Section 2. The Finance Committee shall be appointed by the Board of Directors after the regular Spring meeting and shall consist of the Treasurer (as Chair) and two voting members of the Association. It shall consider request for funds, plan a budget, and recommend to the Board of Directors such expenditures as the committee deems expedient. It shall report at the next meeting of the Board of Directors.

Section 3. The President shall have the power to appoint committees to investigate any matters of common interest to members of the Association.

#### ARTICLE XII. PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order Revised* shall govern this organization in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these by-laws.

#### ARTICLE XIII. AMENDMENTS

Section 1. These by-laws may be amended at any special meeting of the Association called for that purpose or at the regular meetings of the Association. Notice of change shall be made available to the member's one week in advance of the meeting.

Section 2. Unless otherwise provided prior to its adoption or in the motion to adopt, and amendment shall become effective upon adjournment of the meeting at which it was adopted.

Neighborhood Council Name Press Release  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: NAME – PHONE NUMBER  
EMAIL

## Neighborhood Council Writes Press Release

Springfield, MA, MONTH DD, YEAR

*Paragraph 1:* Introduction that summarizes key information, including who, what, where, when, and why.

*Paragraph 2:* Provide more details to previous information.

*Paragraph 3:* Include a memorable quote from someone relevant to add credibility to the story.

*Paragraph 4:* Add any extra relevant information here, expanding on the previous quotation.

*Paragraph 5:* Include an additional quote.

*Paragraph 6:* Conclusion. End press release with concise summary.

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### About [Neighborhood Council Name]

Brief paragraph describing your neighborhood organization.





