



CITY OF OXNARD

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THE
COMMISSIONER'S
TASK

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Oxnard, California

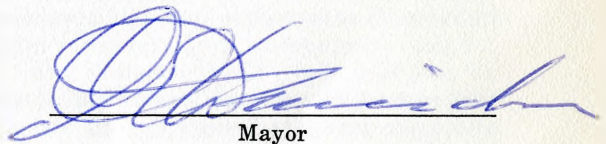
CITY OF OXNARD

CALIFORNIA

GREETINGS . . .

This booklet was written at the suggestion of experienced commissioners and board members, who felt it would perform a useful service to you who have, perhaps for the first time, accepted an active role in your municipal government. We hope you will be guided to early productive use of the time and talents you are so generously donating to our city.

This message constitutes a sincere greeting from your fellow workers in the public service and an expression of gratitude from all of us in the legislative and administrative branches of the government of the City of Oxnard.



Mayor

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THE COMMISSIONER'S TASK . . .

In our growing dynamic City, the intimate and responsive relationship between citizens and government—which characterizes a working democracy—needs constant care and reinforcement. Although the Mayor and City Council ably represent the people of Oxnard, their heavy legislative duties prevent their active participation in all City affairs requiring citizen advice and attention. Similarly, the City Manager and other administrative personnel discharge their duties competently and with full cognizance of their responsibilities to the citizenry. But there remain many policy decisions, public relations duties, and judiciary functions which can best be done by informed responsible citizens. As a Commission, you have assumed responsibility for one or more of these functions, and for making local government a truer image of the will of the people. As you become acquainted with the roll of your particular Commission or Board, you will also become aware that there are certain special services which you are in a unique position to perform.



WHY YOU HAVE BEEN APPOINTED . . .

Whether you are appointed by the Mayor, the City Council, or a combination of authorities, you were selected because the individuals responsible for your appointment have a high regard for your intelligence, common sense and judgment. Occasionally, as program and policy decisions are made, you will find that this regard, coupled with your status as a representative citizen and your intimate knowledge of the program with which you have been working, has made your advice particularly valuable to the authorities under whom you were appointed. You therefore have a responsibility to be thoroughly informed whenever your advice is sought. Modern government is too important and too intricate for off-the-cuff opinions.

Probably the one single job all Commissioners have in common is their heavy public relations responsibility. The most important reason for the existence of citizen commissions is to supply a line of two-way communications between the government and the governed. In addition to your personal qualities of responsibility, intelligence, and knowledge, a major reason

for your selection was that you are an influential member of our community. Obviously, it is impractical, cumbersome, and costly to submit too many policy decisions to popular vote. But, as a Commissioner, your opinion is easily available to government officials, and they will depend upon you to represent the public. In the other direction, government officials often must overcome citizen apathy, ignorance, and cynicism toward certain municipal programs. Public funds cannot be spent on large scale public relations efforts, but you, as a well-informed Commissioner, are in a unique position to see that your associates and colleagues in private life are well-informed. An active, enthusiastic Commissioner, whose opinion is respected in the community, can do a great deal to shape public attitudes toward local government—by knowing municipal programs thoroughly and by taking every opportunity to discuss these programs with other influential civic leaders.



LEARNING THE JOB . . .

The Municipal Code authorizes the Commissions and Boards of the City to perform in advisory and judicial roles. Your orientation as a Commissioner will be immensely facilitated if you understand the particular role or roles of the Commission to which you have been appointed. While we will discuss these functions here in a general way, your best specific information will come from reading the particular Ordinance section authorizing the existence of your Commission, and by discussing your responsibilities with the department head with whom you will be working.

Advisory Commissions exist solely for the very important communications role between an informed citizenry and government officials. Where Advisory Commissions exist, their opinion is usually so deeply respected by the governmental agency to whom they give advice, that they in effect hold a veto power over many program activities. This power is, however, not legal and is dependent upon a sound working relationship and mutual respect between the Commission and the legislative body to whom they report. Advisory commissions are only as effective in our government as the knowledge, ability, and enthusiasm of the individual Commissioners allow them to be.

Citizens' Committees are similar to Advisory Commissions. They differ from Advisory Commissions only in that they are created to help solve a specific problem rather than to advise on a continuing municipal service. Thus, the successful citizens' committee accomplishes its goal and is then disbanded. Because of their temporary nature, the creation of citizens' committee is seldom under the authority of the Municipal Code, but is based on some more informal action, such as a Council Resolution.

Judicial Commissions are usually responsible for interpreting and applying controversial and difficult regulatory legislation. Judicial boards have, obviously, accepted a very heavy responsibility in regulating the affairs of their fellow citizens. They are frequently faced with difficult decisions requiring a thorough knowledge of all the facts and a profound understanding of the importance of equity to all citizens in the application of our laws.

Legislative Functions are performed by all Commissions in the sense that the decisions they make and the policies they recommend may become precedents on which later decisions are based. For this reason, the decisions you make as a Commissioner or Board Member will have an impact for many years after your term as a Commission is ended. This fact emphasizes the importance of thought and care in your deliberations as a Commissioner.



YOUR OPINIONS ARE VALUABLE . . .

In your first months as a Commissioner, you may feel that you are failing to contribute at a maximum level to the course of City development, simply because you have not acquired the program understanding which will allow you to participate as actively as you wish. During this rather trying period, when you may seek advice more often than you give it, we hope you will remember that there is no desire, on the part of either legislative or executive City personnel, to control your opinions or judgments. The aim of everyone with whom you will work is to enlist your well recognized intelligence and energy in the interests of the City of Oxnard. This booklet was, in fact, prepared to hasten the achievement of that aim. The whole concept of the Citizen Commissioner fulfills its democratic purpose only if the Commissioner feels free and unobligated as he forms his opinions and contributes his counsel. Most Commissions are

established under regulations that specifically reinforce this principle. For instance, there is seldom only one entity responsible for appointing members of a Commission or Board. More frequently, a number of parties share in the selection and appointment of Commissioners. Therefore, the Commissioner need not feel too closely affiliated with any one authority. His attention must be turned to the welfare of our entire City—as he, the Commissioner, sees it.



THE CITY TEAM . . .

The Organization Chart on page 9 is included in this booklet so that you can see the basic lines of authority and communication in our City government. Even the most cursory review of the responsibilities of the Mayor, the Council, the Manager, the various Boards and Commissions, and the department heads, reveals that no single official or group in City government is empowered to make unilateral decisions, without some consultation with and endorsement from other Boards, Managers, or Legislators. In addition to the internal relationships suggested by the City Organization Chart, those of us in City government must remember that the City has responsible, interdependent relationships with other governmental entities such as the County of Ventura, the State of California, our neighboring municipalities, the Boards of Education, and a myriad of others.

Many successful and experienced Commissioners report that their failure to appreciate these complexities during their early days on their Commissions was the greatest source of frustration and ineffectiveness they encountered. Most Commissioners are successful professional or business men and women accustomed to positions of authority within their own business lives. The change from a role of almost absolute authority to one of being a member of a large team is a difficult one. However, as you gain experience in City government, you will appreciate the satisfaction that comes from being a competent team member and you will gain a sense of personal achievement as you learn to make your opinions and decisions effective within this complex.

YOUR FIRST STEP . . .

You will find your fellow workers in City government welcome your help and are eager to get you off to the best possible start. We suggest that you make an appointment with the department head or other City official with whom you will be working. You will find him eager to show you the facilities under his direction. He will welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you have about this new task of yours.

We all hope that your experience as a Commissioner will be successful and personally satisfying to you. The other members of City Government speak for themselves and their fellow citizens in expressing their gratitude for your willingness to allocate valuable time to building an ever better City than we now know.



MEETINGS AND ATTENDANCE . . .

Section 1411 - Oxnard Ordinance Code - Meetings. Meetings of all official boards and commissions of the city shall be public and shall be held in a publicly owned building in which adequate space is available for those members of the public who normally attend such meetings. Meetings shall be scheduled at a designated location not less often than once each month on one particular day at a particular hour. The time, day and place of regular meetings shall be established by a resolution of the board or commission, which resolution shall be filed in the office of the City Clerk. The secretary of the board or commission shall be responsible for giving notice to the press of regular and special meetings of the particular public agency, as required in Government Code, Sections 54950 et seq. Complete minutes shall be kept of the proceedings.

Section 1412 - Oxnard Ordinance Code - Attendance at meetings.

Should any member be absent without good cause more than once during two consecutive three month periods from the official meetings of the commission or board of which he is a member, the secretary of the particular public agency shall immediately inform the City Council of such fact. The office of such member shall then be deemed automatically vacant. The Chairman or President of the commission or board shall previously determine whether an absence is with good cause. An absence due to illness or other unavoidable reason shall be considered an absence with good cause, providing that notice of such intended absence is given to the Chairman or President as much in advance as possible.

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

CITY OF OXNARD

LIBRARY BOARD . . .

Five members appointed by the Mayor, with approval of the City Council, responsible for the management and general development of the City Library System.

Covered by Chapter 3 of Division 2 of the Education Code of the State of California.



PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION . . .

Seven members appointed by the City Council to advise the City Council, City Manager and Parks and Recreation Director on policy matters pertaining to public parks and recreational activities in the city.

Covered by Oxnard Ordinance Code Sections 1420 - 1425.



PLANNING COMMISSION . . .

Seven members appointed by the Mayor, with approval of the City Council, to advise the City Council, City Manager and Planning Director on policy matters pertaining to City Planning. The Commission is also responsible for the adoption and recommendation to the Council of a City Master Plan.

Governed by Oxnard Ordinance Code Sections 1450 - 1457 and Chapter 3, Title 7, of the California Government Code.

HOUSING AUTHORITY . . .

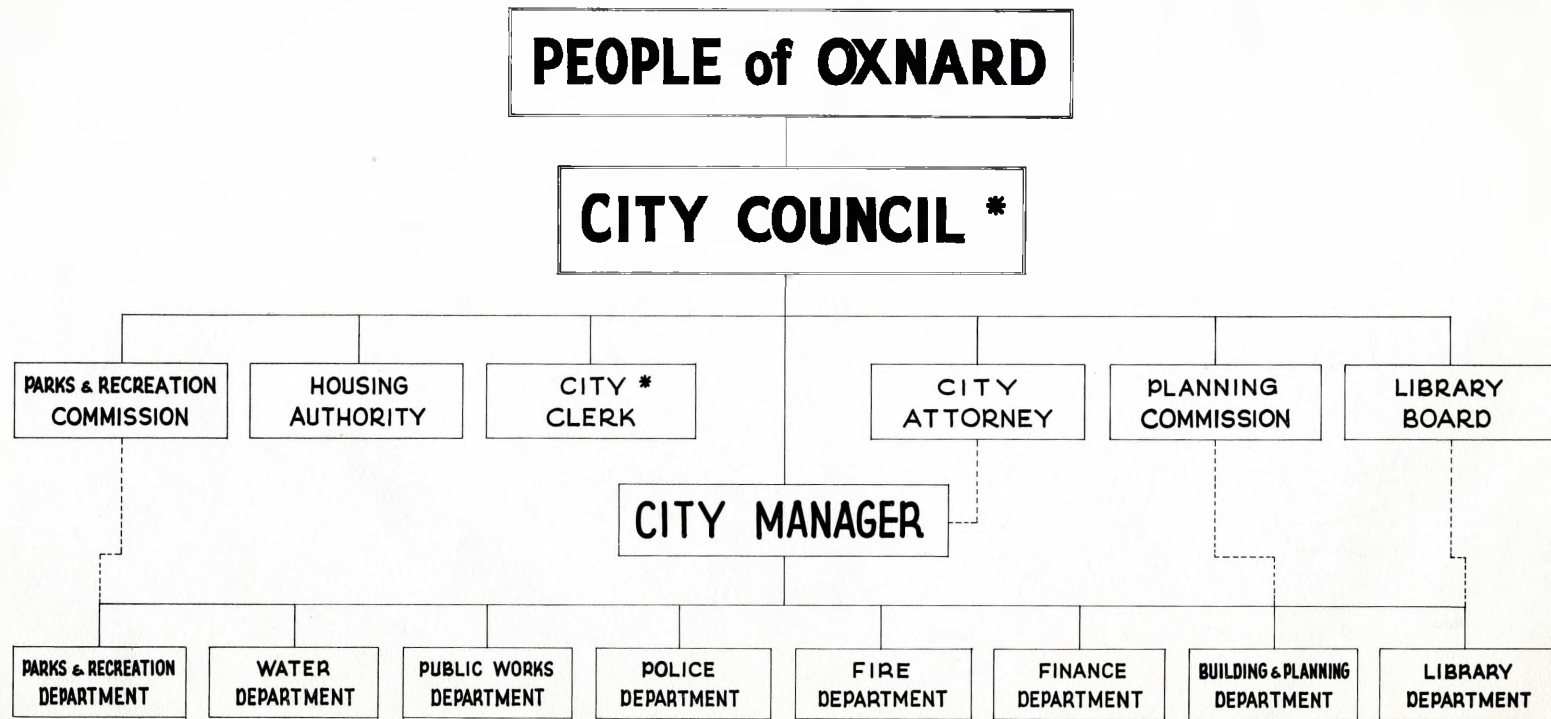
Seven members appointed by the City Council to prepare, carry out, acquire, lease and operate housing projects.

Covered by Oxnard Ordinance Code Section 1440 and Division 24, Part 2, Chapter 1, Article 2, of the California Health and Safety Code.

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CITY OF OXNARD ORGANIZATION CHART

JUNE 1961



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* * Elective