

Chapter 2.75

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS

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Section 2.75.010 Findings

The city council of the City of Vancouver finds that there is a need to maintain strong channels of communication with the citizens of Vancouver on matters affecting the livability of their neighborhood and the community in general. It is the intent of the city council, through the recognition of neighborhood associations, to foster a partnership of open communication between the city and its neighborhoods; to enhance the environment in which citizens are afforded an opportunity to participate in government decisions in an advisory role; to foster cooperation and consensus among diverse interest; to assist the city and neighborhood residents in developing solutions to mutual problems; and to develop in the citizens a sense of personal pride and responsibility for their neighborhood. The city council has recommended that a plan be developed for recognizing neighborhood associations and to establish mechanisms for consulting with such organizations on policies, projects, etc.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.020 Definition

A neighborhood association is a group of residents, property owners, businesses and non-profit organizations within the boundaries established by the affected residents, property owners, businesses and non-profits of the "neighborhood" for the purpose of considering and acting upon a broad range of issues affecting their neighborhood's livability and to foster open communication and partnership with the city.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.030 Authority to form -- Council to Consider Recommendations

The residents, property owners, and representatives of businesses and non-profit organization of any city area not recognized currently may form such an association. Associations seeking formal recognition by the city may make written request to the Office of Neighborhoods for formal recognition as a neighborhood association under the provisions of this chapter. Upon receipt of application of an association, city staff shall issue a report and recommendation to the city council. Recognition of a neighborhood association shall be done by council resolution.

Prior to requesting recognition, a neighborhood association shall hold one or more meetings open to the

public with adequate notice for the purpose of gathering information, approving bylaws, boundaries, officers and a name for the association. Adequate notice means mailing notices or hand-delivering flyers and posting of signs in prominent locations throughout the neighborhood at least five business days prior to the meeting date.

When making decisions and deliberating official city business, council will consider the recommendations of affected neighborhood associations that have been officially recognized by council. (M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.040 Bylaws

In order to be recognized, each neighborhood association shall adopt bylaws which will at a minimum include rules governing process and procedure for:

- a. Election and term of officers;
- b. Information presented to the neighborhood membership, government and/or the general public; membership and voting requirements;
- c. Establishing neighborhood boundaries which shall be substantially within the city or its urban growth area;
- d. Frequency of meetings which shall be at least once per year and provisions for the holding of special meetings with appropriate notice; and
- e. Management of the neighborhood finances and records, including but not limited to maintenance of meeting sign-in sheets.

The initial bylaws shall be presented to the city council as part of the official recognition process by city council, in accordance with VMC 2.75.030, and shall be signed by all elected officers and filed with the Office of Neighborhoods. Any bylaw changes must also be filed in writing with the Office of Neighborhoods within 60 days of the revision.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.050 Membership

The membership of neighborhood associations shall include all residents, property owners, business licensees, and representatives of non-profit organizations within the neighborhood boundaries. All members of the neighborhood association may actively participate in neighborhood events, activities and meetings exercising voting rights pursuant to the bylaws, without regard to race, national origin, religion, sex or physical ability. The neighborhood association will be responsible for maintaining sign-in sheets and other records as required by the neighborhood association bylaws.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.060 Boundaries

Boundaries of associations will be defined by the association membership with assistance from city staff and may not overlap other city neighborhood association boundaries. Boundary changes may occur after residents in the affected area are given notice and the opportunity to vote as prescribed by the neighborhood association's bylaws. The Office of Neighborhoods must be notified about any changes to

neighborhood boundaries in writing within a reasonable time period. City council and relevant city departments will be made aware of neighborhood boundary changes by the Office of Neighborhoods. (M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.070 Funding

Membership fees shall be voluntary and shall not bar any resident from neighborhood association membership or voting privileges. Voluntary dues, contributions, contracts, grants or subscriptions may be used by a neighborhood association as provided for in the neighborhood association's bylaws, as well as any applicable public funding requirements.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.080 Functions of Neighborhood Associations

Neighborhood associations are private organizations. Although the city may provide grants and other limited forms of financial aid to officially recognized neighborhoods, neighborhood associations are not considered agencies or appendages of the city. The responsibilities of a recognized neighborhood association include, but are not limited to:

- a. Becoming a self-sustaining organization that will further the purpose and intent of this chapter.
- b. Making a good faith effort to recruit a diverse and representative group of residents, property owners, and business and non-profit representatives to participate in and perpetuate the governance and operation of the neighborhood association.
- c. Providing effective community participation in government by articulating, defining, and addressing neighborhood problems; by advising, consulting with, and cooperating with the various city departments and council and by notifying and relaying information to residents, property owners, business and non-profit representatives and their assigned city liaison regarding matters that affect their respective neighborhoods.
- d. Providing community input on the efficiency and effectiveness of the city's delivery of services. Making recommendations concerning particular actions, policies, plans, programs, projects, and other matters to the city council and to any city department or commission affecting the livability of the neighborhood, including, but not limited to, land use, housing, community facilities, human services, social and recreational programs, open space and parks, traffic and transportation, environmental quality, and public safety.
- e. Establishing and following clear processes for reporting the association's position on matters affecting their respective neighborhoods to the city as further described in section 2.75.090 subsection (b).
- f. Assisting city staff in determining priority needs affecting the quality of life for the neighborhood and the overall community;
- g. Undertaking and managing projects to benefit the neighborhood association as may be agreed upon by the neighborhood association membership or contracted with the city and/or other public agencies.

(Ord. M-1587 Sec 1 [Ex "A"] {part} 1975)

- h. Maintaining current board rosters and providing the Office of Neighborhoods with the names and

addresses of each of the officers on their board who will receive all notices and other mailings from the city.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2025, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.090 Accountability

A. Neighborhood associations shall be accountable to the membership of the neighborhood which they represent. They shall be responsible for notifying the membership about meetings, elections, and other association events. All meetings of a neighborhood association or its board shall be open to the public. A neighborhood association shall make a good faith effort to seek the views of the people affected by proposed policies or actions and shall consider all proposed options before adopting any final recommendations or actions. Officers will serve as liaison between city staff and the neighborhood association, and shall be elected by the neighborhood association membership.

B. All recognized neighborhood associations shall establish procedures through the adoption of bylaws which shall at a minimum provide that the general membership of such association have the ability to register support or opposition to any issue or proposed city action including, but not limited to holding of a special meeting if necessary to address such issue or action. When a neighborhood association presents its official position on an issue or proposed action to the city, it shall identify the date of the general membership meeting, and the vote tally for and against the position asserted by the association.

The consensus view of a dissenting minority or minorities on any issue considered shall be recorded and transmitted along with any recommendations made by a neighborhood association by the city.

C. VMC 20.180.060 provides for a reduced land use appeal fees for a recognized neighborhood association. In order to qualify for this reduced fee, the neighborhood association must be in compliance with this chapter including but not limited to the provisions of subsection (b) above and all applicable policies and procedures adopted by the city's planning agency. Provided, that if a neighborhood association officer files a timely appeal, the neighborhood association shall have a period of up to thirty (30) days thereafter to comply with the requirements of this chapter. Failure to comply will result in denial of the appeal and forfeiture of the fee.

D. Nothing in this chapter shall be considered as a limitation of any citizen's rights to participate directly in the decision-making process of the city government.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.100 Mutual Responsibilities

A. Notices and Public Information

1. Neighborhood associations and city departments shall undertake to notify neighborhood residents and entities through the officers of the neighborhood association on policy or administrative decisions pertaining to a specific neighborhood.

2. All neighborhood associations, regardless of their legal status shall abide by the Washington State laws regulating open meetings and public disclosure to all information not protected by the right of personal privacy in order to maintain official neighborhood recognition by the city council.

B. Planning.

1. Neighborhood associations and city departments shall include each other in all planning efforts which affect neighborhood livability.
2. Prior to final action being taken on any comprehensive plan amendment located within or adjacent to a recognized neighborhood association, notice to such amendment shall be sent to the affected neighborhood chair in addition to other legal notice procedures.
3. City departments and neighborhood associations shall cooperate in seeking outside sources of funding when appropriate for neighborhood projects.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.110 Office of Neighborhoods

- a. The Office of Neighborhoods shall consist of professional staff that provide technical assistance on a variety of issues, including, but not limited to, neighborhood action planning, grant opportunities, outreach and communication, city liaison program, leadership training, and other ongoing programs.
- b. Functions. In order to facilitate community participation and improve communication, the Office of Neighborhoods may assist neighborhood associations and citizens within the Urban Growth Boundary and city departments in the following ways:
 1. Notify interested persons of meetings, hearings, and other community events;
 2. Provide for the sharing of information and maintain reports, studies, data sources and other neighborhood related information;
 3. Provide referral services;
 4. Maintain an up-to-date list of neighborhood associations and their principal officers;
 5. Assist neighborhood associations to become officially recognized by the city council and help rejuvenate activity in less active neighborhoods when appropriate;
 6. Assist in reproducing neighborhood newsletters when written material is supplied by the neighborhood association;
 7. Act as liaison between neighborhood associations and city departments, and help facilitate processes for citizen involvement;
 8. Assist in contacts with other public agencies;
 9. Assist in educational efforts relating to citizen participation;
 10. Assist neighborhood associations in securing funding resources when appropriate.
 11. Provide information to assist neighborhood associations with the development, implementation and maintenance of their Neighborhood Action Plans.
 12. Coordinate the Neighborhood City Liaison program and serve as a resource to the city staff person appointed and the individual neighborhood association in maintaining a strong, effective partnership.

13. Provide and implement a review process for compliance of all neighborhood associations as set forth in this chapter.

14. Provide reference material to neighborhood associations related to compliance with this ordinance, including but not limited to, Washington State laws regulating public meetings and public disclosure.

(M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)

Section 2.75.120 Review

The Office of Neighborhoods may at least annually perform a review of any and all Neighborhood Associations for the purpose of determining an association's compliance with this chapter. Such review shall be conducted as follows:

a. **Dormant Status Review:** All recognized associations are required to submit evidence to the Office of Neighborhoods that at least one general membership meeting has been held each calendar year, including a current list of elected officers. Any recognized neighborhood association failing to meet these requirements may fall under dormant status. Recognized neighborhood associations in dormant status shall be removed from all official city mailing lists and will lose the opportunity to receive certain notifications as described above, until such time as they re-activate their status by providing evidence of a general membership meeting and a current list of elected officers. Notice of the dormant status determination shall be mailed to the last provided list of elected officers and reported to the media for public awareness.

b. **Compliance Review:** All neighborhood associations are required to comply with the terms and conditions set forth in this chapter in order to benefit from official recognition by the city. Failure to do so may result in the association's loss of official recognition by the city.

If the city receives a complaint that a neighborhood association has failed to comply with this chapter, the Office of Neighborhoods shall conduct a fact-finding study and attempt to resolve the complaint directly with the complainant and the association. If the complaint remains unresolved and the Office of Neighborhoods makes an initial determination that the neighborhood association is out of compliance with this chapter, the complaint will be submitted to the City's Hearing Examiner for review.

1. **Hearings Examiner Review:** The Officer of Neighborhoods shall submit a complaint along with all documents prepared by it in connection with the complaint to the City's Hearing Examiner. Subject to a public hearing, the Hearings Examiner shall have the authority to reverse, affirm, or modify the initial determination of the Office of Neighborhoods. The Hearings Examiner shall have the authority to recommend that the city council adopt a resolution withdrawing recognition of the neighborhood association and removing the association from all official mailing lists.

a. All complaints received shall be scheduled for hearing within 60 days from receipt of the complaint by the Hearings Examiner. Further extensions are permitted under mutual agreement of the parties.

b. Notice of the Hearings Examiner review shall be mailed to the complainant as well as the current neighborhood association officers or board members on record with the Office of Neighborhoods.

c. Hearings shall be open and public and shall allow for testimony on all relevant aspects of the proposed action and applicable policies and standards.

d. The Hearings Examiner may establish time limits on testimony or other additional rules regarding the conduct of the hearing and shall administer oaths to any person testifying.

e. Notice of the Hearings Examiner's decision or recommendation shall be mailed to the complainant as well as the association's officers or board of directors on file with the Officer of Neighborhoods.

f. The decision or recommendation of the Hearings Examiner may be appealed, by either the complainant or the neighborhood association and will be submitted to the city council for review. An appeal of the Hearing Examiner's decision shall be in writing and set forth the specific provisions of the decision being appealed. Written appeals must be received by the Office of Neighborhoods within fourteen (14) days of the date of the written decision of the Hearing Examiner.

g. Any decision, not appealed within the required time limit as set forth in section (f) above shall be considered final and binding.

2. City Council Appeal/Review: Upon receipt of the Hearing Examiner's decision or recommendation, the Office of Neighborhoods, shall forward the Hearings Examiner's written decision or recommendation and the record of the hearing to city council. Upon receipt of the Hearing Examiner's decision, the city council shall conduct a public hearing, within a reasonable time. The council shall have the authority to adopt, amend, or reverse the findings of the Hearings Examiner. The decision of the council shall be a final and binding decision which will be set forth in the form of a council resolution. (M-3696, Added, 03/21/2005, Sec 1)