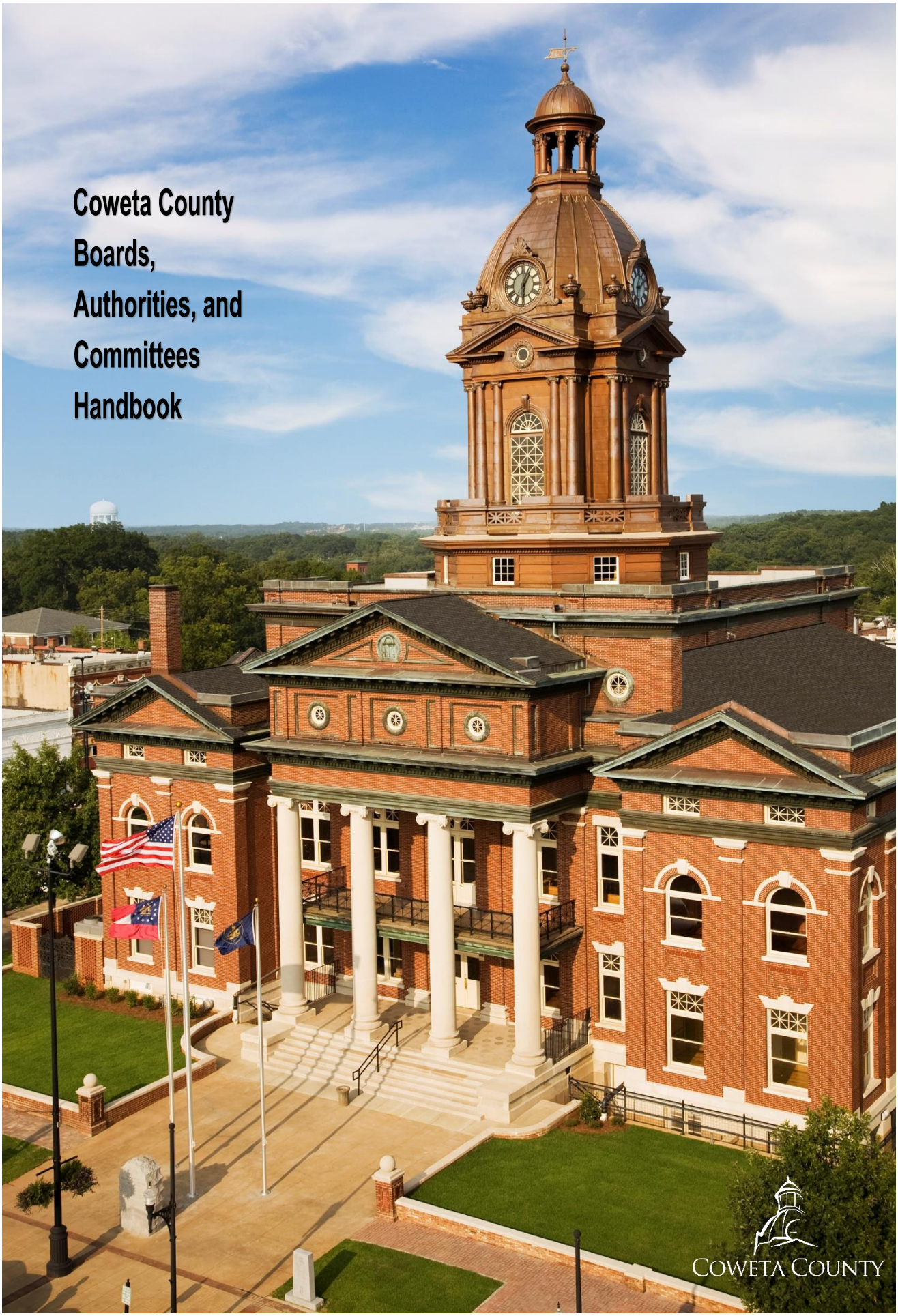
Coweta County Boards, Authorities, and Committees Handbook



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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is for persons interested in volunteering to serve on a County Board, Authority or Committee (BAC) or for those recently appointed. In this handbook, you will find information about each BAC function, qualifications for members, information for new appointees, roles and responsibilities, the policies governing BACs, and a description of all BACs to which members are appointed by the Board of Commissioners.

Roles & Responsibilities of Boards, Authorities, and Committees

By virtue of their authorizing legislation, ordinance or resolution, some Boards, Authorities or Committees (BAC) may have legislative, quasi-judicial, and/or advisory functions. BACs are a structured way for individual citizens to share their opinions and perspectives, study issues, develop recommendations, and participate in board decisions in a focused, small group structure. The primary purpose of BACs is to provide judicious advice, from a citizen perspective, to the Board of Commissioners which is Coweta County's elected policy-making body, to make quasi-judicial decisions in an administrative proceeding, or to participate in board governance as provided in an applicable law or ordinance.

BACs may or may not include studying critical issues, hearing public testimony, conducting independent research, reviewing staff reports and recommendations, and making informed and reasoned decisions all of which are intended to enable the BAC to discuss, formulate, and forward well -developed, thoughtful recommendations to the Board of Commissioners in a timely manner, or to make quasi-judicial decisions based on evidence presented at a hearing.

Boards, Authorities and Committees

Most BACs are advisory boards which make recommendations to the Board of Commissioners. In making these recommendations, several factors should be considered. Has the BAC ….

- Made recommendations that reflect what is best for the entire county.
- Taken care that deliberations included thorough research and review of all alternatives on an issue prior to making a recommendation.
- Made recommendations to the Board of Commissioners that reflect the consensus or majority position of the entire BAC.
- Offered recommendations that reflect a consensus position based on the deliberations of the BAC and public input, particularly from a citizen perspective.
- Provided any written reports, minutes, or supplementary materials, as applicable, to the Staff Liaison for inclusion on the Board of Commissioners' Agenda.
- Selected a representative of the BAC to attend the Board of Commissioners' meeting at which the recommendations are presented in order to answer questions, if applicable.
- Advised representatives not to give personal opinions or recommendations before the Board of Commissioners without clarifying them as such. BAC members should note that staff may present recommendations contrary to that of the BAC; this is to be respected as a different viewpoint. Also, understand the Board of Commissioners is under no obligation to follow the recommendation of the BAC, and may choose for a variety of reasons to implement a policy different than the recommended one. In this case, BAC members should respect this decision and remember they serve the Board of Commissioners; their decisions are policy and once made, the BAC should move on to the next area of discussion or find ways to best assist implementation of the new policy.

Keys to Becoming an Effective Board, Authority, or Committee Member

Like any endeavor, serving as a board, authority, or committee member requires you to put in time and effort. Several key behaviors can help make you a more effective part of these groups:

- Be familiar with the operating statute, bylaws, and other critical documents of the particular BAC. These documents provide information on the mission and scope of the BAC as well as how it should operate. Citations to authorizing legislation for the BACs can be found in *Appendix A*.
- Review the Georgia Open Meetings Law (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1, et. seq.). This legislation will guide how your BAC can meet and several steps it will need to take to comply with State regulations.
- Attend meetings and come prepared. Most of the County's BACs prepare an agenda prior to each meeting and many provide related materials. Members are expected to come to each meeting prepared to discuss the relevant issues, having reviewed any provided documentation. It is beneficial to arrive at meetings on time, in an alert condition, and with an open mind so that meetings will be conducted in an efficient and fair manner.
- Understand the role of your BAC and constraints on the County. By understanding what you can do and how you affect policy, you can reduce frustration with the process and outcomes. In turn, it helps to remember that your area is only one small part of the operations of the County and that limited resources are available to address all needs. Thus, recommendations and the policies ultimately adopted should both be viewed with the idea not of the perfect solution, but the best solution given available resources.
- Remember you are one member. The authority of the BAC comes from the entire group, not just one member, therefore, the decisions made must be of a consensus or majority nature. There may be a time at which your individual view is not that of the BAC as a whole. In these cases, remember to work as a member of the group and represent your personal views only when it is clear that they are personal and not reflective of the BAC or Board of Commissioners. As a member of a BAC, you will have a chance to influence public policy through your recommendations to the Board of Commissioners and gain a better understanding of the issues facing Coweta County. As a member of a BAC you will also have the chance to interact with other citizens on meaningful issues, participate in and gain new insights into the public policy process, and give back to the community by using your time and talent to make Coweta County a better place.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please direct those to:

Shannon Zerangue, County Clerk
22 East Broad Street, Newnan Ga 30263
770.254.2601
szerangue@coweta.ga.us

Regular business hours:
Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS

When contemplating being on a board, authority or committee (BAC) with Coweta County, there are a few questions for you to consider ...

What are the requirements to serve?
What is the time commitment? How long is the term?
What are the responsibilities of the particular board, authority or committee?
Which board, authority or committee is of the most interest to me?
What are the expectations for members?

Consider these questions carefully as you review this handbook and proceed through the application process. Some answers are available in *Appendix A*, which provides a description of each BAC.

Is a member position open on the BAC I am interested in?

Vacancies and upcoming expiration of member's terms are maintained by the County Clerk and made available on the County's website.

Attend a Meeting

Coweta County highly encourages potential applicants to attend at least one meeting of the BAC for which you intend to apply. This is to help you gauge whether this volunteer opportunity is a good fit and to insure you have a good understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the BAC.

We also recommend prospective applicants meet with the Chair and/or Staff Liaison of their desired BAC as well as the appointing Commissioner. Applicants are welcome to reach out to the Staff Liaison to coordinate a meeting with the Chairperson of the board, authority or committee to provide insight into what it's like serving on the BAC, answer any additional questions, and discuss how the applicant would like to contribute to the group if selected as a new member.

Membership Limitations

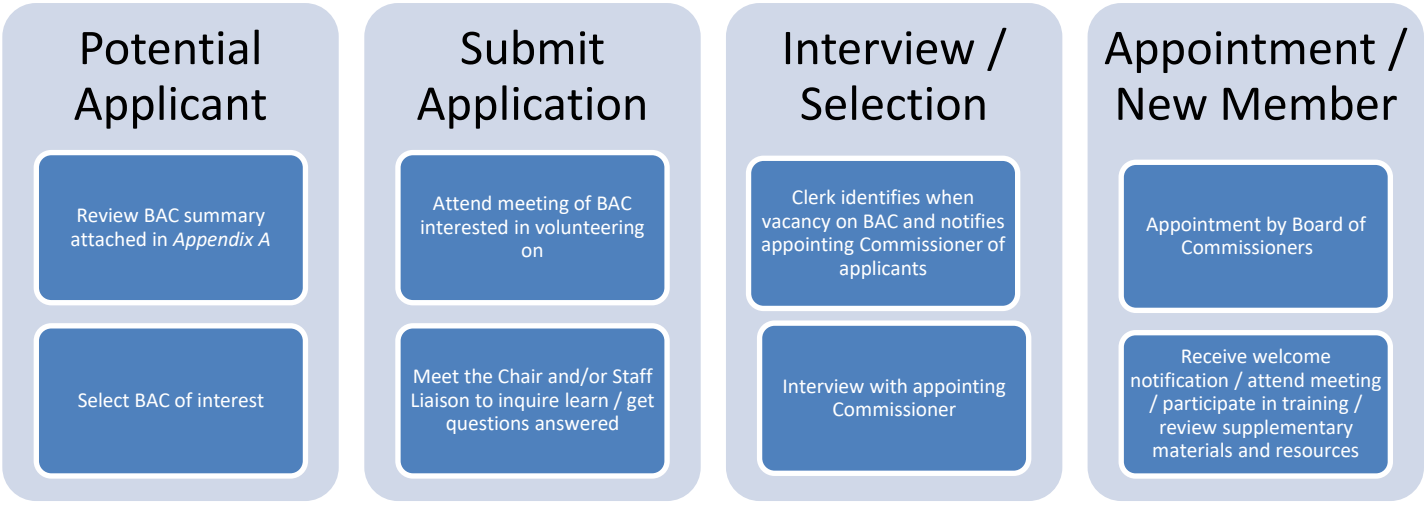
With the exception of the Board of Trustees for the Group Pension Plan and the Board of Trustees for the Salary Deferral and Employee Matching Plans, County employees may not serve on any BAC appointment by the Commission that has a direct relationship to the function of their daily position (i.e. Community Development Department employee may not serve on the Board of Zoning Appeals, Airport employee may not serve on the Airport Authority).

Submit an Application

Applicants must be Coweta County residents. Manner of establishing residency includes, but not limited to, the following: Homestead Exemption status in Coweta County, vehicle registration in Coweta County, voting registration in Coweta County. Any member serving on a BAC who relocates outside of Coweta County during his or her term of service on a BAC regardless of his or her date of appointment or reappointment, should notify the Staff Liaison immediately, who will then notify the County Clerk.

An application is required for consideration of an appointment to a BAC. All information in completing the application becomes public information and is therefore subject to public records requests. Once an application for an appointment has been submitted through the County website https://www.coweta.ga.us/about-coweta/coweta-officials/boards-authorities/boards-authorities-candidate-application is it placed on file and remains active for twelve (12) months.

Application Process



If you have any questions or require assistance, please direct those to:

Shannon Zerangue, County Clerk
22 East Broad Street, Newnan Ga 30263
770.254.2601
https://www.coweta.ga.us/departments-services/departments-a-e/administration

Regular business hours:
Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

EXPECTATIONS UPON APPOINTMENT

By accepting this appointment, you are now in a position to work directly with your local government on behalf of your fellow residents, to enrich community life on a wide variety of issues. The greater your participation in the work of the BAC, the greater the effectiveness of the BAC will be in carrying out its charge and ultimately improving the community.

Attendance

By acceptance to a BAC, members have committed to attend meetings and represent the community on that respective BAC. Should a member become unwilling or unable to attend or participate, he or she shall notify the Staff Liaison immediately. If any member fails to attend two (2) consecutive meetings without cause, the Staff Liaison should notify the County Clerk, so that he or she can work with the affected BAC to address the issue. Recurring failure to attend meetings may result in removal from the BAC by the Board of Commissioners.

Contact Information and Communications

By acceptance to a BAC, members will be required to provide and maintain current contact information through the Staff Liaison.

As applicable, BAC members will be issued a Coweta County email account to be used for BAC business in compliance with County policies; personal use of this account is prohibited. It is the responsibility of the BAC

member to regularly monitor this email account. BAC members may be subject to mandatory cyber security training. All communications related to BAC business are subject to Georgia's Open Records Act (see O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70 et. seq. for further information).

Training

All members of BACs are required to complete requisite training as applicable to the BAC. Members of a BAC may be subject to cyber security training as applicable based upon access to the Coweta County network.

Media and Social-Media

The Coweta County Communications and Branding Policy can be found on the County website (https://www.coweta.ga.us/home/showpublisheddocument/30991/638823140573730000). The Communications Manager, or in his or her absence, a designee, will be responsible for reviewing all information submitted to print, broadcast or electronic media in any form, to include, but not limited to, video files, press releases, newsletters, and emails. Should a media representative contact a BAC member, regarding County matters, the member shall notify the Staff Liaison and refer the media representative to the Communications Manager.

Representation on a BAC

As an individual member of a BAC, you must not represent your own views or recommendations as those of the BAC unless the majority of the body has officially voted to approve such action. BAC members making recommendations or expressing views that have not been approved by a majority of the BAC should indicate they are expressing their individual opinions and are not speaking on behalf of the BAC or the Coweta County government.

Public statements should not contain promises that may be construed to be binding on a BAC, staff, or the Commission. When making a public statement, members should remind listeners that BAC actions are recommendations (unless otherwise provided by law or the function of a specific BAC) and that final action will be taken by the Board of Commissioners. This may not be true with the independent boards. Remember that your actions and statements as a BAC member assume special significance, and if not responsibly discharged, could result in a situation detrimental to Coweta County's best interests.

Although BAC members may be selected, in part, on the basis of representing specific interest groups, each member should represent the overall public good and not that of an exclusive group or interest.

Relationship with Other Members

On many occasions, the success or failure of the efforts of a BAC is dependent upon the degree of cooperation evident among the individual members of the body. We encourage you to keep the following points in mind in your interactions with other members:

- Individual BAC members and the collective group will be fair, impartial and respectful of the public, staff, and each other.
- Each member will participate in the group's discussions and work assignments, without dominating the discussion or activity of the BAC.
- Members will strive to appreciate differences in approach and point of view, whether from each other, the community, the Commission, or staff.
- Allow others adequate time to present their views fully before making comments.

- Be open and honest.
- Welcome new members and help them become acquainted with their duties.
- Strive to maintain goodwill amongst BAC members.
- Minimize conflicts of interest, political bias, and misuse of official position for political motivations.

INTRODUCTION TO THE COWETA COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Board of Commissioners

Jeff Fisher, District 1
Bill McKenzie, District 2
Bob Blackburn, District 3
John Reidelbach, District 4
Al Smith, District 5

The Board of Commissioners is composed of (5) five district commissioners who are elected for four-year terms. The Board of Commissioners elect one of their own to serve as Chairman and Vice-Chairman on a rotating basis in accordance with the Coweta County Code of Ordinances.

The Board of Commissioners serve as the community's legislative body, having responsibilities for enacting ordinances, appropriating funds to conduct government business, and providing policy direction to the County Administrator for implementation. The Commissioners do not give direction to any of the staff members, except for the County Administrator, County Attorney, and the County Clerk.

County Administrator

Michael Fouts

Coweta County Government operates within a Commission-Administrator form of government. The County Administrator is responsible to the Board of Commissioners for the proper and efficient administration of the day-to-day operations.

Functions of the County Administrator include:

- He shall be responsible for the implementation of policy established by the Board.
- Subject to the advice and consent of the Board, he shall appoint key administrative personnel and department directors.
- He shall supervise the activities of the operating County department directors in the implementation and administration of County programs. To effectively accomplish these duties, he shall exercise necessary disciplinary authority over the department directors. In the event that such disciplinary action is termination, the County Administrator shall inform the Commission of his intention prior to taking disciplinary action. In cases where immediate termination is appropriate, the County Administrator may inform the individual Commissioners by telephone or other means.
- Subject to the advice and consent of the Board, he may assign the responsibility to directly supervise various departments in the implementation and administration of County programs to the Assistant County Administrators and Public Works Administrator.
- He shall have continuing direct external relationships with the public and with other governmental bodies and their subdivisions in the administration of County business and the resolution of overall County problems.

	Commission	Administrator
Responsible for:	Policy Decisions	Day-to-day operations
Hires and Supervises:	County Administrator	All other County employees, with the exception of constitutional officers, elected officials, and their respective employees.

Staff Liaison

Most BAC will have an assigned Staff Liaison. Those BAC managed by a non-County entity or agency may not have a departmental County Liaison, in which case the default Liaison for County communication purposes is the County Clerk. The word liaison is used deliberately to describe the nature of the staff role in relation to the BAC.

While Staff Liaisons have some differing duties, depending on past BAC practice, time availability, and departmental resources, in general Staff Liaisons are responsible for:

- Ensuring that meeting notifications, agendas, minutes, and recordkeeping occurs consistent with applicable State laws.
- Serving as a communication link between the BAC, administration, department, and the Board of Commissioners, as appropriate. Staff Liaisons do not preclude BAC members from maintaining communication with the appointing Commissioner as applicable.
- Notifying open records custodians of all open records requests received by BAC members.
- Providing professional guidance, issue analysis, and recommendations as applicable.
- Assisting the BAC with research, report preparation, and correspondence in keeping with the BAC's purpose.
- Presenting BAC recommendations to the Board of Commissioners, if requested to do so by either the BAC or the Board of Commissioners.
- Maintaining a positive working relationship with the BAC Chair and its members.
- Staff Liaisons are responsible for notifying the County Clerk when a member resigns, or a vacancy exists for other reasons.

The Liaisons are staff professionals with other work responsibilities in addition to their liaison activities. In general, the Liaisons are individuals who have staff responsibilities that relate to the same work area as the BAC. Unless specified in the Staff Liaisons' job description, the individual does not "work for" or "at the direction of" the BAC.

There are "no surprises" from the BAC either in the nature of the work being undertaken by the group or the method and timing for administrative decisions or conveyance of recommendations to the Commission. The Staff Liaison fulfills an important role in assisting the BAC in this regard.

Additionally, Staff Liaisons will provide new BAC members with pertinent information and materials that will assist new members in becoming fully functioning members of the BAC. Established BAC are encouraged to share their experience and knowledge with new members.

County Retained Consultant

When a consultant is retained by Coweta County or an applicable BAC, as part of the BAC's work, the consultant will be managed by staff or Staff Liaison as there is a contractual obligation between the County (or

the BAC) and the consultant. Additionally, the consultant will need to have a single point of contact for the engagement. The BAC will act in an advisory role and work with the consultant and staff to accomplish the charge provided by the Commission.

Budget

Generally, budgets are not established for BACs. However, when applicable, funds necessary for the routine business of BACs are included in the respective departmental budget.

PROCEDURES TO CONDUCT MEETINGS / LEGAL COMPLIANCE

It is important that BACs conduct their meetings in a manner that is procedurally correct. BACs shall follow the procedures to conduct meetings as established in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*. In instances where *Robert's Rules of Order* may be inconsistent with the provisions of the Coweta County Code of Ordinances, or this Handbook, the ordinances and this Handbook shall take precedence. This is not applicable to State BACs.

Meeting Rules

At the first annual meeting each year, all BACs shall adopt meeting rules. See *Appendix B* for a meeting rules template that can be modified by the respective BAC. Meeting rules shall be made available to the public.

This is not applicable to State BACs.

Election of Officers

The election of officers should be held each year during a regular meeting for a 12-month period. This time frame follows the annual appointment of new members. Staff Liaisons must notify the County Clerk when new officers are elected.

Bylaws

When bylaws are applicable to BACs, the BAC may not adopt bylaws that are inconsistent with the Code of Ordinances or other policies that may be established by the Commission. A copy of the bylaws or any amendments thereto shall be provided by the Staff Liaison to the County Clerk immediately after adoption by the BAC. This is not applicable to State BACs.

Public Input

Each BAC shall, at or near the beginning of each of its regular meetings, afford members of the public an opportunity to speak to any matter on the meeting agenda. Time limitations may be imposed by the BAC on such public input, as necessary, to conduct the business of the BAC in a timely and efficient manner. This is not applicable to State BACs.

Open Meetings

All BACs must comply with the Georgia Open Meeting Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1, et seq).

Georgia law specifically requires that all meetings of a BAC shall be open to the public, unless in executive session.

Timely notice to the public must be given prior to the holding of any meeting of a BAC at which a majority or quorum is in attendance or is expected to be in attendance or at which formal action could be taken.

Notices must be posted 24-hours in advance of the meeting and must include meeting date, time, and location.

The term "meeting" is defined as a gathering of a quorum of members or any committee of such BAC, at which any public business is discussed or at which any formal action may be taken. Participation and voting should be conducted in an open meeting.

Executive Session

State law allows BACs to enter executive session in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 50-14-3 (b).

The ability to enter executive session is not applicable to all BACs. If you have any questions about the eligibility of your topic for an executive session, please contact the Staff Liaison or the County Clerk.

Public Records & You

All public boards receive and create public records while conducting regular business. You also produce public records when you function in your official capacity as a member on a BAC. For instance, if you communicate with another individual in your official capacity or exchange information about matters under your BAC's purview, you may create a public record even if you use your personal email, voicemail or video recording to transmit that information. Many people misunderstand the law and assume communications on personal email accounts or via text messages are not subject to the public records law; this is untrue. All BAC related communications are subject to public disclosure.

Open Records

All BACs must comply with the Georgia Open Records Act (O.C.G.A. § 50-18-70, et seq).

All correspondence related to BAC business is subject to the Open Records Act, including but not limited to documents, emails, phone records, text messages, etc. This applies to County issued devices and personal devices when utilized for BAC business.

If a BAC member receives an open records request, he or she shall notify the Staff Liaison immediately.

Quorum Requirements

For a BAC to conduct any business or take any formal action, it is necessary that a quorum of the BAC be physically present at the meeting. A quorum consists of a majority of the total number of members that comprise the BAC. This quorum requirement does not change even if a position on the BAC is vacant. If a quorum is not present for a meeting, those present can adjourn the meeting to a later date and time.

Minutes

Minutes must be taken at any meeting of a BAC at which the adoption of any proposed policy, position, resolution, rule, regulation, or formal action occurs or could occur. The minutes of BAC meetings are considered permanent records of Coweta County, must be open to public inspection, and a copy must be filed with the County Clerk. Approval of minutes shall occur no later than the next regular meeting of the BAC.

At a minimum, the minutes of a BAC meeting should contain the following information:

- Date, time and location of the meeting
- BAC members attendance
- General outline of each topic discussed, considered, and the outcome
- All motions along with the recording of how each member voted on each motion

Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting shall be approved by the BAC at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The approved minutes shall be signed by the chair and secretary of the BAC.

RESIGNATIONS AND TERMINATIONS

Any member of a BAC who desires to resign shall do so in writing to the Staff Liaison and/or County Clerk.

Members of a BAC can be removed from said body for failure to meet attendance requirements.

Unless otherwise provided by law, ordinance or resolution, all appointments by the Board of Commissioners serve at the pleasure of the appointing office/elected official, and may be removed at the discretion of said office/elected official.

CHARGE: A Checklist for Effectiveness

C – Community

Am I familiar with . . .

The specific function of my BAC as described on the Coweta County website:

https://www.coweta.ga.us/about-coweta/coweta-officials/boards-authorities

What my fellow board members and I expect to achieve for the community?

The name of the Staff Liaison for the BAC?

H – Hierarchy

Do I understand . . .

How my BAC's work affects the community?

The scope of authority of my BAC?

The role of my BAC's Staff Liaison and chair?

My role as a BAC member?

A – Accountability

Do I understand . . .

My BAC's liability and my own liability as an individual member?

What constitutes a conflict of interest?

Exactly how the law requires that a conflict of interest be handled?

My BAC's accountability to the public?

R – Responsibility

Do I . . .

Attend all BAC meetings?

Prepare for the meetings by studying the agenda and supplemental materials ahead of time?

Complete the tasks I have volunteered to take on?

Know what responsibilities each of us, as individual BAC members, has to our BAC colleagues?

G – Goals

Do I know . . .

My BAC's goals for the next 12 months?

What tasks must be completed to reach each of our goals?

Deadlines for the tasks for which I'm responsible?

E – Evaluation

Have I . . .

Discussed with other members and staff what our BAC can do to improve our performance.