



*Sarasota County Government*

# GUIDE TO CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCILS



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# GUIDE TO CITIZEN ADVISORY COUNCILS

***Advisory Council: A group of Sarasota County citizens appointed by the Board of County Commissioners to act in an advisory capacity to the commission and report directly to the commission.***

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## **Overview**

Sarasota County Government and the Sarasota County Commission value the participation of residents in the decision-making process. To further that goal, the county has more than 30 citizen advisory boards, councils and committees with more than 300 membership positions in all.

Advisory councils are created by ordinance, resolution or Florida statute, and are the first step for many important issues that come before the commission. Each council focuses on a specific issue or topic. Generally, its purpose is to advise the commission, not to make policy, though a few councils are specifically tasked with making financial or funding recommendations. Most provide in-depth assessments of issues related to their area of expertise and offer the commission a recommended course of action. Council recommendations will always be considered, but may not always be adopted by the commission.

Advisory council meetings are open to the public and are advertised weekly on the county website, along with available vacancies ([www.scgov.net/AdvisoryBoards](http://www.scgov.net/AdvisoryBoards)). Membership requirements, meeting frequency and length of term vary, depending on the specific council. All applicants must submit a membership application and acknowledgement of the county's email policy for consideration, and new members are appointed by the commission.

Advisory councils are most successful when members and county staff understand the council's purpose and work together to achieve it. This provides the foundation for a good relationship built on mutual respect and a clear understanding of each other's responsibilities.

Advisory council members should have:

- The expertise necessary to accomplish the council's objectives.
- A reputation for integrity and community service.
- An interest or experience in the council's area of service.
- Sufficient time available to prepare for and attend meetings.

On the following pages, you'll find general information pertaining to all of our advisory councils, as well as a brief description of each council and its requirements. If you're interested in serving, please visit our website for a weekly list of vacancies or to complete an application. If there are no current vacancies on your council of choice, staff will retain your application on file and contact you regarding any vacancies for a period of one year.

We thank you for your interest in advisory council membership and commend you for your willingness to devote your time to improving the quality of life in your community.

## **Appointments/Term Limits**

Advisory council members must be Sarasota County residents and maintain residency throughout their term. Members may not be employed by Sarasota County nor hold elected office unless specifically required as a condition of membership.

Terms are three years for most councils, and service is limited to four consecutive three-year terms or 12 years. After reaching this limit, members may reapply after an absence of one year. Reappointments are not guaranteed. Members may be removed or replaced by a majority vote of the commission. Each year, members elect a chair, vice-chair and other officers. Before accepting a nomination, please consider whether your term will expire in the coming year. No one is guaranteed reappointment.

## **Orientation**

New members must attend Orientation within six months of appointment. The half-day class is offered four times per year and includes information on Florida's Sunshine Law, Public Records, Code of Ethics, Roberts Rules of Order, Advisory Council Rules of Procedure, use of county-provided email accounts, and other essential topics. A list of upcoming dates is available at [www.scgov.net/AdvisoryBoards](http://www.scgov.net/AdvisoryBoards). Please contact your staff liaison to register for a session.

## **Staff Support**

A staff liaison is assigned to each council to provide technical and administrative assistance. Liaisons schedule, advertise and record meetings; prepare summary minutes; assist with agendas and related documents; and involve appropriate staff to provide guidance when needed. Beyond this, members are expected to be self-reliant. Additional research or support must be approved by management or requested by the commission.

## **Meeting Procedures, Attendance, Voting Conflicts**

A council may adopt its own procedures or bylaws; otherwise, Robert's Rules of Order is the standard. All meetings must be open to the public, properly advertised, and held in a facility that in no way excludes members of the public. Agendas are prepared and distributed in advance by the chair or designee and must include time for public comment. Meetings are audio recorded and may also be video recorded. Summary minutes are produced in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order, typed and retained by the staff liaison.

The commission requires members to attend at least 65 percent of scheduled advisory council meetings. If you will not be able to attend a meeting, the staff liaison should be notified in advance. An excused absence may be granted for certain issues including medical, family medical and public service. Members who fail to comply with the attendance requirement may be asked to resign or removed by the commission.

Members must vote whenever a vote is called unless they disclose a voting conflict, indicating a particular issue could result in "special private gain." This means that you, the business that employs you, or certain relatives would incur financial gain or loss as a result of the vote. You must explain the conflict for the record before the issue is discussed, abstain from voting on the issue, and the staff liaison will provide you a form to document the conflict. This form is filed with the meeting minutes.

## **Annual Report**

Each council must present an annual report to the commission, detailing its achievements and progress. This encourages councils to develop focused work plans and ensures the commission is kept informed of council activities. Generally the report is presented by the council chair at a regular commission meeting; the staff liaison will assist with preparation and scheduling.

## **Communications, Correspondence and Email**

Formal correspondence and any use of county logos or letterhead must be coordinated through your staff liaison. If approached by the media, please be very clear that you are expressing your own opinions and are not speaking on behalf of the entire council, and please notify your staff liaison that an interview occurred.

Florida Statutes specifically require the retention of public records, including email, for access by the public and media. Sarasota County Resolution No. 2009-025 mandates the use of county-provided email accounts by advisory council members and requires applicants to provide written acknowledgement of this policy.

Each council member is issued a county email address that must be used for all business related to the advisory council. Messages sent to and from these accounts are maintained by the county in accordance with public records law. Email may not be used to communicate with fellow members about matters that may come before your advisory council; this would be a violation of the Sunshine Law.

## **Financial Disclosure**

Members of the Board of Zoning Appeals, Building Code Board of Adjustment & Appeals and Planning Commission are required by law to file annual financial disclosure (Section 112.3145, Florida Statutes). If appointed to one of these councils, you must file Form 1, Statement of Financial Interest, with the Supervisor of Elections within 30 days of appointment. For each year you serve, you will be notified to file the following May or June. When you resign or your term expires, you must file Form 1F within 60 days. The staff liaison can help you obtain these forms or they may be accessed at [www.ethics.state.fl.us](http://www.ethics.state.fl.us).

## Tips for Productive Meetings

01

Study background materials, agenda and minutes in advance of each meeting, but don't make up your mind. Additional information may be presented at the meeting.

02

Be on time; speak openly and clearly; learn and practice parliamentary procedure.

03

Be courteous to fellow members and the public; be open and responsive to questions and concerns.

04

Comply with Sunshine Law, public records laws and the Code of Ethics for public representatives.

05

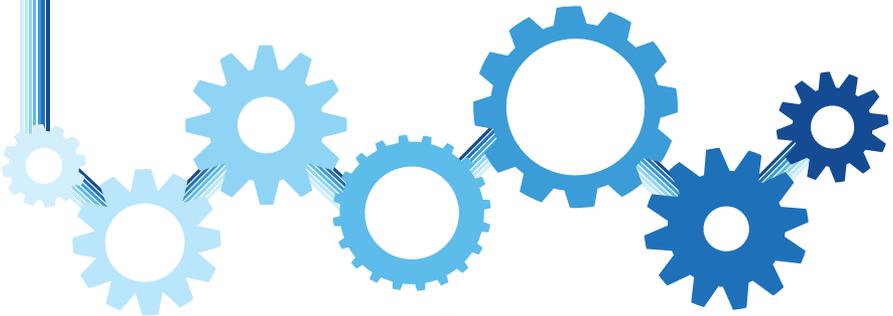
Your council may establish guidelines governing the length of presentations and public comment – typically 15 minutes for the main presentation and three minutes each for members of the public.

06

After the presentation and public comment, members may wish to ask questions. This time should be limited to questions, with discussion for or against held until after a motion has been presented.

07

Once a motion is made and seconded by a voting member, the chair may open the floor to board discussion. Keep comments brief and to the point, and assist the chair in keeping the discussion focused and moving toward a conclusion. Any voting member may "call for the question," or ask if members are ready to vote.



# Sarasota County Advisory Councils

## **Bicycle/Pedestrian/Trail Advisory Committee**

Reviews plans, develops ideas and makes recommendations to the commission to improve bicycle, pedestrian and trail access and safety countywide; volunteers at bicycle, pedestrian and trail events.

- 16 voting members:
  - Four municipal representatives (one each from Town of Longboat Key, City of North Port, City of Sarasota, City of Venice)
  - One Sarasota County School Board representative
  - One Sarasota County Sheriff's representative
  - One student representative (CYD program)
  - Nine at-large representatives
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets quarterly

## **Board of Zoning Appeals**

Hears appeals concerning interpretation or administration and variances under the zoning regulations.

- Seven members:
  - Members must be county residents for at least two years
  - Members may not hold elective office nor be employed by any Sarasota County municipality or county government
  - **Members required to file financial disclosure**
- Three-year terms
- Meets monthly (only if an appeal is scheduled)

## **Building Code Board of Adjustments and Appeals**

Hears appeals of decisions and interpretations of the building official and considers variances from the technical codes (Sarasota County Code of Ordinances, Chapter 22); grants variances to allow new construction, reconstruction and substantial improvements to be erected below the base flood level (Sarasota County Code of Ordinances, Ch 54, Article XVI).

- Seven members:
  - Members must have knowledge of and experience in technical codes: includes architects, civil engineers, mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, licensed contractors and building-industry representatives
  - **Members required to file financial disclosure**
- Three-year terms
- Meets monthly

## Citizen Tax Oversight Committee

Ensures the infrastructure surtax project process is fair, open and fully disclosed, and that money is allocated appropriately.

- Nine members:
  - One member from each district, appointed by commissioner who resides in that district
  - Four at-large members
  - Members must be residents of unincorporated Sarasota County throughout term
  - Member must not be a full-time Sarasota County Government employee or a private individual or employee of a private firm under contract with the county
  - Members must be free from actual or potential conflict of interest that would prevent an unbiased review
- Four-year terms
- Meets as called by the chair

## Citizens Advisory Committee for Public Transportation

Provides a conduit for citizen input to the commission, sitting as the Sarasota County Transportation Authority; makes recommendations or provides advice to the commission and staff.

- Eight members:
  - Includes student representative (CYD program)
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets at least six times per year

## **Citizens Advisory Committee for School Facility Planning**

Supervises the implementation of the interlocal agreement for school facility planning, including monitoring and evaluation of the school concurrency system. Reports on the effectiveness with which the interlocal agreement is being implemented.

- Not a Sarasota County advisory council – Sarasota County School Board oversees this committee
- Five members:
  - One representative of unincorporated Sarasota County, appointed by the commission
  - One representative of each municipality, appointed by the municipalities
- Three-year terms
- At least annually; quarterly as needed

## **Coastal Advisory Committee**

Advises and makes recommendations to the commission on matters pertaining to coastal issues, projects and programs.

- Nine members:
  - Five at-large members
  - Four ex-officio members (one each from: Sarasota County, Town of Longboat Key, City of Sarasota, City of Venice)
  - Must be familiar with coastal processes, inlet dynamics, and the Sarasota County Gulf of Mexico shoreline and associated inlets.
  - Familiarity with local, state, and federal government coastal management programs (regulatory and non-regulatory) preferred
  - Background in coastal engineering, coastal geology, coastal zone management or related field
  - At-large members may not hold an elected office
- Three-year terms
- Meets every other month

## **Community Action Agency Board**

Advises and makes recommendations to the commission on programs and services for low-income households that are under the auspices of county government and barriers that members of low-income households face regarding their ability to be either self-sufficient or upwardly mobile.

- 15-member tripartite board:
  - Five public officials or their appointed representatives
  - Five elected representatives of the poor
  - Five representatives of business, industry, labor, religion, welfare, education or other major group
- Three-year terms (except at the discretion of the public entities)
- Meets quarterly

## Criminal Justice Commission

Evaluates effectiveness of criminal justice programs; discusses planning and development of additional facilities and programs; monitors related legislation related to public safety, and recommends improvements to the criminal justice system in Sarasota County. Members include the state attorney and public defender, who represent various areas of the judicial system and assure a criminal justice process that is efficient, cost-effective and timely. They also determine the best way to manage assets and reduce crime. The commission serves as an advisory board to the commission on criminal justice issues.

- 14 members, three of whom are appointed by the commission:
  - Representative of a county or state jobs program
  - Representative of community groups that work with offenders and victims
  - Representative of the county's Health and Human Services Department
  - Other members include State Attorney or designee; Public Defender or designee; Chief Circuit Judge or designee; Chief County Judge or designee; Chief Correctional Officer; Sheriff or designee; State Probation Circuit Administrator or designee; County Commission Chair or designee; Clerk of the Circuit Court or designee; Director of a county probation or pretrial intervention program or designee (if there is more than one such program, the commission shall select program); director of local substance abuse treatment program or designee (if there is more than one such program, the commission shall select program)
- Terms vary based on membership
- Meets monthly

## **Development Services Advisory Committee**

Provides liaison between the construction industry and the county, advises director on: fiscal matters, matters relating to permits and fees, permitting processes and other matters as may be appropriate.

- Nine members:
  - Includes student representative (CYD program)
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets every other month

## **Englewood Community Redevelopment Area Advisory Board**

Assists in developing and implementing the programs and projects contained in the Redevelopment Plan and advises the commission on the same.

- Seven members
- Four-year terms
- Meets monthly; additional meetings as needed

## **Environmentally Sensitive Lands Oversight Committee (ESLOC)**

Fulfills the county's Comprehensive Plan mandate to protect natural areas from adverse impacts by reviewing lands and making land-acquisition recommendations.

- 10 members:
  - Three with experience/knowledge of business and development
  - Three with experience/knowledge of the environment
  - Three at-large representatives
  - One student representative (CYD program)
- Three years; one year for student representative
- Meets every other month

## **Fire-Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Advisory Board**

Reviews the business of the respective assessment or taxing districts and makes recommendations to the commission concerning property acquisition, capital improvements, operations and maintenance, services and facilities within those districts.

- Seven members:
  - One City of Sarasota resident
  - One resident of Englewood-Fire Control District
  - One City of Venice resident
  - Four at-large members
- Two- and three-year terms, staggered
- Meets not less than two times a year, no more than four times a year

## **General Contractors Licensing & Examining Board**

Examines applications and qualifications for general, building, residential, roofing, pool/spa, and specialty contractors doing business in the county, conducts disciplinary hearings and related functions.

- 13 members:
  - One architect
  - One civil structural engineer
  - Four contractors (general or building)
  - Two contractors (residential)
  - Three citizens/consumer representatives
  - Two trade alternate members
- Three-year terms
- Meets monthly

## **Health Facilities Authority and Industrial Development Revenue Bond Citizens Advisory Committee**

Provides recommendations to the commission with regard to financing of health care facilities and other eligible projects with industrial development revenue bonds.

- Five members
- Three-year terms
- Meets at the call of the chair based on need to review financing applications

## Health Planning Council of SW Florida

Authorized by Florida Statutes to plan for the health care needs of residents of Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Lee and Sarasota counties. Responsibility is shared with the Department of Health, Agency for Health Care Administration and a statewide network of 11 local health councils.

- Not a Sarasota County advisory council
- 12 members:
  - Three Sarasota County representatives appointed by the commission
  - Representatives of health care providers or purchasers and non-governmental health care consumers, with majority being purchasers and consumers
  - Health Planning Council has authority to make recommendations for appointments
- Two-year terms
- Meets monthly

## Historic Preservation Board

Assists in the protection of significant historic resources within Sarasota County by reviewing historic designation nominations, certificates of appropriateness for historically designated buildings, and other duties assigned by the commission.

- Seven members:
  - Members should have a demonstrated interest in historic preservation
  - Members should be practicing or retired from one of the following fields: anthropology; real estate; land development or finance; history; folklore; architectural history; conservation or curation; architecture or historical architecture; historical; historic preservation; land use or historic preservation planning; general or building contractor; professional engineering
- Three-year terms
- Meets monthly

## Historical Commission

Advises the commission regarding the acceptance of grants and donations; the marking of historic sites with county historical markers; the History Center annual budget; and historical material and data.

- 16 members:
  - Includes student representative (CYD program)
- Four-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets monthly

## Human Services Advisory Council

Provides a conduit for citizen input to the commission regarding contracted human services, and provides advice and makes recommendations to the commission on human services policy.

- 19 members:
  - One Sarasota County School Board member
  - One Sarasota County Sheriff representative
  - One psychiatrist, psychologist, or clinical social worker
  - One health-services professional
  - One local grantor entity representative serving the entirety of the county
  - One local grantor entity representative primarily serving south county
  - Three business/financial community representatives
  - One certified public accountant (CPA) licensed to practice in Florida
  - One student representative (CYD program)
  - Eight at-large representatives
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets monthly

## **Integrated Pest Management Advisory Board**

Advises and makes recommendations to the commission on matters pertaining to sound, environmentally-safe, pest-management practices.

- Eight members:
  - One pest control industry representative
  - One medical profession representative
  - One agriculture or nursery industry representative
  - One landscape maintenance profession representative
  - One homeowner/community association representative
  - One student representative (CYD program)
  - One at-large representative
  - One Sarasota County School Board Facilities Maintenance representative (appointed by superintendent)
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets every other month

## **Keep Sarasota County Beautiful Advisory Board**

Works with the Keep Sarasota County Beautiful (KSCB) program coordinator to organize, review and implement litter education and control programs, and advise and make recommendations to the commission regarding such programs pursuant to Keep America Beautiful National Standards.

- Four to 16 members:
  - Includes one student representative (CYD program)
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets six times per year: January, February, March, April, August and October

## **Library Advisory Board**

Assists the commission in providing and improving library service throughout the county in compliance with Florida law.

- 10 members:
  - Nine at-large members
  - One student representative (CYD program)
  - Must be county residents for a minimum of two years
  - Must be nonpartisan and shall not hold elective office
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets quarterly: February, May, September, November

## **Mechanical Contractors Licensing and Examining Board**

Examines applications and qualifications for electrical, plumbing, mechanical and specialty contractors doing business in the county; conducts disciplinary hearings; and performs other related functions.

- 13 members:
  - One architect
  - One mechanical or sanitary engineer
  - Two master electricians
  - Two master plumbers
  - Three citizen/consumer representatives
  - One Class A air conditioning contractor
  - One Class B air conditioning contractor
  - Two trade alternate members
- Three-year terms
- Meets monthly

## **Metropolitan Planning Organization Citizens Advisory Committee**

Serves as a review and advisory body to the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in the comprehensive cooperative and continuing transportation planning process.

- Not a Sarasota County advisory council – Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization oversees this committee
- 28 members:
  - Nine members appointed by Sarasota County Commission include:
    - Three representatives of unincorporated Sarasota County
    - Minimum of one citizen representing the disabled
    - Minimum of one citizen representing minorities
    - Four at-large members
- Three-year terms
- Meets eight times per year

## Neighborhood Initiative Grant Advisory Committee

Advises the commission and makes recommendations pertaining to the Neighborhood Grant Program.

- Seven members:
  - Five district representatives (one from each commission district)
  - Two at-large members
  - District representatives must reside within the boundaries of their districts
- Three-year terms
- Meets twice a year; additional meetings as needed

## Parks Advisory and Recreation Council

Makes recommendations to the commission concerning issues relating to parks, beaches, recreation and the acquisition and use of neighborhood parkland.

- 11 members:
  - Two with background and experience in parks and/or recreation
  - Two with background and experience in neighborhood interests
  - Two with background and experience in real estate or business interests in Sarasota County
  - One with background and experience in environmental interests in Sarasota County
  - One student representative (CYD program)
  - Three representing municipal parks and/or recreation interests
    - One from the City of North Port (pursuant to Contract No. 93-314)
    - One from the City of Sarasota (pursuant to Contract No. 89-4851)
    - One from the City of Venice (pursuant to Contract No. 93-037)
- Three-year terms, one year for student member
- Meets every other month

## Planning Commission

Obligated to interpret and advise the commission on the adoption of and amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and land use applications, pursuant to state statute or existing county ordinances.

- Nine voting members:
  - Must be Sarasota County residents for at least two years
  - One additional non-voting member appointed by the Sarasota County School Board
  - **Required to file financial disclosure**
- Four-year terms
- Meets twice monthly

## Public Facilities Financing Advisory Board

Advises and makes recommendations to the commission on impact fees, other funding sources, fiscal impacts of levels of service and other issues relating to the provision and financing of public facilities.

- Nine members:
  - Three representatives of public facilities and/or financial professionals
  - Three representatives of civics organization
  - Three representatives of development building and construction
- Three-year terms
- Meets every other month

## Sarasota Tree Advisory Council

Recommends street and neighborhood planting projects and priorities; assists the county in updating and revising a consolidated tree list; reviews and recommends revisions to the Sarasota County Code of Ordinances relating to trees; nominates new canopy roads for commission consideration.

- Eight to 14 members:
  - All private members shall serve without pay
  - No member shall hold elective office on the Sarasota County Commission
- Three-year terms
- Meets monthly

## Seniors Advisory Council

Provides a conduit for citizen input to the commission to make recommendations and/or provide advice on issues and conditions affecting Sarasota County's senior community.

- 14 members:
  - One from local lead agency serving elders with Older Americans Act and/or Community Care for the Elderly funding (Senior Friendship Centers, Inc.)
  - One from geriatric department of a local hospital
  - One representing Sarasota County medical community
  - One with professional experience in assisted living or long-term care facilities serving elders
  - One at-large, Sarasota County resident, 50 years of age or older
  - One at-large, Sarasota County resident, 55 years of age or older
  - Two at-large, Sarasota County residents, 60 years of age or older
  - Two at-large, Sarasota County residents, 70 years of age or older
  - One at-large, Sarasota County resident, 80 years of age or older
  - One student representative (CYD program)
  - One from business and/or professional community
  - One from arts and/or lifelong learning communities
  - Members may not hold elected office as a county commissioner, be a constitutional officer or an employee of Sarasota County Government
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets monthly

## Stormwater Environmental Utility Advisory Committee

Supports and advises the Stormwater Environmental Utility in the development of stormwater-related goals and objectives.

- 10 members:
  - Includes two City of Sarasota residents appointed by the City of Sarasota Commission
  - Includes one student representative (CYD program)

- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets every other month

## **Tourist Development Council**

Recommends tourism policy to the commission and oversees the use of tourist development tax revenues pursuant to Florida law; examines the changing dynamics affecting the county’s tourism development, cultural environment, and beach maintenance and restoration; and responds to the needs of the tourist industry.

- 13 members:
  - Chair, as designated by the Board of County Commissioners
  - Four elected municipal officials (one each from Town of Longboat Key, City of North Port, City of Sarasota, City of Venice)
  - At least four but no more than five must be collectors of the Tourist Development Tax
  - At least four but no more than five must be involved in the tourist industry or demonstrate an interest in tourist development
  - Members must be electors of Sarasota County
- Four-year terms
- Meets monthly

## **Traffic Advisory Council**

Advises the commission and makes recommendations on matters pertaining to traffic, parking, speed regulations, safety, and the placing of traffic control devices within unincorporated Sarasota County.

- Eight members:
  - One Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office representative
  - One Florida Highway Patrol representative
  - Six citizens, including one student representative (CYD program)
  - May not be employed by the county, town, city or state
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets quarterly

## Water and Sewer Advisory Committee

Assists the commission in the promulgation of rules, regulations and policies relating to water and sewer, and provides recommendations.

- 10 members:
  - Nine at-large members
  - One student representative (CYD program)
- Three-year terms; one year for student representative
- Meets every other month

## Waterways Advisory Council

Provides a conduit for citizen input to the Waterways Program manager and the commission, makes recommendations and provides advice.

- Five members:
  - Must be property owner and resident within the Navigable Waterways Program Unit
  - May not hold elected office
  - May not be employed by the Sarasota County Commission nor a vendor of county goods and/or services
- Three-year terms
- Meets quarterly

## Well Drilling Advisory Board

Regularly reviews the well drilling ordinance to ensure consistency with statutes and state regulations.

- Five members:
  - Three qualified well drillers with broad experience in this geographical area
  - One groundwater geologist or registered engineer with training/experience in water geology
  - One member from the public at large
- Three-year terms
- Annual meeting in January of each year and additional meetings at the call of the chair

*For more information on Sarasota County advisory councils, a list of current vacancies, or to complete an application, please visit our website at [www.scgov.net/AdvisoryBoards](http://www.scgov.net/AdvisoryBoards).*

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