

# **Citizen Appointment Process Subcommittee**

## **Final Report**



Prepared by the Kent County Administrator's Office

July 2012

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*The mission of Kent County government is to be an effective and efficient steward in delivering quality services for our diverse community. Our priority is to provide mandated services, which may be enhanced and supplemented by additional services to improve the quality of life for all our citizens within the constraints of sound fiscal policy.*

## I. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The Kent County Board of Commissioners functions with the support of variety of boards, commissions, and committees that provide oversight for significant Kent County services. The origin, structure (size, term, tenure, officers), and eligibility (residency, special knowledge, or interest) requirements for each board, commission, and committee member are prescribed by the applicable federal or state law, County ordinance, or resolution of the County Board. Currently, the boards, commissions, and committees listed below perform specific functions for the County Board.

### Citizen Appointments by Board of Commissioners:

The County Board appoints citizens who serve the community, as members of the existing 28 citizen boards, commissions, and committees (collectively referred to as the ‘citizen boards’) that currently include:

1. Agricultural Preservation Board
2. Area Agency on Aging of Region VIII – Advisory Council
3. Area Agency on Aging of Region VIII – Board of Directors
4. Board of Canvassers
5. City/County Building Authority
6. Community Corrections Advisory Board
7. Community Health Advisory Committee
8. Community Mental Health Authority Board (Network180)
9. Concealed Weapons Licensing Board
10. County Building Authority
11. Department of Human Services
12. Fire Commission (*by virtue of office*)
13. Foreign Trade Zone Board
14. Friend of the Court Citizens Advisory Committee
15. Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board
16. Grand Rapids-Kent County Convention/Arena Authority
17. Grand Valley Metropolitan Council
18. John Ball Zoo Advisory Board
19. Jury Commission
20. Kent County Family and Children’s Coordinating Council
21. Kent District Library Board
22. Kent Hospital Finance Authority
23. Land Bank Authority (*by virtue of office*)
24. Millennium Park Architectural Advisory Review Board
25. Pension Board
26. Public Works Board (*by virtue of office*)
27. Road Commission Board
28. Veteran's Affairs Committee

Appointments by Board Chair:

The Chair of the Kent County Board of Commissioners, with the approval of the Board, appoints members (county staff members or commissioners) to 14 boards, commissions, and committees that include:

1. ACSET
2. County Township Liaison
3. Experience Grand Rapids
4. Grand Rapids-Kent County Convention/Arena Authority Liaison Committee
5. Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Transportation Division Policy Committee
6. Housing Commission
7. Human Services Committee (*by virtue of office*)
8. Kent County Dispatch Authority
9. Local Development Financing Authority
10. Officers' Compensation Commission
11. Pension Board
12. Senior Millage Review Committee
13. The Right Place Inc.
14. VEBA Trust Board

**II. SUBCOMMITTEE CHARGE**

To review the citizen board appointment process, to identify ways to improve it, and to make recommendations to the Legislative & Human Resources Committee.

**III. SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS**

The Citizen Appointment Process Subcommittee consisted of:  
Commissioner Dan Koorndyk (Chair)  
Commissioner Carol Hennessy  
Commissioner Bill Hirsch  
Commissioner Mike J. Wawee

Staff support to the Subcommittee was provided by:  
Assistant Corporate Counsel Sangeeta Ghosh  
Executive Assistant to the Board Jamie Groom

**VI. SUBCOMMITTEE TIMEFRAME**

January – June 2012. Since April 2012, the Subcommittee has met on six occasions to fulfill its responsibilities.

## **VII. SUBCOMMITTEE PROCESS**

The Subcommittee began its work in April 2012 and has met on six occasions. It has completed the following tasks.

- Reviewed the current appointment process for citizen boards, commissions, and committees;
- Consulted with Darius Quinn, Human Resources Manager, to gain insight into issues such as diversity, outreach, recruitment, and online application system as it relates to citizen boards, commissions, and committees;
- Conferred with JoAnn Arcand of WebTecs Inc., who administers the County's website, regarding implementation of a pilot online application data system;
- Reviewed citizen board, commission, and committee appointment process guidelines and policies of other counties both within and outside of Michigan to identify best practices;
- Conferred with Board of Commissioner liaisons of several Michigan counties to solicit their perspective on the citizen appointment processes and practices, and
- Drafted recommendations to improve the current citizen board appointment process.

## **VIII. RECOMMENDATION**

The Subcommittee's recommendations apply only to appointments that are made by the Board of Commissioners and do not apply to appointments that are made either by the Board Chair or that occur by virtue of office. As part of the Subcommittee charge, specific recommendations are made for the Citizen Appointment Process as included in the attached document.

The Subcommittee recommends:

***That the Board Chair and the Legislative and Human Resources Committee review and recommend approval of the proposed changes or amendments to the current Citizen Boards, Commissions, and Committees' Appointment Process to the full Board of Commissioners for implementation beginning with the August 2012 citizen appointment cycle.***

**ATTACHMENT**

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE**

**THE CURRENT PROCESS OF APPOINTMENTS FOR**

**CITIZEN BOARDS, COMMISSIONS, AND COMMITTEES**

The Subcommittee's recommendations apply only to citizen boards, commissions, and committee appointments that are made by the full Board of Commissioners and does not apply to appointments that are made by the Board Chair or that occur by virtue of office. The Kent County Board of Commissioners appoints volunteer citizens as members of the 28 existing boards, commissions, and committees that include:

1. Agricultural Preservation Board
2. Area Agency on Aging of Region VIII – Advisory Council
3. Area Agency on Aging of Region VIII – Board of Directors
4. Board of Canvassers
5. City/County Building Authority
6. Community Corrections Advisory Board
7. Community Health Advisory Committee
8. Community Mental Health Authority Board (Network180)
9. Concealed Weapons Licensing Board
10. County Building Authority
11. Department of Human Services
12. Fire Commission (*by virtue of office*)
13. Foreign Trade Zone Board
14. Friend of the Court Citizen's Advisory Committee
15. Gerald R. Ford International Airport Board
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24. Millennium Park Architectural Advisory Review Board
25. Pension Board
26. Public Works Board (*by virtue of office*)
27. Road Commission Board
28. Veteran's Affairs Committee

**A. RECOMMENDATIONS/RECRUITMENT PROCESS:**

1. **Posting of Openings:** The Subcommittee recommends that all citizen boards be publicly posted at the time they become vacant so that qualified and willing citizens have the opportunity to serve and participate in the governance of their community. The current avenues used to publicly post the vacancies should be reviewed and extended to a broader community. New applications should be solicited for all vacant positions by the Board of Commissioner's Office by:
  - a. Publicly announcing the position vacancy and filing deadline by publication in the newspaper of general circulation, County Board of Commissioners' webpage on the AccessKent site, and other news media outlets;
  - b. Posting (physically affixing or electronically) the announcements at public places including the County building, libraries, Chambers of Commerce, and community agencies including agencies representing minority groups;
  - c. Notifying by mail all candidates who have expressed interest in serving on any citizen board;
  - d. Notifying by mail all appointees of citizen boards whose terms are expiring and offering an opportunity to apply for reappointment;
  - e. Requesting that County Commissioners, local elected officials, and community leaders nominate and solicit eligible candidates for citizen board appointments.
2. **Outreach:** The Subcommittee recommends broadening the avenues for recruitment by engaging in enhanced outreach efforts with emphasis on recruiting citizens with diverse backgrounds. Citizen board openings should be posted in newspapers, community centers, private and non-profit agencies, libraries, universities, Chambers of Commerce, and other identified forums. Every County Commissioner is encouraged to nominate or seek candidates to apply for an appointment to any citizen board opening.
3. **Meetings:** The Subcommittee recommends that the regular meeting days and times be posted on the Board of Commissioners' webpage so that citizens applying for current openings fully understand the time commitment necessary to serve on the citizen boards.
4. **Recruitment Time Frame:** The Subcommittee recommends stricter adherence to the deadline for submission of applications. The recruitment process should be completed and resumes submitted by the set deadlines. The Board of Commissioners' Office will date-stamp all applications for appointment. Late applications will be accepted for positions that require further recruitment efforts due to an applicant pool that does not meet specific requirements of a position, mid-year

vacancies, and for any other reason considered necessary by the Board of Commissioners.

The timeline for recruitment and deadlines are as follows:

August 15:	All citizen board position vacancies posted publicly
August 15 - September 30:	Applications accepted
September 30:	Deadline for recruiting and submission of applications
October:	Review of reappointment and new applications, decisions on who to interview, and set up of interviews
November:	Interview selected applicants
December:	Recommendations for appointment of applicants forwarded to the Legislative and Human Resources Committee for review and recommendation
January:	Formal appointments by Board of Commissioners at the Organizational meeting
January:	Citizen Board Member Orientation held and Orientation manual distributed

The above timeline for recruitment shall not apply to filling unexpired term vacancies. Nonetheless, the position openings must be posted for at least 2 weeks for filling an unexpired term vacancy. Applications already on file will be reviewed for the existing vacancy.

## **B. RECOMMENDATIONS/APPLICATION PROCESS:**

- 1. Online Application System:** The Subcommittee recommends upgrading the application system on the Board of Commissioners' webpage by August 2012 to enable candidates to apply online in the 2012 application cycle . As discussed with County's website Administrator, a fully automated online application system should be implemented by August 2013. In the interim, applications will also be received by mail, e-mail attachments or fax.
- 2. Revisions to the Application Form:** The Subcommittee recommends that the citizen board member's application form should be modified to allow resumes and names of references to be submitted.
- 3. Validity of the Applications:** The Subcommittee recommends that the applications remain on file for a period of one year, or one current application cycle. To be considered for a new recruitment cycle, applicants who continue to remain interested in seeking a citizen board appointment must submit a new application form and re-apply. The citizen boards to which they are interested in being appointed must be identified at the bottom of the application and also on online applications once the web-based system is implemented.

4. **Limit on the Number of Applications:** The Subcommittee recommends limiting the number of citizen boards that an individual can apply for appointment to 3, with a check box on the application form that would permit an applicant to indicate interest in serving on other citizen boards.
5. **Maintenance of Applicant Records:** The Board of Commissioners' Office shall retain copies of all applications of candidates who have applied for a vacancy on a citizen board for one year after the recruitment cycle is complete. If another full term or unexpired term vacancy arises during that year, the applicants on file will be notified of the vacancy and asked if they remain interested in being considered for appointment.

### **C. RECOMMENDATIONS/APPOINTMENT PROCESS:**

The Subcommittee recommends creation of a two-step review process for the Appointment Committee.

- Step One would involve reviewing candidates for reappointment.
- Step Two would involve reviewing new applicants only when the current appointee is not being considered for reappointment.

1. **Reappointments:** In Step One, the Appointment Committee would consider whether or not to reappoint the person currently serving on the citizen board. The Appointment Committee would either recommend reappointment by forwarding its recommendation to the full Board of Commissioners for consideration or proceed to Step Two and conduct an open recruitment process and interview prospective new candidates to fill vacancies, as needed. In order to increase community representation, the Subcommittee recommends the following measures to tighten the reappointment process.
  - a) Citizen Board Members may apply and be considered for reappointment after expiration of their term for which they were appointed. Any member seeking reappointment must submit a new application with updated information indicating his or her desire to be reappointed to the same board or appointed to a different board. Citizen Board Members who desire to be reappointed must submit an updated application to the Board of Commissioners' Office by meeting application deadlines, generally set for 90 days prior to the expiration of their term.
  - b) The Appointment Committee should evaluate the candidate's suitability for reappointment and be guided by the candidate's performance by seeking and reviewing among other criteria:



- i. Peer review and staff evaluation records;
  - ii. Number of terms served;
  - iii. Effectiveness and contributions made during their term in office, and
  - iv. Attendance history.
2. **Attendance:** The Subcommittee recommends that all citizen appointees attend at least 75% of all board meetings and should not be absent for more than 3 consecutive meetings without a good cause and without prior excuse from their respective board chair. The respective board Chair or any other member of that citizen board may seek that the County Board remove a member due to excessive absence or other good cause.
3. **Interview Questions:** The Subcommittee recommends that the current set of interview questions for citizen board applicant interviews be reviewed and updated with the objective of screening applicants fairly and objectively.
4. **Term Limits:** The Subcommittee does not recommend setting term limits for appointees to citizen boards. In the alternative, the Subcommittee has recommended measures to tighten the reappointment process in accordance with section C.1 above. The Subcommittee has examined the trends and best practices of Michigan counties as it relates to term limits. While the Subcommittee recognized that term limits can revitalize boards and bring in new perspectives, it also considers that term limits could lead to counterproductive results especially when the term of office of an exceptionally experienced and involved board member expires. The Subcommittee found that in some circumstances term limits may be applicable for various citizen boards as set by statute, County Board resolution, or bylaws of a specific citizen board. The Subcommittee also found that some of the citizen boards have varying terms of office and often have staggered terms.
5. **Citizen Orientation:** The Subcommittee recommends that every member should be provided with a copy of the Citizen Board Member Handbook. An orientation session on roles and responsibilities of citizen board members is to be held every January. The change in the attendance requirement should be communicated to all appointed citizen members beginning in January 2013.