

BOARD & COMMISSION COMPARISON REPORT – January 14, 2014

To: Charter Change Committee (Rachel Siegel, Tom Ayers, Norman Blais)
From: Infinite Culcleasure, Staff Assistant
Re: Survey of Recent Board and Commission Applicants
Date: March 25, 2014

The following summary includes results of an online survey of *Recent Board and Commission Applicants* in the City of Burlington.¹

Number of respondents from each board/commission:

1. Airport Commission (0 of 5)
2. Board of Assessors (0 of 3)
3. Burlington Housing Authority Board of Commissioners (0 of 6)
4. Cemetery Commission (0 of 5)
5. CCTA (0 of 2)
6. CCRPC (0 of 2)
7. Church Street Marketplace District Committee (1 of 8)
8. Development Review Board (1 of 10)
9. Electric Light Commission (3 of 5)
10. Fire Commission (2 of 5)
11. CSWD Board of Commissioners (0 of 2)
12. Conservation Board (2 of 10)
13. Design Advisory Board (2 of 8)
14. Fence Viewers (0 of 2)
15. Board of Health (0 of 6)
16. Housing Board of Review (0 of 6)
17. Library Board of Commissioners (1 of 8)
18. Parks and Recreation Commission (1 of 6)
19. Planning Commission (1 of 8)
20. Police Commission (0 of 5)
21. Public Works Commission (1 of 7)
22. Retirement Board (0 of 9)
23. Board of Appeals (1 of 6)
24. Board of Registration of Voters (0 of 10)

Of the 24 boards/commissions solicited via email, a total of 22 members from 10 different boards/commissions that responded to the survey were current board members at the time of the survey. 1 respondent that replied to the survey was either a recent board/commission applicant or was not appointed to a board/commission.

Of the 22 responses, none responded to the question “*If this was not your first application for appointment, did you notice a difference in the appointment process*” in 2013.

¹ Courtesy of SurveyGizmo.com

19 responded “yes,” that the application process was clear, compared to 4 reporting “no”. 8 responded “yes” that they received a job description for their position (either when they were appointed or since then), compared to 15 who reported “no”.

Out of 23 responses, 11 responded “yes,” that they “believe that the City Council should credit an incumbent over a new applicant with regard to a board/commission appointment”. 7 responded “no”, and 5 responded “I don’t know”.

Out of 23 responses, 8 responded “yes,” that they received “a job description for your position (either when you were appointed or since then), 15 reported no. All 8 responded “yes,” that “the job description was accurate and complete.” (See Table 1 below)

Table. 1

<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>
Board of Tax Appeals	B.R.V.
DRB	Church Street Marketplace Commission
Design Advisory Board (2)	Conservation
Electric Dept.	Conservation Board
Fire Commission	DPW
DPW	Development Review Board
Retirement	Electric
	Fire
	Fletcher Free Library
	Parks
	Planning Commission
	Public Works
	Airport

Additional Comments:

- **Do you have any suggestions for how the application process could be made clearer?** “I only knew that I had to reapply because I checked. I should have been sent a notice that my term was expiring.”
- **How did you learn of the result of your application?** Phone call – 4; letter – 3; word of mouth – 5; my city councilor – 4; email – 5; minutes online – 1; city clerks office – 2
- **What would have been a more appropriate way?** “More communication is needed here, the city can do a better job”; “Letter from the city, or email/call/etc. from nominating councilor”; “Meeting, phone call shortly thereafter or a letter (which I received after a few days); “email notification that my name was on consent agenda and prompt email notification that I was appointed. Unsuccessful applicants should also receive prompt email notification”; “Immediate letter from city hall”.

- **Do you have any suggestions for how the City could encourage greater diversity of application in terms of race, gender, sex, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, national origin, cultural heritage, socio-economic status, and profession?**
 - “One way to do this would be to not always reappoint incumbents, although they should be given opportunities to serve. Their records as board and commission applicants should be taken into account, including attendance. I think the idea of going before the council and making a speech is challenging to many applicants. Meeting with two or three councilors would be better.”
 - “I believe the person best suited for the job should be appointed. Should not matter what race, skin color, or gender the person is. Get the best person for the job. Diversity can not and should not be forced.”
 - “Improve or increase the reach out”
 - “The political parties circulate lists of openings and answer questions/provide references for potential applicants. The many good organizations in town for these groups could be helped to do the same. Also openings can be written up on flyers like they are exciting (not like legal notices) and posted in areas frequented by underrepresented people.”
 - “Quit making it so political! Very clearly, the only people who get involved and appointed are those with connections. Even my vote barely passed (8-6) simply because I am a vocal supporter of a minority party. Base the process instead on qualifications, or something that keeps the process independent. The current process is so blatantly political and rewarding to those in the majority party that it demeans the entire purpose of commission appointments.”
 - “Have student members on all boards.”
 - “Advertise in the FPF for people of “interest” that may want to have a say in our future.
 - “A broader outreach could field a more diverse field of volunteers. But at the same time, it is important to maintain a board of professionals in construction or architecture or related fields.”
 - “Continue to expand marketing efforts for commissions including having current commissioners and staff actively seek good candidates.”
 - “The process could be more visible; there could be announcements of openings on City Commissions published in the local media or announcements that such openings will be posted at City Hall.”

- “All else being equal, incumbents should be given priority over new applicants. To increase diversity on the commissions, the council and administration should reach out to the various groups in the community to encourage folks to apply. However, I don’t believe that the application should ask questions such as gender identity, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc. as that would be very intrusive and would just as likely result in less people applying than more.”
- “Focus on diversity of views, not categories (age/race/gender/etc.) while seeking to make the commission representative of the community’s values.”
- “More outreach to women and minorities.”
- “I think that is an impossible task. I feel that some boards should have people with specific knowledge because of the nature of the board, and others could be more mixed. Now time is at a premium for people, and they just don’t have extra time.”
- “Some of the boards require the historical perspective of a great number of members in order to facilitate training of new folks. I think if you go out and search for or create diversity, you are functioning in an artificial environment. A diverse workforce or participant pool is great, but does not necessarily mean a higher function is attained in all cases.”