



UMC GUIDE RECREATION PARKS & LEISURE

University of Missouri-Columbia Extension Division

Park Boards of Missouri*

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INTRODUCTION

Leaders and concerned citizens need information to choose the most appropriate recreational delivery system for their communities.

This guide will assist community leaders in identifying the organizational structures commonly used to deliver public park and recreation services. Issues will be examined. The basic components of various structures also will be described.

A recreation delivery system should be organized to meet a community's leisure needs using available resources. An incorporated public organization such as a municipal city government usually provides recreation services. It may establish a park/recreation board, with either advisory or administrative authority, a park commission, or some other public agency—or no board at all.

Most Missouri communities have chosen park and recreation boards to be the deliverer of recreational services. However, confusion surrounds the role and

function of these boards. Some confusion results from state laws that allow three general types of boards, each having different duties and responsibilities. Park boards in Missouri may be (1) advisory, (2) administrative/policy, or (3) special recreation boards.

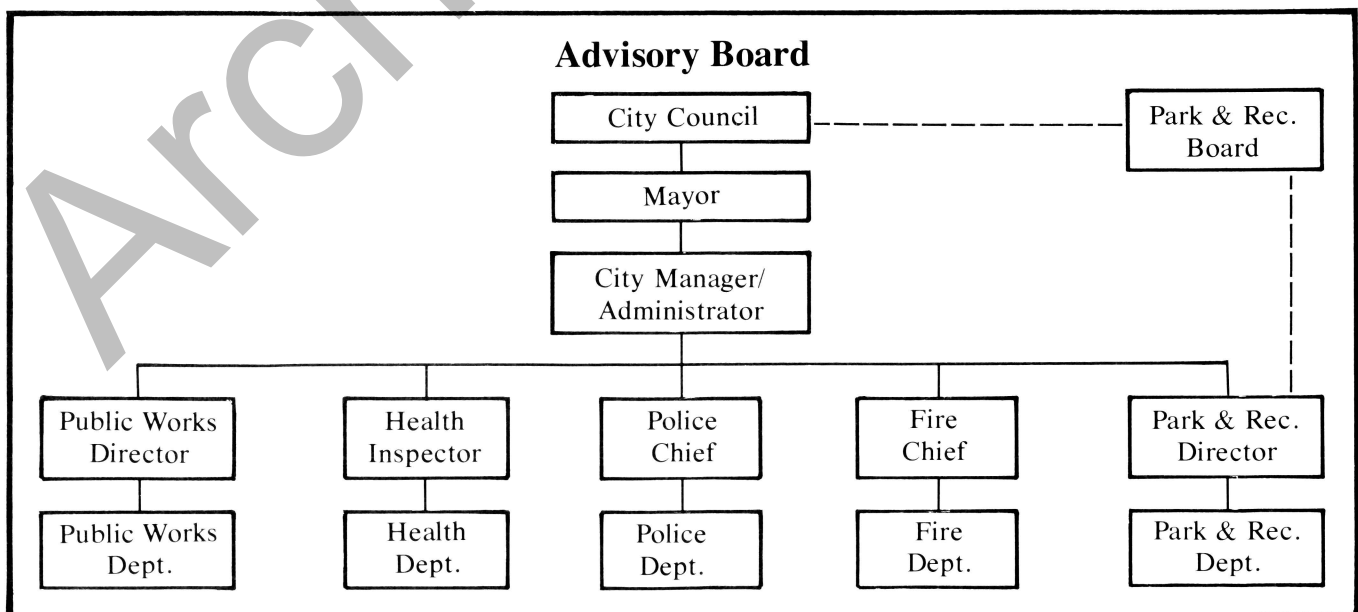
Adding to the complexity, cities with over 5,000 population are allowed to have home rule charter forms of government. They may establish park board rules and regulations within a voter approved charter as long as the provisions of the charter are not in conflict with state law.

Due to wide variance of powers existing in park and recreation boards in home rule cities, this guide will not attempt to analyze board authority and responsibilities.

Advisory Boards

Approximately 60 percent of Missouri park boards are advisory boards. In advisory board cities, it is typical to have a park and recreation department on equal status with other city departments. About 50 percent of the departments are administered by a full-time, year-round, parks and recreation professional who reports directly to the mayor, city manager, or city administrator.

*Formerly "Missouri Park Boards: Types, Authority and Responsibilities"



Organization of the Advisory Board

The director of the park and recreation department is responsible directly to the appropriate city official. The board serves strictly in an advisory capacity to the city council and director.

The board is established by ordinance to advise the director and/or mayor, city manager, city administrator, or council on park and recreation department policy. Having no legal or administrative authority, it usually acts upon requests from city officials or a park and recreation director.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities common among advisory boards in Missouri are to:

- identify park and recreation attitudes of individuals and organizations in the community for interpretation for city officials;
- make annual budget recommendations
- insure resources to continue on-going and future park and recreation programs;

- submit all recommendations or suggestions in writing to avoid misinterpretations;

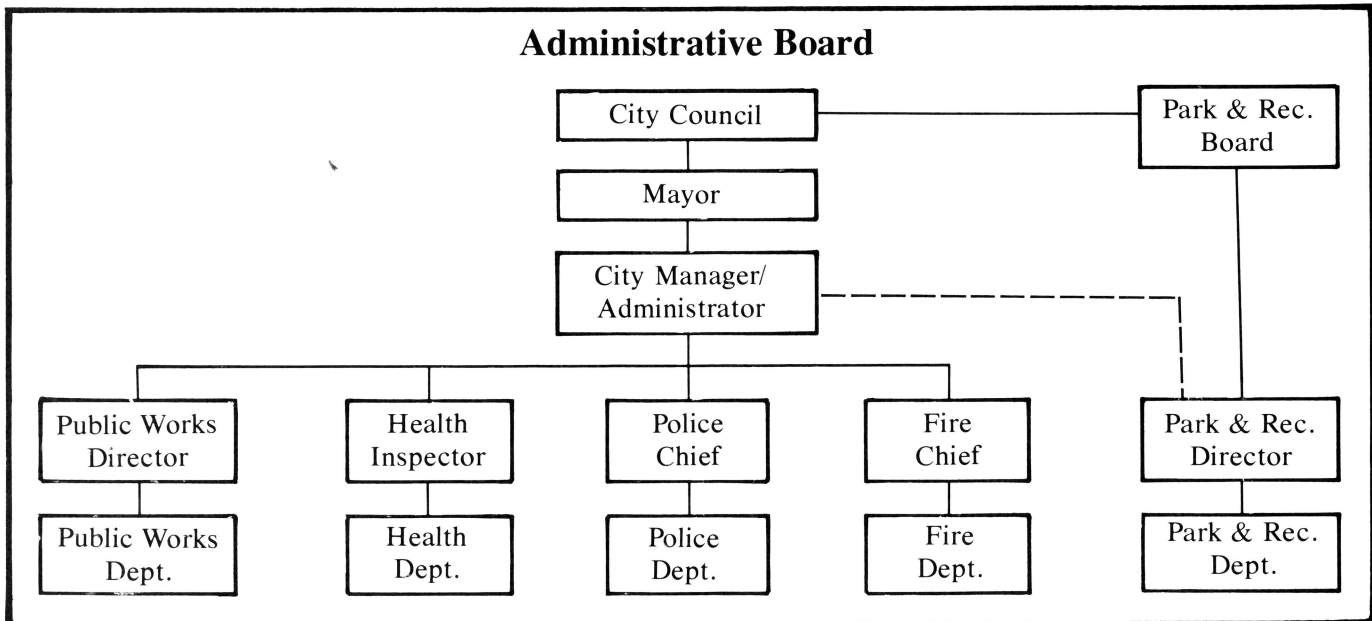
- recognize that its recommendations or suggestions always will not be followed.

Organization of the Administrative Board

The director of the department of parks and recreation is responsible directly to the board. The board determines all policies for the department and is directly responsible to the city council.

Approximately 40 percent of the cities having park boards in Missouri have administrative boards. In these cities, it is not unusual to have the park and recreation department on a different status from the other city departments.

The department, in about 75 percent of the cases, is administered by a full-time parks and recreation professional who reports directly to a lay board or its chairperson. The lay board is established by ordinance to de-



- inform the community about park and recreation department activities;

- accept and perform delegated responsibilities;

- advise on basic policies that guide the department;

- maintain a clear distinction between its own function and the function of the governing body and professional staff;

termine policy and have both decision-making and legal authority.

Administrative Boards

All first and second class cities in Missouri have exercised their option to adopt the home rule charter form of government. All remaining cities and towns may authorize park boards under Missouri statutes 90.010 and 90.500.

Rules and Regulations

The rules and regulations under the above listed statutes are summarized as follows:

Membership

- Nine citizens of the city or town shall be appointed by the mayor to constitute a park board. None may be a member of the municipal government.
- After the original board is appointed for staggered terms, three new members are appointed each year to take office June 1st, for three-year terms.

Authority and Responsibilities

The board has authority to:

- supervise, improve, and care for the parks;
- purchase or otherwise acquire land;
- appoint staff to manage the parks;
- act as trustees for land or moneys donated;
- report annually to the city council on the second Monday in June of each year on conditions of the trust for the preceding year as of May 1; on funds received and expended; and other relevant statistics and information. The receipts and expenses must be verified by affidavit.

Finances

- The board has exclusive control of expenditures of all moneys collected to the credit of the park fund.
- All money received for such parks shall be deposited in the city treasury to the credit of the park fund, and shall be kept separate and apart from other moneys collected by the city.
- Vouchers must be used and signed by the appropriate park board official for expenses of park operation.
- Third class cities and towns under 30,000 are authorized to levy up to 40¢ per \$100 against taxable, tangible property under this section for park and recreation purposes. This levy may be in addition to the \$1.00 per \$100 assessed for general fund purposes. Up to 20¢ above the \$1.00 may be authorized by an appropriate city ordinance, and a majority vote of the council. Up to 40¢ above the \$1.00 may be levied but must be authorized by a majority of the voters in an election for this purpose.

Special Recreation Boards

Legislation passed in 1963 by the Missouri legislature allows communities to establish a special recreation or park board. Few communities have pursued this option because of problems having electors approve the proposal by a two-third vote and because equal financing is available under other statutes not requiring a two-third voter approval. This board's major distinction is in usage of funds. The special tax funds approved at the time the board is created go directly to a relatively autonomous board. The funds are to be used for park and recreational purposes defined by board members.

Rules and Regulations

Special recreation boards under **Missouri Statutes section 67.750** are authorized to:

- consist of not less than five nor more than nine members;
- be appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the governing body;
- serve for five-year terms, after the original board is appointed for staggered terms;
- meet within 15 days after being appointed and elect officers;
- adopt rules and regulations for the conduct, administration, and management of the recreation programs;
- provide, operate, and maintain a system of recreation including parks and recreation centers, grounds, and facilities;
- acquire or maintain the above system by purchase, gift, lease, condemnation, or exchange;
- employ personnel necessary to operate a system of recreation and parks;
- conduct a system of recreation and parks through any existing board or establish a separate board;
- use facilities of other municipal or county departments, schools or other districts with consent of those in charge;
- levy a special tax of 20¢ per \$100 against taxable, tangible property if passed by a two-third vote of the people. This levy may be collected in addition to ordinary levies within constitutional limits. This levy, when combined with other levies for park and recreation purposes, may not exceed 40¢ per \$100.

Identifying Board Type

The above discussion of board types and responsibilities describes how the boards *could* operate; however, distinguishing between advisory and administrative/

policy boards is simple only in theory. Most existing park boards are not totally administrative/policy or advisory. They lie on a continuum between the two extremes, depending on the authority and responsibility delegated to them by the governing unit or charter.

To further cloud the issue, at least three communities do not have a board yet deliver extensive recreational services. At least one community has two boards: one board responsible for park development and maintenance, the other a special recreation board responsible for recreation programming. One can easily discern the possibilities for both cooperation and conflict.

In Missouri, whether a park board is advisory or administrative/policy is truly a matter of degree. In an effort to make the distinction one can:

(1) Check the ordinance or charter under which the board was established. Look for the terms "advisory" or "administrative/policy." Identify what authority is granted or restricted from the board. There are examples of "administrative/policy boards" that have considerably less authority than "advisory boards."

(2) Observe the ongoing operations of the department. Determine whether decisions are being made to allocate resources or to give advice.

(3) Analyze the pattern of relationships which exists with other governmental departments and officials.

Evidently, early park board legislation was intended to allow for community differences in developing an organizational structure. Conceivably the formulators of the enabling legislation envisioned administrative/policy boards for smaller communities that could not afford to employ a full-time park and recreation professional. The advisory board would, then, be more appropriate in larger communities with sufficient resources or an established department (perhaps one requiring the services of a full-time park and recreation professional to manage its daily activities).

Current data does not explain the apparent discrepancy between actual board development and the way the formulators of the law envisioned. Presently, 75 percent of the departments with administrative and policy boards have full-time park and recreation professionals. Although there are communities with developing park and recreation departments currently opting to change from administrative/policy to an advisory role, the opposite is also true. Communities with advisory boards are considering switching to administrative/policy boards.

The problem which confronts communities is whether an advisory or administrative/policy board is the type to maintain or implement services. Is the responsibility for the delivery of park and recreation services to lie with a board or a department head who is responsible to an appropriate city official?

Which Board Type is Best?

As evidenced by the current status of park board structures, there is a wide range of opinion on the type of organizational structure favored.

Advisory Board

Those favoring an advisory board (with an administrator working for a municipal officer) would probably agree that:

- An individual can act more effectively and efficiently than a group.
- Recreational services should be treated like other public services. The chief administrator should be directly responsible to the chief municipal officer.
- Under a single department head, better integration of services is possible.
- The probability of establishing and maintaining financial control and planning is enhanced by an advisory board.
- The chief municipal officer is more directly involved in park and recreation issues.
- Accountability is much easier to establish.
- The possibility of outmoded policy is enhanced by the conservatism of most boards.
- An administrative/policy board is no guarantee against political interference.
- Recreational system is treated the same as other municipal programs.
- There are additional personnel selection controls.

Administrative/Policy Board

Those supportive of administrative/policy boards (an administrator working directly for a board of 4-9 members) would probably agree on these statements:

- It is better to delegate power and authority to more than one person when the best interests of the public are concerned.
- Matters such as determining policies and making regulations should be a result of group action.
- Through overlapping terms of members, boards provide continuity of policy.
- A board protects the professional interest of a department in the absence of informed public opinion.
- An independent board discourages bureaucratic tendencies on the part of public officials.
- Boards are in a better position to reflect public opinion.
- Unpaid lay board members can frequently negotiate advantages for the system better than the paid professional.
- A board can act as a body of appeal for the citizens of the community.
- Standardization of departmental functions under the direction of a municipal manager is not in the best interest for delivery of recreational services.
- A board can best decide what is the most satisfying and effective means of delivering recreational services.

Organizing A Delivery System

When organizing or reorganizing a public recreation delivery system, a community should consider these issues:

- Will the structure insure the resources and public support necessary to deliver a quality service?
- Will the proposed authority have a philosophy, understanding, appreciation, and recognition of recreation concepts broad enough to serve everyone?
- Will funds designated for recreation be guaranteed only for recreation?
- Will the means be provided for coordinating the efforts of all departments, agencies, organizations, and groups concerned with recreation?

Secure funding, efficiency of administration and adequacy of services are vital concerns that must be addressed and *guaranteed* by the structure chosen to handle the responsibility for parks & recreation programs.

Summary

This guide is to assist community members in identifying which organizational structure is best suited to

meet their special needs. In the final analysis, the ultimate responsibility lies with each community to decide which organizational structure is best.

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