



Highlights

Why We Did This Audit

City appointed boards and commissions ("boards") have major authority and responsibilities within Kansas City government. Boards promote opportunities for public involvement, representation, transparency, and accountability in local governance of city affairs.

In fiscal year 2018, combined spending by boards exceeded \$320 million dollars.

Because many city services and functions are carried out and influenced by appointed boards, it is important board seats are promptly filled.

Objective

Are city board and commission appointments current?

We did not evaluate how appointing officials select appointees for board seats.

Background

About 100 city appointed boards have been created, by city charter, ordinances, resolutions, state statutes, etc., to fulfill a variety of functions for the city. These boards are comprised of citizen volunteers and some elected officials that are generally recruited, nominated, and appointed by the mayor and council. City staff typically facilitate board activities.

The City Clerk is responsible for administering oaths to new board members as well as maintaining a record of all board appointments. Boards also submit meeting notices, agendas, and minutes to the Clerk who posts these documents on the Clerk's website for transparency.

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PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Board Appointments Not Current, Formal Process Needed to Assist Appointing Officials

What We Found

Many of the city's board seats are vacant or expired. Full board membership with current terms is important to meet quorum rules in order for boards to make decisions and ensure the community provides input on city policies and operations.



Less than half of board seats filled or current

Current processes in the City Clerk's Office contribute to board vacancies and expired terms as they do not help appointing authorities efficiently install new appointees. The Clerk's Office is integral to all stages of the appointment and reappointment process as well as managing board records. The Clerk has not designed processes to properly track board terms, notify appointing officials of vacancies or expired terms, or update the Clerk's Office website timely.

Without effective, written processes in place:

- the Clerk's Office website displays inaccurate information on board member statuses, board contact information, board descriptions, and the number of boards;
- automated capabilities of the clerk's website were not used to track and communicate board member term expirations;
- board applications were overlooked;
- appointments were inconsistently communicated to the Clerk;
- board seats have gone unfilled; and
- current and past mayoral administrations developed their own processes to help them make board appointments.

An effective appointment process should be designed to include methods to help appointing authorities fill board seats, use appropriate technology and automation when possible, document processes in written policies and procedures, effectively communicate internally and externally, and use quality information.

The Clerk's Office also did not perform some required board duties. The Clerk did not swear-in two sets of appointees after requests from board staff or appointees. The Clerk did not retain records of oaths and appointments for boards as required by city code and state record retention rules.

What We Recommend (full list on back)

We made recommendations to design and implement a process that addresses board application, appointment, and commissioning; management and accuracy of board data; and retention of board documentation.

Management agreed with all of the recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The city clerk should develop and implement written procedures that include board application forms, where the application will be available to potential board members, and how the application will be communicated to the appointing official.
2. The city clerk should develop and implement written procedures that include appointment letter templates and procedures for the appointing authority to use when communicating new appointments to the City Clerk's Office.
3. The city clerk should develop a process to use the Clerk's Office information and document management system's automated functions to regularly report to appointing officials currently vacant seats or expired seats, and seats set to expire over the next six-month period.
4. The city clerk should develop a process to regularly confirm the staff contact information is accurate for boards listed on the Clerk's website.
5. The city clerk should communicate to board staff contacts the Clerk's expectation that reporting changes in board make-up is the responsibility of board staff.
6. The city clerk should review the Clerk's website to provide reasonable assurance the following information is displayed and accurate: board enabling legislation, board purpose, board membership, and board terms.
7. The city clerk should develop and implement written procedures that define which boards to include on the Clerk's Office website, when boards will be added, and how those boards will be updated.
8. The city clerk should swear-in any current member of a board who has not been sworn in and has an appointment letter from the appropriate appointing official.
9. The city clerk should develop and implement written procedures to proactively schedule and administer oaths of office to newly appointed officials within a defined time frame of their appointment. The procedures should also address virtual swear-ins.
10. The city clerk should ensure the Clerk's Office has a signed record of all existing board members' commission paperwork and oaths.
11. The city clerk should develop and implement written procedures to ensure all future appointee records, including board member applications, commission paperwork, and oaths of office are signed and retained.