Interview question bank by board type

Check your charter or bylaws for required questions.

Ask every applicant for a seat the same core questions, in the same order, so the panel compares like with like. Pick two to four questions from the board's list, add the five general questions, and leave time at the end for the applicant's own questions.

Five general questions for every board

1. Why do you want to serve on this board, and why now?
2. What do you think this board does, and what does it not do?
3. Tell us about a time you worked with people who disagreed with you. What happened?
4. How do you prepare for a meeting, and how do you handle a long agenda?
5. What questions do you have for us?

Planning or zoning board

1. In your own words, what does a planning commissioner do?
2. How would you weigh a neighbor's concern against a plan that fits the town's own plan?
3. How would you handle an application that you have a personal opinion about?
4. What do you want to see more of, or less of, in our town over the next 10 years?

Parks and recreation board

1. Which of our parks or programs do you know best, and what would you change?
2. How would you decide between a new playground and fixing an old trail when money is tight?
3. How would you hear from residents who rarely come to meetings?
4. What would make a park feel welcoming to every visitor?

Library board

1. What is your vision for the library in five years?
2. How would you balance books, digital services and programs with a fixed budget?
3. How would you handle a request to remove a book?
4. Who in our town is not using the library today, and how could we reach them?

Youth advisory board

1. What is one thing you would change for young people in our town, and why?
2. How would you gather views from classmates and friends who are not on the committee?
3. How would you explain a committee decision to someone who disagrees with it?
4. How many hours a month can you give to the committee?

Historic preservation board

1. Which building or place in our town matters most to you, and why?
2. How would you weigh keeping a historic feature against an owner's wish to update a property?
3. What do you know about how our town decides what counts as historic?
4. How could the town help owners care for older buildings?

Arts board

1. What arts or cultural event in our town would you like to see grow?
2. How would you choose between funding one large event and several small ones?
3. How would you make sure newer or smaller groups hear about opportunities?
4. How would you measure whether an arts program worked?

Keep it fair

Questions we skip on purpose: anything about age, health, family or home life, religion, or where someone was born. Ask about the seat, not the person.

Panel notes: write the date, the panel members and one line per answer. Use the same scoring method for everyone.

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