



MEMO

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Casandra Eames, Engagement Coordinator

Date: 7/28/26

Subject: 2026 City Boards and Commission Survey Results

In October 2024, the first boards and commissions survey was sent to all current board/commission members to learn more about:

1. What their volunteer experience has been like
2. Who the volunteers are
3. How the City might improve volunteer experience
4. How the City might make serving on a board/commission more attractive for Ames residents.

The annual survey was not administered in 2025 to allow for a review of term schedules. Moving forward, the survey will be conducted in March once new members have completed a full term of service.

The survey summary results are attached (Attachment A). **It is important to note that participation in the survey was voluntary and, therefore, the survey results are not representative of all board members. Forty-one volunteers responded (32% response rate).**

New questions were introduced this year:

1. Please rate from strongly agree to strongly disagree - My board or commission has clear goals and objectives.
2. Please rate from strongly agree to strongly disagree. - My board or commission is effective at accomplishing its objectives.
3. The Engagement Coordinator would love to meet with you to learn more about your experience serving on a board or commission. Would you be interested in meeting with her?

The survey results contain the following notable themes:

- **27 respondents (66%) reported largely positive experiences serving on boards and commissions.** Volunteers specifically mentioned feeling pride in giving back to their community, enjoying learning about government operations, connecting with people, and making an impact through decision-making.
- **37 respondents (90%) expressed that their board or commission has members with multiple perspectives.**
- **38 respondents (92%) stated their board or commission has clear goals and objectives.**
- **37 respondents (90%) stated their board or commission is effective at accomplishing its objectives.**
- **The City of Ames values members who reflect the diversity of the community.** Volunteers shared that many of them have lived in Ames for more than 20 years. There is a mix of diverse backgrounds, including ethnicity, veterans, the disabled, LGBTQ+, and first-generation immigrants. There are individuals with strong ISU professional ties, families with young children, active retirees, and grandparents. Volunteers are engaged in their community in a variety of ways.
- **33 respondents answered "yes" when asked if they would like to meet with the Engagement Coordinator to share more about their experience as a board or commission member.**
 - The Engagement Coordinator held a focus group with interested volunteers and spent time discussing the plus/delta. Here are the key takeaways from the discussion:
 - Boards and commissions frequently reference their strategic plan to remain aligned with their goals.
 - Some feel there is inadequate historical context for volunteers from previous volunteer terms.
 - There is still a lack of public education on processes and regulations.
 - Some feel their meetings could be more efficient.
 - The majority agreed there should be a "cheat sheet" guiding volunteers with any acronyms related to their board or commission's industry terms.
 - Volunteers would like opportunities to meet City staff and learn about their roles.
 - Volunteers would like staff liaisons to have a "touch base" with new members before they begin their term.

Staff will be working to address these suggestions in the upcoming cycle to improve the volunteer experience.

This annual survey continues to provide staff with indispensable feedback that only board and commission volunteers can share. It helps hold staff accountable by highlighting opportunities for continuous improvement, while validating the overall experience is positive for volunteers. The survey also further allows the City to live by its [City Council Goals](#), valuing communication and engagement with the public by continuing to create an opportunity for volunteers to share their insights.

Survey results have been shared with staff liaisons. This survey will be conducted annually in March.

ATTACHMENT(S):

[2026 Boards and Commission Survey Presentation \(Attachment A\).pptx](#)