

Erie County Legislature

HON. TAISHA ST. JEAN TARD
2ND DISTRICT LEGISLATOR



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Dear Members of the Charter Review Commission,

I am writing to formally propose amendments to **Section 2205 of the Erie County Charter** concerning Advisory Boards. These modifications aim to enhance the effectiveness, accountability, and diversity of advisory boards to better serve the needs of Erie County residents and ensure compliance with New York State law.

Proposed Changes and Rationale:

- Clarification on the Establishment of Advisory Boards
- Clearly define the process for establishing advisory boards, including public notification and engagement requirements.
- Require a statement of purpose and objectives for each newly created advisory board to align with the goals and responsibilities of the relevant department.

Expansion of Membership and Appointment Process:

- Increase membership range to allow up to fifteen (15) members where necessary to ensure broad representation.
- Ensure that advisory boards include representatives from diverse backgrounds, including community stakeholders, subject matter experts, and individuals from underrepresented populations.
- Establish a transparent application and selection process, including a public call for nominations and opportunities for community input.

Term Limits and Vacancies:

- Maintain the current two-term limit but allow extensions under exceptional circumstances if approved by a majority of the County Legislature.
- Ensure that vacancies are filled promptly, with a requirement for public posting of openings within sixty (60) days.
- Meeting Frequency and Accountability
- Require advisory boards to meet at least six (6) times per year instead of four (4) to ensure consistent engagement and productivity.
- Implement a standardized attendance policy, wherein three unexcused absences within a year may be grounds for removal, subject to legislative review.

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- Strengthen compliance with Open Meetings Law by requiring that meeting minutes be made publicly available within ten (10) business days.

Annual Reporting and Performance Metrics:

- Enhance the annual reporting process to include measurable goals, outcomes, and community impact statements.
- Require a public presentation of the advisory board's annual report before the County Legislature to ensure transparency and accountability.

Mandatory Training and Ethics Compliance:

- Mandate annual training for all advisory board members on the Erie County Ethics Code, whistleblower policy, and social media policy.
- Require members to complete an ethics acknowledgment form upon appointment and annually thereafter.

These proposed changes will strengthen the advisory board system in Erie County, ensuring these bodies operate effectively, inclusively, and transparently to serve the best interests of our residents. I appreciate your time and consideration and welcome the opportunity to discuss these recommendations further.

Thank you for your dedication to improving Erie County governance.

Warm regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Taisha St. Jean Tard".

Taisha St. Jean Tard
Erie County Legislator, District 2

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