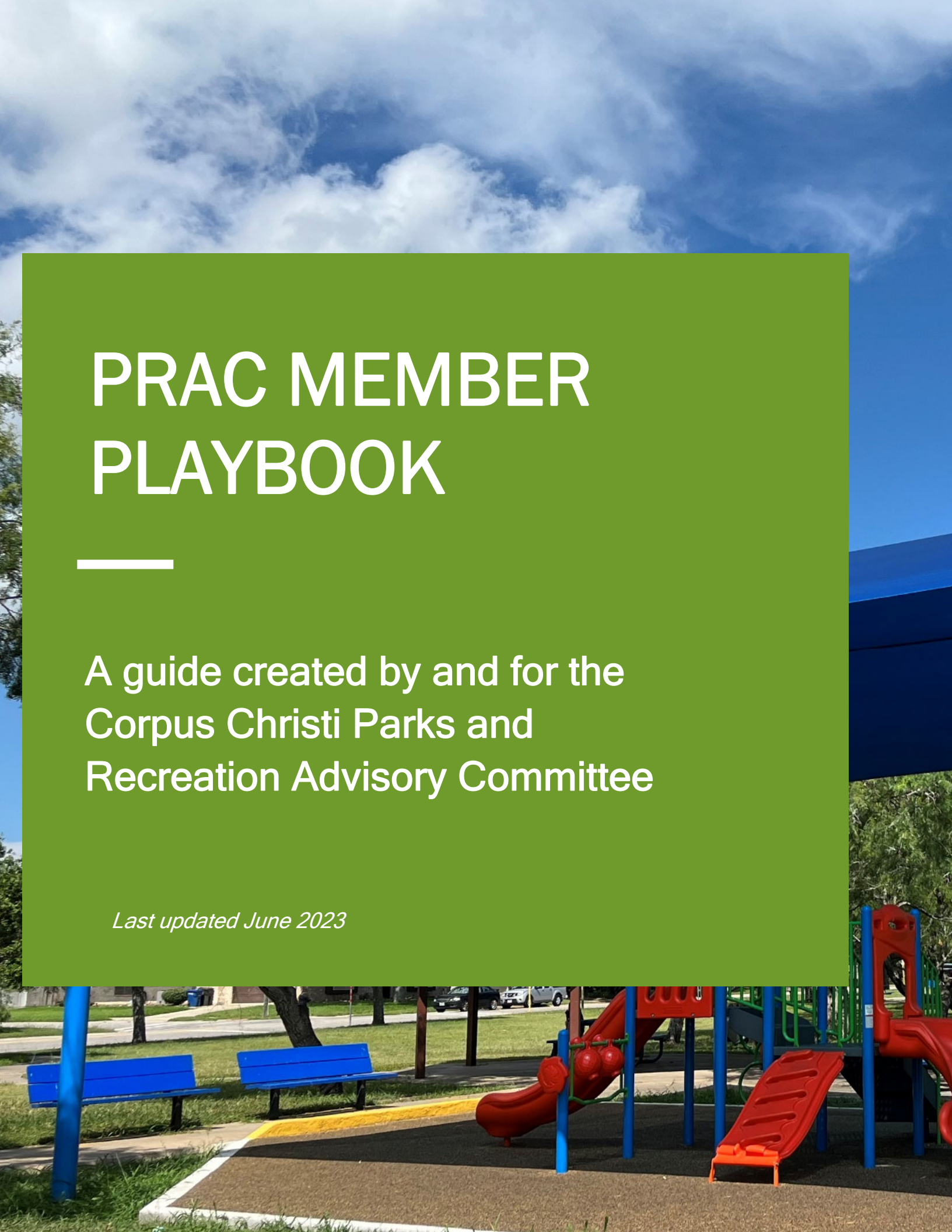


# PRAC MEMBER PLAYBOOK

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A guide created by and for the  
Corpus Christi Parks and  
Recreation Advisory Committee

*Last updated June 2023*



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Welcome to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC). This committee is made of citizens like yourself who have the desire to advise on the city's parks and recreation.

## Purpose of this playbook

As PRAC members, we have personally experienced and continually heard from fellow members that volunteering for a city advisory committee comes with a learning curve, especially if this is your first city role. The city does provide an orientation manual and a training course, which are crucial in understanding general procedures and rules of city committees. Please refer to those frequently as your baseline guiding documents.

This playbook was created by PRAC, for PRAC as an informal next step of details specific to this committee. It is intended to help empower fellow members to navigate your PRAC service with maximum effectiveness.

## PRAC & City Basics

### PRAC'S ROLE

It's important to remember that PRAC has just one formal role as defined by city code: "The Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee Advises the City Council on matters related to all public parks and buildings, public outdoor recreation areas and centers, and any other grounds placed under its purview by the City Manager." - City Code of Ordinances Chapter 2, Article IV, Division 2. Sec. 2-72.

### WHAT PRAC IS

PRAC is an advisory committee established by Corpus Christi City Council to provide a vital advisory role on parks and recreation matters.

### WHAT PRAC IS NOT

PRAC is not a governing body.

## MEETINGS

PRAC meetings are generally held on the second Wednesday of each month at 5:30pm. Meeting locations and agendas will be posted on Legistar. Occasionally a special meeting might be held outside of the typical schedule.

PRAC members should make every effort to attend meetings. Member attendance allows PRAC to reach quorum and carry on business. Besides that, your presence is vital for staying knowledgeable and involved. Meetings allow PRAC to discuss issues as a group. Public meetings are the only time PRAC is allowed to discuss business in quorum (6 or more members), in alignment with the Texas Open Meetings Act. Beyond the reasons for attending, be aware of City Council policy that a committee member having unexcused absences from more than 25% of meetings during a term year will result in automatically vacating their position (Council Policies 10.2.8).

## CITY STRUCTURE

Corpus Christi operates under a council-manager style of government. The City Council (of which the mayor is part) forms policy. The City Council appoints a city manager to oversee carrying out policy. Parks and recreation staff report to an assistant city manager, who reports to the city manager. Knowing this structure and who fills these roles is vital to understanding the operation of the city and how parks and rec fits into that system:

- [Mayor](#)
- [City Council members](#)
- [City Manager](#)

PRAC members benefit from knowing and being known by their mayor and City Council representatives.

For staff matters, PRAC is assigned a staff liaison that the Parks and Recreation department makes known to us. That liaison is typically the preferred first point of contact for questions of the department.

# PRAC Meetings

## PREPAREDNESS

Preparing well for PRAC meetings is one of the most effective things you can do as a member. Preparation can include:

- Knowing the PRAC agenda. Agendas are posted on [Legistar](#) by the Friday prior to each meeting. All members should review the full agenda packet prior to all meetings and be prepared to discuss the agenda items.
- Do advance research whenever possible. The most productive and valuable discussion comes when members have familiarized themselves with the agenda issues. If you have questions that are possible to ask in advance, ask our staff liaison or the applicable person. If specific sites have a key role in the agenda, try to visit those sites in person. Nothing replaces firsthand experience with a site.

## FORMAT

Know that meetings follow Roberts Rule of Order and must stay on agenda. (Here's a quick cheat sheet to Robert's Rules.) This is not to discourage discussion, but rather to have organized meetings that allow for every party to be prepared and informed on the discussion. Members can work with the PRAC chair to add items to the agenda.

Some headings in a typical PRAC agenda might include:

- Director's report, which is developed in collaboration with the chair and might address things like upcoming Council agenda items, events, and member questions of broad interest
- Public comment
- New business for potential action, which includes items for which PRAC might want to make motions of direction or support
- Old business - things unfinished from prior meetings
- Reports from subcommittees, liaisons, and special projects
- A discussion of upcoming agenda items

## QUESTIONS OUTSIDE OF THE AGENDA

If you have questions unrelated to agenda items, email them to the PRAC staff liaison. Staff can reply individually, and if the question is of broad interest, the answer can also be shared within the director's report or possibly addressed as a standalone agenda item at an upcoming PRAC meeting. You can work with the PRAC chair to add items to the agenda if you have an idea.

## Going the extra mile

As advisory committee members, we are strongest when we know our role well and work within it to our best ability. We are a collaborative partner that brings a citizen perspective to Parks and Rec projects. Following are tips that prior PRAC members have shared as empowering their committee experience.

We realize that people have lives and demands outside of PRAC. None of these extra steps are required, but many are easy to fit in bits and pieces as you go about daily life. PRAC service can last up to six years, so view this as a long game of learning that you can start immediately and build on continually.

### 1. EDUCATE YOURSELF!

- **Get out into the park system.** The city has nearly 200 parks. Set a goal of visiting as many of them as possible, starting with ones you see on upcoming agenda items. This [interactive map](#) is a great tool to bookmark and pull up if you find yourself anywhere in the city with a few minutes to spare. It's guaranteed somewhere nearby is a park, likely one you've never been to or that has changed since your last visit. Researching online is helpful, but nothing replaces visiting a site in person. Get out of the car and try to see as much of the park as you're able. Some things that look one way from far away might give quite a different impression when you're very close and/or trying to use them. If you see people at the park and get a chance, say hi. You might want to introduce yourself as PRAC and ask their opinions and feedback, when it feels appropriate.

- **Know the [Corpus Christi Parks and Recreation Master Plan](#).** Part of PRAC's charge in this document is to advance the priorities of this master plan. (See page 155 of the master plan for explanation.) The master plan is what prompted PRAC to create a strategic plan with organized priorities. The master plan is valuable in recognizing the priorities that resulted from an in-depth study of the CC parks and recreation system, plus understanding how park planning works. We sometimes hear concerns that the city pays a lot for planning, then plans sit on a shelf. PRAC can help that not happen - keep this a living document and use it as a citation when making recommendations.
- **Be aware of what Corpus Christi city park jurisdiction includes.** Parks and recreation programming are two obvious things we tend to focus on, but not everyone realizes that CC parks and rec also encompasses things including senior centers and senior services, the Marina, the Art Center and some of the Art Museum, the Museum of Science and History, after-school and summer children's programming, special events permitting, a public art program, public golf and tennis centers, and Heritage Park.
- **Be aware of what Corpus Christi city park jurisdiction DOES NOT include.** Besides city park jurisdictions, there are also national, state, and county parks, often within Corpus Christi city limits, plus we are surrounded by local parks of other cities. The Gulf beaches can be confusing, because different stretches of beach fall under different jurisdictions, but maintenance agreements mean that Corpus Christi parks and rec maintains some non-city beaches. We are sometimes on the front lines of questions about jurisdictions that might not fall under PRAC, so it's good to research the boundaries. It's also good to be aware of these other jurisdictions for purposes of learning from them and understanding collaborations when they happen.

## 2. FOLLOW ALONG.

- **Follow City Council agendas**, especially for park-related matters. Agendas are posted on [Legistar](#) more than a week in advance of City Council meetings. It's ideal to skim the entire agenda, as many things can relate to parks even if it's not immediately obvious. But if you're pressed for time, just search "park" and review any park-specific items. You can watch City Council meetings either live or after the fact on Legistar or [YouTube](#). Legistar lets you jump straight to agenda

items after the meeting has ended.

- **Follow the sister committees to PRAC.** Most closely related are the Water Shore Beach Advisory Committee, Marina Advisory Committee, and Island Strategic Action Committee. The PRAC chair keeps in direct contact with the chairs of those committees, and PRAC has additional formal liaison positions to ISAC and Water Shore Beach. Other entities such as the Planning Commission, Transportation Advisory Committee, Arts and Cultural Commission, and others overlap with park and rec-related interests sometimes. You also follow committees by keeping up with agendas and minutes on Legistar, attending their meetings, and/or getting to know members and keeping in touch.
- **Learn the history.** If a topic is coming up and you wonder what city actions have happened leading up to this, you can search the [Corpus Christi Public Records site](#). This doesn't include everything, but it has decades of archives of public proceedings.

### 3. PARTICIPATE.

- **Attend related meetings.** Every time you get invited to a town hall meeting or public input session, make every effort to attend. Sometimes PRAC is directly invited. Other times, we aren't directly invited but meetings are announced publicly that overlap into parks and rec interests. You can [sign up](#) with the city to receive email alerts and select your areas of interest for notification.
- **Attend ceremonial events.** PRAC gets invited to parks and rec-related groundbreaking and ribbon cuttings. Attendance isn't required, and understandably not everyone can attend things during business hours, but these are great opportunities to see and learn about important changes and also to meet members of the city and the community in a less formal setting than a meeting. The more visible PRAC is, the more connections we build, and the more we stand out as being an active group.
- **Join PRAC subcommittees and special projects** when you're able to. Getting involved in focused groups and special projects helps you find your niche and your voice.



- **Attend City Council meetings and make public comments.** Keep in mind that we are not allowed to officially identify as PRAC members and give advice to Council unless it's advice that PRAC has specifically passed via a resolution, but you are allowed to comment in a non-advisory capacity while identifying yourself as a PRAC member, or you are allowed to comment as an individual if giving advice.
- **Be an ambassador for PRAC.** When CC parks and rec comes up in your everyday interactions, let people know about PRAC. Most people don't realize that there is a citizen group representing public interests for parks and rec. Tell people about PRAC meetings and invite them to public comment if they have opinions to share.
- **Engage with any and all related surveys.** Public feedback is the lifeblood of democratic government. Lots of entities hold park-related surveys, whether it's the city Parks and Recreation department itself, other overlapping city departments like planning, tourism organizations, or outside consultants. Every time you get a chance, take the survey and also share it with your network. Also push yourself to share beyond your personal network when the opportunity arises, such as with clubs or interest groups you are part of.

#### 4. STAY PLUGGED IN.

- **Know how to report park problems.** Maintenance concerns are one of the most frequent types of feedback we receive once people realize we are involved with Parks and Rec. The department has advised us that calling their hotline, 361-826-PLAY, is the fastest way to get a maintenance request into the system. The city also has a City of Corpus Christi app, where certain park problems can be entered. The city additionally has a 311 reporting system and app that's newer, but at the time of this writing, that system doesn't have a park-specific category. That might change in the future.
- **Be aware of Reverse Alerts.** Not a lot of these are related to parks, but two categories are: Coastal Beach Alerts and Weather Alerts. The beach alerts include rip current warnings that are aimed at preventing drowning. It's useful to sign up for whatever alerts apply to you, and to recommend this system to others. [Sign up here.](#)

- **Follow** local news, the city web site, and social media to watch for park-related stories and trends of public interest.