WEST VIRGINIA LEGISLATURE

2024 REGULAR SESSION

Introduced

House Bill 4478

By Delegate Foster

[Introduced January 10, 2024; Referred  
to the Committee on Political Subdivisions then Government Organization ]

A BILL to amend and reenact §7-11-3 of the Code of West Virginia, 1931, as amended; and to amend and reenact §7-12-3 and §7-12-3a of said code; and to amend and reenact §8A-2-3 of said code, all relating to limiting the maximum number of appointees to certain county and municipal bodies; and imposing quorum requirements on certain county and municipal bodies.

Be it enacted by the Legislature of West Virginia:

CHAPTER 7. COUNTY COMMISSIONS AND OFFICERS.

ARTICLE 11. COUNTY PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSIONS.

§7-11-3. Number of members; quorum; qualifications; appointment; term; disqualifications.

The commission shall consist of ~~eleven~~ at least five but not more than nine members, a majority of whom shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business: *Provided*, That the commission may not transact any business unless a majority of members are contemporaneously present at a commission meeting. Each member of ~~said~~ the commission shall be a bona fide resident of the county and shall own real estate within ~~such~~ that county. The term of the commission members shall be for three years and until their successors have been appointed and have qualified: *~~Provided,~~* ~~That the county court in appointing the members of the first commission shall appoint three members for a term of one year; four members for a term of two years and four members for a term of three years~~ *Provided,* That the county commission shall have until January 1, 2025, to reduce the number of members to between five and nine members.The order of the county court shall fix the date on which the term of ~~such~~ the commission members shall begin. The members of any board of park and recreation commissioners heretofore created under the former provisions of this article shall continue in office as members of the parks and recreation commission of ~~such~~ the county until their terms expire and their successors have been appointed and have qualified. Any member of the commission who shall cease to be a bona fide resident of the county or a freeholder thereof, shall thereby be disqualified as a member of ~~such~~ the said commission and his or her office shall become vacant. When a vacancy occurs on ~~said~~ the commission by reason of death, resignation, change of residence from the county, failure to remain a freeholder of the county, or expiration of term, the county court shall appoint a successor or successors to fill out the unexpired term of the member of the commission whose term has been vacated.

ARTICLE 12. COUNTY AND MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES.

§7-12-3. Management and control of county authority vested in board; appointment and terms of members; vacancies; removal of members; quorum requirements.

The management and control of a county authority, its property, operations, business, and affairs shall be lodged in a board of not fewer than ~~twelve nor more than twenty-one~~ five nor more than nine persons who shall be appointed by the county commission and be known as members of the authority: *Provided,* That members appointed to the board prior to July 1, 2018, shall be permitted to complete their term of appointment even if the board’s membership exceeds nine members. The county commission shall appoint one member to represent the county commission on the board and, for each municipality located within the county, the county commission shall appoint one member to represent the municipality. The city and town council of each municipality located within the county shall submit to the county commission the names of three persons, one of whom the county commission shall appoint to be the municipalitys representative on the board. Other members of the board shall be appointed by the county commission and shall include representatives of business, industry, and labor. The members of the authority first appointed shall serve respectively for terms of one year, two years and three years, divided equally or as nearly equal as possible between these terms. Thereafter, members shall be appointed for terms of three years each. A member may be reappointed for such additional term or terms as the county commission may ~~deem~~ consider proper. If a member resigns, is removed or for any other reason his or her membership terminates during his or her term of office, a successor shall be appointed by the county commission to fill out the remainder of his or her term. Members in office at the expiration of their respective terms shall continue to serve until their successors have been appointed and have qualified. The county commission may at any time remove any member of the board by an order duly entered of record and may appoint a successor member for any member so removed.

Other persons, firms, unincorporated associations, and corporations, who reside, maintain offices, or have economic interests ~~as the case may be~~ in the county, shall be eligible to participate in and request the county commission to appoint members to the development authority as the said authority shall by its bylaws provide.

County boards authorized under this section may not transact any business unless a majority of members are contemporaneously present at a board meeting. This quorum requirement may not be amended by the board’s bylaws.

§7-12-3a. Management and control of municipal authority vested in board; appointment and terms of members; vacancies; removal of members; quorum requirements.

The management and control of a municipal authority, its property, operations, business, and affairs shall be lodged in a board of not fewer than ~~twelve nor more than twenty-one~~ five nor more than nine persons who shall be appointed by the governing body and be known as members of the authority: *Provided,* That members appointed to the board prior to July 1, 2023, shall be permitted to complete their term of appointment even if the board’s membership exceeds nine members. One member of the authority shall also be a member of the governing body appointed to represent it on the board. Other members shall be appointed by the governing body and shall include representatives of business, industry, and labor. The members of the authority first appointed shall serve respectively for terms of one year, two years and three years, divided equally or as nearly equal as possible between these terms. Thereafter, members shall be appointed for terms of three years each. A member may be reappointed for such additional term or terms as the appointing agency may deem proper. If a member resigns, is removed or for any other reason his or her membership terminates during his or her term of office, a successor shall be appointed by the appointing agency to fill out the remainder of his or her term. Members in office at the expiration of their respective terms shall continue to serve until their successors have been appointed and have qualified. The appointing agency may at any time remove its appointed member of the authority by an order duly entered of record or by other action appropriate for such appointing agency and may appoint a successor member for any member so removed.

In addition to the appointing agencies hereinbefore named, such other persons, firms, unincorporated associations, and corporations, who reside, maintain offices, or have economic interests~~, as the case may be,~~ in the municipality, are eligible to participate in and request the governing body to appoint members to the development authority as the ~~said~~ authority by its bylaws provides.

Municipal boards authorized under this section may not transact any business unless a majority of members are contemporaneously present at a board meeting. This quorum requirement may not be amended by the board’s bylaws.

CHAPTER 8A. LAND USE PLANNING.

ARTICLE 2. PLANNING COMMISSIONS.

§8A-2-3. Municipal planning commission.

(a) A municipal planning commission in a Class I, II or III city shall have not less than five nor more than ~~fifteen~~ nine members, the exact number to be specified in the ordinance creating the planning commission. A municipal planning commission in a Class IV town or village shall have not less than three nor more than nine members, the exact number to be specified in the ordinance creating the planning commission.

(b) The members of a municipal planning commission ~~must~~ shall be:

(1) Residents of the municipality; and

(2) Qualified by knowledge and experience in matters pertaining to the development of the municipality.

(c) At least three fifths of all of the members ~~must~~ shall have been residents of the municipality for at least three years prior to nomination or appointment and confirmation.

(d) The members of a municipal planning commission ~~must~~ shall fairly represent different areas of interest, knowledge, and expertise, including, but not limited to, business, industry, labor, government, and other relevant disciplines. One member ~~must~~ shall be a member of the municipal governing body or a designee and one member ~~must~~ shall be a member of the administrative department of the municipality or a designee. The term of membership for these two members is the same as their term of office.

(e) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions who may also own interests in businesses that regularly conduct business in front of or with planning commission staff. ~~Such~~ These persons may have experience and expertise which would be valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in or otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and ~~shall~~ may not be disqualified from serving as a member because of a conflict of interest as defined in §61-10-15 of this code and ~~shall~~ may be subject to prosecution under provisions of that chapter when the violation is created solely as a result of his or her relationship with the business. This member ~~must~~ shall recuse himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation, or other activity regarding the conflicting issue.

(f) The Legislature finds that there are persons willing to serve on planning commissions who may also own interests in businesses who regularly conduct business in front of or with planning commission staff. ~~Such~~ These persons may have experience and expertise which would be valuable assets to a planning commission. For those reasons, notwithstanding any other provisions in this code to the contrary, any person employed by, owning an interest in or otherwise associated with a business that regularly conducts business in front of or with planning commission staff may also serve as a member of a planning commission and ~~shall~~ may be in violation of subsection §6B-2-5(g) of this code if the member recuses himself or herself from any vote, discussion, participation or other activity regarding the conflicting issue: *Provided,* That ~~such~~ these members do not constitute a majority of the members of the planning commission at the same time.

(g) The remaining members of the municipal planning commission first selected shall serve respectively for terms of one year, two years and three years, divided equally or as nearly equally as possible between these terms. Thereafter, members shall serve three-year terms. Vacancies shall be filled for the unexpired term and made in the same manner as original selections were made: *Provided*, That members appointed to the commission prior to July 1, 2023, shall be permitted to complete their term of appointment even if the commission’s membership exceeds nine members.

(h) The members of a municipal planning commission shall serve without compensation, but shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses actually incurred in the performance of their official duties.

(i) Nominations for municipal planning commission membership shall be made by the administrative authority and confirmed by the governing body when the administrative authority and the governing body are separate, or appointed and confirmed by the governing body where the administrative authority and governing body are the same.

(j) An individual may serve as a member of a municipal planning commission, a county planning commission, a multicounty planning commission, a regional planning commission or a joint planning commission, at the same time.

(k) The governing body of the municipality may establish procedures for the removal of members of the planning commission for inactivity, neglect of duty or malfeasance. The procedures ~~must~~ shall contain provisions requiring that the person to be removed be provided with a written statement of the reasons for removal and an opportunity to be heard on the matter.

(l) The planning commission may not transact any business unless a majority of members are contemporaneously present at a commission meeting. This quorum requirement may not be amended by the commission’s bylaws.

NOTE: The purpose of this bill is to impose limits on the number of appointees to certain county and municipal bodies; and impose quorum requirements on certain county and municipal bodies.

Strike-throughs indicate language that would be stricken from a heading or the present law and underscoring indicates new language that would be added.