

Conducting Effective Meetings

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Why Meetings

- Conduct your council business
- Make decisions
- Gather public input

Types of Meetings

- Council Meetings
- Work Sessions
- Committee Meetings
- Executive Session
- Public Hearings

Public Notice and Open Meetings

- The public must be notified
- Any time a quorum is present it is a meeting
- Work sessions are meetings

Elements of Effective Meetings

- Understand the meeting's purpose
- Have the information you need
- Know how a meeting should function (rules for procedure)
- Manage public input

Meeting Preparation

- Review information packet
- Come ready to discuss
- Opening packet at meeting sends poor signal and can make meeting last longer

Meeting Agenda

- Now required under recent *Lambries'* decision
- Give in advance of meeting (timely)
- Tells you meeting's purpose
- Agenda is a guide for decisions you make
- Cannot change agenda at the meeting

Rules Should . . .

(Rosenburg's Rules of Order)

- Establish order
- Be clear
- Be user-friendly
- Enforce will of majority while protecting the rights of the minority

Conducting Effective Meetings (booklet)

- Appendix A—Sample Rules of Order



Basic Principles of Robert's Rules of Order

One thing at a time, one person at a time, one time per meeting	Silence Implies Consent
Discussions must be germane to the pending question.	Right to know what will be discussed.
No Interruptions	Everyone is equal (including the chair).
All decisions of the chair may be appealed.	Majority Rules

Review: Types of Motions

- Basic motion—puts forward a decision
- Amended motion—changes your basic motion
- Substitute motion—asks to “throw out” original motion
- Vote on these in reverse order
 - Substitute (if “yes” then you’re done)
 - Amendment (if “yes” then you’re done)
 - Basic motion (if “yes” then you’re done)

Some Deviations from Robert’s Rules of Order are Appropriate

- Speak only after being recognized
- Some limits on debate is good.
- Chair may make motions and vote ... cautiously
- Motions to close debate should be allowed.
- Motions should be seconded.
- Keep discussions prior to a motion to a minimum.
- Liberal use of “unanimous consent”
- Consent agendas
- Controversy **requires** a high level of formality.

Adopting a Motion

There are six steps for adopting a motion:

- Step 1: A member makes a motion
- Step 2: A member seconds the motion
- Step 3: The chair states the question
- Step 4: The members debate the issue
- Step 5: The members vote on the motion
- Step 6: The chair announces the vote

Improper Handling of Amendments

- A motion to amend modifies the main motion; requires second & is subject to debate
- Three types of amendments: Strike, Delete, or Strike and Delete
- Main motion limited to an amendment & an amendment to an amendment
- Amendments limited to immediately pending motion & must be germane to the subject

Executive Session

- Announce reason for executive session
- **Discuss only** matter announced
 - ◆ Security personnel or devices
 - ◆ Employee discipline, promotion, etc.
 - ◆ Contract negotiations
 - ◆ Investigative proceedings
 - ◆ Prospective economic development

Losing Your Vote

- Majority vote
- Sometimes you lose
- Refusing to move-on can damage credibility

Laws Relevant to Meetings

- Freedom of Information Act (handout)
- Ethics Reform Act (handout)

Freedom of Information: Common Problems

- Failing to give notice of work session
- Failing to give reason for executive session
- Discussing matters in executive session that were not publicly stated

Detroit, MI



Saratoga, NY



Know how meetings should function

- Civil conduct is essential
- Wait your turn to speak
- Listen
- Focus on issues, not personalities
- Respect fellow council members
- Respect the council's decision

The Vote—Part of the Public Record

- Voice
- Hand
- Roll Call

- Must be present to vote
- No secret ballots

Manage Public Input

- Ask public to sign-in in order to speak
- Limit time period for comments
- Decide when public should speak
 - beginning or ending of meeting
 - pros and cons

Effective meetings will include mechanisms to allow delays and interruptions and to handle conflicts of interest.



Conflict of Interest

- Announce your conflict
- Follow Ethics Reform Act
- Put your conflict in writing (recusal form)
- Do not participate in deliberations
- Do not vote
- Should you be in the room during deliberations?

Conflict of Interest

- Do not point out someone else's conflict
- Public announcement could be seen as defamation
- Proper procedure is to notify Ethics Commission

QUESTIONS ???

Resources:

Municipal Association of South Carolina
803.799.9574
www.masc.sc

S. C. State Ethics Commission
803.253.4192
www.ethics.sc.gov

S. C. Press Association
803.750.9561
www.scpres.org
