

Meetings – The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

- * Meetings as Elected Officials
 - * Constituents
 - * Public Meetings/Hearings
 - * Open Meeting Laws
 - * Procedural Rules
 - * Meetings with Peers/Staff



Constituents



- Supporters
- Those that question or oppose specific action/issue
- Those that seeking to catch you - get you out of office



Rock and Roll

- “All you need is love.”
John Lennon

- “Welcome to the jungle.”
Axl Rose

Authors

“Feelings are not facts.”

Borton Goldsmith, PhD

“Statement A: Statement B is True.”

“Statement B: Statement A is False.”

Mark Twain

Religious

“Do not let the behavior of others destroy your inner peace.”

Dali Lama

“A soft answer turneth away wrath but grievous words stir up anger. The tongue of the wise useth knowledge aright but the mouth of fools poureth out foolishness.”

Proverbs 15:1-2

Supporters

- Conflicts of Interest – Pecuniary
 - Friendship, customers, campaign contributors – generally not a conflict
 - Official capacity - action, decision or recommendation private pecuniary benefit of you, your household or your business (unless same for profession as whole)
- Don't accept any benefit as consideration for official action or inaction – IC 18-1352 Felony

Opposition Favorite Catch Phrases

- “You politicians are all _____.”
- “You don’t care about _____.”
- “My _____ told me that this area would never change.”
- “I am not against _____, BUT.....”
- “I am not an _____ but I know”
- “All you want to do is _____!”
- “You are elected to represent the people and _____.”

In the Face of All of That....

- Why did you run for office?
- What is your duty/responsibility as a County Elected/Appointed Official?
- How does that relate to meeting and communicating with constituents?

Undecided, Opposed and/or Angry

- Talk/meet with them – unless public hearing pending
- Sometimes have to prioritize time
- Courteous – always
- Professional/Personable – emphasis may vary

Undecided, Opposed and/or Angry

- Listen
- Try to understand
 - Ask for clarification; more info/detail
 - Avoid talking over them
 - Likewise they shouldn't talk over you
 - Don't rush to answer and/or debate
 - Thanks and consider or commit and follow through

Dealing with Angry or Potentially Angry People

- Speaking – pay attention to tone of voice and volume
- Drop the Defensiveness
- Ask and use names but don't patronize
- See if can find Common Ground
- Fair opportunity to speak

When is the Bridge Burned

- What are your criteria?
- What are new rules in the relationship?



Public Meetings and Hearings







Open Meeting Law – Title 74 Ch 2

- “All meeting of a governing body of a public agency shall be open to the public and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting except as otherwise provided.... No decisions by secret ballot”
- Meeting =
- Public Agency =
- Governing Body =



- Meeting = governing body meeting to decide or deliberate
 - Decision – any decision for which vote is required at any meeting where a quorum is present
 - Deliberation – receipt or exchange of information or opinion relating to a decision but not informal or impromptu of general nature not related to pending matter

- Advisory or Subcommittee meetings – Open meetings if committee/sub group created by statute, ordinance or legislative act and has authority to decide or recommend.



Issue Spotting

- Planning and Zoning Commissioner Gitter Dunn really wants to approve the upcoming commercial rezone application for the property next to his property on old Highway 19. He calls his fellow commissioners one on one to discuss the project, encourage them to support the application and ask how they are going to vote. During the hearing Commissioner Flipp is asking questions that seem to indicate he may not support the application. Commissioner Dunn sends him several texts during the hearing explaining why he needs to stay on board and be supportive.

- Notice Requirements
 - Meeting Notice
 - Agenda Notice
 - Regular and Special Meetings
 - Some issues require publication



Executive Sessions 74-206(1)....

- Personnel
- Acquiring Real Property
- Communicate with Counsel – litigation
- State: applicable code section & basic purpose
- Roll Call Vote – 2/3
- No action
- Who can attend/Confidential
- Permissive vs. Required



Meeting Procedure



- Amendments to Agenda
 - Before meeting – more than 48/24 hrs or less than 48/24 hrs
 - At/During Meeting – Action only if Emergency
 - Identify Action/Discussion Items
 - Open discussion and deliberation
 - Can't meet where discriminate
 - Can appear telephonically/internet

Issue Spotting

- The day before the Commissioner's meeting the Sheriff approached Commissioner Tater and wanted the county to buy the property across from the courthouse for more parking. Tater thought that was a good idea and said he would bring it up at the meeting. The property has been on the market for a month with some interest shown but no deal yet. At the Commissioner's meeting the Clerk notes that a pipe broke that morning in the admin building and they need to approve a contract for the clean up and repair of the building. Commissioner Tater also says he wants to purchase the property across the street for parking. The Commissioners add the items to the agenda and vote to approve both.

Public Participation



Public Meetings and Hearings

- Public Hearings
 - Right to testify
 - Reasonable limitations
 - Rules/Procedure
 - Conduct of Hearing
- Describe Rules, Process and Expectations at beginning
- Disruptions?
- Public Meetings
 - Right to be present
 - If circumstances call for it – describe rules and expectations.
 - Some process differences – rotate pro/con; less formal; time limits

Issue Spotting

- The County Commissioners are holding a regular meeting and addressing a controversial issue regarding buying a parcel of land to build a new jail which would be funded by issuing bonds. A large crowd is at the meeting wanting to talk. The Chair allows a few to make comments, some more time than others and some not at all. The commissioners are occasionally whispering to each other or passing notes. One commissioner states she feels this is a controversial issue and wants to handle it by secret ballot to protect those voting. Another commissioner makes and motion to buy it, gets a second and after no discussion they vote.

Robert's/Mason's Rules

- Most not officially adopted
- General guide – not hard/fast
 - Motion/second – best for chair to acknowledge
 - Discussion on Motion
 - Generally – discuss/debate issue not person
 - Withdraw/Amend Motion
 - Substitute Motion/Amended Substitute
 - Vote (Roll Call or Voice)
 - Work backwards



Robert's Rules of Ordering.

Meetings – Leader/Executive

1. Three Rules of Running a Meeting
2. Give everyone a Role
3. Control the Meeting, Not the Conversation
4. Make Everyone Contribute
5. Make Meetings Essential

Three Rules of Running a Meeting

1. Set the Agenda –

- Seems obvious but many start with no clear purpose
- Handout, whiteboard or discussed
- Meeting Compass – stay on track – “parking lot”



Three Rules of Running a Meeting

- **2. Start on Time – End on Time**
 - Everyone is busy
 - End time – helps accomplish goals and get back to work



Three Rules of Running a Meeting

- **3. End with an Action Plan**
 - Leave last few minutes to lay out next steps

Let's have a staff meeting and discuss the things that must happen but will never actually end up happening.



someecards
user card

Make Sure Everyone Has Role

- What is the Role of the Meeting Participants
- Layout Purpose/Role at Beginning
- Who makes the decision?
 - Gather input and then you make the decision; or
 - Trying to reach majority or consensus

Control the Meeting and Not the Conversation

- Let Them Speak
 - “Your job is to be right at the end of the meeting not the beginning.” David M. Cote, CEO Honeywell
 - Lay out purpose then be quiet for awhile
 - If you talk first you may just get a lot of nodding/yes
 - Need all the facts and opinions to make good decision

Make Everyone Contribute

- Common Dynamics to Manage
 - Show boat/dominators
 - Some volunteer ideas and other just criticize
 - Reluctance to speak outside their wheelhouse.
- Participants – forget job title
- Be Vulnerable
- Make Everyone a Judge
 - Wow – Nice – Not So Much



Make Meetings Essential

- Review your regular meetings quarterly – each should defend itself
- Mission creep ----- Meeting Creep

THANKS