

Keys to Better Public Meetings

1. Before the meeting:
 - a. Plan; when, where, and how many people will attend
 - b. Come early
 - c. Send out board packet (with enough lead time so the Board can read them)
 - d. Prepare an agenda
 - i. Past draft meeting minutes
 - ii. Supporting documents for current agenda
 - iii. Other supporting documents
 - iv. Provide a procedure to obtain agenda items
 - v. Write agenda items so action can be taken. If the agenda is well composed, a motion can be made right of the agenda.
 - vi. Stated public comment period
 - vii. Action items vs. discussion items
 - viii. Agenda should fit time allotted
 - ix. Post meeting in accordance with open meeting law
 - e. Prepare written minutes
 - i. Keep concise and informative
 - ii. Include actions and decisions
 - iii. Completed in a timely fashion
 - iv. Correct spellings
 - f. Keep old minutes. If you marked them up, keep old copy and confirm changes were made.
2. At the beginning of the meeting:
 - a. Start on time
 - b. Clearly define roles
 - c. Introduce yourselves with roll call
 - d. Review, order and revise the agenda
 - e. Set clear time limits
 - f. Be consistent
 - g. Review action vs. discussion items
3. During the meeting:
 - a. As the Chairman, you are running the meeting. Rely on other Board members. Call their name and ask for input.
 - b. Call on the public to make comment.
 - c. Board members can modify agenda items to make motions.
 - d. Develop procedure:
 - i. Example: The Chair reads agenda item; author of item discusses item; Chair requests discussion of item amongst Board members; Chair requests public comment; after comments, Chair closes comment period; Chair calls for a motion stated and seconded; vote taken. Focus on the same procedure each time for the agenda items.

- ii. Look at each other and the public when they are speaking.
- iii. Board members look organized with no messes in front of you.
- iv. Board members represent their constituents
- v. Shared responsibility; Board members are active and positive
- vi. Collaborative attitude; Board members act with intent to cooperate
- vii. Strategic thinking; Board members lead the entity, don't micro-manage.

e. Keep moving forward:

- i. Boomerang questions to those asking question to get input and to be sure question is understood.
- ii. Regain focus, if discussion wanders from topic
- iii. What's going on, keep on track
- iv. Enforce meeting procedures
- v. Deal with topics or defer them
- vi. Use humor at the right time
- vii. Praise people when deserved but don't give positive feedback.
This encourages lengthy responses and wastes time.

4. At the end of a meeting:

a. Strong finish:

- i. Summarize agenda items for next meeting
- ii. Compose action list
- iii. Announce next meeting date, place, time
- iv. Close meeting crisply