

Public Meeting Basics for City Commissions



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Topics to be Covered

- Open Meeting Law
- Data Practices
- Gift Law
- Conflicts of Interest
- Parliamentary Procedure Basics
- Social Media
- City Code Requirements
- Tips for Effective Participation
- Q & A

Introduction

- Role of Commissions in City Government
 - Appointed by Council
 - Advise/recommend direction to City Council
 - Give guidance to staff and other commissions and taskforces
 - Assist in setting City policy
 - Serve as ambassadors

Open Meeting Law

- Applies to City Council and Commissions
- What is a meeting?
 - Quorum or more of members, at which members receive or discuss information on matter that is or will come before the body
 - Not necessary that action be taken for it to be a meeting
 - Not chance or social gatherings
 - Usually not seminars/conferences
- Be careful to avoid discussions with other Commissioners

Open Meeting Law

- ❑ Meeting must be open to public
- ❑ Generally must be in city limits; accessible room
- ❑ Public must have access to agenda materials, unless protected

Open Meeting Law

- ❑ Open Meeting Law sometimes **ALLOWS** closed meetings and sometimes **REQUIRES** closed meetings
- ❑ Advisory bodies unlikely to conduct closed meetings; topics are generally not within their authority

Open Meeting Law: Email and Social Media Concerns

□ Basic Assumptions

- Email and social media communications can violate OML where a quorum is involved and topic is city business
- Okay to use social media for exchanges with all members of the public
- Consider whether purpose of communication is to evade public discussion on the issue
- General rule: Avoid discussions with each other outside of a public meeting
- Ask staff liaison or attorney if you have questions

Data Practices

- Data Practices statute applies to all data (written or electronic information) maintained by City, including data in possession of Commissions
- General Classifications:
 - Public
 - Private/Non-public (personnel)
 - Confidential/protected non-public
- Government Data on Personal Devices
 - Subject to data request
 - Where data is stored does not matter

Data Practices

- Public Data on appointed officials:
 - Name and address
 - Education, training and employment history
 - Volunteer work, awards and honors, prior government service, veteran status
 - Telephone or email, first and last dates of service
- Inform staff liaison of any data requests
- City doesn't necessarily collect all of the above information
- Commissioner contact information on website

Gift Law

- ❑ Statute/City Charter (Chapter 12 of Ethics Code)
- ❑ Applies to both elected and appointed officials
- ❑ Prohibits local officials from accepting gifts from “interested persons” (persons having a financial interest in a decision)
- ❑ May accept donations, which are approved by City Council

Gift Law

□ Exceptions

- Services of insignificant monetary value
- Plaques or memento recognizing work
- Trinket or memento costing \$5.00 or less
- Informational material of unexceptional value

Conflicts of Interest

- State statute/city charter (Chapter 12-Code of Ethics)
- Rules apply to council and commission members
- General rule
 - Do not participate in matters in which you have a personal financial interest
 - Notify staff liaison of possible conflict

Meeting Procedures

- Sturgis' Code of Parliamentary Procedure
 - Will apply if disputes arise
- Typical Process:
 - Attendance
 - Review and approve agenda
 - Approve minutes
 - Regular business – Old/New
 - Public Hearings
 - Future Agenda Items/Upcoming meetings
 - Other business/Announcements
 - Adjournment

Parliamentary Procedure: Meeting Procedures

□ Role of Chair

- Announces items
- Staff presents report
- Calls for discussion or a motion
- Calls for a vote and announces results
- May request disruptive persons to leave
- Seek assistance from law enforcement if necessary

Use of Social Media

- City presence on Social Media
 - Facebook
 - Twitter
 - You Tube
- Purpose
 - Connecting with residents and sharing information
- City website
 - Commissions may post/update content through staff liaisons

Use of Social Media

- Issues for City
 - Compliance with laws (OML; data practices)
 - Content oversight
 - On-line etiquette
- City Policy
 - Websites monitored and controlled by staff
 - Subject to review and deletion
 - Contact staff liaison for posting information
- Use of Personal Sites/Expressing Personal Opinions
 - You represent the City
 - Avoid perception of favoritism and conflicts
 - “Letters to the editor”

City Code Requirements

- City Code contains requirements for Commissions:
 - Residency (for most Commissions)
 - Terms (3-year terms; no more than 3 consecutive terms on the same Commission)
 - Attendance
 - Removal (appointed & removed by Council)
- Attendance required; may be removed for excessive absences
- Notify staff liaison of anticipated absences
- Bylaws may be amended by a 2/3 vote

Tips for Effective Participation

- ❑ Come to the meeting with a positive attitude
- ❑ Be on time
- ❑ Read your packet in advance
- ❑ Think about what is best for the entire city
- ❑ Visit agenda locations in advance
- ❑ Allow group participation
- ❑ Be a good listener
- ❑ Contact your staff liaison if you have questions or concerns before the meeting
- ❑ Contact your staff liaison if you cannot attend

QUESTIONS?

- May contact staff liaison or city attorney any time!

Your Contribution is Important!

- **THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO THE CITY OF RICHFIELD!**