

Public Meetings that Work

BEFORE THE MEETING

- ☐ **Prepare a clear agenda**
Use plain language. List action items separately from discussion items. Avoid vague terms like “old business” when possible.
- ☐ **Post the agenda on time**
Follow your state’s open meetings laws for notice requirements and posting locations.
- ☐ **Include public input opportunities**
Clearly note when and how the public may comment.
- ☐ **Share background materials early**
Council packets, financial summaries, and staff memos help everyone prepare.
- ☐ **Check compliance**
Review open meetings and public records requirements if the meeting includes sensitive or complex topics.

DURING THE MEETING

- ☐ **Track motions and votes carefully**
Record who made the motion, who seconded it, and the outcome of the vote.
- ☐ **Note public participation**
Summarize comments without editorializing.
- ☐ **Clarify actions taken**
Make sure it’s clear when the council is acting versus discussing.

AFTER THE MEETING

- ☐ **Prepare accurate minutes**
Focus on decisions, actions and outcomes.
- ☐ **Publish minutes promptly**
Follow your city’s policy and state law for approval and posting.
- ☐ **Maintain public records**
Store agendas, minutes and meeting materials according to records retention rules.

SUPPORTING GOOD PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Encourage early input on major projects or financial decisions
- Help staff explain budget limits and legal constraints in plain language
- Coordinate with elected officials so expectations are clear
- Use surveys, open houses, or informal feedback when appropriate

KEEP LEARNING

- Attend state league training when available
- Share resources with council members
- Keep a handbook or reference guide handy for quick questions