

## "Practices for Successful Meetings"

**Jim Elliott**  
**Butler Snow LLP**

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### AGENDA

1. Welcome & Introduction
2. Things that go Wrong in Public Meetings
3. Planning for the Meeting
4. Conducting the Meeting/Procedures
5. Public Participation/Conflicts & Disruptive Behavior
6. Meeting Follow-Up
7. Facilitation & Chairmanship Duties
8. Records, Minutes & Other Documents
9. Rules of Order & Procedure
10. Advisory Boards and Committees

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### What is a "public meeting?"

A meeting occurs when a quorum of a city council (or of another governing body, agency, or committee) gathers either to discuss city business or any other public matter, to take official action, or to discuss or formulate recommendations on city business or policy. The meeting may be a regular council meeting, a special called meeting, or an ad hoc/informal gathering.

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## POP QUIZ

- If someone makes a motion it must be debated.
- Citizens always have the right to participate in the deliberations of an elected governing body.
- Once a main motion has been decided, it can be reconsidered during that meeting only if someone voting with the majority wants to do so.
- A motion to amend an amendment to a motion is out-of-order.
- A committee can bring a motion before a body without a second
- Junior members of a public body are required by to yield on procedural matters to senior members.
- An out-of-order ruling by the chair can be appealed.

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## Things that can go wrong

- Conflicting recommendations
- Rippling effect of lack of trust
- Staff given conflicting directions
- Fights over the minutes mask hidden agendas
- Complaints about poor communication usually mask other agendas too
- Abuse/misunderstanding of parliamentary procedure

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## Meeting “Robbers”

- Disagreement on meeting purpose
- Excess tangents and irrelevant discussions
- Room not suited to the meeting
- Wrong people in attendance
- Leader not clear, or no control from chair
- Rights of participants not respected
- Participants not prepared for the meeting

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## Meeting “No-Nos”

- Too much on the agenda
- Lack of time to deal with important items
- Defensive leader, not willing to change
- Side conversations
- Lack of decorum and formality
- Leader is too conciliatory
- Leader has a predetermined solution

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## EVERY MEETING NEEDS A PLAN

**BLUEBERRY CHEESECAKE**  
MAKES 12 SERVINGS  
PREP: 20 MIN.; BAKES: 1 HR., 15 MIN.;  
STAND: 10 MIN.; COOL: 30 MIN.; CHILL: 4 HRS.  
Though this isn't ready a hour to dessert, it has less than half the calories and less than one-third the fat of the original.

**1** cup graham cracker crumbs  
**3** tablespoons butter, melted  
**1** tablespoon sugar  
Vegetable cooking spray  
**2** (8-ounce) packages 1/2-less-fat cream cheese  
**1** (4-ounce) package fat-free cream cheese  
**1** cup sugar  
**3** tablespoons all-purpose flour  
**1/2** teaspoon salt  
**2** large eggs  
**2** egg whites  
**1** (8-ounce) container light sour cream  
**1** teaspoon vanilla extract  
**1** tablespoon grated lemon rind  
**1/2** cups fresh or frozen blueberries  
**1** cup fat-free frozen whipped topping, thawed  
**1/2** cup light sour cream

**COMBINE** graham cracker crumbs, melted butter, and 1 tablespoon sugar in a small bowl. Press mixture on bottom and 1 1/2 inches up sides of a 9-inch springform pan coated with cooking spray. **BAKE** at 350° for 5 minutes. Remove from oven; set aside.

**BEAT** cream cheeses at medium speed with an electric mixer until smooth. **COMBINE** 1 cup sugar, flour, and salt. Add to cream cheese, beating until blended. Add eggs, 1 at a time, beating well after each addition. Add egg whites, beating until blended.

**ADD** 8-ounce container sour cream, vanilla, and lemon rind, beating just until blended. Gently stir in blueberries. Pour mixture into prepared pan.

**BAKE** at 350° for 1 hour and 10 minutes or until center of cheesecake is firm. Turn off oven, and let cheesecake stand in oven, with oven door partially open, 30 minutes.

**REMOVE** cheesecake from oven; cool in pan on a wire rack, 30 minutes.

**COVER** cheesecake, and chill 4 hours. Re-line sides of pan.

**STIR** together whipped topping and 1/4 cup sour cream. Spread over cheesecake.

Source: U.S. Dairy Farm for Life. © 2011 Carl Vinson Institute of Government. All rights reserved. Recipe adapted from U.S. Dairy Farm for Life.

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## Successful Meetings are Planned

- Define the desired meeting outcome in specific and preferably measurable terms  
(e.g., “we are gathered here to ...”)
- Make sure the meeting is necessary
- Decide who needs to attend
- Draft an agenda that is realistic; distribute a finalized agenda in advance
- Assure an appropriate meeting location

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ESTABLISH  
THE  
TONE  
FOR  
THE  
MEETING  
EARLY



"Bad guy comin' in, Arnie! ... Minor key!"

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O.C.G.A. 50-14-1(d) and (e):

*"Every agency shall prescribe the time, place, and dates of regular meetings of the agency. Such information shall be available to the general public and a notice containing such information shall be posted and maintained in a conspicuous place...Prior to any meeting, the agency holding such meeting shall make available an agenda of all matters expected to come before the agency at such meeting."*

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AGENDAS "101"

- Regularize the agenda format
- Who prepares the agenda?
- Who approves the agenda?
- Establish deadlines for the agenda
- Who can add items and when?
- When and how will the agenda be provided to members (with supporting documents), and to the public and media?

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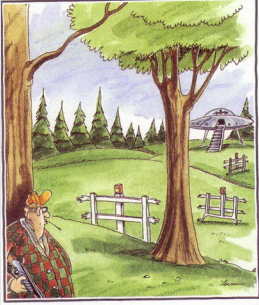
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CONFLICTING  
GOALS  
WILL  
CAUSE  
PROBLEMS



The Zeonions came with the answers to many secrets of the universe. Vern, regrettably, came with thick glasses and his deer rifle.

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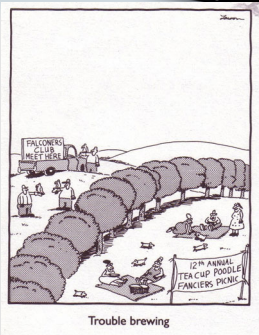
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SOME  
AGENDA  
ITEMS  
ARE  
NOT  
COMPATIBLE



Trouble brewing

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### Successful Meetings are Planned

- Give all members of the governing body the same information and documents
- Prepare handouts and meeting strategy
- Don't pack the agenda with too many difficult items or incompatible subjects
- Provide options to governing body members; distinguish between policy and administrative issues

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## Different Types of Meetings

- Information-Giving Meetings
- Information-Exchanging Meetings
- Information-Creating Meetings

*Which one of these describes a typical city council meeting?*

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## SOME STANDARDS OF CONDUCT ARE ASSUMED



Social morays

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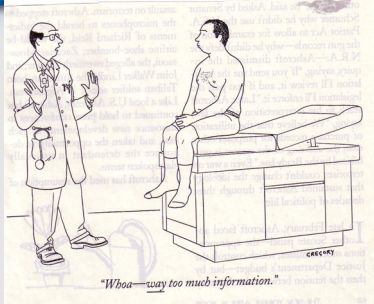
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## APPROPRIATE INFORMATION IN RIGHT QUANTITIES



"Whoa—way too much information."

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### Conducting Meetings, cont' d

- Use of and rules concerning public forum
- Recording votes (what to do about abstentions)
- Conflict of Interest
- Making staff presentations
- Avoiding the appearance that decisions have been made in advance
- Public Hearings

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### Items for Council Rules

- Notification of times and dates of regular meetings
- Procedures for calling special meetings
- Attendance at meetings expected
- Contents of meeting information packets, and time of distribution
- Voting procedures
- Quorum rules
- Public hearings rules
- Absence of the presiding officer
- Order of the agenda
- Changing the established order of the agenda
- No action on public forum items, except for emergency

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SOME DOCUMENTS ARE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE



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## (continued)

- Limits on speaking (for members or the public)
- Parliamentary procedure manual used/referenced
- Conduct of meetings (decorum of council members; disorderly conduct)
- Public participation rules other than limits on speaking
- Type of minute preparation/style
- Committees (establishing; process for making appointments; duties and responsibilities)
- How often resolutions and ordinances must be read and voted upon
- Getting the floor and making remarks through the chair
- When and how the rules of order may be suspended

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## (continued)

- Rules for general comments at the end of the meeting
- Is a motion always required to engage in debate?
- Chair's discretion to require a spokesman for a group of citizen speakers, and to limit redundant citizen remarks
- Entering remarks in the minutes explaining votes
- Procedure for declaring conflict-of-interest
- Discouraging and recording of abstentions
- Enforced meeting ending times
- Use of special equipment (cable cast, TV cameras, special lighting, etc.)
- Rules for the consent agenda

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## Meetings According to GORP

(this is really a recap)

- Goals
- Order
- Respect
- Planning

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## Conflict & Disruptive Behavior

Types of Conflict:

Facts	Methods
Goals	Values

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## Meeting Follow-Up

- Finish the minutes and circulate them promptly after the meeting
- Make sure target dates and person(s) responsible are recorded and contacted
- Periodically ask members to evaluate the organization's meeting processes, procedures and practices
- Updates to members on agenda items
- Everyone gets everything

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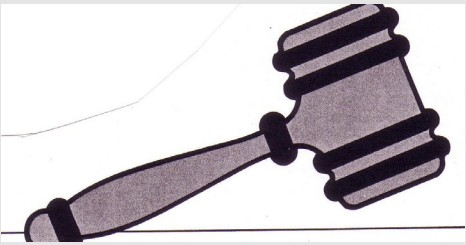
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## Chairing & Facilitation of Meetings



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## The Chair

- Memorize often used procedures
- Make sure all know what's being debated and voted on
  - See that all motions are worded clearly
  - Repeat motions frequently
  - Make the effects of amendments clear
- Learn how to conduct voting
- Know the steps in a meeting
- Learn how to handle points of order and appeals
- Know more about procedure than other members

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## Records, Minutes & Documents

1. Why are accurate minutes important?  
historical record, legal document of action taken, future research & retrieval
2. Types of public meeting minutes:
  - verbatim minutes
  - summary minutes
  - action minutes
3. Amending & Voting (or not) to approve minutes

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## Rules of Procedure for Meetings

What is the purpose of Parliamentary Law & Roberts Rules?

- *To enable an assembly to transact business with speed and efficiency*
- *To protect the rights of the individual*
- *To preserve a spirit of harmony within the group*

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## Parliamentary Procedure is the Source of other popular rule books

- Robert's Rules of Order
- Demeter's Manual of Parliamentary Law & Procedure
- Sturgis' Rules of Procedure
- Riddick's Rules of Procedure
- Mason's Manual of Legislative Procedure
- Bourinot's Rules of Order

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## Ten Basic Rules of Meeting Procedure

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization's rights supersede rights of individuals</li> <li>• All members rights are equal</li> <li>• Must have quorum</li> <li>• Majority rules</li> <li>• Silence is consent</li> <li>• Two-thirds vote rule</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One speaker/one question at a time</li> <li>• Debatable motions receive full debate</li> <li>• A question decided typically can't be brought back up in same meeting</li> <li>• Personal remarks are out of order</li> </ul>
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## Hierarchy of Rights

- Right of the majority to decide & to prevail
- Right of the minority to be heard
- Rights of individual members (which are equal)
- Rights of absentees

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## Supremacy of the Rule of Law

- **First:** Federal & State Constitution
- **Second:** State law & Case law
- **Third:** Local government charter
- **Fourth:** Local government ordinance
- **Fifth:** Referenced rules of procedure, by default where ordinance/charter are silent
- **Sixth:** Common sense and courtesy

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## How are motions classified?

- Main Motions
- Subsidiary Motions
- Privileged Motions
- Incidental Motions

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## Precedence

- Privileged Motions
  1. Adjourn
  2. Recess
  3. Question of privilege
- Subsidiary Motions
  4. Lay on the table
  5. Previous question (end debate)
  6. Limit or extend debate
  7. Postpone to a certain time (or indefinitely)
  8. Commit or refer (to committee)
  9. Amend
- Main Motion

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## How should a motion progress?

- Member addresses Chair
- Member is recognized
- Member proposes motion
- Another member seconds; no discussion without one
- Chair states motion
- Board discusses motion
- Chair takes the vote
- Chair announces result of vote

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## How to amend a motion

- Addition or insertion
- Elimination or striking
- Substitution

*\*A motion to amend may be hostile, but must be germane*

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## Types of Amendments

- First Rank
- Second Rank; none past
- Vote in reverse order

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Other Rules:

- General Consent
- Suspension of the rules
- Tabling vs. postponing
- "Calls for the question"
- Work/Study Session
- Quorums

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Advisory Boards & Committees

- Role of advisory boards and committees
- Expectations of advisory board members
- Same rules can apply to these meetings, but they may be venues for greater use of the rule of general consent
- Review statement of purpose or enabling ordinance(s)
- Meet periodically with appointing authority

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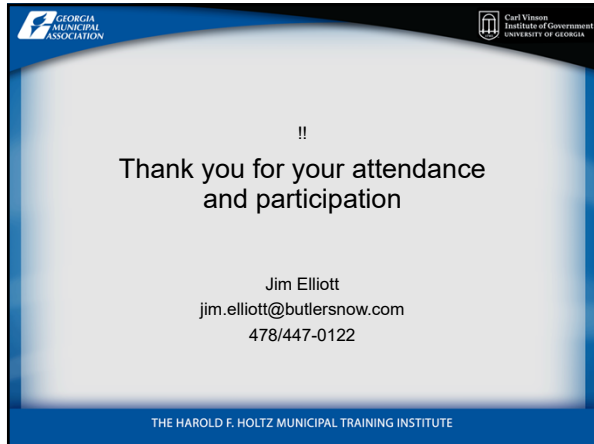
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