



Citizen Meeting Agenda Template and Organizing Roles

The power of the citizens' meeting is that it is not necessarily polished and professional. For the audience, the meeting is really "your friends and neighbors" participating in a community issue in a positive manner. It actually works in your favor if participants are visibly nervous. In this context, being nervous while speaking in front of the community and public officials shows that the participants are dedicated to the issue.

The meeting should be no more than 90 minutes from beginning to end. It absolutely must end on time. It may not be polished, but it must be tightly run. This agenda will help you make the most of the

Agenda Format

I. Welcome and Overview

- Statement of the problem/issue
 - Explain why should citizens organize around this issue
 - When citizens do not organize around an issue, the community usually loses and the special interests win. (organized money vs. organized people)
- Purpose of the meeting
 - To explain the issue from a citizen perspective and to give City Council a clear show of support for curbside recycling
 - Explain why have a citizen meeting rather than going through normal channels to show support to the Council
- Introduce the group – include credentials
 - Example of credentials: a group of community oriented citizens organized to show the city council support for Universal Curbside Recycling
 - If you have a Special Guest (for the research portion perhaps), introduce him/her at this time
- Go over ground rules & agenda

II. Youth Involvement

A skit, short video or song from the community's youth really sets a friendly tone for the rest of the meeting. It puts both the audience and the Public Officials at ease.



III. Research Presentation

The research presentation is an in-depth explanation of the issue. Why 'A' leads to 'Z'. If we don't do this, then 'X' will happen.

IV. Review Ground Rules (again)

V. Public Testimony – 15 mins

Control the time allotted each individual with a huge (but friendly) "TIME" sign. The "TIME" sign can be held up by a youth participant. Having a young person fulfill this role takes the edge off.

- Have two or three people from the group act as "ice-breakers" to start the testimony section
- Encourage clapping
- It's o.k. (and encouraged) if opposing views or concerns are talked about
- If someone takes over the microphone and will not yield, the tech crew should switch off the microphone. Part of the Emcee's role is to moderate if necessary.
- Finally, have a "closer" from the group sum up what was said. Include both positive and negative points – but end on a positive note.

VI. Public Officials Speak

Give each official at least 2 minutes to speak. Allow them to go over if meeting time permits.

VII. Acknowledgement from Public Officials

If politically possible, the Emcee should ask the officials directly if they will commit to passing curbside recycling. This gives them a forum to announce their opinions in front of the media.

VIII. Thank you & Summary

The Emcee thanks everyone and gives an inspiring summary of the meeting. Include the next steps.

Examples: "You showed up and it mattered"

"We got X agreement from the City Council"

"We learned ..."

"A show of hands - How many of you will (do the next steps i.e. come to the City Council vote)?"

Having music to close the meeting is a good cue for the audience.



Organizing Roles

The key to running a successful citizens' meeting is to share responsibilities in preparing for and running the meeting among your core community group. This also keeps your group members engaged in the process and committed to making the event a success.

Below are the key roles your group members can adopt. They can be performed as a committee of several people or just one person, depending on your group size.

Agenda Committee

- Sets agenda
- Finds suitable meeting location

Technical Committee

- Stage manager (optional)
- Lights
- PA system
- Presentation equipment and screen

Set-Up Committee

- Tables & chairs set up for the presentation, speakers, Public Officials and audience
- Refreshments table
- Media area (optional)
- Kids area (optional)

Signage Committee

- Create signage
 - Ground Rules
 - Group Name / Welcome Banner
 - Time Sign – to signal when time is up during the Public Testimony
 - Parking Signs
 - Directions to room
 - Program for attendees

Event Committee

- Emcee
 - Gives the "Welcome and Overview"
 - Introduces the speakers
 - Reviews the Ground Rules
 - Facilitates the Public Testimony portion
 - Invites the Public Officials to speak
 - Concludes the meeting



- Time Keeper (great role for youth)
 - Holds up "Time" sign during Public Testimony to indicate when the time allotted has completed
- Research presenters
- Public Testimony: Planted Speakers
 - Two or three "ice breakers" from the group to start the public testimony section of the meeting
 - Closer: Summarizes what has been said and ends the testimony on a positive note

Media Committee/Spokesperson

- Invites the media to the Citizens' Meeting
- Coordinates interviews between the media and group members
- Meets with newspaper editorial board(s) to seek a favorable editorial in the local newspaper(s).
- Meets members of the press during the event and connects them to group spokesperson.

Public Officials Contact Committee:

- Invites Public Officials to the meeting and gives regular reports to the group of the "status" of the Public Officials. It is vital to keep in contact with the Public Officials to:
 - monitor their feelings on the issue before and after the Citizens' Meeting
 - answer any questions about the group
 - answer any questions about the agenda
 - ensure they'll attend meeting

Research Committee

- Produces the presentation for the Citizens' Meeting based on research of the issue.
- Responsible for writing any informational documents going to the press or Public Officials.
- This is your group of writers.

Youth Involvement Committee (optional)

- Youth participation sets a friendly tone and engages the audience. Youth may do such things as perform a short skit, show a youth-created video or sing a song.
- Youth are also great candidates for the Time Keeper role.

Turnout Chair

- Responsible for keeping track of the expected number Citizens' Meeting attendees.
- Takes a tally at each previous group meeting (based on the number of one-to-one contacts who have committed to attending the Citizens' Meeting).
- Must be dependable and energetic.