

Are Council Meetings Getting Harder?

Tips for Making Them Go Smoothly

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 | Government | City Government | City Council | Council Meetings

Council Meetings



Panel Discussion



**Jan Perkins,
Moderator**

Vice President – Raftelis,
Former City Manager

jperkins@raftelis.com



**Mayor Bobbie
Singh-Allen**

City of Elk Grove

bsinghallen@elkgrovecity.org



**Mayor Caren Ray
Russom**

City of Arroyo
Grande

crayrussom@arroyogrande.org



**City Manager
Jason Behrmann**

City of Elk Grove

jbehrmann@elkgrove.gov

Tips: Preparation + Meeting Management



Mayor's Role



Council's Role



Staff's Role

The Mayor Provides Key Leadership

Before the Meeting

- Practice the basics of governance – respect roles (Mayor, Council, City Manager, staff)
- Foster a strong governance team with a collaborative mind set
- Discuss the agenda with the City Manager and any background important to the meeting – anticipate what may come up at the meeting
- Provide the City Manager with community “intel” about agenda items

During the Meeting

- Set the tone of civility, kindness and professionalism for all – treat everyone respectfully and expect the same from all
- Utilize protocols for running the meeting – stick to speaking times, stay within city government’s lane
- Guide deliberations; remind Council Members to stay on point and be efficient in their comments
- Take breaks if things get heated

Council Members Play a Part in How Effective a Meeting Will Be

Prior to the Meeting

- Respect roles (Mayor, Council, City Manager, staff) – have a collaborative mindset and stay in our lanes
- Read the materials – ask questions in advance, even if you will be asking in public setting
- Provide the City Manager with community “intel” about agenda items

In the Meeting

- Treat everyone with respect and kindness – colleagues, staff
- Be ready to make a decision, or alert the City Manager in advance that you have concerns or questions that cannot be answered quickly
- Keep your comments on point with the agenda item
- Stay within the city government’s lane

Professional Staff Get Things Started Right

Staff's Role

- Clear, thorough reports with recommendation(s), alternatives
- Anticipate questions
- Sufficient public review and input of complex issues
- Practice the presentation (dry runs)

City Manager's Role

- Orient new members of Council to their roles
- Carefully plan the agenda: don't overload, consider timing of agenda items (election cycle, Council attendance, etc.)
- Maintain a Council meeting advance planning calendar
- Answer Council questions prior to the meeting
- During the meeting, ask for clarifications of motions if needed



Questions and Comments from the Audience



Wrap Up

1

Set the Foundation

Collaborative mindset, clear roles, respect, professionalism

2

Anticipate

Questions, audience, issues

3

Plan and Prepare

Manage the agenda items, prepare a thorough staff report and presentation, ensure the public and Council have enough time to discuss the issue and ask questions

4

Manage Meetings in the Moment

Follow protocols, stay focused on the item and get to resolution



Lakewood city council meeting in session.

January 1, 2024 | Features | By Jan Perkins and Dan Keen

Essential tips for effective city council meetings

Jan Perkins, ICMA-CM, and Dan Keen, ICMA-CM, are local government consultants and former city managers. They can be reached at jperkins@raftchis.com or danielkeen@danielkeenconsulting.com.

If you're reading this, chances are that you've attended many city council meetings. Most were probably smooth, orderly, and otherwise unremarkable: Professional staff and elected officials



It is essential for elected officials to read the materials provided and come prepared for council meetings.

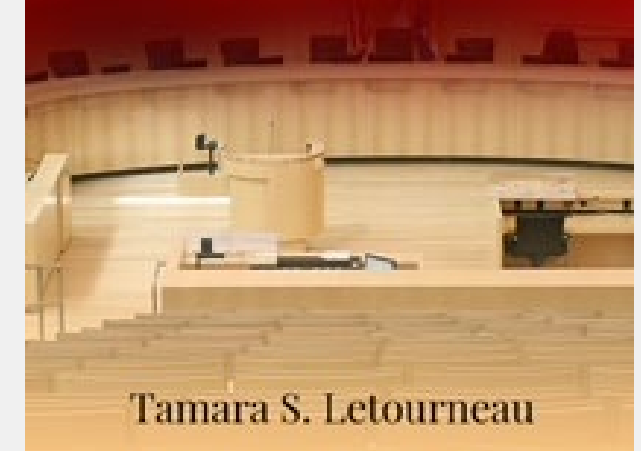
January 1, 2025 | Features | By Barbara Halliday and Jan Perkins

The golden rules for new council members

Barbara Halliday is a former council member, mayor, and planning commissioner for the city of Hayward. Barbara can be reached at hallidah1@sbcglobal.net. Jan Perkins

MASTERING THE ART

A Step by Step Guide to Writing a Quality Staff Report



Tamara S. Letourneau



Resources

Thank You!



- **Elk Grove Mayor Bobbie Singh-Allen**
- **Arroyo Grande Mayor Caren Ray Russom**
- **Elk Grove City Manager Jason Behrmann**
- **Moderator Jan Perkins, Vice President/Raftelis, Former City Manager**

