



When the Gavel Drops: Leading Productive and Respectful City Council Meetings

League of California Cities Annual Conference

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 2026

WELCOME



Melissa Kuehne
Director of Enterprise
Programs and Special Projects
Institute for Local Government

TODAY'S CONVERSATION



Basics of Open Meeting Laws



Strategies to Make Your Meetings More Productive



Why Relationships Matter



Available Resources

NON-PROFIT, NON-PARTISAN & COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING & IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- The Institute for Local Government is the non-profit training and education affiliate of the League of California Cities
- We were founded in 1955, 70 years ago, and our mission is to serve and support local government
- Our target population is the 2,500 cities, counties and special districts in California
- We provide practical and easy-to-use resources so local agencies can effectively implement policies on the ground



HELPING LOCAL GOV'T IMPLEMENT POLICY ON THE GROUND

Program Areas

Leadership &
Governance

Workforce
Development &
Civics Education

Public
Engagement

Sustainability



Services

Education &
Training

Technical
Assistance

Capacity
Building

Convening

Our mission is to help local government leaders
navigate complexity, increase capacity
& **build trust** in their communities

INSIGHTS FROM THE FIELD

The governance environment is getting harder.

Leaders are navigating:



More pressure and
scrutiny



More visible conflict
and incivility



Complex policy and
fiscal choices



Changing council
dynamics



Real impacts on staff
capacity, morale and
retention

The question is not whether governance dynamics matter. It is how intentionally we manage them.

TODAY'S SPEAKERS



Randi Johl

Director of Legislative Affairs/
City Clerk
City of Temecula



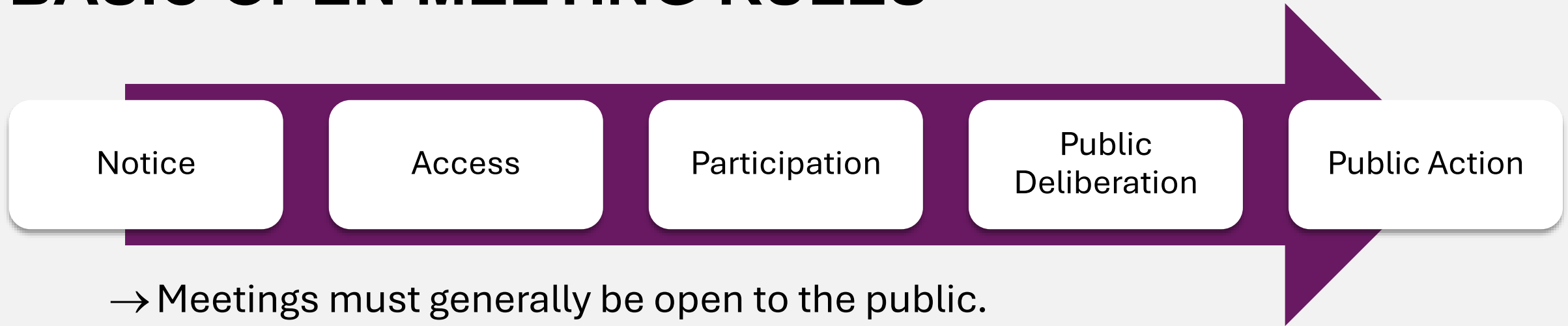
Erica Stewart

Mayor
City of San Luis Obispo

BASIC OPEN MEETING RULES



BASIC OPEN MEETING RULES



- Meetings must generally be open to the public.
- The agenda must be posted in advance.
- The public has a right to address the council.
- Councilmembers cannot use private communications to evade an open meeting.
- Meeting materials and council actions generally must be accessible to the public.

DISCUSSION:

Strategies to make your
meetings more productive



The Law is the Floor

Policies Set Boundaries

Consistency is Key

Keep a Pulse on Community

When Things go Sideways

Why Relationships Matter/Governing is a Team Sport



Audience Q&A

AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Temecula Public
Participation
Guidelines



SLO Civility
Guidelines



ILG Sample Codes
of Conduct &
Governance
Handbooks



ILG Customized
Trainings and
Workshops



STAY IN CONTACT



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THANK YOU!

