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Meeting Management: Tips for Efficient and Effective Public Meetings

League of California Cities 2020 Planning
Commissioners Academy

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Civic Engagement

- “When it comes to free speech and participation in the democratic process, our laws should reflect the goal of making it easier for more citizens to engage.”

- Arizona Governor Doug Ducey

What is the Role of the Planning Commission?

- Planning Commissioners and other public officials have a legal obligation to act in the best interest of the public.
- Adopt Commission Policies: Government Code Section 54954 provides, generally, that each legislative body of a local agency – including a planning commission – shall provide whatever rules or bylaws required for the conduct of business by that body.

Meeting Management

- **Open Meeting Laws – Rules are Important**
- **Theories of Public Engagement**
- **Meeting Efficiency**
- **Role of Staff**
- **Role of the Chair**

A “Right of Access...”

- “The people have the right of access to information concerning the conduct of the people's business, and, therefore, the meetings of public bodies and the writings of public officials and agencies shall be open to public scrutiny.”

California Constitution, Article 1 Section 3(b)

A Policy of Open Government

"In enacting this chapter, the Legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and councils and the other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and their deliberations be conducted openly."

- Government Code Section 54950

“Open and Public”

"All meetings of the legislative body of a local agency shall be open and public, and all persons shall be permitted to attend any meeting of the legislative body of a local agency, except as otherwise provided in this chapter."

- Government Code Section. 54953(a)

The Brown Act applies to “legislative bodies”

- **What is a “legislative body?”**
 - Governing body of the agency
 - Subordinate boards and commissions created by formal action of the governing body – **including planning commissions**
 - Standing committees with regular meeting schedule and continuing subject matter jurisdiction
- **What is not a “legislative body?”**
 - Advisory committees, composed solely of the members of the legislative body that are less than a quorum of the legislative body

Meetings

- **Elements:**

- congregation of a majority
- same time and place
- to hear, discuss or deliberate any item
- subject matter jurisdiction

Serial meetings are illegal

- **What is an illegal serial meeting?**
 - direct or indirect communication
 - employed by a majority
 - to develop a collective concurrence
 - as to action to be taken

Meeting Exceptions

- **When is a meeting not a “meeting?”**
 - individual contacts/briefings
 - conferences*
 - community meetings*
 - another body of the agency*
 - social or ceremonial events*
 - standing committee meetings

* Cannot be used as a pretext to violate the Brown Act

Rules Governing Meetings

- **Types of meetings**

- Regular
- Adjourned
- Special

Regular Meeting

- Agenda must be posted 72 hours in advance
- Brief description of items of business
- Posted agenda must be freely accessible to public
 - Ordinance governing location
 - Ordinance governing where to post

Special Meeting

- Called by presiding officer or majority of commission
- Notice must be posted 24 hours in advance
- Notice must be received by each member and press unless waived
- Consider only items on the agenda

Adjourned Meetings

- Regular or Special Meeting may be adjourned to specific time and place
- If no time stated, then meeting continued to the hour for regular meetings
- Less than a quorum or Secretary/Clerk may adjourn