Civic Agencies Training: Module No. 4

Meetings

CITY OF
VANCOUVER

Meeting Types

- **Regular meetings**
  - Resolutions may be passed;
  - Supported by administrative staff, who prepare and distribute an agenda, provide procedural advice, and record and distribute "decision-based" minutes;
  - Open to public observation; public may only participate with permission of the chair;
  - May be convened in-person, virtually, or as a hybrid of the two.

- **Special meetings**
  - Intended for urgent business only; must be requested by chair or a majority of members;
  - Resolutions may be passed;
  - Supported by administrative staff, who prepare and distribute an agenda, provide procedural advice, and record and distribute "decision-based" minutes;
  - Open to public observation; public may only participate with permission of the chair;
  - Are convened virtually.

CITY OF
VANCOUVER

- **Working sessions (type A civic agencies only)**
  - Informal meetings intended to provide space for receiving information or learning about matters related to the mandate;
  - Resolutions may not be passed;
  - Convened by administrative staff, but not supported otherwise;
  - Closed to the public, though public may be invited to participate;
  - Are convened virtually.

- **Subcommittee meetings**
  - Subcommittees may be established and convened informally at a civic agency's discretion, to address a specific topic or initiative, or conduct research or work referred by the broader civic agency;
  - Resolutions may not be passed;
  - Not supported by administrative staff;
  - Closed to the public, though public may be invited to participate;
  - Members are responsible for securing a venue or convening virtually or by telephone.

Meeting Procedures

- **Quorum**
  - The minimum number of members required to be present at a regular or special meeting to conduct business (usually a majority of appointed members).
  - Working sessions and subcommittee meetings have no quorum requirement.
  - Alternate members do not count toward quorum.

- **Call to order**
  - The chair begins the meeting at the scheduled start time, or when quorum is achieved.
  - If quorum is not achieved within 30 minutes of the scheduled start time, administrative staff takes attendance, records the result, and declares the meeting cancelled.

CITY OF
VANCOUVER

- **Discussion and debate**
  - The chair is responsible for the good conduct of the meeting and for facilitating all members' participation.
  - All members should share meeting time appropriately, make sure decisions are made fairly and all views are considered, and treat one another with respect and dignity.

- **Conflict of interest**
  - If a member wishes to declare a conflict of interest on an agenda item or decision, they should state the nature of the conflict, which will be recorded by administrative staff, and leave the meeting for the duration of that item.

- **Adjournment**
  - At the meeting's scheduled end time, the chair calls for a resolution to adjourn.
  - After the resolution is approved, administrative staff record the time, and the meeting ends. No more official resolutions may be made after this point.
  - Any remaining agenda items are considered unfinished business, and are moved to a future agenda.
  - Unlike City Council, civic agencies are generally not permitted to extend a meeting past the scheduled end time.

- **Meeting cancellation**
  - The Chair and administrative staff may cancel a meeting in advance if it is clear the meeting will not reach quorum.
  - If a member is unable to attend a meeting, it is important to inform the Chair and administrative staff, and request a leave of absence as early as possible.

Meeting Attendance

- **Absence policy**
  - Per the *Procedure By-law* (15.8), members are considered to have resigned their appointment if they are absent from three consecutive regular or special meetings without obtaining an approved leave of absence.
  - Some civic agencies may vary, so please refer to relevant terms of reference or by-laws.

- **Leave of absence**
  - If a member will be absent from a regular or special Meeting, they must submit a leave of absence request to administrative staff as far in advance as possible.
  - At the beginning of the meeting, the civic agency will decide whether to grant the leave of absence.
  - Alternate members are not required to obtain a leave of absence.

CITY OF
VANCOUVER

- **Medical leave**
  - Absence due to illness is considered an automatic leave, and does not need to be approved by the civic agency.
  - Members are still required to notify administrative staff in advance of the meeting.

- **Resignation**
  - Members or alternate members wishing to resign their appointment must submit their resignation in writing to the City Clerk, via administrative staff.

Meeting Agendas

- The agenda is a list of all items to be considered during a regular or special Meeting, including procedural and administrative items. It also indicates the order in which items will be considered.

- The agenda is made available to the public, and serves as notice that the meeting will take place.

- **Agenda preparation**
  - In consultation with liaisons and administrative staff, the chair finalizes agenda items approximately two weeks before the meeting. Members may contact the Chair in advance to request the inclusion of specific agenda items.
  - Items may include presentations, consultations, reports, recommendations, discussions, or updates.

- **Agenda distribution**
  - At least five days in advance, administrative staff upload the agenda to the City's website, and circulate links to the agenda and previous meeting minutes to all participants, along with meeting attendance information.
  - Supporting documents may also be included as attachments.

- **New business**
  - Following distribution of the agenda, any additional items may be brought forward under "new business," which takes place at the end of the agenda.
  - Matters that are not considered urgent may be postponed to the next meeting. Members may also choose to postpone items if it is felt that not enough information is available, or key members are not present.

Meeting Agendas (continued)

- **Order of business**
  - Approval of the agenda at the meeting is not necessary, but there may be a need to vary the order of the agenda during the meeting.
  - The *Procedure By-law* (3.4) states that the order of business may be changed by a two-thirds vote of members present (e.g., 11 out of 15 members present). The variation is noted in the minutes, which are then recorded chronologically.
  - If the civic agency is applying modified procedures, consensus on the agenda variation must be achieved (see Training Module No. 5 for more information on modified procedures).

- **Working Sessions and Subcommittees**
  - Members are responsible for producing and distributing agendas for working sessions and subcommittee meetings.
  - Civic agencies may include staff engagements in working session or subcommittee agendas, but these should be reported in the next regular meeting in order to be included in the official record.

- **Decision-based minutes**
  - Administrative staff produce "decision-based" minutes for regular and special meetings, meaning verbatim discussion is not recorded; if discussion details are needed for future reference, members are responsible for taking more detailed notes.
  - Each agenda item appears with a title, a brief description of what took place, and any resolutions (whether approved or not).

- **Distribution**
  - Within 3 business days of the meeting, administrative staff circulate any approved resolutions to the City Manager, City Clerk, liaisons, and relevant staff.
  - Within 2 weeks, minutes are posted on the City website and circulated to members, liaisons, and Mayor and Council.

- **Approval**
  - At the next regular meeting, members are asked to either approve or amend the minutes.
  - Amendments to the minutes are limited to corrections of factual errors or incomplete information only. They should not substantially alter the minutes, or stray from City minute-taking standards.
  - If you would like to amend the minutes, it is helpful to advise administrative staff before the meeting.

- **Working session or subcommittee notes**
  - Minutes or notes taken at working sessions or subcommittee meetings do not need to be approved, and are not posted on the City's website.

CITY OF
VANCOUVER

- Land Acknowledgements take place at the beginning of all civic agency meetings. This is an opportunity for civic agency participants to recognize that our work takes place on the unceded territories of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Skwxwú7mesh* (Squamish), and *səl̓ilwətaʔɬ / sel̓íl̓witulh* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.

- A Land Acknowledgment is not a routine matter, or a quick statement to be glossed over at the beginning of a meeting. Land Acknowledgements are connected to long-standing traditional gestures of respect, care, and recognition. They are a way to share gratitude and declare intentions, and also a reminder of the systemic racist and colonial practices that have harmed and continue to harm Indigenous Peoples.

- A Land Acknowledgement should be planned, thoughtful, and meaningful. If there are Indigenous People in attendance, they should not be asked to deliver a Land Acknowledgment, unless this has been requested or confirmed in advance.

CITY OF VANCOUVER

- It is important that Land Acknowledgements are sincere and spoken with respect. Keep it simple, and speak from the heart.

- For example: "As a settler on this land, I recognize that our work takes place on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Peoples. We thank them for having cared for the lands and waters that sustain us all, and we commit to working and thinking in ways that bring us into good relations with the Indigenous Peoples of this land. I invite everyone here to reflect on the ways that our work can contribute to the goals of Reconciliation and Decolonization."

Respectful Interactions

- Meetings are the main forum for civic agency activities, though members may interact with each other, with liaisons, or with staff through other means including email and telephone. In all interactions, the following should be kept in mind:

  - The *Code of Conduct By-law* (2.e) states: "A member must treat members of the public, one another, and staff respectfully, without abuse, bullying or intimidation and ensure that the work environment is free from discrimination and harassment."

  - Under the *BC Human Rights Code*, members are protected from discrimination and harassment based on one or more protected personal characteristics, such as race, colour, religious belief, gender, disability, or sexual orientation.

Equitable Meetings

- Below are some suggestions for ensuring equity and respect in civic agency meetings and other spaces:

  – Include your preferred pronouns when introducing yourself.

  – Be aware of your privileges and habits: if you tend to speak first and often, try to hold back and give other members a chance to speak.

  – Amplify voices by returning to someone who has been interrupted, or by asking to hear from someone who hasn't spoken (or alternately, solicit input before or after the meeting to avoid putting someone on the spot).

Equitable Civic Agencies (continued)

- Give your full attention to the speaker, avoid interrupting, and avoid presenting someone else's ideas as your own.

- If you find yourself in disagreement on an issue, assume good intentions, maintain a respectful atmosphere, and challenge the idea, not the person.

- When someone else is speaking, avoid microaggressions and negative body language such as head shaking or frowning.

- Warn members in advance if difficult or potentially traumatic issues will be discussed during the meeting.

1. What is the term for the minimum number of members required to be present to call a meeting to order?

A. Leave of absence

B. Minutes

C. Working session

D. Quorum

2. **According to the *Procedure By-law*, a member is considered to have resigned after how many consecutive, unapproved absences?**

A. 6

B. 2

C. 3

D. 10

3. In which 2 types of meeting may resolutions be passed?

A. Working sessions; subcommittee meetings

B. Regular meetings; special meetings

C. Subcommittee meetings; regular meetings

D. Special meetings; working sessions

Module No. 4 Quiz Answers

1. D

2. C

3. B

- Why do you think we use meeting procedures, even if they can make meetings feel overly formal or predetermined? What are some things that might happen if members do not share a common understanding of how meetings operate?

CITY OF
VANCOUVER

- What are some things you can do to ensure that all members of your civic agency feel safe and comfortable participating in meetings and other interactions? Can you think of any strategies for sharing differing opinions and/or disagreeing in a respectful and productive manner?

Module Complete