Meeting Management 101

Georgia Clerks Education Institute Agenda

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   - Importance of the Clerk
3. Meetings
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Course Overview

Meeting Management 101

Much of government’s progress is made through formal meetings, and Clerks play an instrumental role in their facilitation from advertising notices through record-keeping.

In this required course, Clerks will acquire in-depth knowledge and skills regarding the proper methodology for preparing agendas and minutes. This required course will lead a discussion on the different approaches used by clerks for preparing agendas and recording minutes for public meetings and hearings.

Learning Objectives

This course is designed that you will gain an understanding of:

• Key strategies necessary to master the efficient and effective methods of preparing agendas and minutes.
• Being able to record executive sessions & affidavits.
• Learning the facets of public & administrative hearings.

Class Guidelines

1. Be prepared to have fun!
2. Misteaks vs Perceptions
3. Enjoy being away from the office!
   - Please keep side conversations to a minimum.
   - Please let work, text, emails wait for breaks.
4. Share, share, share.
Role & Importance of the Clerk

- A clerk is a senior position in many governments.
- Particularly in the US, it is impossible to fully describe a clerk's duties, because there are literally hundreds of different job descriptions.
- The position has existed for centuries.
- The word clerk derived from Latin “clericus” meaning cleric or clergyman.
- Known as remembrancers.
- When the early colonists came to America, one of the first offices established was that of clerk.

Meetings

- What is a meeting?
  - In the basic definition, a meeting is a gathering of people to exchange information, present ideas, plan activities, make decisions or execute actions already agreed upon.
  - Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A. §50-14-1), which is our State Law, defines a meeting as “a quorum of the members of the governing body of an agency or any committee of its members created by such governing body, whether standing or special, pursuant to schedule, call or notice of or from such governing body or committee or an authorized member, at a designated time and place at which any public matter, official business, or policy of the agency is to be discussed or presented or at which official action is to be taken or, in the case of a committee, recommendation on any public matter, official business, or policy to the governing body are to be formulated, presented, or discussed”.

- Types of Meetings
  - Regular Meetings
    - “Official” where decisions are approved.
  - Work Sessions
    - Discussion and NO formal votes are taken; optional.
  - Special Called Meetings
    - Convened or called for a specific purpose and to take action.
  - Committee Meetings
    - Smaller group that discusses topics, often to make a recommendation to the governing body.
  - Executive Sessions
    - Private, closed to the public sessions held by limited purposes by law.
Meetings

• Meeting “Exceptions”
  1. Inspecting physical facilities or property.*
  3. Meeting with State or Federal officials.*
  4. Traveling to meetings/gatherings.
  5. Social, Civil, Ceremonial, or Religious Events.

Key- NO business relating to the entity is discussed*

Meetings

• Executive Sessions
  • The primary reasons why Council would lawfully hold a closed meeting are:
    1. to discuss pending or potential litigation with legal counsel and to discuss or vote on settlement;
    2. to discuss or vote on authorizing negotiations to purchase, dispose of, or lease property;
    3. to discuss or vote on the acquisition, disposition or lease of real estate by the governing entity;
    4. to discuss hiring, compensation, evaluation or disciplinary action for a specific public officer or employee;
    5. to interview an applicant to be an executive head of a department; and
    6. to discuss records that are exempt from disclosure.

Meetings

• Who participates in Commission meetings?
  1. ________________________
  2. ________________________
  3. ________________________
  4. ________________________
  5. ________________________
  6. ________________________
  7. ________________________
Meetings

• Why is it important to have structure to your meeting?
  • Citizens make decisions about the effectiveness of their governing body from the way in which public meetings are organized and handled:
    - meetings = good image
    - meetings = poor image
  • Organized meetings have a structure through which the Board of Commissioners review, discuss, debate and derive a decision.
  • It allows decisions to be made in a way that is fair and consistent to everyone involved.

Meetings

• Rules of Order
  ➢ Rules of order for public meetings should help manage the conduct of the council.
  ➢ Although it is suggested that every local government should adopt a set of procedural guidelines/rules to govern its meetings, there is no state law requiring adoption of a particular set of rules.

Meetings

• Rules of Order
  1. Review your local legislation to see how your entity should be governed.
  2. Confirm that your rules include three principles:
     1. They are providing a clear framework for the conduct of the meeting.
     2. They are clear and simple.
     3. They are user friendly so "non-government" individuals are able to participate in the process correctly.
  3. Consult your attorney and/or parliamentarian for clarity and concerns.
Meetings

**Rules of Order**

Tips
1. Review your association’s model ordinances and guide for parliamentary procedures for assistance.
   - Reference list is in the back of the book.
2. Keep a “cheat sheet” handy for the outline and ranking for the flow of parliamentary procedures.
   - Provided in the packet.
3. Consult your attorney and/or parliamentarian for clarity and concerns.

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Meeting Prep

**How do you prepare for meetings?**

**What components are needed for every meeting?**

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Meeting Components - Purpose

**Reason/Purpose**
- The intention for having the meetings.
- The information helps to create the agenda.

**Agenda**
- The outline of items to be considered.
- The meeting “road map.”
- Standard Rules of Procedures with stated time guidelines help provide structure and focus.
Meeting Components - Agendas

• Agenda Style (Popular)
  ➢ Title Only
    o Information presented in the format with only the issue listed.
  ➢ Descriptive/narrative
    o Information presented describes all detail. Format typically includes who, what, when, where and why.
  ➢ Annotated
    o Information is presented in an explanatory notes or comment format.
  ➢ Mixed
    o Information is presented with a combination of above styles.

Select the style that is best for your government.

Meeting Components - Agendas

• Agenda Order
  A sample agenda outline includes the following:
  1. Call to order/roll call/verify quorum.
  2. Invocation/Pledge of Allegiance.
  3. Approval of minutes from previous meeting.
  4. Approval of the order of the agenda.
  5. Public Hearings.
  6. Delegations/Citizen Comment Time.
  7. Reports.

Meeting Components - Agendas

• Agenda Order (continued)
  8. Old/unfinished business.
  10. Consent items.
  11. Tabled items/hold items.
  12. General Comments.
Meeting Components - Agendas

- Agenda Discussion
  Discussion of topics should be consistent and should follow the same format.
  1. Announcing the agenda item.
  2. Obtaining staff report or relevant information on the topic.
  3. Allowing Council to vet topic (if not done in Work Session or briefings).
  4. Soliciting Public Comment (if applicable).
  5. Calling for a motion and second.
  6. Restating the motion and requesting additional discussion.
  7. Receiving vote or other disposition on final motion.

Meeting Components - Agendas

- Keys to Preparing an Effective Agenda
  • Establish a time frame for agenda topics and materials to be presented.
  • Ensure that everyone knows who prepares and approves the agenda.
  • Make sure that everyone knows who can amend the agenda and when.
  • Select a format that best meets the needs of your organization.
    - Be cautious of the font, spacing, bolding; number multiple pages.
    - Be cautious of “lingo” and acronyms; one time reference is suggested.
    - Proofread.
  • Balance items on the agenda.
    - Be realistic with the number of topics on the agenda and not "overwhelm" the Commission and public with too many topics.

Meeting Components - Agendas

- Keys to Preparing an Effective Agenda (continued)
  • List key information:
    - Government name, type of meeting, meeting location and time.
  • Include an American with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement.
  • Distribute the agenda in advance and post as required by law.
  • Follow the agenda. You worked hard to create it.

Sample Agenda Review and Discussion
Meeting Components – Supplemental Info

• Supplemental Information:
  • Is provided to give further data, clarity or supplement to topics on the agenda.
  ▶ Handouts & Reports
  ▶ Presentations
  ▶ Videos

• Tips for using supplemental info:
  ▶ Minimize handouts.
  ▶ Proofread, even if provided from other sources.
  ▶ Test audio/video in advance.
  ▶ Have extra copies.
  ▶ Give all members of the governing body the same information at the same time, unless protocol or common sense dictates otherwise.

Meeting Components - Minutes

• Types of Minutes
  ✤ Action Only
  ✤ Summary
  ✤ Verbatim

Minutes should not be an exact recording of every detail that happened during the meeting. Minutes are meant to record basic information such as decisions made and action taken so that they can be referenced later as background information for future meetings related to the same topic.
Meeting Components - Minutes

• **Keys to Preparing Effective Minutes**
  
  ➢ **K.I.S.S. Rule - Keep it Super Simple**
    - Try to focus on simplicity and brevity.
  
  ➢ **Understand the procedure and motion precedence as they relate to the minutes.**
    - Record action items and decisions as they are discussed.
    - At the minimum, this should be included in the minutes:
      - Members present at the meeting.
      - Description of each motion or proposal made.
      - Record of who seconded each motion.
      - Result of the vote (who voted for and against each motion).
      - For minutes of emergency meetings that have less than 24 hours notice, the minutes must also state how notice was given and the reason for the meeting.

  ➢ **Suggested Format:**
    - List the government name, date and location of the meeting.
    - State the type of meeting being held.
      - Regular or Executive Session, Association or Committee meeting, etc.
    - The presence of a quorum.
    - Record the time any Board member arrives late or leaves early.
    - Remember a quorum is needed for action.
    - The time the meeting was called to order.
    - Action of meeting.
      - Reflection of agenda items.
    - Adjournment of meeting.

• **Have written policies, at the least, internal operating procedures to ensure that references in the minutes are consistently documented.**

• **Include information that supports the topic.**
  - Recommended to list facts and not opinions and beliefs (not applicable for verbatim and action only minutes).

• **Completion of minutes.**
  - Record & take notes during the meeting to recall items.
  - A summary of the meeting shall be available to the public for inspection within two business days of the adjournment of the meeting.

(O.C.G.A. 50-14-1(e)(2)).
Meeting Components - Minutes

- Keys to Preparing Effective Minutes
  - Proofread
    - Be sensitive to how items are phrased to prevent underlying political values or offend.
    - Write in the same tense throughout the document.
    - Number the pages (especially on drafts).
  - Distribution & Storage
    - Ensure point of contacts are aware of action items.
    - Official books.
    - Permanent/Electronic Retention.

Sample Minute Review and Discussion

Meeting Components - People

- Public participation is allowed by Georgia law for nearly all council meetings.
  - Governing bodies typically value citizen input; even though the law does not state that the public has to be allowed to speak.
  - Guidelines should be published and accessible to the public prior to the meeting so they can participate and be held to the standards of the council.

Meeting Components - Notice

- When should notice of meetings be given?
  - Governing boards and agencies are required to post information as to the time, place and dates of regular meetings.
    - See O.C.G.A 50-14-1 (d)
  - If the meeting is to be held at other places or times, the agency must provide 24 hours advance notice by:
    1. posting notification at the place at which regular meetings are held and
    2. by notifying the local legal organ (newspaper).
    - See the Sunshine Law for posting timeframes based on the legal organ's circulation time frame.
  - If an emergency meeting is held with less than 24 hours notification must be given to the legal organ and the notice must include the reason for holding the meeting.
Meeting Components - Notice

• When should notice of meetings be given?
  - The agenda must be made available as far in advance of the meeting as reasonably possible within the two week period immediately prior to the meeting, but is not required to be available more than two weeks prior to the meeting.
  - Notice of the time, place and dates of regular meetings must be made available to the general public and be posted in a conspicuous place at the regular meeting place of the entity and must be posted on the website, if the entity has one.
  - Email is the most effective, efficient and trackable means for notification.

Additional Information for Effective Meeting Management

The following are other helpful topics to assist you with having an effective meeting:

1. Telephone Meetings
   - Can be held for:
     • Emergency Meetings of the Board – for issues involving public safety or the preservation of property or public services are at risk.
     • Participation due to absence or health – individual commissioners may participate in a meeting due to health reasons; but cannot be utilized more than twice in one calendar year unless there is an emergency or doctor certification that the commissioner cannot attend the meetings.
     • Participation due to active military service – individual commissioners may participate via teleconference when on active duty (O.C.G.A. 38-2-279(g)).
   - Teleconferences are subject to the same requirements as other meetings and public access shall be provided in accordance with the Open Meetings Law.

2. Executive Sessions & Affidavits
   - A quorum must vote to close a meeting.
   - The regular minutes must state why the meeting was closed.
   - Minutes must state each issue discussed, but attorney-client discussions do not need to be recorded.
   - Minutes are subject to an in-camera inspection by the court if a dispute arises pertaining to the executive session.
   - Only discussion pertaining to the stated reason that the meeting was closed can be held.
   - The presiding officer must execute an affidavit, under oath, and file it with the official minutes that discussion was devoted to matters stated for closing the meeting. (See packet for sample affidavit)
Additional Information for Effective Meeting Management

3. Public Hearings
   - Can be separate meeting or incorporated in a meeting.
   - Presiding Official will use the following format to:
     - Announce the topic.
     - Obtain information from staff.
     - Allow Commissioners to obtain clarification on topic.
     - Open the hearing for public input.
   - After public comment, close the hearing; with additional comments provided only by the Commission unless the governing body waives this rule by majority vote.
   - Obtain motion for vote and follow procedure as in a standard meeting.

4. Electronic Management
   - Preparation
   - Records Management

5. Penalties
   - Any person that knowingly and willfully violates the open meetings act shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be fined up to $1000. (O.C.G.A.50-14-6)
   - Alternatively, a civil penalty may be imposed by the court in any civil action... against any person who negligently violates the terms of this chapter in an amount not to exceed $1,000 for the first violation. A civil penalty of not more than $1,000 may be imposed for each additional violation that contains within a 12 month period from the date that the first penalty or fine was imposed.

6. Follow up

Key Resources

- Citizens
- Clerks
Objective Review

You have successfully completed Meeting Management 101, did you gain an understanding of:

• Key strategies necessary to master the efficient and effective methods of preparing agendas and minutes?
• Being able to record executive sessions & affidavits?
• The facets of public & administrative hearings?
• Other objectives and ideas?

Thank you for participating!

This information was brought to you by a partnership with CVIOG:

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