



Best Practices For Local Public Committees in New Hampshire

Following the Law*

In accordance with New Hampshire law (RSA 91-A) governing the conduct of public governmental meetings, the following are required:

- The public must be given notice in advance of a meeting.
- With limited exceptions, which are clearly stated in RSA 91-A, the public must be allowed to attend meetings.
- Minutes must be available to the public within five business days.
- Public documents (except those exempted by law) must be available to the public.

* See the League of Women Voters' "Quick Guide to New Hampshire's Right-to-Know Law: NH RSA 91-A."

Promoting Democracy

To promote the sound practice of democracy, the League of Women Voters encourages all public committees to:

- Appoint or elect a committee chair and a secretary to take minutes
- Post notice of a meeting, with an agenda, preferably three days or more in advance of the meeting.
- Take minutes of the meeting.
- Within five business days of the meeting, make minutes available at the appropriate town or SAU office and on the website if possible.

Encouraging Citizen Participation

- Consider holding meetings at different times, days and locations to encourage a wider range of participation.
- Use as many methods as possible for distributing information: newspapers, newsletters, local radio, public access television, word-of-mouth, websites, etc.
- Distribute information through existing networks: schools, employers, town, business organizations, etc.
- Provide information to the public that is accurate, timely, readable, clear and reflects differing opinions.
- Do not use public funds to advocate a position or to tell voters how to vote.

Best Practices for Planning and Running a Meeting

BEFORE the meeting:

1. Provide notice of the meeting. Postings should be in three locations around the town, and on the respective town or SAU website. Also give notice of major board and committee meetings in a newspaper of general circulation.
2. Prepare an agenda and send it well in advance to committee members, as well as posting it.
3. Distribute materials to be discussed as far in advance as possible.

AT THE BEGINNING of the meeting:

1. Start on time.
2. Circulate an attendance sheet and, if feasible, have members and the public introduce themselves.
3. Review, revise and order the agenda as needed.
4. Set clear time limits if appropriate.

DURING the meeting:

1. Take minutes, making sure they include names of people who participate, a brief description of the subjects discussed, all motions, all votes and all decisions.
2. Make sure each member knows what tasks are to be completed, and by what date.
3. Set the date for a follow-up meeting, if this is needed.
4. Close the meeting on time.

AFTER the meeting:

1. Record minutes and make them available for public inspection within five business days, even if the committee has not approved them. Post them on the website if possible.

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