

The Role of the Committee Chair



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Accepting Files



- Central to the “The Chair” process
- A scalpel as well as a hammer
 - Expected to be a consultative process

Setting Agendas



- The committee chair determines when to schedule a file and works with staff to set the agenda.
 - ✦ Collaborate – Can be compelled
 - ✦ Standard pieces for each agenda
- The committee chair determines who should be notified of the hearing on a matter.
- Staff handles notices and referrals to departments for reports.

Running the Meeting -- I



- The chair calls the committee to order.
- The chair announces the name of the committee as well as the date and time and introduces the members and key staff.
- The chair reads the title of each item on the agenda and asks if there is any discussion. The agenda may have items scheduled for specific times. Under the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law, items may not be taken up before their scheduled time.

Running the Meeting -- II



- The Chair recognizes persons to speak on items and maintains decorum. Speakers should be directed to use the microphones if applicable and address their remarks to the chair.
 - ✦ Generally the sponsor of a matter is recognized first.
 - ✦ Key staff is often then consulted.
 - ✦ Members of the public generally speak next.
 - ✦ ***The Wisconsin Open Meetings Law does not grant a right to any individual to participate in a meeting, only to be present and observe.*** The Chair or a committee may decide to limit or exclude testimony on some items.
 - ✦ Committee members may ask to be recognized by the chair for purpose of asking a question of any speaker.

Running the Meeting -- III



- ✦ After all persons have addressed the committee, the chair announces that the matter is “in committee” at which point discussion is generally limited to the committee members. However, the chair may allow further comment by other persons when they may have information to assist the committee in its deliberation.
- ✦ The Chair recognizes members for purposes of debate and making any motions.
- ✦
- ✦ The Chair announces the results of any votes (e.g., “The motion is approved” or “The motion fails”).

Running the Meeting - IV



- The chair may make procedural comments and ask questions of witnesses or other committee members without relinquishing the chair. If the chair wishes to make substantive comments on a matter, he or she should relinquish the gavel to the vice-chair and only retake it when the pending question has been disposed of.
- Staff takes the minutes of all actions taken by the committee and assists the chair by providing information on files and advising on questions of procedure.

Running the Meeting -- V



- Committees may go into closed session on certain items specified in the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law if proper notice has been given beforehand.
 - ✦ To go into closed session, the chair must announce the committee's intention to go into closed session, the purpose of the closed session and the specific statutory authority for going into closed session. A roll call must then be taken on a motion to go into closed session.
 - ✦ During closed session, only members of the committee, other council members, and staff necessary for the conduct of the session are permitted to be present. The decision as to who should be present or not is in the discretion of the chair subject to review by the committee.
 - ✦ At the end of the deliberations in closed session, the chair entertains a motion to either return to open session or to adjourn.

Running the Meeting -- VI



- When all items on the agenda have been acted on, the chair adjourns the meeting. Under the Wisconsin Open Meetings Law, no item may be discussed or acted on unless it had been properly noticed as part of the agenda for that meeting.

After the Meeting



- Chairs present their reports at Common Council meetings
- They are often asked questions about items before their committees – especially when the items are not sponsored by a fellow council member

Questions?

