

## **Managing for Appropriate Communication in Meetings**

The City of Madison accomplishes its work through a myriad of formal and informal meetings. From time to time issues around appropriate communication arises in those meetings. The following outlines suggested language for structuring and communicating regarding expected behaviors in meetings and suggestions for addressing issues as they arise. As a starting point, it is expected that all meetings will have a designated chair or convener of the meeting. It is their responsibility to ensure that the meeting is run in an orderly and civil manner for all participants. There are some variations in how this is accomplished depending on whether the meeting is a formal City meeting or a neighborhood or informal meeting.

### **Committee Meeting run by the Chair**

At a formal committee meeting, the person running the meeting would be the chair unless they designate another member to be the Sargent at Arms. At the beginning of the meeting, the chair should review communication guidelines for the meeting for everyone present. It may be necessary to review those guidelines several times during the meeting if new participants enter. For example:

*“You have before you the agenda for this meeting of the XXXX committee. The agenda outlines the discussion and work that the designated committee members will take up at this meeting. We will run a civil and orderly meeting. As a publicly noticed open meeting we have set aside time for public comment. Interested individuals who are not on the committee have the opportunity to speak for up to 3 minutes on issues pertinent to the agenda or work of this committee. As we move into committee discussion or agenda items, only committee members and staff will participate in discussion of agenda items. It is inappropriate for members of the public to interrupt the committee discussion, or to speak from the gallery on these agenda items. Anyone who inappropriately disrupts the meeting will be asked to stop. Anyone who persists in attempts to disrupt the meeting will be asked to leave. Thank you for your cooperation.*”

### **Other Instructions**

Any committee member at any time can address the chair and call for point of order. They can ask the chair to direct an off topic or disruptive party to restrict their comments to the matters at hand, stop the meeting, address inappropriate behavior, (The chair has the authority to ask someone to leave a city meeting and facility) or be removed if they persist in their disruption.

If a member of the public or a committee member is making disparaging, inaccurate remarks or personally attacking staff, Committee members can ask staff if they want to respond, or staff can address the Committee chair and ask to respond to those statements. This should be used judiciously and comments should be kept to clarification of information that may impact committee decision making.

### **Neighborhood or Informal Meeting**

All Neighborhood and informal meetings also need a designated person that is in charge of facilitating the meeting. The person in charge may be an alder, a paid facilitator, or a staff or community person. If the meeting is being held at an outside location, there should be a person present who is in charge of the facility and has the authority to ask someone to leave the premises.

Opening comments should address expectations for communication within the meeting. For example:

*“You have before you the agenda for this meeting. The agenda outlines the discussion and work that we hope to accomplish at this meeting. We will run an orderly and civil meeting. Please allow the presenters to present their information without interruption. We will allow time for questions and comments after xxx (each presenter, or when presentations are finished). Anyone who inappropriately disrupts the presenters will be asked to stop. Anyone who persists in disrupting the presenters or the meeting will be asked to leave. Thank you for your cooperation.*

*We will allow xx minutes for questions and comments. Please keep your questions brief and focused on the agenda items. Please raise your hand if you have a question and XXX (person running the meeting) will call on you.*

### **Other Instructions**

A presenter that is the focus of interruptive or disruptive behavior can inform the chair that they are unable to continue their presentation due to the interruptions. They can ask the chair to direct an off topic or disruptive party to restrict their comments to the matters at hand, stop the meeting, address inappropriate behavior, (The chair has the authority to ask someone to leave a city meeting and facility) or be removed if they persist in their disruption.

The person facilitating the Q and A/ Comments section of the meeting should do their best to facilitate in a way that allows a diversity of viewpoints and broad spectrum of residents to ask question or provide comments.

A facilitator at the beginning of the meeting should state any timeline restrictions that are in play. *“We must end this meeting by 9:00 and we want to make sure we get through the agenda and allow time for questions, so we will be cutting off Q and A at xx time. If you are not able to get your question answered or comment spoken you can direct these via email or phone to XXXXXXXXX.”*

### **Concerns for Safety**

If participants, committee members or staff are feeling that their safety may be threatened, they are encouraged to request a conversation with MPD to potentially have an officer at the meeting. If issues arise within a meeting, i.e. a person is asked to leave and refuses, the site representative should state that they are no longer welcome in the meeting, and MPD can be called to escort them from the building.