

TEN THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT RUNNING A PUBLIC MEETING ON A CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC

1. **IDENTIFY** CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS EARLY AND PLAN AHEAD
 - Usually These Topics Are Foreseeable
2. **WHAT ARE THE VIEWPOINTS** THAT THE PORT COMMISSION WILL HAVE TO CONSIDER?
 - Very Important Step
3. **MAKE A PLAN**
 - Allow All The Time Needed For Public Comment
 - Build In Breaks
 - Decide How Many Meetings Before A Decision Will Be Made
 - Decide Who And How Will The Port Explain The Process To The Public
4. **GET A ROOM** – A LARGE ENOUGH ROOM
 - Too Small A Room Leads To High Emotional Energy
 - Use A Port Public Meeting Space
 - Create Some Distance And Elevate
 - Consider Using A City Or County Council Meeting Room (Execute An Interlocal Agreement Ahead Of Time)
 - Have A Podium For Speakers
5. **AT THE FIRST MEETING** AND EACH MEETING WHERE THE TOPIC IS DISCUSSED **ACKNOWLEDGE THE CONTROVERSIAL TOPIC AT THE START OF THE MEETING**
 - Commission President Or Staff Presents The Topic And Summarizes The Competing Viewpoints
 - Commission President Invites Public Comment
 - Commission President Announces When Public Comment Will Be Accepted – Hopefully The Beginning Of The Meeting
 - Commission President Announces The Timeline
6. **AT THE FIRST MEETING** – AFTER OPENING ROLL CALL AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES - SET THE GROUND RULES FOR PUBLIC COMMENT
 - Tell The Audience About Public Comment – Not A Debate With Commission
 - “It Is Our Opportunity To Hear From You”
 - All Speakers Must Be Polite And Respectful Of Various Viewpoints
 - “In The Best Tradition Of Your County/City”
 - Prohibit Ad Hominem (Personal) Attacks

7. **ALLOW ALL THE PUBLIC COMMENT** THAT IS THERE
 - If There Is A Lot Of Speakers Set A Time Limit Per Speaker But Not An Overall Time Limit
 - Alter The Normal Agenda Order To Take Public Comment First
 - Minimize Use Of Speaker Sheets – Just Ask Each Speaker To Identify Themselves For Record
 - Invite Written Comments
 - Thank Each Speaker

8. **DO NOT ENGAGE** – DO NOT ASK QUESTIONS – DO NOT DISAGREE – DO NOT SEND NON-VERBAL SIGNALS
 - Remind A Speaker To Be Polite – Enforce The Community Standard
 - But Always Be Respectful

9. **IF THE MEETING GETS TOO HEATED** – TAKE A BREAK
 - Better To Have Breaks Scheduled

10. **MAKING THE DECISION**
 - Acknowledge The Competing Viewpoints
 - Thank Everyone For Input
 - Actually Debate The Issue
 - Talk About The Port's Mission
 - Vote And Then Take A Break

**AND ALWAYS REMEMBER TO KEEP THE TOPIC IN PERSPECTIVE
“HOW MANY PEOPLE LIVE IN YOUR DISTRICT?”**

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