

Townhall #3

Guiding Community Councils: Leading Diverse Stakeholders with Vision Q&A Takeaways - November 2024

- **Where do we start?** You just were elected (or voluntold) to your Council board.
 - What are some basic resources that are out there for Council Boards?
 - Check out the handouts! [Participating in CCs](#) has a bunch of resources for Council Boards such as:
 - Reading your Council's by-laws
 - Check out your neighborhood's District/Neighborhood Plan and the 2040 Land Use Plan
 - Sign up for alerts/agendas from Boards & Commissions and the Assembly
 - Create a one-stop shop of resources for your neighborhood.
 - Check out [Rabbit Creek Community Council's Sample](#)
 - Make this resource available for your Council membership.
 - Question from the audience - Opening a meeting – land acknowledgement, pledge of allegiance, other openings. How do you handle them? What is the balance?
 - Every council will be unique in this space.
 - Work with your Council Board and discuss what makes sense for your Council. Or bring it to the General Membership.
 - Whatever you choose to do, do it with intention.
 - Set group agreements so everyone has a clear understanding of expectations when they come to the space. This will set the tone and culture for your meetings.
- **Outreach** – Lots of councils wish they had more attendance. They want their council's resolutions to be heard and to be an accurate representation of their neighborhood.
 - Question from the audience - We are trying to grow our council membership, what strategies have been helpful in your councils?
 - Set a purpose and intention for your meetings. Then use that purpose to figure out what kind of outreach would work best for your Council.
 - Make sure your meetings are FUN! Include relationship and community building into your meetings so people build meaningful connections and want to engage month after month.
 - Some types of outreach that Councils have tried:
 - Email Members
 - Physical Mailers & Flyers
 - Door to Door/ Bring a Friend
 - Signs at main neighborhood roadways or gathering spaces

- Outreach to local organizations that may be interested in a specific topic and can bring neighbors.
 - Work with local businesses and schools to put up signs
 - Facebook / Nextdoor
 - Create a neighborhood event – block party, potluck, clean up event – and get out of your usual meeting place
 - Build an agenda around a specific topic (schools, public safety, library, transportation, etc.) and invite local experts for community engagement. Publicize and market around the topic to drive new interest.
- Question from the audience - Community Councils seem to be made for long term residents who are entrenched in the community. Is there a place for more transient residents, such as military members who may only be here for a few years, at Community Council meetings? How do you view their role in the process?
 - Holding meetings on zoom help those with accessibility issues or parents join the meeting.
 - Make your meetings easily understood by explaining acronyms and names that are often shorthand for the more experienced member.
 - Intentionally welcome and create space for newcomers.
 - Question from the audience – How can councils collaborate?
 - Check out the FCC!
 - Work together on candidate/issue forums.
 - Think about fun events for collaboration opportunities.
 - Use committees that exist across multiple councils to be a space for collaboration.
 - Visit other councils and hear from them on their interests.
 - Meet as an Assembly District or a Representative District.
 - **Leading the general membership meeting** – it’s hard to be chair. Different opinions, that often are conflicting. And it can be very personal for people because it is their home, children, business at stake.
 - Question from the audience - How do you form goals/action items as a community council? I often times feel as though we have presenters but we are not working towards a shared goal.
 - Brainstorm with the membership
 - Example: Get butcher block paper and have small groups work together. No bad ideas!
 - Refer back to long-term goals in Neighborhood/District plans as a guide.
 - Listen to outgoing Board members about their goals that were unfinished when they stepped down.
 - Establish committees around topics people are interested in, that can report to the larger group. Committee leaders do not need to be

Board members, which is a great way to grow leaders that may join the Board in the future.

- Some examples of existing committees
 - Parks & Trails
 - Land Use, or Land Use & Transportation
 - Public Safety
 - Housing & Homelessness
 - Beautification/Neighborhood Projects
 - Resilience
 - Transportation (AMATS)
 - Outreach
- Look to your Neighborhood/District plan as a living document with guidelines around land use, trails, transportation, etc. for your area, a vision to work toward, and points of interest.
- CIP Lists – Capital Improvement Projects
 - Every year the Community Councils are surveyed on what are their most important Capital Improvement Projects (CIP).
 - Representatives at the Muni & State level use CIP priorities to establish priorities and opportunities for funding.
 - Work with your State Representative to affirm Council priorities and provide information for CAPSIS.
 - CAPSIS (Capital Project Submission and Information System) is the online system that allows communities to submit project requests to their legislators in Alaska. The system also allows legislative offices to input their capital project priorities.
 - State and Municipal Departments also use the lists to help prioritize their projects and improvements for upcoming years.
- How do you handle someone monopolizing the conversation? How do you determine when the conversation needs to be taken offline? When it is productive, even if it's running long.
 - Don't be afraid to move things to committee or offline.
 - Ask presenters or representatives to share contact information for people to use to follow up afterwards.
 - Make your agenda realistic. Don't pack it too full of high value topics.
 - If you are unsure what to pick, go back to your Councils goals and use those to decide what topics are priority.
 - Sometimes time limits are key.
 - The Chair's role is to lead the meeting and make those tough decisions.
 - Develop the skill to recognize when the conversation is valuable and is worth going off-agenda.

- Support your Chair in their process to be consistent and fair.
- Use the group agreements/culture to hold respect and space for everyone, as appropriate.
- Think about how much of your agenda is taken up by updates and how much is community input on both reactive (time-sensitive) and proactive/visionary issues. That balance will be different for every council and likely at every meeting but examine whether the current system works well for your Council.
 - For example: An “information” item may just take 5 minutes, while a “discussion” or “decision” topic (when there is a vote) may take 20-30 minutes.
 - Create an agenda with timeframes in mind, so you can move things along accordingly.
- Whatever you choose, be consistent and do it with intention.