

Information for Chairs of District Advisory Committees

Effective Leadership

- The chair or co-chairs must ensure that meetings are orderly.
- Become familiar with basic parliamentary procedure (see separate section below), the committee's bylaws or charter, and the district's Communications and Visitors Guidelines (https://www.austinsd.org/sites/default/files/dept/advisory-bodies/docs/Communications-Visitor-Guidelines_20180122.pdf), and ensure that all of these are followed.
- Establish an expectation for timeliness – consistently start and end meetings on time.
- Monitor the amount of time given to each agenda item, or appoint a timekeeper.
- Prior to discussion, inform members that the time given to them to speak may be limited to allow others an opportunity to speak.
- If the time being spent on an item becomes overly long and you need to move on in the agenda, inform members that discussion will need to conclude and you will only be able to take a few more comments.
- Do not allow discussion of items not posted on the meeting agenda (see separate section below).
- If a member departs from the agenda, makes comments not related to the subject at hand, interrupts another speaker, or becomes abusive, rule the member out of order.
- The presiding officer must treat ex officio members and staff members who may be present with the same expectations for order.
- If there are co-chairs (which is often the case), assign one co-chair to preside over each item on the agenda – this prevents any confusion over which co-chair recognizes a member to speak or which co-chair may need to make other efforts to keep order – it also allows the non-presiding co-chair to more freely participate in the discussion without undermining the impartiality and objectivity a presiding co-chair should demonstrate.
- The chair or co-chairs are certainly allowed to vote and take part in discussions, but as indicated in the above point, the person presiding should be primarily ensuring order and facilitating equal opportunities for members to speak, and should strive to demonstrate impartiality and objectivity – but this is not to say that the person presiding can never express an opinion, so long as that opinion is not presented with any impression of carrying more weight than any other member's opinion.

Basic Parliamentary Procedure

- “Robert’s Rules of Order” is a widely accepted reference for parliamentary procedure, but this is a very large set of rules and only a few basic rules should be necessary for district advisory committees.
- The preferred method of decision-making for district advisory bodies is consensus approval – the presiding officer simply asks if anyone objects to approving something or moving forward with something – if there is no objection, then consensus is reached, but if any member objects, then a majority vote is necessary.
- But before there is a vote, a member must make a motion, and the motion must be seconded by another member (this does not necessarily indicate agreement with the motion, only that the motion warrants consideration).
- After the motion is seconded, the presiding officer asks if there is any discussion – the presiding officer recognizes members who wish to speak.
- If there is no discussion, or after discussion concludes, then the presiding officer will call for a vote.

- If a member feels that discussion is going on too long or is not necessary, a motion may be made to “call the question,” or to end the discussion immediately and take a vote – for this particular motion, a 2/3 vote is required rather than a majority.
- A member may move to amend a motion that is already on the floor – amendments may be in the form of changing the existing motion or making a substitute motion.
- Once seconded, an amended motion is also subject to discussion and vote – voting is in inverse order, such that amended motions are voted on first, then the original motion.
- A member may move to “table” discussion, to either consider the matter later in the meeting or at a later date (usually to move on to other items on the agenda).
- A member may move to “postpone indefinitely” the discussion, which means the matter cannot be reintroduced at that meeting, but may be taken up at a later date (this is often done in hopes of killing a motion).
- If a motion has several parts, a member may move to divide the motion to vote differently on the parts.
- If a member feels that something is not germane to the matter at hand or that something is being done incorrectly, a “point of order” may be raised to be addressed by the presiding officer.

Meeting Agendas

- Agenda headers must include the name of the committee, meeting date, meeting location, and start time. Somewhere on the agenda should be contact information, should people have any questions.
- Agendas serve to inform the public of exactly what will be covered at a meeting. Therefore, agendas must not contain any generic items, such as “Old Business,” “New Business,” or “Items from Members” unless there are bullets under these items or footnotes to explain what will be covered. There are no “open forums” at a meeting – only items specified on the agenda may be discussed.
- For committees with co-chairs, each item on the agenda should have a specific co-chair designated as the presiding co-chair.
- Agendas must be posted at least 72 hours in advance of a meeting (which may include weekends and holidays). If an agenda is posted prior to 72 hours, the agenda can be revised and reposted. But after 72 hours, a posted agenda cannot be revised.
- Paper agendas must be posted in a place that can be viewed by the public at all hours. The district headquarters has a designated place for postings. For a campus, this would usually be on a glass-paneled main door, facing out. In addition to the mandatory paper posting, agendas for district-level committees must also be placed on their websites. For Campus Advisory Councils, online postings are encouraged.

Meeting Minutes

- Minutes must be prepared for all regular meetings.
- Minutes must include the start and adjourn times, and date and location of the meeting.
- Minutes must also include a record of attendance, for members as well as visitors.
- Minutes do not have to be an exhaustive account of a meeting. Minutes are intended to provide a summary of the proceedings. But any votes or formal actions of the committee must be included in the minutes.
- Minutes must be approved by a majority of the committee. For district-level committees with executive committees, approval of minutes can be delegated to the executive committees.