



How to Run Effective Council and Committee Meetings

Photo location: Bay Bulls



Legislative Framework

Key Points:

- The *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* governs council and committee meetings.
- Sections 38–48 outline meeting requirements, transparency rules, and committee structures.
- Councils must follow legislated procedures and adopt local rules of procedure.



Regular and Special Meetings (Sections 38 & 39)

Key Points

- Regular meetings must occur at least monthly.
- Date, time, and location approved annually by resolution.
- Special meetings may be called by the Town Clerk at the request of:
 - The Mayor, or
 - Written request of two councillors.
- Minimum 24 hours notice required.
- Only business listed in the notice may be discussed unless all members agree otherwise.



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Open Meetings (Section 40)

Key Points

- All council and committee meetings must be open to the public.
- Transparency is required by legislation.
- Public access strengthens accountability and trust.



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Closed Meetings (Section 41)

Key Points

- Meetings may close only for the 10 legislated reasons.
- Public must not be present during closed discussions.
- Only limited resolutions/by-laws may be adopted.
- Records are restricted as defined in legislation.
- Decisions must be ratified at a public meeting.



Rules of Procedure (Section 46)

Key Points

- Council must adopt formal rules of procedure.
- Rules guide debate, motions, and decision-making.
- Ensures fairness, consistency, and efficiency.



Committees (Sections 47 & 48)

Key Points

- Standing or special committees require at least two councillors.
- Council establishes mandates and procedures.
- Advisory committees may include residents or experts.
- Council defines scope, functions, and guidelines.



Best Practice: Clear Mandates

Key Points

- Every committee should have a written mandate.
- Define purpose, scope, and authority.
- Establish objectives and timelines.
- Communicate expectations publicly.



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Best Practice: Transparency & Accountability

Key Points

- Publish agendas and minutes.
- Keep meetings open whenever possible.
- Document recommendations clearly.
- Report outcomes to full council.



Best Practice: Expertise & Communication

Key Points

- Include diverse skills and perspectives.
- Invite experts when necessary.
- Provide regular updates to council.
- Maintain communication with stakeholders.



Training and Evaluation

Key Points

- Orient new committee members.
- Provide ongoing governance training.
- Periodically evaluate committee effectiveness.
- Adjust mandates or structures when needed.



Liabilities: Legal Responsibilities

Key Points

- Duty of care: act in municipality's best interests.
- Avoid negligence through informed decisions.
- Disclose conflicts of interest.
- Follow legislation and municipal policies.



Liabilities: Ethical Responsibilities

Key Points

- Maintain integrity and impartiality.
- Avoid undue influence or personal gain.
- Protect confidentiality when required.
- Maintain public trust through ethical conduct.



Indemnification & Risk Reduction

Key Points

- Municipalities often indemnify members acting in good faith.
- Transparency reduces legal risk.
- Proper documentation protects decisions.



Effective Committee Meetings

Key Points

- Distribute agendas in advance.
- Members review materials beforehand.
- Encourage structured discussion.
- Base recommendations on evidence.



Public Participation

Key Points

- Use public forums or comment periods where appropriate.
- Ensure participation opportunities are inclusive.
- Public input improves decisions.



Role of the Chair

Key Points

- Guide discussion and maintain order.
- Ensure equal opportunity to speak.
- Keep meetings focused and on schedule.
- Rule on procedural matters when required.



Conflict Resolution

Key Points

- Encourage respectful disagreement.
- Resolve issues through discussion.
- Refer unresolved matters to full council if needed.



Key Takeaways

- Follow legislative requirements.
- Use clear procedures and mandates.
- Promote transparency and accountability.
- Support ethical decision-making.
- Strong committees strengthen local governance.