



# Maximizing Your Meeting's Potential

Welcome!

Instructed by  
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## Open Meetings...

- Are announced in public postings.
- Are held in locations available to general public.
- Allow public to address the board/commission.
- Are places of deliberation and decision making.



**There is a "spirit" of the law, just as much as there is a legal requirement**



- Call the meeting to order
- Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
- Public hearings
- Business items
- Committee reports (standing or special committees)
- Adjournment





## Agenda Basics

### Role of chair is to:



- Maintain Order**
- Enforce Procedures**
- Apply Rules**
- Ensure Courtesy**
- Ensure Respect**



## Tips for Orderly Meetings

- Print public participation rules on the back of agendas.
- Do not attempt to answer all questions.
- Take a recess.
- Do not force decisions.
- Represent all interests of community.
- Limit speaking time.
- Limit number of time one person may speak.
- Ask for spokespersons.



## Public Hearing Process

1. Opening of public hearing and announcement of subject.
2. Summary of procedures/rules and explanation of question-answer format.
3. Presentation of main points of application & recommendation.
4. Recognition of applicant and persons in support.
5. Recognition of applicant and persons opposing.
6. Applicant response.
7. Public hearing closes, explanation of next steps, decision clarification.
8. Deliberation and decision.



## Fact Finding and Discussion

**Facts: important information pertaining to decision**



**Discussion: review of facts from all information presented and to seek a majority viewpoint**

- State conclusion
- Rationale for conclusion indicating facts
- Must have a maker and second
- Description of the nature of the request
- Action taken
- Conditions attached
- Reasons for actions taken



- Phrase motions carefully to withstand scrutiny by a court.
- Ensure everyone is clear on motion.
- Reference relevant sections of ordinance and reports.
- Make motions in the positive.
- Conditions may be imposed on any zoning decision, except rezoning.



- Restate motion clearly: "It is moved and seconded that..."
- Be sure the motion has been seconded when necessary; without a second the motion should be rejected.
- State motion before discussion.
- Allow maker of motion first chance to discuss it.
- Do not permit people to speak twice until all have had a chance to speak.
- Direct all comments to avoid debates.



**Conditions must be...**

- ✓ Reasonable and intended to protect natural resources, health, safety, welfare, and the social and economic well being of all.
- ✓ Related to a valid exercise of police power.
- ✓ Meet intent and purpose of zoning ordinance.
- ✓ Identify who is responsible to ensure conditions are implemented.





## Handling Disputes

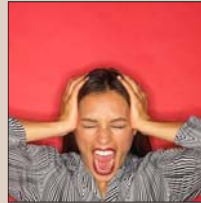
### Angry People

- Ensure fairness for all concerned, the applicant, and the public.
- Give everyone opportunity to speak and present evidence.
- Keep a balance between degrees of formality and informality.
- Recognize emotional responses.
- Follow meeting rules to facilitate a calm meeting environment.

**Watchwords: Consistency, Fairness, Predictability**



## Handling Disputes



- Communicate
- Uncover "interests"
- Seek points of agreement
- Problem-solve
- Build trust

**Watchwords: Consistency, Fairness, Predictability**



## Risk Management Conflict of Interest

### Conflict if...

You are the applicant.

You are a close relative of the applicant.

The proposal allows you, a relative, or business associate to receive financial gains.

You have close ties.

If you have to ask...



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## Risk Management

### What to do if you have a Conflict of Interest...

1. Call in alternate (ZBA only)
2. State nature of conflict
3. Abstain from discussion and voting
4. Leave the room
5. Minutes should reflect abstention and reason



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**APA MI** Risk Management

**Conflict of Interest**  
**Proceed with Caution!**



- Speaking as a citizen may influence audience.
- Bias may undermine public trust in the process.
- Do not discuss proposal with commission who may have to act.
- Do not use inside contacts.
- Follow procedures in place for all applicants.
- Do not represent yourself if you are the applicant.

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**APA MI** Risk Management

**You CAN'T avoid litigation**




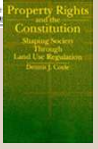

You CAN manage risk & liability exposure by:

- Using consistent *rules* and *procedures*
- Treating everyone *fairly* and *consistently*
- Avoiding *conflicts of interest*
- Keeping *accurate* and *complete* records

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**APA MI** Risk Management

- Zoning must provide a reasonable use
- The use need NOT be the most profitable
- Support your decisions (based on review standards)
- Follow proper procedures
- Case law: In state and federal courts is still emerging

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**APA MI** Communicate with other boards/commissions

**The Community**

- Cross Membership
- Information Exchange (Minutes)
- Joint Meetings
- Elected Officials – Master Plan



**The Region**

- Cooperative Planning
- Joint Planning
- Commissions



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American Planning Association  
Michigan Chapter  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

**Thanks for listening!**

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