



Centre Region Council of Governments OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION

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GUIDELINES FOR MEETING ETIQUETTE *- Adopted November 26, 2018*

The Centre Region Council of Governments (COG) is committed to an environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to participate in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities to be heard and to participate in the decision making process. At the same time, conducting the meeting is to be handled efficiently, so the time that people invest at meetings is well spent and concludes within a reasonable timeframe.

The COG believes that civil conduct in public affairs promotes participation in democracy. Examples of polite, civil, and respectful behavior towards elected and appointed officials and volunteer committee members persuades citizens to participate and therefore has a positive impact on the quality of our governance.

COG primarily follows Roberts Rules of Order, as applied by the meeting Chair.

CODE OF CONDUCT

- **Respect the Chair and their role in facilitating the expeditious conduct of business.**
- **Treat everyone with courtesy and respect.**
- **Do not make negative remarks about an individual or a municipality.** *Pejorative remarks are not helpful to finding solutions that everyone can live with.*
- **Keep the discussion focused on the agenda and the topic at hand.**
- **No interrupting.** *Even if you strongly disagree with comments, respect others when they are talking.*
- **Wait your turn.** *Raise your hand and let the Chair recognize you.*
- **Be concise and clear.** *Keep the discussion focused and to the point in order to respect the groups' time and so that all can participate... remember others may have questions as well.*
- **Stick to the facts and provide supporting evidence.**
- **Limit side conversations.** *Give all members the opportunity to share their thoughts and be heard.*
- **Respect decisions made by the Committee and/or Board even if you disagree with it.**



ASPIRATIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

- **Come prepared.** Review materials ahead of time, bring something to take notes, and arrive on time.
- **Appreciate all issues and ideas as important.**
- **Accept the fact that there will be differences of opinion.** These differences are healthy and when voiced in a polite and thoughtful manner, will help to identify solutions that everyone can live with.
- **Participate actively.** The key to COG's success is active and informed involvement and participation.
- **Listen actively and attentively.** Active listening helps to avoid redundant questions and comments.
- **Challenge ideas and attack problems.**
- **Keep an open mind, remain objective.** A diversity of thought is important in understanding an issue and its implications.
- **Be patient with the process and one another.** Group decision making takes time.
- **Be aware of your body language and the silent message you are sending.** Body language can make those around you feel uneasy, bullied or distracted.
- **It is OK to apologize.**

An effective board is multiple minds speaking with one voice.

NOTES FOR THE CHAIR

- **The Chair is responsible for enforcing the Ground Rules.** In the absence of the Chair, or in the event that the Chair is personally in violation of the Code of Conduct, the Vice Chair has the responsibility to voice their concern and reference the Code of Conduct rules. If there is a repeat offender, the Chair will follow up with the respective municipality and/or the Executive Committee.
- **Start and end the meeting timely.**
- **Ensure participants are aware of the purpose of the meeting.**
- **Remind members of the public who speak during the meeting to identify themselves.**
- **Remind all invited presenters, speakers and citizens of their allotted time.** Hold them to it!
- **The Chair sets time limits for discussions on agenda items.** Keep the meeting on pace.
- **Keep the meeting focused on the agenda and discussion focused on the topic.**
- **Clarify how decisions are to be made.** Let the group know up front if the agenda item calls for participant input, is a "group decision" or action item, or is an "information only" agenda item.
- **Be a leader.** Show interest in other people's contribution and appreciation for their contribution.
- **Promote participation.** Engage those who may not have had the opportunity to speak; ask if they have input to add to the discussion. For instance, the Chair may say, "I am looking for different perspectives."
- **Never take sides or show favoritism.**
- **When arguments erupt, remain objective.**
- **At times, conflicts are a necessary by-product of reaching consensus.** Rather than begin with solutions, first focus on a detailed analysis of where things can go wrong.
- **Seek solutions that everyone can live with.**
- **Deal with conflict directly.** A Committee and/or Board shows integrity by recognizing that there is a problem rather than ignoring it.
- **Avoid premature voting merely to arrive at decisions.**
- **Summarize the decision made or the progress made at the end of each discussion.**