



Southeastern Connecticut
Council of Governments

Commissioner Training Quick Reference Guide #1: *How to Run an Efficient Public Meeting*

- Commissions should be professional, unbiased, and transparent in their actions and decisions.
- Commissions ensure a fair process for applicants, and must hear comments from the public during public hearings.

Commission Composition

- Commissions are made up of residents of a municipality, and the members are either elected or appointed.
- Commission officers are elected by the members and typically include a:
 - Chair: Runs the meeting and moves the Commission through the agenda while allowing members, applicants, and the public to speak at the appropriate times. The Chair can also sign approved plans.
 - Vice-Chair: Runs the meeting in the absence of the Chair.
 - Secretary: Reads items into the record, and can sign approved plans.
- Full/Regular Members can vote and participate on all items.
- Alternate Members are seated if Full/Regular Members are absent. If an alternate is present but not seated for a Full Member, they can ask questions during a hearing but cannot vote or participate in deliberations after the close of a hearing.

Meeting Preparation

- Prepare by reading the agenda packet, reviewing applications, and looking into applicable regulations.
- Be on time to meetings. If a quorum is not present, a meeting cannot occur (**quorum**: the minimum number of members who need to be present for a meeting).

During Meetings

- Public comment should not be a 'back and forth' between commissioners and the public.
- Be recognized by the Chair before speaking, and avoid crosstalk and/or sidebar conversations.
- Avoid joking during meetings.

Making Motions

- Motions are required before taking votes. You can make a motion to approve or deny, but the motion must be seconded before a vote is taken.
- After motions are made, a discussion ('deliberations') can ensue before voting.