

It's nothing new. In 2017, the Red Wing Citizens Assembly made these findings and recommendations for "good government" and "better public meetings." Will the City Council facilitate open access or will it continue efforts to shut down public voices?

QUALITIES OF GOOD GOVERNMENT

The following are the prioritized top four qualities of good government as voted on by the Assembly.

- 1. Trust: All community members trust that public institutions are working in the best interests of the community.**
 - Trust is where local government begins and ends. When your motivations are clear, your competencies are proven, you've earned people's trust. And you can do anything. You can lead a team, or collaborate with others, trusting the work will get done. But without trust, no way. When we can't trust others, we do twice the work because we are trying to outthink and outmaneuver the people who should be our allies.
 - In government, trust is crucial. Can we believe our elected officials once they've lied to us or manipulated us?
- 2. Accountability: Public institutions are required to justify decisions and outcomes to the public.**
 - Leaders need to consider what needs to be contained in their decision making.
 - Accountability is the start of improvements, making corrections, and promoting transparency. Accountability means government being able to justify its actions.
- 3. Transparency: Processes, institutions, and information are accessible to the public, and enough information is provided for the public to understand and monitor them.**
 - Transparency is important because confidence in city government is directly related to public access to information.
 - Transparency provides public officials an incentive to be accountable to their constituents for their actions.
- 4. Strategic Vision: Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development.**
 - Strategic vision requires deciding a goal using community awareness and information. Make a plan that includes listing everything needed to achieve those goals.

We believe pursuing Better Public Meetings might offer these top benefits to the City of Red Wing:

- Allows more community members to feel they are heard and contributing (8)
- Empowers diverse groups of citizens to be active in public decision-making (7)
- Provides information and promotes civil discourse (5)
- Could allow community members to be more comfortable and engage where there are facilitators (5)
- Can help focus on important issues (5)

However, we believe pursuing Better Public Meetings might require addressing these top considerations:

- Training/retaining local facilitators (9)
- How to manage conflict, allow difference of opinion, talk effectively (8)
- Designing agenda and process effectively (7)
- How to decide when, where, how long to hold meeting and communicate info effectively (4)
- Resistance to changing style, being open to input (3)

If we were to pursue better public meetings in Red Wing, it would be important to:

- Invest in and recruit trained, local facilitators. (16)
 - We would invest in training community members in facilitating/moderating alternate forms of public meetings in order to develop and support an engaged community.
 - We would have trained facilitators in order to keep focus, set timelines, and mediate to have effective meetings.
- Develop and distribute pre-meeting educational materials to prepare participants. (14)
 - We would do pre-meeting education on the issues to be presented.
 - We would educate the public about different types of meetings, upcoming agendas in order to increase knowledge and participation.
 - We would define the purpose of the meetings (to inform, consult, involve, collaborate, or empower) in order to be productive, satisfy participants, and achieve desired or intended purpose.
 - We would educate people about how to participate.
 - We would make the meeting agenda available in multiple mediums in order to encourage as many people as possible to participate in the process.
- Conduct targeted outreach to diverse populations. (12)
 - We would implement an outreach program to actively seek engagement from a more diverse group of citizens, including those from multiple ethnic and religious backgrounds, differently abled, the LGBTQ community, and the elderly.
- Vary the time and location of meetings. (12)
 - We would introduce alternative time/place/formats for meetings in order to improve the level of community engagement and commitment.
 - We would do a time schedule to accommodate many, if not all.
- Utilize alternative meeting formats (9)
 - By adopting alternative meeting formats including open space and portable meetings, we would increase public input and engagement.
 - We would increase participation and convenience for the public by offering town meetings at different times and allowing citizens to participate digitally, in real time, to ensure equity.
- Seek out, learn, and adopt best practices (5)
 - We would seek, learn and follow best practices in order to ensure productive and well received meetings.
- We would have no-pressure, facilitated, personal meetings aimed at a diverse audience and take advantage of existing community groups in order to increase the power of the process and give officials the opportunity to make better decisions. (2)
- Generate buy-in from city personnel. (1)
 - We would gain buy-in from city officials and staff that improved dialogue is needed to improve their engagement, participation, and communication.

Report at: www.legalelectric.org/f/2017/09/Red-Wing-Citizens-Assembly-Event-Report.pdf

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