

Massachusetts Housing Partnership

Structure Meetings for Success

Consensus Building Institute



**Better negotiations.
Better decision making.
Better results.**

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Stakeholder
Engagement

Research &
Evaluation

Mission: Empower stakeholders—public and private, government and community—to resolve issues, reach better more durable agreements, and build stronger relationships.

Meetings gone Bad

Meetings go badly because . . . ?

Enter a short comment into Mentimeter

<https://www.menti.com>


Code: 3579 2641

Structuring Effective Meetings

- **Why:** purpose and intent
- **Who:** do you want to or will intend
- **Where and When:** room set -up, on-line, times of day
- **What:** building a good agenda
- **How:** tools for engagement
- **After:** product and follow through

Assumption – for this module we assume you have some control over meeting format and approach

WHY are you having this meeting?

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.



WHAT is your purpose?

- **Acknowledge:** Act doesn't apply to all but the challenges applies across communities.
- Your Town is proposing new zoning to meet the MBTA Communities Act that will increase height in key areas around transit from 2 to 4 stories, achieving the Act's minimum gross density of 15 units per acre for those buildings proposed not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, or ferry terminal, if applicable
- You expect a large turnout at the meeting. The Town meeting/City Council will rule at a later date on the proposed zoning.
- You are free to design the meeting as you see fit since it is not part of the most formal regulatory process (formal hearing, formal Board meeting, etc.).
- What might be the core purpose(s) of this meeting?

*Ask yourself, **What does success look like?** If my meeting were a success, how would I know?*

Possible meeting objectives



Sharing information

Brainstorming new ideas

Building relationships

Learning new perspectives

Empowering a group

Consulting on a decision

Solving a problem

Seeking consensus

Eliciting preferences

WHO are the relevant publics?



- Has a vested right (“I have a legal right”)
- Has an interest (“I care about this issue”)
- Will be affected (“I will have to look at this”)
- Has influence (“People listen to me”)
- Has resources (“I have expertise or dollars”)

WHO: preparing around the people

Consider (and research/reach out to) people who will be affected, have influence, resources, etc.



Ask: What do they need to participate?

- Language and translation
- Accessibility: *physical, economic, transportation, learning styles*
- Information before, during and after the meeting in what forms
- Childcare, food, drink, comfort
- Strategic preparation

WHEN and WHERE to accommodate the WHO

When

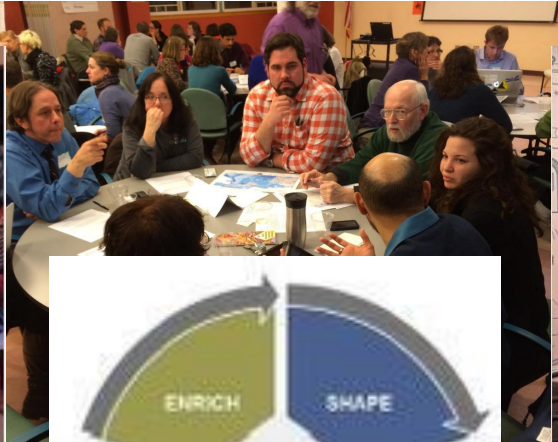
- Time of day (working people, age, childcare, shifts, etc.)
- Time of week (conflicting meetings, school events, tenant meetings)

Where

- Accessibility (both the building & location)
- Lighting and safety
- Room accommodations (fixed or moveable furniture)
- Comfort and quality
- Sound (can they hear one another)
- Visual (can they see the project and others)



WHERE: Space Matters



Security . . . ?

- **What is the risk or threat?**
- **What role might security play?**
 - Direct traffic
 - Project authority and safety
 - Be prepared to address overwhelming disruption
 - Other?
- **Basic Advice**
 - Decide purpose clearly
 - Communicate and partner with security to have a clear plan of if, how, and when to intervene
- **Caution**
 - Security may be perceived in very different ways by different audiences



NO WHERE: Virtual or Hybrid

- Pick your platform (Zoom, Teams, Google Meets, etc.)
- Audio matters most
- Be clear with virtual participants what they can expect (or not)
- Plan ahead; test, assume s/t will go wrong almost every time
- Staff sufficiently to manage tech
- Support those on-line with less tech abilities
- Consider pros and cons of on-line tools for engagement (Chat, Q&A, Mentimeter, Webinar v Meeting format, etc.)

Discussion

What has been a very effective meeting set-up for you when challenging topics are on the table?

Enter a short comment into Mentimeter

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WHAT: Meeting agenda



A good agenda should tell a story:

Where have we come from?

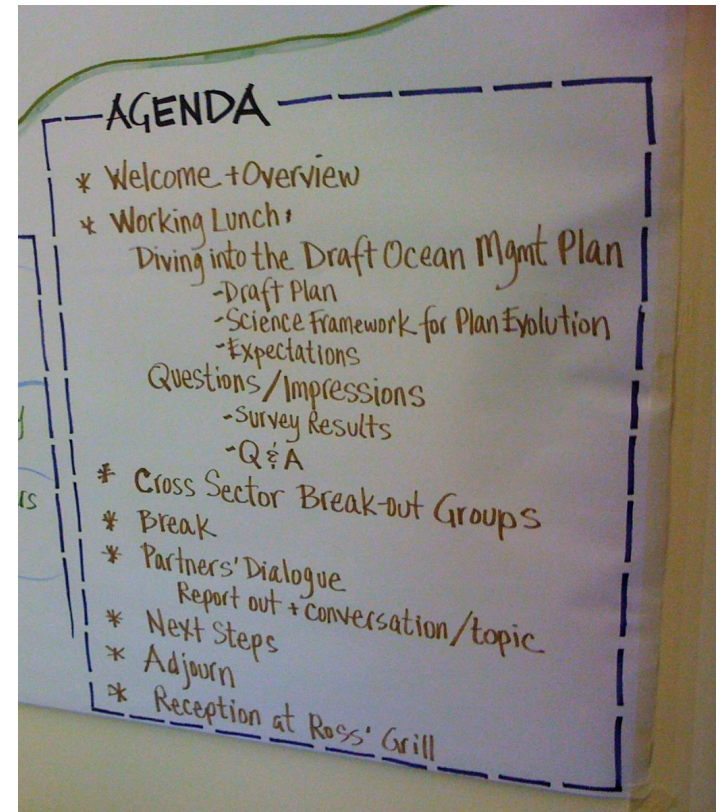
What are we here to do?

Why does this matter?



What makes a great agenda?

- Tailored to the purpose
- Clear, simple but descriptive
- Identifies who and what
- Logically sequenced
- Uses time realistically
- Sets aside adequate break time
- Concludes with next steps/actions



Agenda Design Considerations

Issues to consider

- Timing
 - *What can we really accomplish in the time we have?*
- Togetherness
 - *How do we maximize the value of time together?*
- Balance
 - *Presentations vs. discussion; small groups vs. large group; work vs. breaks*
- Sequencing
 - *What do we cover when to build flow, understanding, and connection?*

What: Open the meeting

Tell the “story” of of the meeting/session: *Where you’ve been, where you’re going, and why*

- Introduce/clarify roles as needed
- Work with the group on meeting norms
- Set the context and background
- Review the agenda, sequence of issues (flexible)

Explain your and others’ role

What: Conduct the Meeting

Vary the types of activities, mixing presentation with interactive elements:

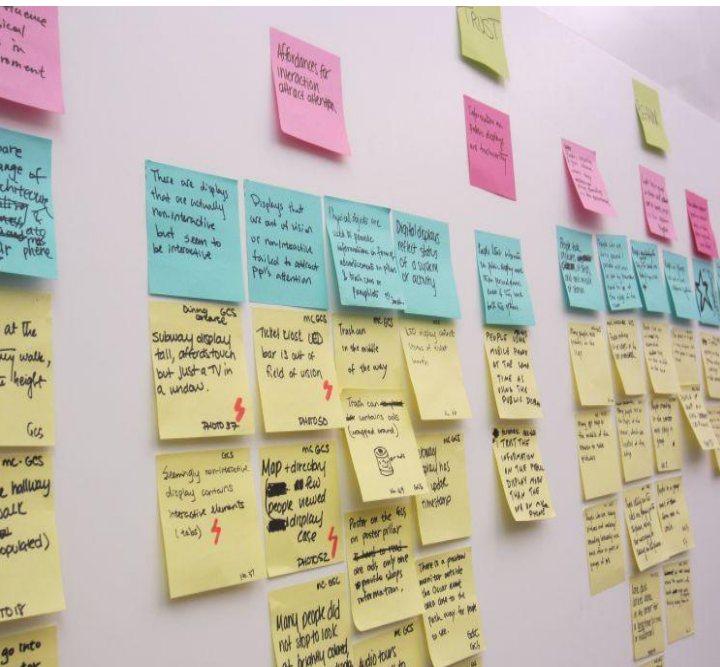
1. Presentation(s)
2. Demonstration/story telling
3. Large group discussions
4. Small group discussions
5. Interactive exercises
6. Solo reflection/work
7. Breaks

What: Make visible the work



Bring order out of verbal chaos:

- Use worksheets, maps, blank matrices, or other tools to focus the participant's work
- Capture the conversation on flip charts or PowerPoints or white boards
- Summarize key points or issues made
- Record outcomes, decisions, next steps
- Create a shared memory and a single record with flip charts, graphic facilitation, stickies, or other tools



What: Close strong



To bring a sense of closure:

- Draw connections, summarize, make meaning of what has been said
- Clarify next steps & action items
- Elicit takeaways, reflections, final thoughts
- Express gratitude to hosts and to the participants

After: Follow-up and implementation



At the end of and after meetings:

- Create and send around action items lists or some kind of follow up
- Produce a meeting summary or report and share slides
- Assign subgroup or between-meeting work (charge, participation, decision-making authority)
- Check in with missing participants

How: Goals of Engagement

- Collecting Ideas
- Clarifying Interests
- Answering Questions
- Clarifying Understanding
- Fostering Dialogue
- Evaluating Pros and Cons
- Improving Options

Process: Tools to consider

Spur creativity

- Charrettes
- Brainstorming
- Post-it notes

Share information

- Presentation
- Gallery walk
- Information stations

Elicit preferences

- Criteria matrix
- Keypad polling
- Sticky dot voting

Connect people

- World café
- Speed dating
- Kinetic/artistic task

Expand thinking

- Visioning
- Appreciative inquiry
- “Pre-mortem”

How: Getting people engaged

- **Physical Space:** Use the room/table setup for maximizing interaction (circles, round tables, small tables)
- **Stacking:** individual reflection first, then one on one, two on two, & so forth
- **Standing:** Use walls, posters, post-its to stand up, mingle, engage
- **Go Rounds:** Everyone gets their chance to speak
- **World Cafe:** Everyone engages on everything but in small groups
- **Tables:** Small conversation, 1 to 2 points per
- **Polling:** Use on-line tools for the “silent majority”

How: Answering Questions

Ways to get questions from a group:

- Have participants write on a note card one thing about the presented information that remains unclear to them or on which they want more detail.
- Ask participants to submit questions electronically in advance of the meeting as a jumping off point for presenter.
- Create an anonymous questions box (physical or virtual) that people can drop questions into throughout the week in preparation for the meeting (this is usually for standing meetings).
- Follow up one on one with key meeting participants to ask what questions they might have.
- Ask people to form small groups of 2-4 to discuss what requires clarification.
- Have large group discussion – “What questions do people have?” Not recommended for larger groups.
- Celebrate and appreciate when people do ask questions.

The agenda should be . . . ?

- **Acknowledge:** Act doesn't apply to all but the challenges applies across communities.
- **Remember:** Your Town/City is proposing new zoning to meet the MBTA Communities Act that will increase height in key areas around transit from 2 to 4 stories, achieving the Act's minimum gross density of 15 units per acre for those buildings proposed not more than 0.5 miles from a commuter rail station, subway station, or ferry terminal, if applicable
- You expect a large turnout at the meeting. The Town Meeting/City Council will rule at a later date on the proposed zoning.
- You hope to introduce various staff, set some norms for the meeting, cover the basics of the MBTA Communities Act, how your Town is out of compliance currently, take questions, explain what are some zoning options, receive initial feedback, and explore next steps
- You have two hours so . . . ?

Breakouts

- You'll be “sent” to a breakout with 5 to 6 other participants
- Take a crack at a skeleton agenda for the meeting as described
- Be prepared to report out (we'll only get to a few but . . .
- You'll have 10 to 12 minutes

Evaluation of your Meeting



CBI

CATALYZING COLLABORATION

Do You Need a Facilitator?

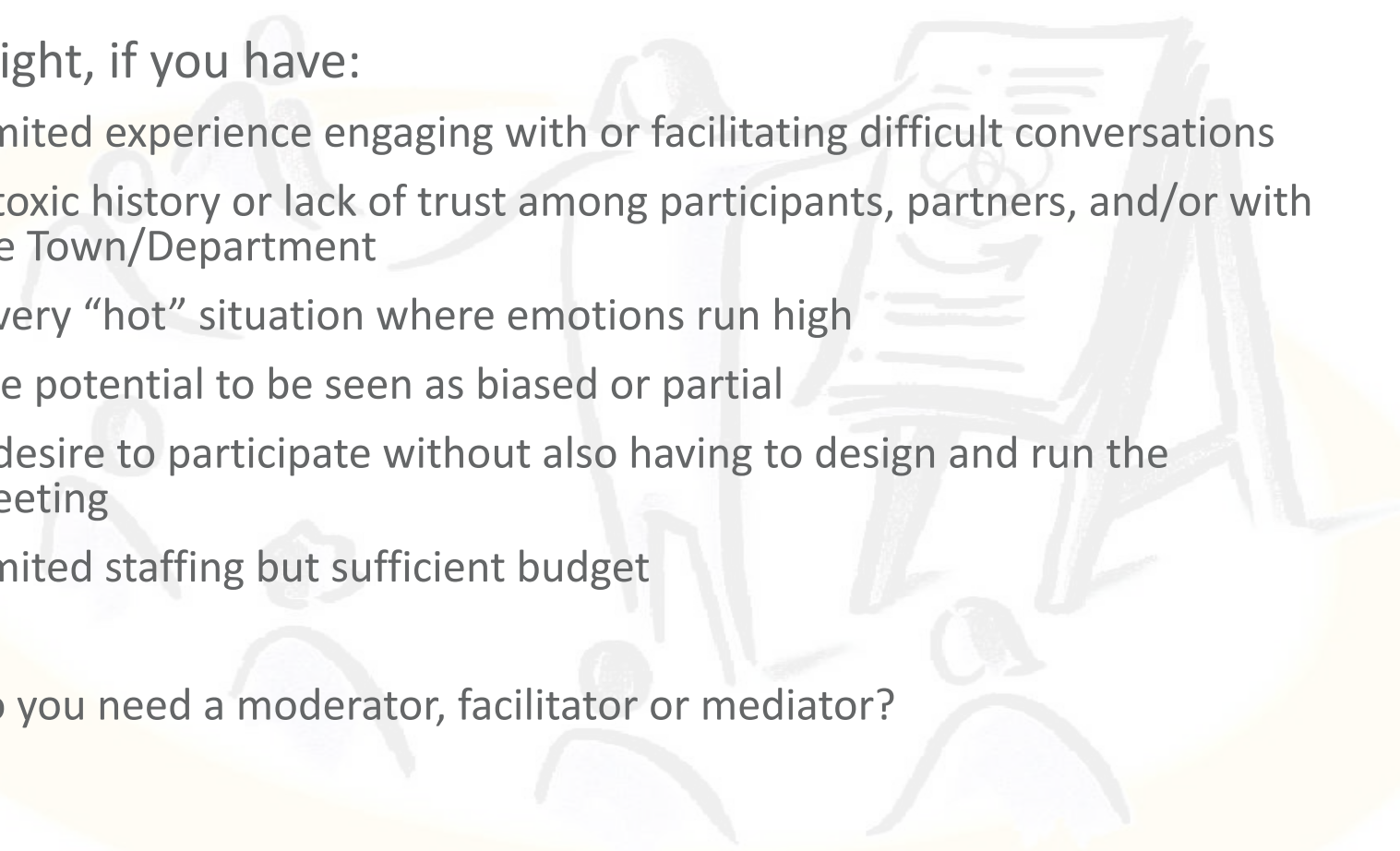


You might, if you have:

- Limited experience engaging with or facilitating difficult conversations
- A toxic history or lack of trust among participants, partners, and/or with the Town/Department
- A very “hot” situation where emotions run high
- The potential to be seen as biased or partial
- A desire to participate without also having to design and run the meeting
- Limited staffing but sufficient budget

Note

- Do you need a moderator, facilitator or mediator?



Final Comments and Questions

