

Module 5

Conducting Community Meetings



THE SOUTHERN CENTER FOR

Communication, Health & Poverty

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Background

Citizen participation is a key ingredient to the health of a community, and community meetings provide one avenue to get citizens involved. Community meetings can offer public health organizations the chance to share vital information and provide citizens with the opportunity to help identify and solve problems by providing them with a platform to discuss important issues. The purpose of this module is to give you an overview on how to plan for and conduct a community meeting. The module also will provide you with skills for facilitating a community meeting.

Resources: The following module was adapted mainly from two sections of a larger collection of skill-building lessons provided by the Community Toolbox, *Conducting Public Forums and Listening Sessions*, contributed by Vince Francisco and Jerry Schultz and edited by Bill Berkowitz, and *Conducting Effective Meetings*, contributed by Gillian Kaye and edited by Bill Berkowitz. For more information on these particular sections and other invaluable resources go to the Community Toolbox at: <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/>

Types of community meetings

Throughout your career as a public health professional you may find it necessary and advantageous to help organize and facilitate community meetings. The kinds of meetings a public health professional could be expected to arrange and facilitate include:

- Public forums (a problem-identification and problem-solving session)
- Coalition building (a coalition is a “group of individuals and/or organizations with a common interest who agree to work together toward a common goal” (definition source: *Coalition Building I: Starting a Coalition* on the Community Toolbox website at: http://ctb.ku.edu/tools//sub_section_main_1057.htm)
- Risk communication/ Public advisory meeting (this type of meeting is held when there is some type of risk or crisis the community must deal with).
- Focus groups (groups for sharing opinions and responses to issues or products)
- Environmental health information exchange session (technical staff are called upon to provide interpretation of scientific data)
- Formal public hearings during which citizens can go “on the record” regarding their concerns about health and safety
- Open meetings of the local boards of health, conservation commissions, etc



photo by Greg Knobloch, CDC

Things to do before a community meeting

Good meeting management is critically linked to participation. Citizens typically will lose motivation to attend meetings unless you pay serious attention to the planning, logistics, chairing duties, and follow-up activities. All of these elements alone and in combination can have an impact on member participation and involvement.

The first factors that you should consider when planning a meeting are (a) the goals of the meeting and (b) the audience for the meeting. For instance, do you want to inform the general public of a particular hazard in the community? Do you want input from a specific population within the community to help you identify problems, design solutions and projects and help you come up with a list of local resources? People's time is valuable, so don't waste it. If you do not have a clear goal with an interested audience, a boring and unfocused meeting may result. Thus, if you do not have a clear goal in mind for the meeting, than do not call the meeting.

Formal or informal meetings?

In general, transparency in public health is important. Citizens have a right to know the best scientific information available regarding community health. On the other hand, emotions can run high when it comes to health risks, and sometimes large community meetings can result in polarization and antagonism. Some health communicators believe that calling a large public meeting should be a last resort. More constructive interaction can sometimes take place when you meet informally with smaller groups—at a recreation center with residents of a city block rather than in an auditorium with an entire neighborhood invited, for example. The Agency for Toxic Substance and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has developed a scenario called “public availability sessions.” At public availability sessions, representatives of public health agencies might be sitting at different tables scattered throughout a cafeteria. Each table might have a sign labeling the topic to be discussed by that subject matter expert. For example, one table might be labeled “Health Effects of Arsenic on Children.” Another might be labeled “Arsenic and Drinking Water.” Yet another might be “Industry Actions to Contain Arsenic.” Citizens cycle from one table to the next, engaging in dialogue and problem-solving. They are less likely to feel that they are being lectured at or argued with, compared to some large community meetings.

Nevertheless, planned, formal community meetings or hearings can play a helpful and even necessary role in keeping the public informed and involving citizens in public health decision making. Proper planning and decorum are key to conducting constructive meetings.

Creating an agenda

Creating an effective agenda is one of the most important elements for a productive meeting. An agenda can serve as an outline for the meeting and provide a focus for the meeting. An agenda can also be used as a checklist to ensure all information is covered, and if distributed ahead of time, can help participants prepare for the meeting. Input should be solicited from a variety of sources regarding the agenda. Citizen involvement should be used to develop agendas, if possible. In other

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words, citizens should be empowered to help set the agenda, and should not just be expected to respond to an agenda about which they were never consulted.

The following is a list of items to be included in any agenda.

Agendas should include:

- ✓ Meeting date, time, and location
- ✓ Meeting Objective(s)
- ✓ Topics for Discussion
- ✓ Time allotment for each topic
- ✓ Presenter or discussion leader for each topic
- ✓ Action Items

Source: <http://www.effectivemeetings.com/meetingplanning/agenda/agenda.asp>

On the agenda, list the topics for discussion and the amount of time you plan for each item. If someone other than you is presenting some part of the agenda, add that presenter's identification to the agenda as well. Consider allowing some time for addressing each of the following topics: issues and concerns; barriers and resistance to addressing the issues and concerns; community resources for change; recommended alternatives and solutions. The use of action items can be very helpful from meeting to meeting to continue or follow up on unresolved issues. An example of a basic agenda follows.



photos by Greg Knobloch, CDC

BOARD OF HEALTH MEETING AGENDA

Monday, December 4, 2008

3:00 PM

Anytown Town Hall

Hearing Room A

Anytown, GA

- 3:00 Approval of Minutes of Board of Health Meetings Meeting of November 20, 2008
- 3:10 Public Hearing – Proposed Stable Regulations
- 3:40 Water Sampling Variance – Macon, GA
- 4:00 Discussion – Meeting of Board of Selectmen Re: Fluoride, December 5, 2008
- 4:30 Reorganization of the Board of Health
- 4:40 Other Business
- 5:00 Public Adjournment

ALL TIMES ARE APPROXIMATE AND SUBJECT TO CHANGE

cc: Board of Health Town Clerk File

Once the target audience and goals have been determined and an agenda developed, you will need to decide on the date time and location. A neutral venue is one that is easy to find, comfortable for all parties, and is public such as a community center, school or church. Meeting at a neutral venue implies that everyone is on the same footing. However, there might be a cost for using the space, so find that out upfront. When booking the venue, make sure you also ask about logistics such as keys, alarms, lights, security, and other things such as heating and cooling. Additionally, check that there will be enough seating for the anticipated attendants.

Depending on the topic and urgency of the meeting, it may be advantageous to hold several meetings at different sites and times to maximize the number of people from the community who have the opportunity to participate. If only one meeting can be scheduled, it is best to hold it in the evening to avoid time conflicts citizens will have with work and school.

Tip: If the meeting space is hard to get to for seniors or others, try to arrange transportation or perhaps a volunteer "escort" service to the meeting (a great teen/senior project).

Meeting notices: Advertising the meeting

Publicize the meeting as widely as possible. Fliers, advertisements, public service announcements and press releases can all be used. You may be able to post notices for free in several locations with permission (e.g., the post offices, libraries, local businesses, doctor's offices, schools, parks, on the Internet, church bulletins). Additionally, many radio stations have designated airtime where they air postings of community events for free as a form of community service. If you have the time, personally recruit community leaders and diverse community members and ask them to recruit others as well. Interpersonal communication can be a very effective tool.

The public should be given enough information in the notice and enough lead-time in order to determine if they would like to attend (e.g. at least a week, but two weeks is better unless it is an emergency). At the minimum, include the date, time, location and purpose of the meeting. The notice needs to be concise, in a simple font with color (if possible). To bring more attention to the notice, you may decide to add a simple picture, sketch or map, if appropriate. Be sure to use more bullet points than text so that people can read it quickly. Also add a contact phone number or Internet site in case anybody would like further information.

Example meeting notices

A simple notice could look like this.

Public Health Meeting

7:00 pm
May 2, 2008

Discussion: Water contamination in our community
Speaker: Jane Smith, Fitzgerald County Director of Health Services
Location: Department of Health and Environmental Control
1st floor community meeting room
123 22nd St., Anytown, GA

For more information contact: Joe Brown, 404-222-0000, jbrown@dhr.state.us

A more attention-grabbing version could look something like this.

Public Meeting
May 2, 2008
7:00 pm

Discussion: Water contamination in our community



Speaker: Jane Smith, Director of Health Services, Fitzgerald County
Location: Department of Health and Environmental Control
1st floor community meeting room
(turn left at main doors)
123 22nd St., Anytown, GA

For more information contact: Joe Brown, 404-222-0000,

You may also consider writing a news release and sending it to the media. For more information on how to write a news release see Module 1.

Example news release

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) holds many community meetings throughout the country each year. Below is an example of news release for a community meeting produced by ATSDR in 2006 (Source: http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/NEWS/southbay_pahokee.html)

MEDIA ANNOUNCEMENT

**Community Meeting to Discuss South Bay, Pahokee Public Water Systems
ATSDR to hold Public Availability Session May 22 and 23**

For Immediate Release: May 18, 2006

ATLANTA – The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) will hold two public availability sessions to discuss municipal water system quality and exposure to trihalomethanes (THMs) detected in the Pahokee and South Bay municipal water systems in Palm Beach County, Fla. The first session will be held Monday, May 22 from 6:30 until 8 p.m. at the Tanner Park Community Center, 105 E. Palm Beach Road in South Bay. The second session will be held Tuesday, May 23 from 6:30 until 8 p.m. at the Glades Academy, 1200 E. Main St. in Pahokee.

At the sessions, ATSDR experts will be available to speak one-on-one about the quality of public water and THM-related issues. Community members are invited to stop by any time during the sessions to talk with ATSDR staff.

THMs are chemicals formed when water containing organic material is treated with chlorine. Chlorine is frequently used in public water systems to prevent disease from exposure to harmful bacteria and viruses.

Some scientific studies suggest a link between exposure to THMs and adverse health effects. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency asked ATSDR to evaluate potential health concerns regarding exposures to THMs in the South Bay and Pahokee communities' public water systems. THM levels exceeded the EPA maximum contaminant level in 2001; but have remained below the EPA limit since 2004.

For more information, community members may contact Environmental Health Scientist Peter Kowalski or Health Communications Specialist Youlanda Outin, toll free, at 1-888-422-8737. Regional Representative Benjamin Moore also may be contacted at 1-800-241-1754, ext. 21784. Please refer to the Pahokee/South Bay Municipal Water Systems site.

ATSDR, a federal public health agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, evaluates the human health effects of exposure to hazardous substances

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Members of the news media can request an interview with ATSDR staff by calling the NCEH/ATSDR Office of Communication at 770-488-0700

Also during the planning phase you should consider who will facilitate the meeting and be invited to make a presentation, or be on hand to answer questions. The Community Toolbox suggests designating a discussion leader who is known and respected, who is neutral on the topic, who has good listening and group process skills, and who can keep things moving along should be utilized.

Checklist of items to bring to the meeting:

- ✓ Sufficient copies of agenda
- ✓ Refreshments (if possible--refreshments encourage mingling and set a friendly tone.)
- ✓ Informational materials about the topic at hand or your organization
- ✓ Whiteboard and markers, or large sheets of paper and felt pens
- ✓ Paper and pens for taking minutes
- ✓ Name tags
- ✓ Sign-in Sheets

Conducting the Meeting

The following guidelines have been adapted largely from materials developed by the Public Information Team at the Massachusetts Military Reservation (MMR) on Cape Cod. This resource is included as supplementary material to this curriculum. It can also be found at:
http://www.mmr.org/Community/lessons_fs.htm

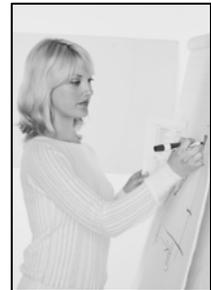
Before the meeting starts

If necessary, put out chairs for the number of people you expect. A circle is friendlier than rows of chairs. As people arrive, greet them and show them where to sit. If people arrive late, greet them briefly and invite them to sit down with the group. Invite people to sign-in. Sign-in sheets do more than tell you who came to the meeting, they also help update your membership list and give you names for phone trees and email addresses for correspondence. Be sure to ask for people's names, organization, address, and phone number.

During the meeting

1. Begin at or very near your advertised start time and end on time. It is disrespectful to abuse peoples' time. If you must start or end late, then apologize.
2. Welcome everyone at the beginning of the meeting.
3. Make introductions-- Start by introducing yourself and your role. If time and group size allow, let others introduce themselves. When there's a special speaker, it is the job of the facilitator to introduce them.
4. State the purpose of the meeting. When a topic is introduced, outline the key points before beginning the presentation to give the listener a road map of what you are going to cover and when.
5. Whether you run a formal meeting or have a relaxed discussion, designate someone to take minutes or notes. Minutes should include who was present, the main decisions and assignments.

6. Group agreements help the group run more smoothly. Some suggestions you can make to the group include:
 - a. Take turns in speaking
 - b. Respect that other people may have other points of view
 - c. Stick to the topic
 - d. Ask questions if you don't understand something
 - e. Keep people's personal matters confidential
7. Provide background information on the topic at hand. Sufficient informational materials also need to be made available at the meetings, if not before.
8. Appropriate technical experts should be present at meetings where scientific information will be shared.
9. Be fair but firm so the meeting runs smoothly. Make sure everyone who wants to speak can do so. If a few people seem to be dominating the discussion, politely thank them for their contribution and ask what everyone else thinks. If a person who has been quiet speaks, show your appreciation.
10. Try rotating responsibility for chairing each future meeting.
11. If the group seems to want to go beyond the agreed upon time on an issue, ask for agreement from everyone. A statement such as, "We've already used our allotted time for this issue. Would everyone like to continue on the topic for another ten minutes?" can be a good way to take the group's pulse on the matter.
12. Wrap-up each agenda item by summarizing any conclusions out loud. Move on when no one objects or everyone agrees.



Advice for presenters

1. Have presenters be as short, concise and clear as possible. It is difficult for the audience to hold questions for longer than 10 to 15 minutes.
2. Acronyms should be spelled out, and technical terms briefly defined so that people unfamiliar with the terms can better understand the terminology. Warn speakers to use lexicons or jargon with caution.
3. If possible, include handouts with numbered pages so that the audience can follow along and have something to refer back to at a later date.
4. Advise speakers not to be afraid to point out successes and mistakes. Acknowledge in a straight-forward manner that problems may exist or difficulties might have occurred.
5. Advise presenters that in major updates of key projects, to include two slides: one on "What is Working" and another on "What Needs Work."
6. Advise presenters not to cover up or minimize adverse or negative impacts.
7. It is alright not to know the answer to a question posed by a community member from the audience. If you do not know, better to say so than to speculate or guess.
8. Don't be afraid to share complex data. Please include data in formats that are large enough to read easily, and highlight the key data points in the presentation that need to be focused on. It is better to share too much information, rather than too little and be blamed later for hiding or concealing information.
9. Content in visual overheads (maps, charts, etc.) should be able to be seen at least 30 feet away. Please avoid projecting detailed, small-print data charts that cannot be read by the viewers. Such detailed information is better conveyed through written handouts.

Concluding the meeting:

1. Set a finish time and keep to it. This conveys a respect for people's time.
2. There may need to be a continuous appeal to the meeting participants by the facilitator to restrict their comments to the agreed-upon agenda items, as well as to a time limitation.
3. If more time is needed to discuss an agenda item, move the spill-over discussion to after the last agenda item, or plan another meeting to complete the discussion.
4. If people do not seem ready to make a decision after discussion, they may need more information and another meeting.
5. If working groups are formed to tackle an issue, make sure they are smaller than 30 participants. It may be necessary to divide the group into smaller groups. Make sure to designate a recorder for each group so that you can keep track of what all the groups have accomplished.
6. Conclude the meeting with a summary of what was achieved and a plan of action.
7. Announce the next meeting if applicable.
8. Have informal time before and after the meeting for people to talk and socialize. Remember, sometimes "the meeting after the meeting" is where many things can happen.

Facilitation: Managing people in a meeting

As a group facilitator you may on occasion have to deal with frustrated and noncompliant people. Provided next are some tips on how to prevent disruptions (PREVENTIONS) and also how to intervene should they occur (INTERVENTIONS).

Preventions are techniques that can help you avoid disruption from the start. If you use these "preventions" from the start of your meetings, you should keep disruption away.

A. Listen to understand

People can tell when you are not paying attention. Listen closely to understand the points the speaker is making, and restate these points aloud if you are unsure.

B. Stay in your role

You cannot be a participant and the chair of the meeting at the same time. When you blur the lines, you risk alienating participants, causing resentment, and losing control of the meeting. Offer strategies, resources, and ideas--but not direct opinions. If you feel that you cannot be an unbiased facilitator at a particular meeting, then hire one from outside your agency.

C. Don't be defensive

If attacked, criticized, etc., take a "step backwards." Think about what was said before you respond. Once you become defensive, you risk losing the group's respect and trust, and may

Interventions are techniques to use when confronted with disruption or problems during the meetings. They can be used separately, but are usually more effective in combination.

A. Have the group decide

...if someone refuses to stick to the agenda, keeps bringing up the same point again and again, challenges how you are handling the meeting, etc.

B. Use the agenda and ground rules

...if someone keeps going off the agenda, has side conversations through the whole meeting, verbally attacks others, etc.

C. Be honest: Say what's going on

...if someone is trying to intimidate you, you feel upset and undermined, you need to enlist the help of the group, etc.

D. Use humor

...if there is a lot of tension in the room, people are resistant to being at the meeting, scared/shy about participating, you are seen as an outsider, etc.

E. Accept, deal, or defer

...if someone keeps expressing doubts about accomplishing anything, is bitter and puts down every suggestion, keeps bringing up the same point over and over, has power issues, etc. This means: ACCEPT that what they are saying is true, don't ignore it; DEAL with it right there by spending some time on it, or DEFER it to the group for a decision about what to do.

F. Use body language (if possible)

... to quiet side conversations, help quiet people participate, re-focus attention, etc. You can speak volumes by making eye contact, by smiling (or not smiling), or by a change in your seating position.

G. Take a break: Confront disrupters outside the meeting room

...when less confrontational tactics haven't worked, someone keeps verbally attacking other participants, shuffling papers, having side conversations or cutting people off. You can deal with this issue outside the room, at a naturally-occurring break in the action.

H. Confront in the room

...if it's appropriate and will not create backlash, if the group will support you, if you've tried less confrontational tactics already, etc.

Tips on handling difficult members taken from *Conducting Effective Meetings* from the Community Toolbox (http://ctb.ku.edu/tools/EN/sub_section_main_1153.htm).

Public health risk communication

In situations where there is a risk or crisis, public health officials may need to hold community advisory meetings or public forums. Below is a list of possible information to cover in these meetings.

- Geographical / residential area impacted by the environmental health risk
- Risk to human and ecological health
- Proposed action due to short/long-term OR due to recent events prompting immediate (emergency) procedures to be taken
- Schedule of proposed activities; timeline, with dates for public involvement, poster board sessions, neighborhood meetings, public comment periods
- Data such as comparative analysis with other samples over time
- History (if relevant)
- Roles of agencies, regulators, town elected officials, and the community (if relevant)



Photo by James Gathany



Risk communicator Peter Sandman offers these tips about communicating about risk to the public. More information can be found at www.petersandman.com

1. Tell people what to expect.

“Anticipatory guidance” -- telling people what to expect -- does raise some anxiety, especially if you’re predicting bad news. But being forewarned helps us cope, it keeps us from feeling blindsided or misled, and it reduces the dispiriting impact of sudden negative events. Warning people to expect uncertainty and possible error is especially useful. So is warning people about their own likely future reactions, particularly the ones they may want to overrule: “You’ll probably feel like stopping the medicine before it’s all gone, but it’s important that you finish the entire prescription.”

2. Offer people things to do.

Self-protective action helps mitigate fear; victim-aid action helps mitigate misery. All action helps us bear our emotions, and thus helps prevent them from escalating into panic, flipping into denial, or declining into hopeless apathy. Plan for this well in advance; mid-crisis is a harder time to start figuring out what to offer people to do -- including the legions of volunteers who will want to help.

3. Let people choose their own actions.

Offering people a choice of actions recruits not just their ability to act, but also their ability to decide. This makes it all the more empowering as a bulwark against panic or denial. Ideally, bracket your action recommendations with less and more extreme options, so people who are less concerned or more concerned than you wish they were do not need to define themselves as rebels; you have recommendations for them too.

4. Ask more of people.

In a crisis, pro-social, resilient impulses vie for dominance with less desirable impulses: panic, passivity, and selfishness. Cultivate those prosocial impulses and suppress the selfish ones by asking people to offer help in the crisis. Make sure to ask for emotional sacrifices as well, but assure your publics that they will be able to withstand the emotional strains.

Additionally, Peter Sandman points out that in risk situations it is important to not over-reassure people or attempt to calm all fears. Rather, you should acknowledge uncertainty and legitimate people’s fears. It is better for public officials to be regretful instead of defensive. Officials must also be willing to answer what-if questions. Additional information and a list of recommendations for risk communication can be found at: www.petersandman.com.

Class activity 5.1: Role-playing the part of a facilitator at a community meeting

Running or chairing a meeting means more than just moving the group through the agenda. When you chair a meeting, you are responsible for the well-being of the group and the members in it. That demands a certain amount of attention be paid to "group dynamics" and other process issues. Running meetings is a learnable SKILL, not a talent you are born with. Just as with any skill, you will get better with practice--and more confident, too.

The goal of this activity is to have students take turns role-playing the parts of a facilitator, technical expert, and citizens at a public health-oriented community meeting. Students will build skills around facilitating meetings and working with difficult members of the community who may show up at the meeting upset or frustrated.

You can use the scenario below, or develop your own. Make sure to pick a topic that is a little controversial to ensure discussion and debate. Be sure to identify one or two students to facilitate. Let the other students play the part of disgruntled or worried community members. It may also be beneficial if one or two students play the part of a technical expert so that they get experience answering technical questions in an easy –to-understand and concise manner.

Case Scenario: To provide a context, use the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) press release from above to set the stage for a public forum on water contamination in the communities of Pahokee and South Bay, Florida. This meeting is to discuss the health effects of trihalomethanes (THMs) in the municipal water system. THMs are disinfection by-products that are formed when water is chlorinated. While THM levels are monitored in municipal water system, in 2000 they exceeded EPA regulations in these communities. In 2003 they dropped below the federal regulations and remained low through 2005.



The results of laboratory animal studies suggested that the levels of THM in Pahokee and South Bay would not likely result in adverse health effects, like cancer, among the general population. However, many epidemiological studies *suggest* an association between adverse birth outcomes and THM levels in chlorinated drinking water. Thus, public health should take measures to educate and reduce pregnant women's exposure.

(for more information, see the full report included in the supplemental materials or at <http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/HAC/pha/PahokeeSouth%20Bay/PahokeeSouthBayHC062106.pdf>)

After the meeting is over

Just because the meeting is over, doesn't mean that the work is done. There are several things that need to be accomplished in order to successfully follow up after the meeting.

Meeting minutes

Public meetings benefit greatly from minutes being taken. Minutes can list the decisions made, with the follow-up action stated and can also provide direct statements to avoid any confusion or misquoting. Minutes should contain announcements, informational items, etc., and be concise and accurate. The format of the minutes can be flexible, ranging anywhere from verbatim to a brief summary, depending on the needs of the particular meeting. Above all, the focus of minutes needs to be on the issues at hand, and not on people. The minutes can also read more like a story than a formal roman-numerals-type report. Here again, it will depend on who the audience is. Decisions made should be placed in **boldface** or ALL CAPS, so they stand out- ditto for follow-ups. Below is a sample of meeting minutes from a work group.

**Fictitious County Board of Health
Metro Air Pollution Control Board Meeting Minutes
Administration Building
123 22nd St., Anytown, GA
April 1, 2008 3:00 pm**

A public hearing of the Anytown Metro Air Pollution Control Board was called to order April 1, 2008, at 3:02p.m. in the Board Room of the Anytown Metro Air Pollution Control District, 123 22nd St., by Chair Joe Smith. Board members Lee Howard, and Jane Brown, were also present.

1. General Statement, Rules, and Purpose

Chair Smith read the opening announcement, rules, and purpose of the Public Hearing, which was to review twenty proposed regulations comprising the Strategic Toxic Air Reduction (STAR) Program. These proposed regulations are listed on the agenda for today's public hearing.

The Board will be taking comments on all the STAR Program regulations at once rather than take comments one regulation at a time. Mr. Jon Tyler, District Secretary-Treasurer, said that approximately four people have submitted a card identifying that they would like to make a statement at today's public hearing.

Meeting Minutes Continued.

2. Strategic Toxic Air Reduction (STAR) Program Regulations

Mr. Tyler explained that these regulations have been discussed with the Board in several different forums, therefore, the Air Pollution Control District (District) will not, at this time, summarize the proposed regulations. Mr. Tyler said that the District has received a significant number of written comments on the proposed regulations.

3. Public Statements

Mia Self said that as she looks around this room, she sees a room full of folks who have worked long and hard to bring the issue of Anytown air pollution to the forefront. She thanks the Board for its leadership, courage, and commitment to the people of Anytown.

Dr. S. Tinkey said this issue has risen to such a level that, as a lung doctor and member of the medical community, he felt obligated to comment that the STAR Program proposal appropriately addresses a critical public health issue, polluted air that contains the garbage of our industrialized nation's activities.

Tim Dono, said that after months and years in which planning, discussion, and debate have gone into the necessity to develop a comprehensive plan to significantly reduce toxic air pollution within Anytown, it is difficult to think of something new to say.

Reverend D. Pew said it is hard to put your full trust in what is being done, especially when you have been involved with this system for all these years, unless there is a safety net put in place for the people that have been negatively affected for decades by these emissions. He has learned to distrust until the institutions prove to be trustworthy, especially in Anytown and the State of Georgia.

4. Closing

Chair Smith said that the Board appreciates everyone who made comments today. The Board will be looking very carefully at all of the comments after the staff has analyzed them. Thank you very much for your time today, thank you to the District staff members for all their work, and thanks to all the Board members for their time and commitment to the air health of Anytown.

5. Adjournment

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Since minutes stand as the record of a meeting, the secretary has considerable power and responsibility. Therefore the secretary should be someone who is neutral and trusted by all parties. It may be advisable to record the meeting as well has to take notes. When editing the notes for distribution, the secretary may wish to contact various parties to make sure that any paraphrases are correct.

Minutes of the meeting should be readily available to citizens. They can be posted online, filed at the public library, and mailed to key officials and advocates.

Out of class activity: Produce minutes for a public health meeting or hearing

Attend a meeting of a health board or of a special public hearing or meeting in your community. Obtain a copy of the meeting agenda ahead of time and take the time to familiarize yourself with the likely participants. Produce a set of minutes that is as complete as you can make them.

Once you have edited your minutes, share them with one of the key participants and see if she or he agrees that you have captured the essence of the discussion. Then compare the minutes that you have produced with the official minutes that are promulgated by the governing agency.