

5. The Business of Community Council Meetings

Council members decide how often, where and when they will meet so the Council can do the best it can with available time and resources. The meeting schedule should be designed to enable as many members as possible to attend meetings so the Council can be successful in planning and achieving their work plan goals.

5.1 When Councils Meet

Many Councils meet once each month from September to June. Some have Committees that meet regularly during the year, or when needed, to plan and host events. A number of Councils don't meet during peak winter months when travel is more challenging. Some Councils meet on a Saturday; others meet in the late afternoon or early evening.

Most meetings are scheduled for about three hours, and some provide lunch or dinner. Groups meeting on a Saturday often schedule five-hour meetings to take advantage of everyone coming together for a part of the day since members often travel a significant distance. Meeting schedules are influenced by member transportation needs, member availability and meeting place requirements.

5.2 Where Councils Meet

Some Councils use the same location for all meetings so members always know where to go. Other Councils move between communities to accommodate members and / or to help the Council stay in touch with each town's or area's issues. Location is influenced by venue accessibility and the members' access to transportation. For example:

- Is the meeting place on a public transit route such as bus or Skytrain?
- Is it near an airport for people who may need to travel a great distance?
- Are there parking places for members who drive to the meeting?
- Can the meeting place accommodate Council members need to call in (using telephone or Skype)?

Meetings can be held at a local CLBC office or in a community room at a local library or community centre. Posting a sign outside stating that the meeting is a Community Council meeting may invite passers-by to want to know more about the Community Council, thus giving the Council greater community visibility. It is important that whatever space is used, it can support the group to engage in meaningful dialogue. For example:

- Can members easily see each other across the meeting table?
- Is there space to work in small groups if this is needed?
- Is the space comfortable, and will it contribute to conversations where people will feel heard?

5.3 Decision-Making

Council members decide together about their work plans and goals, who they will recommend as members, and any community activities and discussions they will host. Sometimes the Council talks

about CLBC's policies and practices, offering information, ideas and advice to the Integrated Services Manager. Council members agree that in all decision-making they will:

- Listen respectfully to each other's ideas
- Work together to reach agreement on each decision at all possible times
- Accept the majority decision (51% of a membership quorum) if everyone does not agree on a decision
 - ◆ a quorum is the minimum number of members necessary to conduct a group's business. Each group decides what they will accept as a quorum; it is either a % of members (often 51%) or a fixed number (e.g. 8 members out of 15). Groups can meet if they don't have a quorum but **cannot** make decisions that require majority member agreement, for example, decisions about spending money or appointing the Chair and Vice Chair

5.4 Council Meeting Agendas

Meeting agendas are put together by the Council Chair and Integrated Services Manager. Councils that have Committees usually include Committee reports on each meeting agenda. Reminders and agendas are usually sent out by the Council / CLBC administrative staff who receives the upcoming meeting agenda from the Council Chair or Integrated Services Manager.

The agenda should be sent out at least one week before the meeting so members can prepare for the upcoming meeting. This provides time for members who need support to prepare for meetings to get assistance (reading and / or understanding materials sent out for the meeting; thinking ahead of time about some of the issues to be discussed).

5.5 How Councils Communicate with Their Members and with Their Communities

Meeting minutes are taken at all Community Council meetings; some Councils nominate a member to take and distribute meeting minutes; others use the services of a person under contract; still others are supported by a CLBC administrative staff. The person who fulfills this role gets the consent / approval of the Council Chair and Integrated Services Manager before sending minutes out to all Council members.

Meeting minutes document who attended, each agenda item and key discussion points on any decisions and recommendations made. To ensure that minutes help members follow through on work they have agreed to, it is best when minutes are distributed to members within a week of the meeting. Minutes are reviewed by Council members before the next meeting; any necessary corrections are made at the meeting before they are accepted as accurate. Guidelines and a template for Council meeting minutes are found in **Appendix 18**.

Each Council has a webpage on CLBC's website to share information with individuals, family members, community organizations and others. Councils can use the webpage to tell people about upcoming events and discussions, and to show pictures and tell stories about events they host or participate in. Minutes are also posted on the Council's webpage. Christopher Rae, CLBC's Online Content Specialist, can assist Councils to update their webpage. Chris can be reached by email at Christopher.Rae@gov.bc.ca or by phone at 604-619-7023.

5.6 Council Committees

Councils can use Committees to do some of their work. At a minimum, each Council should have a Membership Committee to support recruitment. This will keep recruitment on the Council agenda throughout the year and help Councils to be open to considering new ways to build interest in potential members becoming involved in the work of the Council. Other examples of things a Council Committee might focus on include:

- An event such as a community forum or a presentation on a community inclusion issue
- A particular issue, initiative or theme, such as employment, housing, young people in the criminal justice system or services for aging adults

A Council member can chair a Committee while also drawing Committee membership from the broader community. Inviting non-Council members to sit on a Committee is a good strategy to:

- Increase community awareness about the work of the Council and issues relating to building more inclusive communities
- Strengthen Council member recruitment efforts (working on a Committee may be a smaller or time limited involvement that can lead to interest in supporting and joining Council)

Working on a Council Committee provides both Council and community members opportunities to:

- Celebrate community and individual practices that are inclusive
- Share ideas, concerns, and examples of practices that are not inclusive and join together in developing strategies to address these

5.7 Council Activities and Budget

CLBC gives Community Councils a budget each year. Each Council is informed of its budget by the Integrated Services Manager as close to the beginning of CLBC's new fiscal year (April 1st) as possible. The Council prepares a budget that aligns with its work plan and can include such costs as activities that roll out from the year's planning agenda, Council meetings, child care, respite, member travel including support for Councils members who must travel to meetings from out of town, and member registration at conferences and workshops that align with the Council work plan and mandate.

Information about repaying expenses for individual Council members is found in **Appendix 19**.

Budget planning often includes a review of the previous year's expenses, the current year's work plan and goals, anticipated opportunities, and making choices that reflect both the money available and the Council's priorities.

Each Council is responsible for managing the use of its budget. The Manager will provide the Council with support to develop the budget and, if asked, to track Council expenses. If the Manager provides this support it is recommended that he or she present a budget update at each Council meeting. If a Council member manages the budget independent of the Manager, the member will present a budget update at each Council meeting.

Depending upon the availability of funding, the Council budget may include funding for training, including opportunities for Chairs and Vice Chairs to enhance their skills in leading effective Councils and for members to attend workshops, conferences and other training events related to the Council's work.

5.8 Orientation of new Community Council Members

New Council members receive an orientation from the Council Chair and Integrated Services Manager as soon as possible once he / she is confirmed. The contents covered in the orientation can be found in **Appendix 22**.