

Organized meetings key to communication

Community affairs are important - participate! Remember - ADAPT the contents of this column to suit your group and community needs.

The Public Meeting
"Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success."
Unknown

The public meeting is one way of finding out more about the problem or issue your group is interested in. It also involves your community and gets people's support for your efforts.

The public meeting consists of two-way communication. You explain the problem... people give facts, their experiences, opinions and advice. Then, based on this new information, you explain a plan of action...and people say whether they think it will

work.
The following points may help you, in planning your group's public meeting.

1. Make sure people know about your meeting. Set a date several weeks in advance. Send a news release to local newspapers and radio stations, giving the date, time and place of the meeting, the subject and who to contact to find out more. If your meeting concerns a particular neighbourhood, put up posters or pass out leaflets door-to-door (include the names of some people in your group). Urge your group's members to mention the meeting to their friends and neighbours. Ask local churches and synagogues to announce your meeting to their congregations. Make sure you present the purpose of your

meeting in an interesting way.
2. Invite a well-known community person, involved with your issue, to speak at your meeting. This will draw people who otherwise might not have attended. Be sure your publicity mentions the name of this person and what he/she will speak about.

3. Hold your meeting on a weekday evening (not Friday), and check to see it won't be competing with another important event. Try to find space that is donated for free - in a centrally located school, church, library, municipal building, etc. Don't use a room so large that people get "lost" in it. The room should be well-ventilated, the right temperature, with comfortable seats and good lighting.

4. Select a leader (chairperson) for your

meeting with great care. If no one in your group has the needed experience or confidence, invite a guest leader. This person should be friendly, tactful, neutral (should not push his/her own opinions), patient, fair but firm, able to guide discussion so it stays on topic and doesn't drag, able to listen to what a speaker is really trying to say, and able to summarize and coordinate the various points of view. Your leader should learn as much as possible about the subject to be discussed before the meeting starts.

5. The leader must create a comfortable atmosphere in which everyone feels welcome into the group - that his/her ideas are important. Quiet people should be encouraged to speak out. In a small gathering, each person

can introduce him/herself.
6. Start your meeting with a written background, clearly stating the issue - why you are calling the meeting or starting your group.

7. What do you want from the public meeting? Do other people see your problem as real? More information about the problem? Ideas for solving it? People's support for your group? Volunteers? Plan your meeting accordingly.

8. Your subject should be specific enough that some decisions can be reached, but not so broad that people become overwhelmed. The steps of discussion are:

- a. recognizing and clearly defining the problem
- b. looking at the facts - what is real and what is fiction?
- c. proposing tentative

solutions
d. making suitable decisions.
Use display charts and exhibits, if possible.
9. Keep your meeting short and to-the-point. One to two hours is long enough.

10. One member of your group should take notes of important points of the discussion.

11. Always be guided by what comes out of the meeting. It is easy for you to think you know better than those attending, and to go your own way. This can take away community support, and may even lead to the formation of an opposing group.

12. Before closing the meeting, make sure everyone understands what has been decided and what your group plans to do next. Always set a date - even if approximate - for a follow-up.

13. Try to have refresh-

ments after the meeting. This will encourage people to stay around and get to know each other, and may increase membership in your group.

14. Follow-up makes the difference between action and more hot air in the community! Be sure to get everyone's name, address and telephone number before he/she leaves. Send a report to the proceedings to everyone who attended, and any further notices. If people volunteer to do things, check to see if they are doing what they said they would.

A little knowledge can be a dangerous thing! For a pamphlet containing information and books to read, enclose \$2.00 and write to: The Management and Fund Raising Centre, 123 Edward Street, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario, M5G 1E2.



Canadiana picnic

Earlier this summer Coldwater Canadiana hosted an enormous picnic and barbecue - an annual affair at the historical site in Coldwater. All items in

the old homestead's gift shop are now discounted as the organizers prepare to close shop for the fall and winter.
Staff photo

Coldwater group preserves heritage

by Murray MacAdam

There was talk in the early 1960's of demolishing the unusually well preserved log cabin along the river in Coldwater, along Highway 12. The land and the building were for sale and no government body, museum or historical society ventured an offer to preserve them, largely because of limited funds.

Thus was formed Coldwater Canadiana, a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the heritage of the area and in particular to restoring the old log cabin. The Woodrow Homestead had stood on its original foundations for more than 100 years and the Coldwater group was intent on preserving it.

In 1966, under the driving force of Ruth Woodworth, a retired Coldwater school teacher, a group of residents borrowed money to buy the homestead and about an acre of land surrounding the old home and fronting on the river.

Its charter declared that Coldwater Canadiana is dedicated to the preservation of pioneer history; its objective is to fully restore the Woodrow Homestead and preserve the house as a museum honouring the pioneer families of the district, and as a cultural

centre for arts and crafts. The purchase of the home though, was only the first step of a long, arduous road that has seen volunteers contribute hundreds of hours tearing down the plaster that hid the beautifully preserved logs, to restoring new sections and laying new floors. The fieldstone in the original single room of the homestead was laid with "the blood, sweat and tears" of volunteers mixing with sand and water. It was an example of dedication that can never be measured or fully appreciated.

Needless to say, there are sizeable expenses that must be met by the association. Memberships in Coldwater Canadiana help defray some of the costs, as do sales of gifts and handicraft items from the gift shop in the Woodrow Homestead.

The shop sells a little of everything - Eskimo and Indian crafts, some of which come from the local area, miniature china, and lots of antique china, knitting and crocheting, quilts and toys. It's open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day except for Monday. Home baking is often sold on the weekends. Coldwater Canadiana also runs historical tours through the summer and sponsors

a September supper. The second of this summer's historical tours will be held on August 17. The tour will leave the log house and take in historical sites and views in Tay and Tiny Townships. The price is \$2.50 per person. The tour will last about three hours.

Chicken supper. The second of this summer's historical tours will be held on August 17. The tour will leave the log house and take in historical sites and views in Tay and Tiny Townships. The price is \$2.50 per person. The tour will last about three hours.

Chicken suppers will be held on September 10 and 11 from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. each day at the log house. The suppers, which will feature only home-made food, include delicious desserts.

Coldwater Canadiana would eventually like to turn the Woodrow Homestead into a museum. The group has acquired quite a lot of pioneer furniture, utensils and clothing that could be used for the museum. Much remains to be done, though, before this goal can be realized.



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