

## **URB 291: Suburbia**

### **Public Meeting Observation**

During the semester, students are required to attend a local suburban government council/board meeting (e.g., city council, park district, library district, school district, zoning board). A list of local government public meetings is posted on the course blackboard site. Most meetings are in the evenings, and typically last 1-2 hours. Examples of previous student memos are also posted on the course blackboard site.

Prior to attending the meeting, students should read the minutes of previous meetings and news reports about pertinent issues facing the government entity.

During the meeting students should take detailed notes. Be sure to collect any materials distributed at the meeting for reference. Students should pay special attention to the issues addressed and report on any votes and policy decisions made during the meeting. Be sure to explain the structure of the deliberative process used to collect citizen input, and discuss what, if any, outcome resulted. Answering the following questions during the meeting will help you gather information for your memo:

Where/When is the meeting being held?

How many people are in attendance?

What are the ages and demographics of those attending?

Are those in attendance representative of the suburb? Why or why not?

Who has the responsibility for running the meeting?

Are those in charge using formal procedures (Robert's Rules) to conduct business? If so, describe the process

What are the agenda items/topics?

How much time is spent on each topic?

Did the board/council address anything controversial?

Are the people in the room engaged?

Are the decision makers thoughtful and interested in different views/opinions?

Did the board/council vote on anything? If yes, on what and what was the outcome?

Is there opportunity for citizens to participate? Did citizens participate?

Did anything about the meeting surprise you?

After attending the meeting, each student will submit an informational memo describing the suburb, the council/board, and date/purpose of the meeting. Be sure to include a copy of the meeting agenda with your memo. Memos should include describe the council/board, including information about the power/jurisdiction of the council/board.

As this assignment is designed to help students understand how the public can be involved in local government decision-making, students are encouraged to participate in these meetings and ask questions.

Your memo should be no more than two pages in length and double-spaced in a twelve-point font.