

Comparing Cities' Council Processes

Written by

Wednesday, 16 January 2008 02:20

The action last week by the Davenport City Council to move all its meetings to Wednesdays sparked some controversy, less for the substance of the day change than the swiftness with which it was done. (See "Big Hat, No Cattle," *River Cities' Reader* Issue 666, January 9-15, 2008.) Arthur Anderson filed a formal complaint on Friday, claiming "violations of the Council Rules of Order, Robert's Rules of Order, state law, the cities [sic] special charter, and the public's trust." He has requested a formal written response.

By doing away with meetings on three different days (committee meetings on Thursdays, committee of the whole on Mondays, and city council on Wednesdays), Davenport compressed its process significantly.

Committee-of-the-whole meetings will be held at 5:30 p.m. on the first and third Wednesday of each month; the city-council meetings will be held at 5:30 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesdays. Committee meetings will be held during a committee-of-the-whole recess.

This makes Davenport's cycle resemble those of the other Quad Cities. Now only Bettendorf holds its public council meetings on multiple days during the week. Its city council meets every other Tuesday beginning at 7 p.m. Committee of the whole meets the preceding day beginning at 5 p.m.

In Moline, the committee of the whole meets the first four Tuesdays of each month at 6:30 p.m., followed immediately by a city-council meeting. There are no meetings the third Tuesday in June, the second Tuesday in July, and the first Tuesday in August.

East Moline's city council meets the first and third Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m., with Tuesday meetings when Monday is a holiday. Committee of the whole meetings directly follow the city council.

In Rock Island, city-council meetings are held Mondays at 6:45 p.m., with study sessions starting at 5 p.m. The council does not meet the last Monday of each month, and only meets the second and fourth Mondays in July and August.

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On the plus side, Davenport's new schedule is simpler than the old one, and that will encourage more public participation.

But Davenport leaders were also trying to address a long-standing complaint that the city's protracted public process somehow made it look foolish.

I expect that they'll discover quickly that the process isn't responsible for the appearance of buffoonery. That fault lies wholly with the people involved.