
Tips for Planning a Meeting

It is helpful to have an organizing committee set the agenda and a general direction for the first large neighborhood meeting. Oftentimes, a group will start out with a large meeting that has no direction, no chairperson, and no agenda other than a discussion of the issue. The resulting confusion from such a meeting can be frustrating to the initiators, alienating to potential members, and wasteful of a lot of good energy.

When you are ready to have that first neighborhood-wide meeting, here are a few ideas to help you plan it.



Arrange for the use of a church basement, school or community center within your area. If you have a choice, choose a room that is a bit too small for the crowd you are expecting. A group of 50 can get lost in a room meant for 200; whereas, that same group in a room meant for 40 will feel a greater sense of unity and closeness (although it might get a bit stuffy).



While it is always difficult to choose a good meeting time, it is generally a good idea to schedule the meeting during the early evening (around 7:00). If possible, make arrangements to transport interested seniors that are without a ride to the meeting.



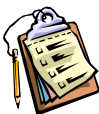
Prepare a flyer that states the time, place, date and purpose of the meeting. If there is a quick-copy printer in the neighborhood, ask if they will donate the printing. If not, the city will make up to 200 black and white copies for you for the purpose of advertising this first meeting.



The organizing committee should personally distribute flyers throughout the neighborhood. Be prepared to do a lot of talking. Also, if appropriate, check with the principal of the elementary school in your area about sending flyers home with children. And don't forget to include merchants, ministers, and others who work in the neighborhood.



At this first meeting, it will help if special attention is given to the setup of chairs, etc. Since it is possible that many people will need to get acquainted, make it easy for them by arranging the chairs so that people have to look at each other. Post a map of the neighborhood that is easy to read, with the tentative boundary and areas of concern (if applicable) clearly marked. You can obtain a map from the Fargo Planning Department. If you can, have coffee or other light refreshments available and allow time for mingling.



Follow a prepared agenda and give everyone a chance to speak. If there are several issues, vote to prioritize them. Obviously, some of the problems can be solved almost immediately, while others will require months and maybe years of effort. It is best to have a steady stream of small projects to make the group feel successful, as well as one or two big projects.



End the meeting by giving committee assignments to deal with the problems identified. If the tone of the meeting has been sincere and enthusiastic, you will have ample volunteers.