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Local Government and Town Hall Meetings

Local governments govern cities and towns in a state. They are in charge of issues that only affect their specific communities. Local governments oversee schools, libraries, and parks within a city. They also look after the streets to make sure they are clean and make laws to keep people in their cities safe! For example, a local government makes sure streetlights are replaced when they burn out.

Local leaders, like mayors and aldermen, are elected to run these governments. An alderman is an elected leader chosen by the people in a district or ward. They represent the people in a community and are in charge of carrying out the wishes of the people who live in their district.



Follow the steps below to learn about the importance of aldermen in a community.

Step 1: Learn about Being an Alderman

Read the story attached about being an alderman. Then, answer the questions.

1. How is an alderman different from the President of the United States? How is an alderman similar to the President of the United States?

2. What are town hall meetings, and why are they important?

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3. Which of these issues is an alderman likely to work on? Fill in the circle under your choice.

a.

Discussing the need for a new recycling center in a district

b.

Changing the name of the state

c.

Declaring war with another country

4. What could happen if people weren't allowed to attend town hall meetings and share their opinions?

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Step 2: Making a Flyer For a Town Hall Meeting

Imagine that you are an alderman who is designing a flyer for an upcoming town hall meeting. Create a flyer on a separate piece of paper or on a computer. Your flyer will address issues facing your community. You can make up your own issues or you can use real issues that are currently affecting your community. Your flyer must include the following:

- Name of the local government (ex. Naperville City Council).
- Where and when the meeting will take place.
- 2-3 reasons people should come to the town hall meeting.
- 1-2 issues that will be discussed at the meeting.
- List of questions that will be answered during the meeting about the issues being discussed. For example, if your issue is whether to put in a new playground downtown, you might need to answer questions about how much the playground will cost or how much space it will take up.

The background image shows the exterior of a grand, ornate City Hall building. The building is light-colored with intricate architectural details, including a large arched entrance with a decorative facade. The words "CITY HALL" are visible above the entrance. A set of stone steps leads up to the entrance. A green street lamp is visible on the left side of the steps.

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Meet Tyler!

Hello! My name is Tyler, and I am an alderman. An alderman is a leader in a ward or district. A ward or district is a smaller area of a city. For example, Saint Louis, Missouri has 28 wards.



Aldermen are elected, meaning people vote on who should become aldermen. Here are some things that aldermen do:

- *Manage a budget*

A budget determines how much money a city has to spend and how much a district might get to improve the community. For example, new street lamps might be needed on dark streets. Aldermen help to keep track of how much money the ward spends on different projects.

- *Build public works*

Public works are structures found in a city. The structures help make a city safe and enjoyable to live in. For example, water and sewage pipes are public works that keep a city clean and safe. Other public works include bicycle lanes or parks. Aldermen make recommendations about what public works should be built or fixed in a city.

- *Serve on committees*

A committee is a group of people that work on a specific project. For example, aldermen can serve on a committee about public health. This committee makes sure that a town is a safe and healthy place for people to live. The committee might talk about creating a new law that people cannot smoke cigarettes by playgrounds.

Why I Became an Alderman

I decided to become an alderman because I want to help make improvements in my community. I also want to share my opinion about how my ward can be better! Below is one issue I care about right now!

Issue:

There are a lot of car accidents in our town. There have been a lot of drivers who are driving too fast and crashing into other cars.

My Opinion:

We should add speed bumps on the roads so cars have to slow down. As a dad of two young kids, I think we should add speed bumps so that our community is a safe place where kids can play outside.



Preparing For a Town Hall Meeting

Right now, I am preparing for a town hall meeting. A town hall meeting is a meeting that is open to the public to attend.

This means that anyone can come to the meeting to ask questions, talk about concerns, or share ideas. For example, people might come with a question like, "Why has the city not cleaned up the trash in the park?"

I am passionate about answering questions from people who live in my ward. Here are a few examples of things that people wanted to talk about at our last town hall meeting!



Prateek:

Prateek wants to know more about the addition of the new dog park. Prateek does not have a dog. He cannot believe that the city wants to spend \$30,000 on building a dog park. He thinks that the money for the dog park should be spent on something more important.

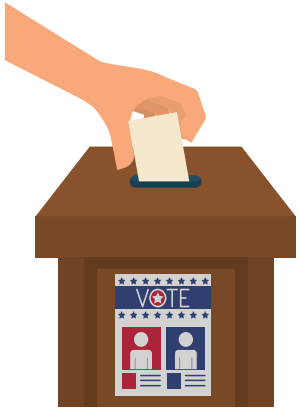


Penelope:

Penelope is unsure about new speed bumps being added to her street. She understands that the speed bumps will make streets safer for kids. But, she knows that it is expensive to add speed bumps and isn't sure if the city should spend money on that.

Why Town Hall Meetings are Important

Town hall meetings are an important part of a democracy. A democracy is a type of government where people elect their leaders. In a democracy, people also have the responsibility to give their opinions on issues in their community.



Attending a town hall meeting is one way to participate in a democracy and give your opinion!



Preparing for the Town Hall Meeting

To prepare for the town hall meeting, I am going to make an agenda. An agenda is a list of items that people will talk about at the meeting. Take a look at the agenda I created!

Town Hall Meeting Agenda May 15th, 2019

- Discuss the results from a town survey. In the survey, people gave their opinion on whether they think a new dog park should be built.
- Decide if people should be fined if they are caught littering. A fine is a payment for breaking a law.
- Give updates on the budget. This year, the town has extra money to spend on improving roads. The town will vote on whether to use money to fix potholes. A pothole is a hole in the road that can cause damage to cars.
- Ask people if they have any other concerns that did not get brought up earlier in the meeting. This will be a time for open questions.

My next step is to create a flyer so that people know there is a town hall meeting coming up. I want people to come to the meeting and share their ideas and concerns. In the United States, it is people's responsibility to participate in their local government. One way that people can participate in their government is by coming to town hall meetings!