

LWVMC Commission Watch Guidelines

Background

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

As Mason County League members attend and observe the Mason County Commission briefings and meetings, we become the “eyes and ears” of the League by learning how government works and observing, identifying, and reporting issues that are relevant to the League and to the community. Observers attend commission meetings, note what happens at the meetings, and report back to the League periodically.

Observers provide a valuable service to the community. They help ensure that citizens are aware of the decisions that impact their lives, and they promote government transparency and accountability. In addition, the presence of observers lets officials know that someone is watching to ensure that government agencies are fulfilling their responsibility to be transparent and accountable to the citizenry.

Individuals may speak at meetings as they wish, but *always* identifying themselves as “*speaking for myself.*” A League member may speak *for the League* if, and only if, she is representing a specific position that has been agreed upon by the local, state, and/or national League.

Preparation—wear your LWV badge! (Sign-up sheets will be available at LWVMC meetings, but anyone can attend any meeting at any time.)

1. Do your homework.

Check <http://www.co.mason.wa.us/index.php#agendas> for meeting agendas and supporting materials.

If you have a question about any meetings, contact 360-427-9670 x419 (M-Th, 8-5).

Briefings with department heads are at 9am in Commission Chambers on Mondays but may begin earlier if Executive Session ends early. Briefings may also be schedule at any time M-T-W. Check the website for agendas and times.

Regular Commission meetings are at 9am in Commission Chambers on first, second, and third Tuesdays, and at 6pm on fourth Tuesdays. On fifth Tuesdays an informal meeting is held at 6pm in Belfair at the School District Office.

2. Pay special attention to the content and substance of the meeting agenda.

a. What items were approved/disapproved, postponed, or otherwise considered and disposed of that are of interest to the League? **This is the heart of the Commission Watch activity!**

b. Where possible, relate each item to LWV program areas or topics or League positions, and identify any that deserve immediate attention for LWVMC.

Commission Watch Guidelines

2

3. Make notes about the meeting itself.
 - a. What type of meeting was this: briefing, regular weekly meeting, public hearing?
 - b. Which commission members are present? Did any come late/leave early?
 - c. Which principal administrative officers or staff were present (attorney/legal counsel, fiscal officer, department head or administrator, etc.)
 - d. What media coverage attended?
 - e. What was the size and composition of the audience--individual citizens or groups with special interest, students, observers from other groups, etc.?

4. Describe the conduct of the meeting.
 - a. Are officials attentive and alert?
 - b. Does there appear to be adequate discussion of issues? Do decisions appear to be already made before the meeting?
 - c. Are visitors treated with respect and courtesy? Do speakers have ample opportunity to present their complaints/requests?
 - d. Is the atmosphere generally welcoming and friendly? Are the physical facilities adequate?

5. Make note of any other ideas or thoughts you had that seem relevant to LWVMC programs or topics of interest.