



**West Virginia Municipal League**

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**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK  
OCTOBER 20-24, 2014**

**Dear Municipal Official:**

**Enclosed is your Municipal Government Week information packet for 2014.**

**The third week of October each year was proclaimed, “Municipal Government Week” by the Governor. This year the dates will be October 20-24, 2014, it is our eighteenth annual event and we need your support.**

**Please take the time to read through the enclosed information and pass it on to the person(s) responsible for putting together this activity.**

**Call us if you have any questions and as always, share your ideas and news releases with us.**



**19th ANNUAL  
MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK  
OCTOBER 20-24, 2014**

***Consider This:*** “Public officials at one level of government are blamed for policies enacted by others...City complaints are often directed to the wrong department...Many city residents cannot identify any of their locally elected officials...Municipal elections often have voter turnout rates that are half those of state and national elections despite the fact that one vote in a mayoral race has far more impact than a single vote in a state or national contest. And, all too often, citizens are awakened from their apathy and impelled to vote only when an issue directly affects them, often enacting public policy in an atmosphere of emotion and animosity rather than decision based on meaningful debate”. **Does this sound all too familiar???**

*Local government serves a unique purpose in the American democratic system. As a laboratory for participation in a representative democracy, local government contributes stability and an essential training ground for the practice of self-governance at the state and national levels.*

*Local government also distinguishes our democracy from all others through its independence, its variety of forms, its sheer numbers, through the lack of hierarchy found in other levels of government, and by the extent of agreement on basic values among citizens required to make community decisions.*

*As the level of government closest to the people, local government offers its citizens the best opportunity to be heard and to influence the course of our communities. **But self-governance is inherently dependent on the awareness of citizens and the level of commitment they have to participating in government.***

# **MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK**

**OCTOBER 20-24, 2014**

Through the WV Municipal League's efforts, the third week in October has been proclaimed Municipal Government Week in West Virginia. Although this effort should be on-going, participation in Municipal Government Week serves as a focal point and provides a unified statewide opportunity to educate our citizens on what municipal government is all about.

One of the most successful activities that has occurred during the nineteen years that the MGW program has been in place, is municipal participation in an open house and mock council meetings with area students and citizens. This effort provides students and citizens an opportunity to recognize and understand the government in their community. Many municipal officials chose to make visits to the classroom to talk about municipal government and some municipalities invited classrooms to visit city/town hall. Early contact with area schools will help them make time available in their school calendars. This interaction with schools generated a fair amount of press coverage. Guidelines for conducting mock council meetings are included in this packet.

We have provided a sample local press release and a certificate that can be presented to the school in recognition of their participation in Municipal Government week. The certificates will be available to municipalities to give to participating schools whenever mock council meetings are being held, not just during Municipal Government Week.

The greater the number of municipalities that participate in Municipal Government Week, the greater the educational impact on our communities and interest from the media. The League would like to issue another press release this year and we will need to know which municipalities will be participating and the activities that could be conducted during MGW Week and an activity outline sheet. Please fill it out and return it to us by the date indicated on the form.

Whether your municipality provides all, most or some service delivery, it is increasingly obvious that municipal residents do not often associate these quality of life provisions with their municipal government. It is up to municipal officials to get the word out, "**MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WORKS**" **in their community and for their community**. WV municipalities working together through the Municipal League can make that message a strong one.

# **MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK**

## **IDEAS FOR OBSERVING MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK**

There are many ways in which your municipality can observe Municipal Government Week and generate involvement and enthusiasm in your community. The following is a list of suggestions to get you started:

### **Hold an Open House**

- \* Announce the “IF I WERE MAYOR, I WOULD...” essay contest. A copy of the brochure is attached for your use.

- \* Invite local civic groups, business leaders and community residents to the municipal building for an open house and informal question-and-answer sessions with elected and appointed officials.

- \* Invite municipal employees to be on hand to greet visitors and talk about their important jobs.

- \* Highlight major projects, new programs and any efforts by the municipality to save the tax payers dollars!

- \* Put some municipal equipment and replacement parts on display and attach the year and purchase price.

- \* Invite local and state legislators, distinguished citizens in the community, and others you want to be certain to attend. Make sure to invite the citizen(s) that are always complaining! This could be a good, non-confrontational way to start changing their attitude about community government.

- \* Notify the media well in advance so that they can cover the event.

### **Honor Community Leaders**

- \* Plan an official ceremony to honor a past or present municipal official, employee or community volunteer who has shown outstanding dedication to the municipal government cause and has made significant contributions to the municipality.

- \* Honor the selected individual(s) with a plaque, certificate or award.

- \* Contact your local newspaper about doing a feature story on the person(s) you have selected to receive the award.

## **Encourage Media Coverage, Media Communication**

- \* Notify local newspapers and radio and television stations of your plans to observe Municipal Government Week at least one week beforehand.
- \* Find out your local paper's copy deadlines and get information to reporters on time. Make use of the WVML sample news release in this information packet.
- \* Use your municipal newsletter to let local residents know about your activities during Municipal Government Week. If your municipality does not have one, use this event as an opportunity to begin one.
- \* Put municipal government trivia questions in the newspaper each day that week as a fun way to promote municipal government awareness and educate citizens.
- \* Participate in local cable or radio public service segments to talk about municipal government and your special activities that week.

## **Schedule Special Events-Examples**

- \* Conduct mock council meetings with area students in city/town hall or in the classroom.
- \* Create a municipal quiz game for area students.
- \* Have a municipality spring clean-up and repair week. Involve students, scouts, civic groups and other types of volunteers.
- \* Have a special dog and bicycle registration that week to promote awareness of those services (or ordinances) in your municipality.
- \* Offer tours of municipal facilities. (This could be an excellent student field trip). Highlight your Public Works Department.
- \* Hold a parade. Show various types of municipal equipment.
- \* If your municipality does not have a seal, use a contest format during Municipal Government Week to select a design.
- \* Have an old fashioned picnic in the park. Invite businesses and civic groups to co-sponsor the event.

# SAMPLE

*Press Release*

*For Immediate Release*

*(One Week Prior To MGW Week)*

## **CITY/TOWN OFFICIALS CELEBRATE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK**

The third week in October of each year has been proclaimed Municipal Government Week in West Virginia. This year Municipal officials are recognizing the week of October 20-24, 2014, with local proclamations as well.

Many activities will be taking place in cities and towns across the state.

*\*\*Personalize the following according to your municipality's plans for MGW\*\* For example, elected officials will be conducting mock council meetings with area students in an effort to promote student recognition and understanding of the government in their communities. The exercise will help students to become informed, responsible and involved citizens.*

Municipalities are the level of government closest to the citizens they serve. From police and fire protection, to water & sewer service, cities provide services for a better quality of life in West Virginia.

For more information regarding Municipal Government Week, contact  
\_\_\_\_\_ (person responsible in your municipality).

# MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WEEK

## Activity Sheet

Please type or print. Return to the West Virginia Municipal League A.S.A.P. at: 2020 Kanawha Blvd., E., Charleston, WV 25311 or Fax: (304) 342-5586.

**MUNICIPALITY** \_\_\_\_\_

**CONTACT PERSON** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE ( )** \_\_\_\_\_

**MOCK COUNCIL MEETING: YES** \_\_\_\_ **NO** \_\_\_\_

**SCHOOL VISITS** \_\_\_\_\_

**GRADE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCATION ( check one ):**

**SCHOOL** \_\_\_\_\_ **CITY/TOWN HALL** \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER ( please specify ):** \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER ACTIVITIES:** **YES** \_\_\_\_ **NO** \_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITY** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE** \_\_\_\_\_

**DETAILS** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## FACILITATOR GUIDE

# Mock Advocacy Activity

### ACTIVITY AT A GLANCE...

**Objectives:** To let youth practice for future advocacy meetings with policymakers while enabling them to build critical thinking and interpersonal communication skills

**Time:** 60-90 minutes

**Space:** One large room, preferably with 2-3 smaller breakouts; you will divide into small groups that will preferably work out of earshot of each other

**Materials:** Student handout that follows (*Mock Advocacy Activity*)

If your group of youth plans to advocate on a particular issue, they will probably be called on to meet with an elected official in order to seek support for their cause. This activity enables youth to role-play policymaker meetings, using either hypothetical topics or real ones.

Please note that youth will need the student handout that is part of this activity

### Preparatory Work

As the facilitator, review the student handout in advance. Decide whether you want to divide into three groups or fewer. Also decide whether you will use the sample policies or one of your own.

Please note that the sample issues offered in the handout assume an introductory knowledge of smart growth and community planning.

### Step 1: Divide into Groups and Distribute Handouts

Divide into small groups of 4-5 youth each and assign a scenario to each group. Instruct each group whether it should pick from the sample policies or use a real one you provide. If you have more than twelve students, you can ask more than one group to work on the same scenario.

In each group, assign two or more youth to the “Policymaker Team,” with the youth selecting their own roles (i.e., mayor and chief of staff). Assign the remaining students in each group to play the roles of advocates seeking policymaker action regarding their issue. Give each group about 15-20 minutes to prepare a strategy for a mock meeting.

### Step 3: Hold the Mock Meetings

Like real policymaker meetings, your mock meetings shouldn’t take longer than about 15 minutes each. Each side should interact as though they are meeting for the first time. Remind students to introduce themselves and be courteous! Explain that depending on the policymaker’s position, the issue may be resolved during the meeting, it may be set aside for later discussion, or the request may be flatly denied. Instruct the students to be prepared to discuss next steps, if appropriate.

### Step 4: Debrief

After the mock meetings, bring all the students together. Discuss what just happened and what the youth learned. What would they do differently? Were their methods of communication effective? Did the meeting reveal holes in their information? Should they do more research in future? Encourage them to critique each other and offer constructive criticism.



## STUDENT HANDOUT

# Mock Advocacy Activity

This activity asks you to role-play advocacy meetings with policymakers. In small groups you will develop a strategy for your stance in the meeting and then you will hold a mock meeting, lasting up to 15 minutes. Your facilitator will assign you to a scenario and also to either a “policymaker team” or an “advocates team.”

## Questions to Consider

### Questions for Policymaker Teams to Consider:

What is the advocate likely to ask you? What do you think s/he wants? Do you want to take a stand on this issue? Who are other interest groups that might urge a different stance than this one? What pressures might you face from other political bodies (city council, legislature, governor) if you take action on this issue? What do you want to get out of the meeting?

### Questions for Advocates Teams to Consider:

What do you want to get out of the meeting? How will you open the meeting? Does the policymaker have information that might help your cause? What questions will you ask? What materials should you bring? What specific course of action do you want the policymaker to take? Knowing that s/he likely won't be able to commit to that action on the spot, what tone will you take so s/he will look favorably on your request later?

## Meeting Scenarios

### Scenario #1: Meeting with State Legislator and Staffer(s)

*Sample Policy Issues: (select one of the following, or use one of your own)*

- A - Would provide financial incentives to local governments who emphasize “transit-oriented” development.
- B - Would authorize the state purchase of five thousand acres of environmentally sensitive coastal land to keep it from being developed as a new upscale suburb.
- C - Would launch an education campaign to educate citizens and business owners about the benefits of “walkable communities.”

**Policymaker Profile:** You are a highly conservative **state legislator**. Your staff knows that you rarely support legislation on environmental issues. You are more interested in legislation as it applies to businesses because business owners are among your main constituents; there are many small and large businesses in your district.

**Advocates Profile:** As advocates, you want this legislator to vote for the bill because you know it needs support from the conservative side if it has any chance of passing. You need to make this legislator believe that this bill will benefit the state's communities and their residents, including those within his/her district.

### Scenario #2: Meeting with City Council Members

*Sample Policy Issues: (select one of the following, or use one of your own)*

- The creation of an Urban Services Boundary that would keep new development close to downtown and the expansion of a program that supports the construction of affordable housing
- Changing the city zoning ordinance to allow higher-density, mixed-use neighborhoods and reducing taxes for developers who want to build these kinds of projects
- Spending city transportation funds on bike paths and sidewalks that would connect all neighborhoods to downtown

**Policymaker Profile:** Your **city council** has been approached by several advocacy groups in the past few weeks that have different ideas about what is important for your city's development. Each has proposed strategies for community development based on their opinions. Now, yet another advocacy group is trying to pitch a proposal that they say is in the best interest of your city. You wonder how to decide which community development priorities are most appropriate and cost effective.

**Advocacy Profile:** As advocates, you need to sell your opinions/ideas as the best for this city. This city needs to develop the community according to Smart Growth principles and you want the planning commission to understand that these principles are well worth spending money to support and promote. You want to see the quality of life in the community preserved and feel the proposed policy change will help accomplish this.

### **Scenario #3: Meeting with Planning Commission Members**

*Sample Policy Issues: (select one of the following, or use one of your own)*

- Create a set of building design standards that make sure all new construction “fits in” with the historic look of the town
- Change the zoning of downtown to encourage more housing built near existing offices and shopping
- Block the approval of new development that consists of low-density strictly residential and a “big box” retail center

**Policymaker Profile:** As **planning commission** members, you know that you've made land-use decisions that do not advance Smart Growth ideals. There has been pressure in recent years to move toward methods of sustainable living but you know developers are hesitant to spend money for features like sidewalks or to build more dense neighborhoods they fear won't sell. You are also concerned that housing prices are becoming unaffordable for long-time residents and their children.

**Advocates Profile:** As advocates, you know that your city is growing with great speed. You want to take measures now to prevent sprawl and all of its consequences in order to improve the quality of life. You promote Smart Growth methods because you want to make sure that historical aspects of the city are not lost, that citizens can maintain active lifestyles, and that the city's growth occurs at a sensible pace.

The West Virginia Municipal League is sponsoring the "If I Were Mayor, I Would..." essay contest. The contest is open to all **7th grade students** in West Virginia. The League wants students to learn more about municipal government and this is a great way to achieve that goal.

Three winners will be chosen from **7th grade students** across West Virginia. Each will receive an award plaque and \$250 for use toward a savings bond or their college savings fund.

The deadline for entries is November 26, 2014, with essays received at the WV Municipal League office no later than 5:00 p.m. on this day. Winners will be notified in writing by mail.

To enter, complete an entry form (copies are acceptable) and attach to your **one page, hand written** essay. The students name, teacher's name and school name must appear at the top of the essay.

## "If I were Mayor, I would..."

### Essay Contest Entry Form

(Entry form must be complete)

Students Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Students Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Students Home Ph.# \_\_\_\_\_

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies/Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: \_\_\_\_\_

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You will also be able to download the contest brochure from WVML's website [www.wvml.org](http://www.wvml.org). This contest is open to all West Virginia **7th grade students** enrolled during the 2014-2015 school year.

**Essay Contest Entries will be evaluated using the following criteria:**

- 1. Legibility**
- 2. Essay relation to contest topic.**
- 3. Grammar.**
- 4. Knowledge of the Role of Mayor.**

