

February 7, 2014

City of Eagleville Tennessee
Mayor Sam Tune
108 South Main Street
Eagleville, Tennessee 37060

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Mayor Tune:

In follow up to our recent communications regarding work sessions, the following amendment to Section 1-101 of the Eagleville Code of Ordinances is presented to formally establish this practice if it is of interest to the city council to pursue (new text):

1-101. Time and place of regular meeting, work session. The city council shall hold regular monthly meetings at 7:00 P.M. on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the town hall.

Regular work sessions of the city council shall be held at 7:00 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month or as otherwise scheduled by the city manager. Nothing precludes the holding of a special work session as the need may dictate. The city manager may cancel a work session when no items are ready for board review. No official action shall be taken at work sessions.

By fixing a date certain – just like has been done for regular meetings – all members of city council will be aware of upcoming work session dates and can arrange their personal schedules so as to minimize conflicts during the year. This practice also provides the manager and staff a known schedule to work toward to bring items of discussion to the council in a planned and orderly fashion. I've suggested a schedule that will distance the work session by two weeks from your regular meeting – that provides time between meetings for staff to prepare the material for action or discussion. The same starting time is shown to avoid confusion as to when meeting and work sessions commence – but that can be whatever works best for the council. Some cities hold work sessions earlier in the evening and often times in a conference room setting to clearly distinguish between the purpose of a regular meeting and work session. My experience has proven that holding work sessions in a conference room around a table, rather than sitting in the council chambers at the dais, is the most effective setting to advance conversation and discussion between council and staff in the informal review of items placed on the work session agenda.

It is my recommendation that the work sessions be instituted to provide an opportunity to review complex or involved projects or issues, or to introduce topics requiring special attention and discussion of the board before the matter is placed on a future agenda for formal action. Typically a work session will include not more than 3 or 4 items; sometimes they will be limited to just a single item such as a review of the proposed budget.

It is best to not use the work session as a “meeting before the meeting” wherein every item that will be placed on the regular meeting agenda is reviewed first in work session, as such setting can result in much discussion by the council that is often not repeated at the regular meeting. Such broad discourse on agenda items is thus lost to those not attending the work session when the item is formally considered at a subsequent regular meeting when votes are cast. While the work sessions are open to the public, experience shows that fewer residents attend these meetings (since no formal decisions are made) than regular board meetings where your

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citizens know the business of the city will be conducted. So by limiting the work session agenda to a few major topics and issues you will further your goal of a transparent and open government.

Finally, as work sessions are meetings – minutes must be kept. However since no formal action is taken, the minutes should be as concise as the date and time, board members in attendance, items discussed by title/subject, and a statement that no formal action was taken on any item.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss this matter in further detail.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Jeffrey J. Broughton
Municipal Management Consultant

Cc: Amy Von Almen