

December 3, 2003

Honorable Vickie Vineyard, Mayor
City of Blaine
Indian Ridge Road, P.O. Box 85
Blaine, Tennessee 37709-0085

Dear Mayor Vineyard

Enclosed is a resolution outlining general rules of order to be used by the board. It is important that the board recognize that the purpose of the meeting is to conduct the city's business. The order of business provides two separate places on the agenda for citizen comments. The resolution does place a limit on the amount of time citizens are given for their comments. As presiding officer you should enforce the general rules of order and the board should support your efforts.

Board members are available to citizens before and after a business meeting to receive comments for an unlimited period of time. They may and often do call you at home, or even at work, to voice their concerns. When you permit citizens to speak first on the agenda, their comments often get into items that follow on the agenda, and the agenda format is disrupted and changed. The format contained in the resolution in effect provides for a public hearing on items on the agenda prior to the old business and again after new business. You all do not even have to allow citizens to speak at a meeting. The law only requires that you conduct your meetings in public. Most boards are not that restrictive and I recommend that citizens be allowed to speak as outlined in the resolution. I recommend that the board adopt general rules of order that allow for an efficient business meeting with limited citizen participation.

Under the outlined agenda format citizens are not placed on the agenda, they comment during the two citizen comment sections of the agenda. If an item on the agenda is up for discussion by the board, and the board wishes to ask questions of an attendee who has a direct interest in the issue, the presiding officer may permit them to respond to questions or address the issue. A strict time limit should be enforced. This instance should not open the item up for general discussion by other attendees. Other comments should come in the citizen comment sections of the agenda. The presiding officer should enforce this requirement. I recommend the general rules of order included in the resolution.

Please call me if you have questions or comments. I plan to be at the meeting on January 5, 2004.

Respectfully Yours

Ron Darden
Municipal Management Consultant

cc. Aldermen

Enclosure 1