Open Public Meetings Notices And Agendas

A Joint Preliminary Research Project of the eCitizen Foundation and e-Democracy.Org

Home
Vision and Overview
Research
Recommendations
Feedback
Media and Materials
Proposal

Recommendations

A. Guidelines

Public Meeting Notices and Agendas is intended to help local and larger jurisdictions and other interested parties the understanding and best practices and check-lists for creating a healthy ecology of public notices within a larger civic ecology. Towards this we have a few guidelines:

- Jurisdictions should not have to cede identity, jurisdiction or oversight over their public notice systems as part of any contract or terms of service.
  - However, jurisdictions may be held responsible for other sorts of provisions including paying for services and materials necessary to publish and syndicate the notice information.
- Jurisdictions should not limit access to the information that is published for any reason including jurisdiction, constituency, payment, and authentication for any purpose. However, based on sound and reasonable methods, jurisdiction should be encouraged to limit participation to any criteria that is understood, explicit and based on previously instituted rules, laws and regulations.
- Regardless of any additional methods of conveying the information contained in a public meeting notice, there must be a main method which is both human readable and machine processable.
- Aggregators, re-publishers and value add systems must always link and/or cite to the original and authoritative published version without any additional cost or proscriptions regarding the original content.

B. How to Publish an Online and Printable Public Meeting Notice with Agendas

1. Principles:
   - Everything should be at a URL (time/date, location, jurisdiction, agenda items, people)
   - Every section of the page itself should be individually at a URL fragment and authoritatively citable and use embedded self-cite recommendation) so that each can have "Share-Like" functions.
   - Everything should cite to authoritative source and be citable (self-cites)
   - Standards for "Semantic" or "XHTML" for each component (e.g. RDFA for cal/time, microformats for events)
   - Include links to alternative standards (e.g. iCal, RSS, etc)
   - There should be a QR barcode for online, printed and mobile versions and other versions optionally.
   - Every page should use "pop-ups" recommendation ("Preview Online Page Universal Page Standard")
   - Point to the Rules under which the meetings will be held.
2. Processes:
   - The applicable business and work-flow processes should be described with pointers to the full rules, and any examples or "help" available, including:
     - Applicable Procedures (quorum requirements, other rules for each part of meeting);
     - Process for Commenting on Items, etc in advance of meeting.
3. Policies
   - The applicable legal and policy rules should be described with pointers to the full rules, and any examples,

"FAQ" or previous cases or decisions, including rules and policies related to:
    - The extent to which the meeting, or portions or the meeting, are public or are either private or otherwise include restrictions on streaming or re-publishing;
    - The requirements, constraints or other rules related to "identity", including whether participation must be "authenticated" and if so how, whether or when participation or comments may be made under a psudonym or anonymously, and what fair information practices apply to any personally identifiable information of participants in the meeting, including onlookers in a virtual forum;
    - Comment, Participation and Collaboration (including policy and process for entertaining contributions that are not directly germane - e.g. "out of order" or "out of scope" and how those determinations are made for comments and online participation rather than in-meeting live rulings on points of order)
    - Proprietariness and Propriety, including any applicable gift-ban rules on free services, whether an RFP or Public Notice is needed to use Vendor and any licensing, royalty or other ownership-based rules that apply.

4. Business and Functional:
    - **Workflow for Public Employees and Officials** (or authorized agents acting on their behalf) to auto-generate or manually create, amend or replace public meeting notices and agendas.
    - **Required and Recommended Tasks** associated with the meeting notices and agendas should be identified and reduced to explicit tasks, including: to publicize broadly and inform relevant constituencies, etc (e.g. using a check-list and segmented or clustered e-mail lists, social media groups and other channels)
    - **Role of "For Profit" "Non Profit" and other External Entities** in Providing Services and in the Ecology of this information, communication and collaboration.
5. Future Research Directions
    - Standard Markup and Processes for Creating Notices and Agendas Compliant with These Recommendations;
    - Examples of Meeting Notices and Agendas Aspects to Be Modeled and Tested:
        - Notice
        - Agenda
        - Pre-Meeting Phase
        - Meeting Phase
        - Post-Meeting Phase
        - Archive and Access

Home
e-Democracy Project Page
eCitizen Foundation Project Page