The public hearing process: Considerations for local environmental health agencies

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The Public Hearing Process:
Considerations for Local Environmental Health Agencies

by

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B.A., University of Montana, 1981

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA
1989

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August 15, 1989
Date
Acknowledgements

I want to thank the following for their help with this project:

my committee members, Professors Tom Roy, Paul Miller, and Howard Schwartz, for their time, insight and encouragement;

my colleagues at the Missoula City-County Health Department, especially Dan Corti;

the late Walt Koostra, a public health mentor whom I miss;

and my wife, Neva, for her continued encouragement, patience and support.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. Case Study</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Public Hearing Process</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining the Problem</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Analysis</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing an Implementation Strategy</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. Improving Implementation</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk Communication</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizen Attitudes</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Conclusion</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. Introduction

Local environmental health agencies have been called upon to increase their effectiveness in three areas: constituency building, citizen participation, and communication with elected officials and the community at large. Lack of skills and focus in these areas has put the practice of local public health in jeopardy. In a recent report entitled "The Future of Public Health" (Nation's Health 1988), a 26 member committee consisting of national public health leaders stated that one reason many agencies face budget cutbacks, dismantling of programs, and loss of staff is because environmental health practitioners (officials) are not as adept in these three areas as they must be if they are to function well during the next decade.

According to the report, the causes of a "shattered vision" of public health include citizens' ignorance of what public health protection does for them, the difficulty health officials have in communicating to the public or to leaders, and disorganization within public health agencies. The report also identified agency image as a problem, "because a poor image interferes with the capacity of officials to mobilize support from the general public and from political leaders." (Walker 1989)

These concerns fall on the ears of already beleaguered officials. In an era of dwindling resources and cutback
management, agencies often go from crisis to crisis, struggling simply to provide baseline services. As an agency loses budgetary ground, officials rarely find extra time and money to bolster the agency's political effectiveness and its working relationship with citizens. What practical steps can an agency take to respond to the concerns presented in "The Future of Public Health" that are not prohibitively expensive?

Significant opportunities to build a supportive constituency and establish more positive relationships with political and community leaders are readily available to local agencies and are being wasted. The opportunities exist in the public hearing process; I am referring to those proposals and issues which regularly emerge in the course of environmental health practice, which usually require a final public hearing. The issues range from small adjustments in local regulations to large, controversial proposals such as establishing a groundwater district and generating fees from the owners of individual water wells.

Many officials look upon the public hearing process as inconvenient at best. Environmental health professionals usually have strong scientific/technical backgrounds, but less familiarity with areas of study such as citizen participation, public administration, marketing, group process, and public relations. This knowledge is extremely helpful, however, when an official considers ways to take full advantage of the public hearing process. By carefully planning early in the
process, and implementing effective citizen involvement strategies, an agency can achieve many short and long term objectives beyond instituting a solution for the problem at hand.

I have worked in public health at the local level for eight years. This paper is designed to offer an overview of issues related to the public hearing process which may help officials steadily build, during trying times, a better, more effective relationship with the community they serve.

Public Hearings and Local Environmental Health

Local environmental health agencies can be found in one form or another in most counties and larger cities in the United States. Frequently, they are located in local public health departments. An agency can be represented by a single sanitarian operating out of a county courthouse in a rural county or it can consist of a large staff divided into several divisions. Local concerns, organizational size and structure, political and tax support, jurisdictional authority, all vary from locale to locale. In each setting, when attempting to change existing rules or initiate various types of local proposals, an agency is required to bring the issue to a public hearing before the pertinent policy makers, usually a health board and/or elected officials.

The various types of environmental health concerns and proposals which require public hearings also differ; some are
small and only concern an individual group, such as excavators or licensed establishment operators, while others are controversial and galvanize the entire community.

Environmental health proposals are often hotly debated and resisted. This is not surprising. Officials are no strangers to controversy. In the public health arena, an agency frequently requires the restriction of activities that some perceive are basic rights or measures which cost citizens substantial extra money.

The more controversial the issue, the more likely the final public hearing will be filled with angry citizens resisting the proposal. Without careful preparation and citizen involvement strategies, the resistance awaiting a proposal at the final public hearing can be strong enough to kill any chances of the local board approving it. This often results in the loss of considerable effort on the agency's part, not to mention the loss of the ability to tackle the problem the proposal was addressing. Also, the agency can lose standing with political leaders, board members, and key citizens which is difficult to regain.

Ideally, policy makers solicit testimony and opinions from all interested or concerned citizens in the community. All concerned parties are well informed about the proposal and have had considerable input into the process which has shaped the final proposal. The final hearing should be, more or less, a formality, at which representatives of the various
interests formally acknowledge their acceptance of a proposal they have had significant opportunity to shape. Unfortunately, few public hearings occur this way.

Although occasionally the results are disastrous, more often, the results of the average public hearing process are merely adequate. A rule is changed. A measure is passed. However, many opportunities were missed.

This paper proposes that by incorporating several steps and techniques, the public hearing process can become a premier tool to achieve long term goals called for by national public health leaders. The public hearing process can be characterized as consisting of four stages: 1) defining the problem; 2) policy analysis; 3) developing an implementation plan; 4) implementation. Each stage includes steps and considerations which critically influence subsequent stages. An agency, for example, will not work optimally with citizens unless it has anticipated and planned for several factors long before attending any official meeting.

In order to make recommendations about the public hearing process, I have reviewed literature in the fields of public administration and political science. I have also participated in many public hearing processes at the local level. This paper is intended as an overview for someone working in the local environmental health arena.

In order to provide an example of a successful public hearing process which includes many of the recommendations
which follow, I have included a case study which occurred in Missoula, Montana. By carefully including citizens early in the process, and taking extensive steps to inform citizens, a very controversial issue was diffused and essentially settled before the final public hearing.
II. Case Study

During the last decade, the Missoula, Montana City-County Health Department Environmental Health Division, like any agency, has been involved in many public hearing processes. In each case, the way the problem was initially identified and described, the time allowed for the process, the relative extent and quality of policy analysis associated with it, the implementation strategy and how citizens were encouraged and offered opportunities to be involved and included in the process, has varied widely. The following public hearing process was perhaps the most challenging, and most successful, to date. It was not handled solely by the agency. The health officer played a key role, as well as others inside and outside the agency. In the case study, the agency will be referred to as the Health Department, or department.

Background

Missoula is a community of 65,000 located in the mountainous region of western Montana. Positioned in a narrow valley surrounded by high mountains, Missoula's geographical setting forms an airshed which is prone to severe wintertime temperature inversions. An inversion occurs when cooler air is trapped by warmer air above. During a Missoula winter, air quality is dependent on wind and weather fronts passing through the valley, breaking up the inversions. When
inversions form, the airshed fills with trapped pollutants, worsening with each day, until a frontal system of sufficient strength breaks down the inversion. Missoula has experienced several inversions that have lasted over two weeks.

In 1967, the Montana Clean Air Act authorized local implementation of air pollution control programs. If 15% of the registered voters sign a petition, the state Board of Health will grant local agencies authority and partially fund monitoring and enforcement programs. The Health Department and the Air Pollution Control Board assumed that responsibility from the state Air Quality Bureau and began monitoring air quality.

Prior to 1970, industrial sources (primarily paper and plywood mills) were largely responsible for the high levels of total suspended particulate (TSP) measured during winter inversions. Citizen groups were vocal about the problem and pressed for action against this pollution source. By 1974, strict enforcement of standards had reduced air pollutants produced by industry by 90%. Missoula began achieving the federal annual ambient standard for TSP.

In 1973-1974, the cost of energy soared as a result of the Arab oil embargo. Missoula residents, surrounded by an abundant wood resource, turned to residential woodburning for space-heating in order to reduce rising utility bills. Missoula once again failed to meet TSP standards. Winter air quality progressively deteriorated during the rest of the
1970s.

**Defining the problem**

During the winter, Missoula, Montana has air pollution episodes in which the federal standards for TSP and Carbon Monoxide (CO) are violated. The air pollution is visible, unpleasant, and may pose significant health risks. By federal law, the local community or the state is required to develop implementation plans to reduce these levels.

The problem was defined for the local environmental health agency by a number of factors. Monitoring data demonstrated violation of federal standards, which had not, at the time, clearly defined human health risks associated with TSP. The problem was visible enough that Missoula had a well earned statewide reputation for being an unpleasant polluted place in the winter. High volume particulate filters were collecting different types of material from the air, (the material on the filters changed from a light to dark color, looking and smelling suspiciously like chimney soot). The relative size of the particulate was decreasing, which meant it could more easily be inhaled to the deeper recesses of the lungs.

Preliminary evidence suggested that residential woodburning was the main source of the problem. Thousands of Missoulians had switched to wood as a source of heat. During the early 1970's, citizen groups had been victorious in
forcing the major industrial source of the area to install pollution equipment, and were well organized and skilled in pressing regulatory agencies into action. The Health Department asked the Board of Health for voluntary controls on woodburning in 1979, but the body of evidence was not yet conclusive about the source of the problem. The health board directed the department to further study the problem.

The first step was to determine the source and extent of the problem, and whether these TSP levels actually caused health risks. The federal Clean Air Act was amended in 1977, and TSP standards were established in relation to potential health impacts.

Also in 1977, the Montana state legislature funded the Montana Air Pollution Study (MAPS) as an extensive program to evaluate the impacts of air pollution state wide. In 1978 and 1979, as part of MAPS, school children in Missoula were given pulmonary function tests to determine if wintertime pollution episodes affected their breathing capacity. A year later adults with chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases were also tested. Literature was reviewed related to health risks and TSP.

Policy Analysis

In 1976, policy analysis was not done solely by the department. Citizens already having a history of interest in air quality issues worked with the agency, both formally
during monthly meetings, and informally by meeting with officials. A consensus existed at that point that the issue would require several years to resolve.

In this case, separating policy analysis from implementation is not easily done, because policy evolved and emerged as a result of implementation strategies which significantly included citizens. In December 1980, a public meeting was held by the health board. Results of all the studies were presented. In less than a decade, Missoula's major source of air pollution had shifted from six industrial sources to approximately 20,000 residential wood stoves and fireplaces. (Hand 1980) Pulmonary dysfunction had been noted in school children during the winter, and among individuals with chronic pulmonary problems. (MAPS)

The primary source of air pollution had shifted from point sources to area source. In general, citizens did not appear to believe that their wood fire's single, small contribution to the air shed made a significant difference in the air quality. If asked to quit burning, many felt their individual freedom was being infringed upon, and a fundamental frontier heritage of self-reliance was at stake.

Implementation

As a result of the public meeting, the health board decided to establish four citizen committees to consider: 1) health effects, 2) woodburning, 3) transportation, and 4) future air pollution problems and their possible solutions.
This process was designed by department staff and the health officer. Citizens were urged to apply to work on committees, and were asked to submit applications detailing their interests and background and first and second choices for committee assignments. 80 citizens volunteered to serve on a committee of their choice. Key citizens were invited beforehand. An environmental health staff liaison member was assigned to each committee.

Each committee developed its own outlook on the air pollution issue. Staff members worked as facilitators, and gathered materials needed by the group. Staff, when questioned, provided input about the department, but the committees acted completely independently of department direction. Each committee established its own operational framework. Each assigned two members to a steering committee which coordinated the work of the separate committees. After three months of work, the committees were ready to report their findings and recommendations to the health board. The Steering Committee also reached consensus and made several influential recommendations.

These recommendations can be summarized as follows: 1) a significant educational effort was necessary in the community in order to guarantee that everyone was aware of the detrimental consequences of burning wood during air pollution episodes; 2) community leaders both inside and outside the governmental realm should develop a county-wide
pollution control strategy; 3) implementation of that strategy should include dissemination of information and acquisition of new information; 4) public education efforts should focus on convincing citizens to voluntarily reduce their individual woodburning contribution; 5) future community planning should include air pollution considerations as a component of development design; 6) the Steering Committee concluded that regulatory enforcement might be needed in the future, but that a voluntary compliance strategy should be implemented first. (Gotshalk 1981)

The recommendations guided the health board and the department's air quality program until 1983, when the department concluded voluntary compliance was not working. Citizens in the Air Pollution Advisory Council continued to significantly influence department policymaking while it wrestled with the tough questions associated with mandatory controls. Consisting of core members of the citizen's steering committee, the Council was formed after the recommendations were presented. It also worked on a number of specific projects for several years. The air quality program remained a primary concern of the health board until 1986, when, except for fine tuning, the program was established and working.

In 1980 and 1981, two telephone surveys (Hand 1980,1981) measured citizen attitudes about residential woodburning. They also surveyed attitudes about transportation related
pollution and vehicle inspection programs. The surveys were very helpful to the public education campaign, which got into full swing in 1982, because they provided hard numbers indicating the extent of the problem. The extensive public education effort was initiated and managed by staff, and included the production of public service announcements, informational pamphlets, extensive coordination with local news media, and slide shows. Air pollution and energy curriculum materials were produced for local schools. A speaker's bureau made presentations to over 2600 people over a one year period.

In February, 1983, the department reported that pollution levels were not dropping during wintertime inversions as a result of the department's intensive public education efforts and the community's voluntary compliance. As a result, the health board directed the department to develop proposed regulations which would more effectively reduce the emissions from residential solid fuel devices.

The department responded with proposals consisting of four main objectives, which would be systematically implemented by mandatory rules. The proposals included: 1) establishing a low emission Source Performance Standard, a process to certify low emission devices (LED), and a permitting system for residential solid fuel devices (RSD); 2) requiring the eventual replacement of existing, high emission RSDs with LEDs; 3) placing more stringent controls.
on emissions from high emission RSDs during periods of air stagnation (This was easily the most controversial issue. Woodburners would be required to stop burning wood on polluted days in the winter and be fined if they refused.); and 4) encouraging more appropriate use of energy through the use of high efficiency RSDs and home weatherization. (Carlson 1983)

Eight town meetings were held at various locations in the Missoula urban area over a three week period. The department delivered a carefully constructed opening presentation which stressed the need and rationale for more stringent requirements. Citizens were encouraged to express their opinions. Large crowds turned out. Supporters and opponents vigorously argued their positions. The media focused heavily on woodburning issues during the entire period.

Mandatory regulations were passed in 1983 and 1985. The original department proposals above were modified slightly and adopted in stages. Opposition was essentially token during the formal hearings before the Board of Health. Many citizens still grumbled about the restriction of their freedoms, but most of the heat was gone from the issue. At this stage, most Missoulians felt something had to be done about air pollution, and that the rules and restrictions were probably necessary, and unavoidable.

It might be argued that the department and key political leaders knew early on that these mandatory restrictions on
residential woodburning would be the only successful mechanism to contend with the pollution episodes, and that all the steps taken before those rules were put into place were simply a way to allow citizens time to come to terms with the inevitable. Although that may have been true to a certain extent, most officials and leaders were not sure what would come of the process, and the impact of citizen involvement was very significant.

Conclusion

Several elements encouraged the generally successful outcome of this process and are key components of any good public hearing process. The department: 1) made a considerable effort to document and characterize the problem (studies, surveys, etc.) before bringing the issue formally to citizens; 2) included citizens early in the process, at both the stage of characterizing the problem as well as the search for solutions; 3) communicated effectively with and gained support from political and community leaders (although more early work with the business community would have been very helpful); 4) conducted extensive public education and community outreach efforts; 5) worked well with the media (extensive coverage was forthcoming because the issue was full of ongoing community-wide conflict); 6) demonstrated a willingness to meet with nearly anyone to address concerns in a variety of settings; 7) gave the community a clear chance
to demonstrate whether it could or could not solve the problem voluntarily (although some would claim a year and a half was not a long enough test); 8) provided many opportunities, especially with the town meetings, for citizens to vent their concerns and frustrations; 9) located citizens, such as those working on the Council, who continued to work on department issues for years as a result of being significantly included in the process.

Most public hearing processes emerge from a complex set of variables, many of which are only indirectly related to the specific issue which initiates the process. When designing a strategy to implement a policy change, officials should attempt to anticipate as many of these as possible. They influence citizen interest, political support, and overall feasibility. Understanding the nature and relative strength of the variables will help officials gauge how much time should be allotted for the process, as well as the degree of initial groundwork necessary before focusing an issue for community scrutiny.

In this case study, several additional items are worth noting. First, the wintertime air pollution episodes were noticed by everyone living in Missoula. Unlike invisible contaminants in a groundwater supply, wintertime inversions smelled bad, and the brown stagnant air resembled Los Angeles smog. Most citizens instinctively believed it wasn't healthy to breathe the air. Rarely does an agency find an issue in
which an entire community is aware of a problem, even if it is divided about its relative significance.

Second, Missoula was one of the first communities in the United States to grapple with air pollution generated by residential woodburning and to institute mandatory restrictions. It was exciting to be leading the way, and there were few precedents to cite or established answers to adopt. Citizens and officials were intensely involved, without preconceived notions of the exact nature of the problem or reasonable solutions.

Third, Missoula's air pollution problems focused in the latter 1970s, on the heels of a successful campaign to clean up the practices of the local paper mill. The 1970s were the heyday of grassroots activism in the national environmental movement, emphasizing, during that era, the need to clean up the visible problems of surface water and air pollution. Substantial grants were available for air pollution work, and coffers were relatively full in local agencies. Missoula activists had a clear sense of themselves as citizens who cared about the quality of life in their community. All these factors coalesced into something that propelled the public hearing process along with a quality of energy which is unusual. Most issues an agency wrestles with and brings before citizens are not likely to find the fertile soil of the case study.

Fourth, issues emerge in agencies partially as a result
of the interests and energy of key officials. Several relatively new officials, including the health officer, characterized themselves as dynamic activists, not plodding bureaucrats. They were looking for an issue to dive into, to flex the department's muscles. Frequently, an agency will have officials in key positions who are long term employees more interested in maintaining the status quo than taking on new projects. Their inertia can be difficult to overcome.

Fifth, as a result of this process, the department and several officials became well known in the community. As a result of scores of speaking engagements, thousands of citizens characterized the department and the practice of public health in a manner they had not considered before. The department was perceived as a lively agency that does something. That reputation has held up, even in the relatively fallow period that has followed the case study.
III. The Public Hearing Process

The case study is one example of a public hearing process. For the purposes of this paper, the public hearing process refers to the steps taken to implement a significant change in agency policy. Usually, but not always, the process culminates in a formal hearing before the health board or elected officials. Occasionally, the process itself generates alternatives considered workable and appropriate by everyone concerned, and a final public hearing is not necessary. This occurred in the case study situation when the department chose to institute a voluntary program for two years.

Ideally, the public hearing process, then, is a systematic way of addressing an agency concern which more effectively incorporates and is influenced by a wide range of input. This chapter focuses on the first three stages of that process: 1) defining the problem; 2) policy analysis; and 3) developing an implementation strategy. Chapter Four addresses issues associated with effective implementation, the fourth stage.

Traditionally, public hearings serve to legally document public, agency, and industry views toward particular issues. They are required in government decision making at almost all levels of public policy making. Public hearings are open to citizens to present their views for the official record. Testimony representing various opinions is presented to
Policy makers. Policy makers are those with the formal authority and legitimacy to formulate policy. In the practice of local environmental health, the local health board and elected officials such as the city council or county commissioners are the policy makers. This rulemaking authority is provided by state and local law.

Ideally, the public hearing process allows the local environmental health agency, officials from other agencies at the state and federal level, and citizens, to advise and assist policy makers. They make decisions about changes in existing local rules and regulations which promote public health as well as represent public interest. The rule changes can be minor or major, varying from small changes in existing sewer regulations to something as large as creating a water use district. The changes can be relatively controversial, and require considerable process, as presented in the case study.

There are many ways an agency can increase the likelihood that the public hearing process will achieve agency objectives as well as more fairly represent the interests of citizens. The discussion and recommendations which follow have been constructed to help an agency achieve four goals: (1) to more effectively and professionally fulfill its mandate to protect the public health; (2) to become more politically astute when working with policy makers; (3) to take fuller advantage of
its influence on public policy making; and (4) to work more effectively with citizens. Environmental health agency objectives for the public hearing process should include the following:

1) have the community and policy makers accept that a situation defined by the agency as a problem is a problem.

2) arrive at an optimum solution for both citizens and the agency to a problem.

3) encourage the likelihood that policy makers and citizens are satisfied with both the process and the results of the process by (Kaufmann and Shoret 1977):
   a. establishing trust and legitimacy in the community.
   b. relaying information about programs so opinions can be formed.
   c. delineating ways to facilitate resolution of conflicts.
   d. assuring that citizen-generated options are considered.

4) encourage citizen compliance with the agreed upon solution.

5) strengthen the agency's political position among policy makers and in the community at large.

Agencies commonly approach the public hearing process
without developing a detailed strategy or preceding the hearing with a substantial process. Usually, as a result, the short and long term goals of policy makers, officials, and citizens are not well served. The proposal will not have had the opportunity to grow and evolve and benefit from the input of various interests outside of agency. Without this process, citizens may characterize the proposal as arbitrary and unreasonable. Not only that, the public hearing itself is likely to add to a poor reception from the community. Public hearings as a citizen involvement mechanism have been criticized by Howell, et.al. (1987). Public hearings:

1) are seldom conducive to widespread public representation.
2) usually enhance confrontation and a polarization of issues.
3) are usually dominated by a few individuals or special interest groups.
4) do not encourage significant interaction or discussion between citizens and agency representatives.
5) can increase adverse relationship between citizens and government.
6) create an atmosphere in which many individuals are uncomfortable or embarrassed to ask questions.
7) receive news media focus on confrontation situations.
8) are enacted after a decision has been reached by
government planners.

9) frequently are just pro forma reactions by
government agencies to honor the legal mandate of
citizen involvement.

**Policy Maker-Implementation Linkages**

Every agency exists as part of a unique configuration of
power relationships. This arrangement is, of course, complex
and is in flux. At a single point in time, an issue will be
buffeted by various relative influences, including the nature
of the risk, legal mandates, the relative degree of community
familiarity, current and hot media topics, as well as the
relative interest of key officials, elected officials,
community leaders and groups. Any public hearing process is
profoundly shaped by these forces. During the course of the
process, the configuration of power will ebb and flow, as
citizens or task forces gain power, other concerns emerge, and
public attitude shifts.

Before continuing, it is useful to consider the nature
of this configuration. A chief task of an effective agency
is to understand it as well as possible when it comes time to
design a public hearing process strategy. After all, the
process is partially one of understanding, weighing, using to
advantage, and contending with the interests, concerns, and
relative political strengths of key individual and groups.
Essentially, officials must, among other roles, be effective politicians. Officials who are reluctant to "play politics" are missing the point.

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss this in detail, two issues should be pointed out associated with the way these various forces are linked and influence agency policy making. In the case study, for example, a new health officer, some health board members and a county commissioner all wielded significant influence on the nature of the process and the outcome at various stages. The "classical" policy system model described by Nakamura and Small (1980) shows hierarchical linkages between policy makers, at the top, and subordinate implementers (agencies) beneath, carrying out the policy makers' commands in a tight, technical, nonpolitical fashion. Nakamura and Small suggest that this is rarely the case in practice; there appear to be many situations in which the implementers possess a considerable degree of independent discretion and authority to exercise their own political judgements in order to influence and shape the policy process.

They describe five different types of linkages that exist between policy makers and implementers which successively shift power from the former to the latter. Within these linkages, implementers can serve as "(1) 'classical' technocrats, (2) instructed delegates, (3) bargainers, (4) discretionary experimenters, and (5) bureaucratic
entrepreneurs." They argue that in most agencies, the linkages are a complex combination of all five categories.

This is worth noting for several reasons. First, the nature of the linkages between actors who occupy the policy formation and policy implementation settings in agencies will define and influence many features of the local public hearing process before it even begins. This is especially true during the first stage of the process, defining the problem. Consider when an agency chooses to focus attention on an issue and characterize it as a problem. The agency's goal is for the community to become concerned about the matter and choose to take action. If an official has broad policy influence and is operating as a "bureaucratic entrepreneur", for example, and determines that potential groundwater contamination is a critical issue, then he/she can define it as such, find supporting players and materials, and set the process in motion. If an official is operating as a "classical technocrat", he/she may be implicitly required to bring the "problem" of potential groundwater contamination to a key policy maker first, who can stop the process by simply stating it seems premature to do more than study the matter.

Second, two linkages play a role in the local environmental health arena which may not be found in other branches of local government. The first linkage is policy making influence by statute. Public health officers are
empowered by state law to do whatever is necessary to protect public health. This power is rarely used, and is designed primarily for acute episodes in which citizens are endangered. It reflects, however, the implicit policy making influence local agencies have if a "significant" health risk is identified. The second linkage is policy making influence due to expertise. Public health issues require considerable scientific/technical knowledge and officials are usually regarded, to one degree or another, as experts, especially when compared to other policy makers. So, within certain limitations, agencies are expected to contribute substantially to policy making, and not simply be associated with implementation.

An agency's relative influence (the nature of its linkages), and potential to alter that configuration to its advantage as a result of a public hearing process, can be strengthened or weakened to the extent it recognizes the current power configuration it operates within. Understanding this is the basis of operating well in the political arena where, whether officials like it or not, environmental health is practiced.

A. Defining the Problem

The first step in the public hearing process involves the identification of a problem. An agency has enormous influence at this stage. Most situations which require some
type of agency response are not nearly as defined or obvious as that described in the case study. Every community has an array of situations which pose some degree of health risk. How does an agency determine that one of those situations is more significant than the others and requires agency action?

The way an agency learns about an environmental health concern can play a role in whether it is defined as a problem requiring action. For instance, if a city council member learns his/her basement has radon levels twenty times the levels considered currently safe and this information receives media attention, the agency may be asked what it plans to do about the radon problem. If the agency, on the other hand, learns about radon from the EPA by accumulating literature citing numerous instances across the United States of levels exceeding health standards, it has more discretion about how and when it should respond to the concern locally.

Clearly, when citizens demand that an agency work on a perceived problem, the agency takes particular notice. Some issues receive considerable national attention, for example, such as those associated with hazardous materials. After reading about an incident like Bhopal, a community can suddenly become concerned about the handling and storage techniques of a local industrial source. Usually, most issues are initially recognized by officials or a small number of interested parties. Extensive agency discretion is involved in determining whether the situation will be
characterized as a problem.

Construction of a problem.

Out of a range of possible concerns, how does an agency choose which concern will be defined as a "problem" which requires prompt attention? Government's role in the process of constructing problems is the subject of much study and theorizing. Edelman (1988) argues that problem construction is a complex and subtle occurrence, an aspect of the formation of self and of the social sphere, and linked to the "endless construction of political causes, role structures, and moral stances":

Problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies, not simply because they are there or because they are important for wellbeing. They signify who are virtuous and useful and who are dangerous and inadequate, which actions will be rewarded and which penalized. They constitute people as subjects with particular kinds of aspirations, self-concepts, and fears, and they create beliefs about the relative importance of events and objects. They are critical in determining who exercise authority and who accept it.

In local environmental health agencies, certain prevailing values are likely to be strongly held by officials. I have encountered many who entered the profession with a primary belief in the importance of protecting natural resources from various human activities, and reducing citizens' exposure to agents which pose health risks. Over the years, the strength of that belief may erode, but I
believe it remains, to one degree or another, a fundamental principle. This certainly is not surprising; however, this ethic can be an effective filter which rejects, early on, many alternative characterizations.

An agency has a specific mission and is not charged with taking the multiplicity of the community's values and interests outside the realm of environmental health into consideration. (Officials do consider how much various proposals will cost.) I think it is also common to find officials with a rarely questioned certainty that they know what is best for the community, at least in the arena of environmental health. They assume that the environmental ethic should be the overriding value, and their job is to lobby for it.

As a result, an agency has significant influence when it deliberates in-house about how to handle an existing concern. This usually occurs long before policy makers and citizens are included in the process. The way an issue is defined will determine who is likely to be involved in the resulting conflict (Schattschneider 1960). The ability to determine what will and won't appear on the agenda is considered to be an important part of power. (Bachrach 1967) A situation can be characterized as a smaller, isolated problem, or be described as part of a much larger problem. For example, an agency receives new data that a subdivision in the county has high nitrate levels in its groundwater. This situation could
be depicted as representing an isolated event which requires further study, or it could be used to argue for the formulation of an overall groundwater management plan.

Characterizing the problem

Often, an agency becomes aware of an issue or situation and is not certain how to deal with it. Radon once again provides a good example. Officials decide radon may pose a significant risk in the community. It is an issue which may warrant agency action at some future point. The EPA has indicated that, in the United States, a significant number of homes have radon levels which are harmful to human health. Many questions need to be answered to develop a sense of the extent of the local problem. Do the homes in the local agency's jurisdiction have high radon levels? How should the agency find out? Conduct monitoring themselves? If so, who pays for the tests? What about private testers? Should the agency compete with them? Are the results of private testing useful to the agency in order to get a sense of whether a problem actually exists in the community? Will the agency need new rules in order to require local testing, or a way of generating funds to establish a program. The questions go on and on.

Answering the following questions can be helpful for characterizing a problem and isolating key variables. They provide a tool for officials to prepare for the next stage of
the public hearing process which is policy analysis.

1. **What** is the problem?

2. How sufficiently is the problem defined?

3. What health effects are associated with the problem?

4. How long has the problem existed?

5. Who is affected by the problem? What agencies or groups or citizens are likely to be concerned about the problem?

6. What are the agency's roles in the problem?

7. What alternative ways are there for defining and understanding the problem (differing from the way it is currently defined and understood?)

8. What, if anything, has been done to solve the problem? What were the outcomes of these efforts?

9. Who is responsible for the problem?

10. Who stands to win (if anyone) and who stands to lose (if anyone) if the problem is not solved? If the problem is solved?

11. If the problem is not solved, what is the likely outcome?

12. What are the advantages of not solving the problem?

**B. Policy Analysis**

At this stage of the process, a problem has been defined as important to address, for whatever reasons. The next step is to identify a reasonable action plan to help solve the
problem. At this stage, it is not clear how the agency wants to handle the problem. The agency may finally choose to do nothing or it may decide to initiate a program requiring rule changes or a process in which the community helps determine how to handle the problem. The agency may determine that several steps will be required over a number of months or years, before the issue will be focused enough for a final public hearing.

Presently, an important factor influencing policy analysis at the local level is the largely reactive nature of many environmental health agencies. Dwindling budgets reduce available time for planning. The extent of planning done in most agencies occurs during the budget process. Operating in a reactive mode, from crisis to crisis, an agency's ability to anticipate events dwindles. (Yosie 1985) Without planning, it is difficult to determine how potential responses to the problem fit into existing priorities. Planning is critical, if an agency is to achieve the goals detailed previously for the public hearing process.

Group problem solving among a number of environmental health professionals results in stronger policy analysis, than approaches which utilize only one or two officials. Environmental health issues usually consist of many variables. The broad range of experience and expertise existing among staff is a valuable resource. The different points of view are more likely to uncover key concerns which will allow the
agency to better anticipate the community's reaction to a proposal. A secondary benefit is that group problem solving promotes a sense of collective mission and being part of a team. It can also break up the potential boredom associated with too great a portion of staff time spent on routine tasks.

Various planning techniques, none of which guarantee flawless evaluation and problem solving, are available to agencies. Bader and Carr (1986) are very helpful.

Gather data and review literature

Commonly an agency will decide it needs more information to properly assess the nature of and the range of responses to a problem or concern. An official nearly always would like more data than he/she has, and is required to act without it. If data is needed to understand the extent of a problem, it is worth trying to get it. As mentioned in the case study, the extra time spent documenting the problem strengthened every stage of the process that followed. If the agency recognizes the need for certain information before proceeding in the public hearing process, it is likely policy makers and citizens will sooner or later realize the information is important, when it is less convenient for the agency to get it.

Often, similar situations have occurred elsewhere; a literature review or consultation with officials in communities with similar settings or concerns can be very
helpful. This is one reason a planning process is useful. Reviewing these potential sources of information, or seeking funding to generate new data, may require more time during the initial steps of a public hearing process, but will serve the process well over the long run.

**Determine who will be most affected by the proposed action**

A key step in initial agency planning is recognizing who will be impacted by anything the agency intends to have the public consider, modify and/or approve. Map out who will be concerned about the proposal, and for what reasons. Try to list key individuals, such as industry spokespersons, neighborhood leaders, and local business owners. The primary focus of any citizen involvement strategy associated with the process will be to provide these citizens an opportunity to understand the issue, and have their concerns adequately considered.

If possible, meet informally with some of these citizens. Later, the agency will very likely formally solicit opinions from them. There is an advantage for officials during the policy analysis stage to understand what they may be contending with if they decide to address the problem in a manner which requires citizen support. It's not uncommon for officials to believe they can fully anticipate citizens' reactions. They pay later for skimping on the preliminary investigation.
Consult with policymakers and key players

Meet individually with key players in the community and introduce the initial results of the agency's policy analysis. These key players will include elected officials, board members, and other community and industry leaders. Approach them as valued consultants, emphasizing that the proposal is in its infancy, and the agency needs both their ideas and their blessing. It is dangerous to go further in the public hearing process without their support and full understanding of what the agency hopes to accomplish, how the community is likely to feel about it, and why it seems necessary to the agency. All the planning and information gathering done prior to meeting with these people is necessary to have these informal discussions go well.

This is good basic politics. It is also an excellent way to build positive working relationships with key board members and elected officials. Key policy makers should never hear about anything for the first time in a public setting. One thing an elected official hates the most is being surprised and put in a position to look ill-prepared.

C. Developing an Implementation Strategy

Allow enough time

Once a problem is defined and an agency has decided it is of high enough priority to respond with a proposed action,
be sure to allow enough time for the public hearing process. A common mistake is to underestimate how much time it takes for board members, community leaders, and citizens to fully understand an issue, consider alternatives, and feel comfortable about resolving it. Customarily, the more controversial the issue, the more time required to resolve it.

**Select a coordinator**

In larger proposed actions, such as the siting of a hazardous waste disposal facility or a dam, it is recommended that an agency hire a professional facilitator/coordinator. A neutral individual in this role can be critical in highly charged situations. Local environmental agencies rarely have the means to do this. Since most issues are not large enough to warrant the investment, an official playing this role for an agency should remember how important it is to appear unbiased and fair.

In order to offer consistency, continuity, timely follow through, as well as the assurance that key players will be contacted when they need to be contacted, the agency should consider assigning a staff person the role of citizen involvement coordinator for the process. This person becomes the key contact for the news media, citizens, or whomever needs an update on any aspect of the process. Skills and/or knowledge in areas like planning, public relations,
interpersonal communication, marketing, adult education, group dynamics, conflict resolution, and community resource analysis are very useful.

Citizen Involvement Techniques

The primary goal of any citizen involvement strategy is to have adequate, substantive discussion occur before the final public hearing. Effective dialogue between citizens and officials can be promoted by a variety of means, in various settings. If an agency's strategy is successful, the final public hearing should be a formality; an acceptable proposal which has been ironed out by all interested parties is presented for formal approval by the policy makers.

Selecting suitable citizen involvement techniques depends upon the agency's specific objectives. Each process is different. Rosener (1975) divided common citizen involvement objectives into the following categories:

1. Identify attitudes and opinions
2. Identify impacted groups
3. Solicit impacted groups
4. Disseminate information
5. Answer citizen questions
6. Facilitate participation
7. Generate new ideas and alternatives
8. Clarify planning process
9. Facilitate advocacy
10. Promote interaction between interest groups
11. Resolve conflict
12. Change attitudes toward agency
13. Develop support and minimize opposition

As an agency designs an implementation strategy, Rosener's objectives provide a good checklist. Although many issues may not warrant elaborate citizen involvement mechanisms, most will warrant a few. In some public hearing processes, for example, the primary objective might be to educate a targeted group about a problem or issue. In others, it might be to negotiate an agreement as part of a conflict resolution where opposing parties are very clear about the nature of the problem. A general rule is to encourage opportunities for opposing groups to become familiar with each other early in the process, in "safe" settings, before the process moves into a decision stage.

Howell, et.al. (1987) offer an excellent summary of the advantages and disadvantages of various mechanisms, including brainstorming, breakfast meetings, neighborhood meetings, direct mailings, hotlines, information centers and seminars, mass media, open houses, surveys, working groups and task forces. That summary is included as Appendix A.

During the decision making stage, how issues will be discussed and debated depends partially on the participatory mechanisms chosen, which can include citizen task forces or
advisory boards, advocacy planning, community planning councils, public hearings, the use of an ombudsperson, and steering committees. (See Appendix A) When an agency selects mechanisms, it should carefully evaluate how much influence it desires to have in this stage of the process, and how much influence it formally wishes citizens to have.

It is helpful to produce a written plan. List all the activities to be conducted, a rough timetable, general objectives for each session, and stipulate the roles of community leaders and citizens in the process. Guidelines should also be established concerning the composition of working groups as well as deadlines for becoming a member. Consider providing training for participants, covering such subjects as conflict management and how to run an effective meeting.

Each public hearing process requires a different strategy depending on a number of variables. How controversial is the problem? Who does it affect? How costly are the probable solutions? How interested are citizens likely to be in the issue? Does the agency need citizen support? How difficult will it be to raise the level of understanding of target groups? How much time and effort needs to be invested simply to better understand the way citizens perceive the issue?

When the plan is in draft form, meet again with the key community players who have been identified as being concerned with the public hearing process. Ask them to critique and
approve the citizen involvement plan. Their support is important. A well designed citizen involvement effort will benefit them in both the short and long run. An elected official appreciates appearing open-minded and attentive to citizen concerns. He/she also appreciates having most of the heat diffused from a controversial issue when it comes time to make a decision.
IV. Improving Implementation

The various citizen involvement mechanisms which can be used in the public hearing process are good opportunities for an agency to build a climate of trust and to develop a constituency in the community. As compared to other agencies, local environmental health agencies have many advantages when it comes to working effectively with citizens. Citizens are very attentive to anything which threatens their health, environment or pocketbook.

Even the best implementation strategy is doomed to fail, or at the least, be ineffective, if officials do not pay enough attention to a few key factors. Not the least of these is keeping firmly in mind the reasons that citizens are motivated to participate in the first place. Citizens usually participate in government in order to acquire benefits. Citizens' willingness and enthusiasm depend on whether the process seems like a reasonable way to pursue their goals. These benefits can be a sense of contribution and recognition, as well as a feeling that they are influencing the outcome of events which affect them. When designing a citizen involvement strategy, officials should attempt to create settings in which the costs of involvement are minimized (expenditure of free time, social embarassment or discomfort), while the rewards are maximized.

If the public perceives an agency is planning to do
something to them, as compared to with them, the entire process is in jeopardy. A basic rule is don't ask citizens to ratify something already decided upon by the agency, or which is perceived to already have been decided. This can be difficult if the agency has defined the problem and reduced the options during policy analysis in such a manner that only one course of action seems reasonable. It is better to avoid asking citizens to make a decision if there aren't any real choices. Once the public perceives that an agency is not sincerely seeking input, and is not revealing its real intentions, the agency's credibility can be damaged for a much longer period than simply the duration of the public hearing process.

Another general rule is to keep sessions as small as possible. Citizens are more likely to speak up if groups are small. Citizen participation requires resources and skills not evenly divided in the community, including the ability to communicate and the confidence to use that ability. Citizens most likely to participate are those in the middle and upper socio-economic groups. A variety of "civic attitudes" such as sense of efficacy, of psychological involvement in politics, and the feeling of obligation to participate, appear to be associated with job, education, and income. (Verba and Nie 1972)

A common mistake made by officials is to assume that citizen's goals for the public hearing process are the same
as theirs. They rarely are. Everyone is participating in the process for his/her own reasons. The agency, for example, may assume the underlying reason for the process is to increase compliance, while citizens may believe the real reason for the process is for them to become empowered. Time spent sorting out the various goals that participants bring to the citizen involvement process before continuing can head off cries of foul at the end of the process, when some disgruntled participants may feel their needs weren't met.

Common assumptions that citizens and officials may bring to any citizen participation mechanism, such as a task force or neighborhood meeting have been summarized by Kweit (1981) as follows:

1) society will be restructured by decentralizing government decision making;
2) participating in government can contribute to the fulfillment of individuals;
3) education derived from citizen involvement processes will make citizens more tolerant and trusting of government;
4) being involved in government decision-making decreases citizen alienation from government;
5) a mutual search for desired goals allows citizens to protect their self-interest and achieve what they desire from government;
6) citizen involvement will improve both effectiveness
and efficiency of service provided by government.

Obviously, many of these assumptions are, to varying degrees, in conflict with each other. Problems arise when an official assumes that everyone sees the process the same way he/she does. For example, an official proposing an extension of municipal sewer service may be dwelling on the technical merits of the project while citizens are concerned that they have never been properly asked whether they actually want the system.

This chapter presents an assortment of topics which are related to effective implementation during a public hearing process. The review is certainly not exhaustive. It is designed to provide an overview of concerns which warrant more study by officials working with citizen involvement issues.

An excellent way for officials to improve their ability to work with citizens is to learn to see themselves and their agencies in the manner that citizens see them. The more successful they are in this exercise, the more likely their interactions with citizens will be positive.

Meetings

Citizen involvement consists of meetings; meetings of various sizes, in different settings, some highly charged, others benign working sessions. There are several things officials can do to insure that those meetings are productive.
and actually accomplish the appropriate objectives for that stage of the process. Remember that citizens may not have as much experience with meetings as officials.

In advance of the meeting, build an agenda and rank the agenda items in terms of relative urgency and difficulty. Send the agenda to participants well in advance of the meeting. Make a realistic estimate of the time required for each agenda item. Bader and Carr (1986) suggest the agenda scheduler should order the business at hand for that particular meeting in such a way that the most challenging tasks come in the middle third of the meeting. Schedule a break after the difficult items are completed. For the remainder of the meeting, after the break, consider items requiring discussion only, but no decision making.

Arrive early at the meeting and make sure the room is set up properly. Plan activities for earlier arrivers. Always start on time. Be sure everyone is introduced to each other. If this is the first time everyone has gotten together, place names on a folded notecard in front of each participant. Clarify expectations for the meeting and define roles, if necessary, of the leader, facilitator, and recorder. Review, and revise the agenda, if necessary. Everyone should agree on the time limits. Review the previous meeting's actions.

Facilitate the meeting according to the agenda. Utilize different structures and processes to work through the items
at hand. Participants, for example, can exchange roles or run special activities like brainstorming or planning.

At the close of the meeting, review what the group has accomplished. If action items have emerged, clarify who will do what and by what date. Set the date and place of the next meeting, and sketch out a preliminary agenda. End the meeting on time. Bader and Carr (1986) add:

Any group functions more efficiently and productively (and is more enjoyable for members) when all members of the group recognize and follow certain agreed upon behaviors. These standards, norms, or procedures are a basis for making decisions, for encouraging participation, for taking risks, for rewarding behaviors that facilitate cooperation or resolution of conflict, to name but a few functions. Most groups develop norms in an unplanned or indirect way, following tradition, imposing standards developed in other groups, or by looking for clues to appropriated behavior from other members. Discussing and agreeing on norms for working together often improve the working of boards, committees, and other work groups, in the same way that establishing a mission, clarifying values, and setting goals improve their direction and determination.

When the group is not working well together, devote time to determine why and make adjustments. Conflicts are inevitable, but should be dealt with immediately and handled in a positive manner. If a member of the group is not participating, for whatever reason, attempt to draw that person into the discussion.

Communicate effectively

Often an official's best intentions are undermined by
poor communication skills and a lack of awareness of how he/she is perceived. Citizen involvement techniques depend on effective communication in order to get started in a positive fashion. They can quickly bog down if conflicts aren't clarified or diffused in a "safe" manner, or if the agency is perceived as being untrustworthy or patronizing. Visual and verbal cues from officials can suggest that citizen input is trivial or lacking in content and understanding, which can lead to citizen frustration and disgust. Problems and issues should be discussed in a manner that does not cause mental anxiety, personal discomfort, or continual conflict among participants. Frustration is compounded when officials do not seek out citizen questions, or when they constantly challenge citizen interpretation of situations.

This is one reason that professional facilitators frequently are brought into larger scaled processes. For most local environmental health proposals, hiring a facilitator is not economically feasible. An agency should consider finding someone among its staff who has good communication skills. These skills are useful for all officials, both for work within and outside the agency. Providing inservices for staff to enhance communication skills is recommended.

**Follow through on commitments**

Behind the scenes, take the extra steps necessary to make sure the process runs smoothly. Make the extra phone calls
to be sure citizen participants are aware of a meeting. Check in with citizen participants, one on one, throughout the process, to get a sense of how they perceive the process to be going.

Be a resource. Various degrees of technical assistance or support will be needed. During the case study, staff's prompt provision of information to the committees allowed citizens to spend much more time on policy analysis. Since officials are more familiar with source material and technical documents than most citizens encountering the issue for the first time, it is smoother and more efficient, when possible, for the official to provide this service, rather than a citizen.

Working With the News Media

The best way to work with the news media is to think like a reporter. Most reporters don't have much scientific background. An average reporter covers and writes two to three stories a day. (Sandman 1986) His/her goal is not to find out all that is known, but just to find out enough to write the story.

After the nature of an acute risk is established, what happened, how it happened, who's to blame, and what the authorities are doing about it all command more journalistic attention than the message the agency wants to get out. When there is no crisis, interest in chronic risk is very limited.
This, of course, is often the situation when an agency is in a preventive mode and wishes to begin a program designed to contend with a potential hazard. If there is no court battle or regulatory action associated with the risk, an agency will have an uphill battle to make the issue newsworthy.

When writing a news release, making a presentation, acting as a reference to a task force, giving a television interview, be as concise and nontechnical as possible. Always consider the audience and sort out what it needs to understand from what is unnecessary material. Before presenting material, test run the talk on coworkers without expertise in the subject area. Work with the local news media to give the public hearing process as much publicity as possible. Meet with news directors early and keep them fully informed. Learn what they find newsworthy and interesting, and try to provide it for them. Significant public education and public relations opportunities are available during this process and can only help the agency if handled well.

Risk Communication

Environmental health agencies are primarily involved in the identification and reduction of risks in the community, as well as informing citizens about those risks. The agency focus is both on current, existing health risks, as well as potential health risks associated with resource degradation. Novick (1984) claims that current public concerns about risk of exposure to a variety of toxic chemicals and other agents
has expanded the role of environmental health agencies. This challenges agencies in at least two ways. First, hazardous materials frequently lack health effects data and it is difficult to quantify exposure. Second, smaller, common sources are generating these materials. Sources such as gas stations, dry cleaners, and home operated wood stoves are much more difficult to regulate than major facilities which are currently well regulated. (Thomas 1988)

Most proposals emerging from a public hearing process are designed to eliminate or reduce some type of risk. An agency argues that a risk exists which is substantial enough to require doing something about it now. How citizens perceive that risk will determine, to a great extent, how they will respond to it. This perception will significantly influence the community's willingness to support an agency proposal. An agency is wise to communicate as effectively as possible about risk to key players and citizens in general. And this is not easily done:

Creating policy is hard when the public ignores serious risks and recoils in terror from less serious ones. The task of risk communication isn't just conveying information, but alerting people when they ought to be alerted and reassuring them when they ought to be reassured. (Sandman 1987)

Risk assessment involves creating mathematical models to determine what sort of threat a given hazard poses to a particular group of people. Risk assessment is only as good as its data and the appropriateness of the inferences made
during calculations. There is a general lack of information and data regarding health effects as well as the constant problem of quantifying exposures over time. Customarily, experts will interpret data differently. Rarely will a local agency have enough information to adequately assess the relative risk posed by a situation. It will lack sufficient data to enter into models, and the expertise to evaluate the results. This was a significant problem in the case study. Continually, the agency was asked to quantify exactly how risky it was to breathe elevated levels of TSP for one month each year, and to justify its claim that reduction of these levels was required.

Even if an agency fully understands the risk of a situation, it still has to communicate that risk to the public. The newly emerging field of risk communication is providing helpful information about the difficulties inherent in doing that:

Research has demonstrated that it is simplistic to believe that people have only one goal in protecting the environment—to reduce calculated risk. They are also concerned about the physical characteristics of the risk, its source, how it is distributed, and whether it is fairly imposed upon them. They have a healthy skepticism about the certainty of those risk calculations, and a gnawing anxiety about what future evidence may bring. Taking the complex of values that real people bring to decisions and opinions, they may well choose to be poorer and sicker, and less ecologically secure than they could be, at least as measured by expert opinion. And tellingly, our system of government gives them the right to make the call... Success in risk communication is not to be measured by whether the public chooses the set of outcomes that minimizes risk as estimated by...
the experts. It is achieved instead when those outcomes are knowingly chosen by a well informed public. (Russell 1987)

People often overestimate the risk of current, sensational, well publicized causes of death and underestimate more familiar causes which, over decades, claim lives one by one. Experts and citizens view risk differently for a number of reasons. Experts often take a "societal (macro) perspective, while the lay public usually takes a more individual or personal (micro) perspective." (Allen 1987) For example, during the ethylene dibromide (EDB) controversy, the EPA focused on how many deaths might result from EDB contamination, while the media and the public focused on the question, "Is it okay to eat the cake mix?". Sandman (1987) argues that redefining terms is helpful. Call the death rate (what experts mean by risk) "hazard". Call all the other factors, collectively, "outrage". Risk is the sum of hazard and outrage. The public is not as interested in risk as they are with outrage. Citizens are more concerned about the cancer risk associated with living next to a toxic waste dump than they are with the risk of eating peanut butter.

The following list identifies some of the characteristics other than mortality that factor into working definitions of risk (Sandman 1986):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Less Risky</th>
<th>More Risky</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voluntary</td>
<td>Involuntary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familiar</td>
<td>Unfamiliar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controllable</td>
<td>Uncontrollable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled by self</td>
<td>Controlled by others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53
In northern New Jersey, thirty percent of the homes have radon problems elevated enough to pose more than a one-in-a-hundred risk for lung cancer to occupants. The source is geological uranium. After considerable media attention, only five percent of the homeowners have decided to monitor their homes. Compare the response to that of three New Jersey communities which have a similar radon problem associated with a landfill partially filled with radioactive wastes. Citizens there have been outraged and fearful, and have demanded that cleanup costs for the dump, averaging hundreds of thousands of dollars per home, be spent to clean up the problem. (Sandman1986)

Effective risk communication begins with the understanding that risk perception is predictable, that citizens overreact to some risks and ignore others, and that an agency can have a reasonable idea in advance whether the communication problem will be panic or apathy. There is no neutral way to present risk data, only ways that are alarming and reassuring in various ways. For example, a pollutant which might eventually lead to 10,000 people getting cancer,
sounds much less threatening if it is described as adding less than one tenth of one percent to the national cancer rate.

The social context of the source of the hazard also influences perception of the risk. In the case study, citizens were much angrier about the air pollution generated from the local paper mill than the smoke swirling up from their neighbor's chimney. Citizens are usually more concerned about effluent from industry pouring into a river than they are about effluent generated by their municipal sewer plant. Do citizens like or dislike, trust or distrust, the sources of the risk? Are some citizens enduring more risk than others? The equitable distribution of risks and benefits is often more important than the minimization of total risk or the maximization of total benefit.

Lack of scientific literacy

A challenge which all agencies must plan for is the lack of scientific literacy in the United States today. Only a small percent of the adult population has a sophisticated enough mastery of scientific material to understand the subtle distinctions involved with relative risk, statistical validity, chemical reactions, and so on. What may seem like essential qualifying language to an official may be perceived as unnecessary jargon to citizens.

Commonly, whether or not it is currently involved in a public hearing process, an agency contends with this
situation. Discussions with local elected officials, health board members, and citizens frequently requires the characterization of a scientific problem in a way that is succinct, accurate and understandable. The challenge of doing this effectively is, of course, increased during various citizen involvement sessions, when citizens may be required to hear, dissect, and judge a massive amount of conflicting expert testimony and technical reports. It can be done. In the Bonneville Power Administration public involvement program, for example, citizens select, evaluate, and criticize scientific theories and analytical methodologies used to set electricity rates, forecast electricity demand, and estimate nuclear power risks, as well as determine which policy alternatives best seem to satisfy community interests and values. (Reaven 1987)

Explaining risk information is difficult but not impossible, if citizens are motivated to learn. Sandman (1986) argues that citizens learn for a reason—either they are curious, or they are committed to a point of view and looking for ammunition, or they are faced with a decision and are looking for guidance. If citizens are powerless to do anything about what they have learned, then where is the motivation?

Obviously, shrouding comments in a cloud of professional jargon will not help the average citizen understand an issue. Clarify all technical language. Since the majority of
citizens do not have the time or interest to wade through all the information related to the issue, simplify the material by deciding what to leave out. This requires thinking through the agency's goals and citizens information needs. Tell citizens what you are leaving out and why. Present enough information so that citizens understand the critical points and feel they understand it.

Making sure citizens understand technical information is not the only challenge to an agency. Not only what is discussed, but how it is discussed, can significantly affect opinions and political outcomes. By manipulating language, or using key terms, an official/expert can create various responses to the same situation. For example, data can be characterized as a source of serious concern or of no cause for alarm. Carefully worded responses such as "there may be an association" can easily be interpreted by citizens as "it causes". The word "probability" used in a statistical context, can become "strong possibility" in the mind of a citizen. (Wann 1987) Even argument styles used by experts can convey completely different messages. (Reaven 1987)

Citizen Attitudes Affecting the Public Hearing Process

Citizens Expect To Be Included

Citizens expect to be consulted by government about issues which concern them and they have been significantly
included during the last 25 years. Citizen involvement has been well analyzed within the fields of political science and public administration. Although federally mandated citizen participation had existed prior to the 1960s, such as in the Tennessee Valley Authority and the first Housing Act, Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" introduced citizen involvement requirements which have changed the face of public administration. In 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act required that the poor be mobilized and be involved in policy decisions. In 1966, Model Cities legislation required "maximum feasible participation" and "adequate opportunity for citizen participation." (Kweit 1981) In the 1970s, a stipulation for states and local communities receiving grants-in-aid programs was that citizens should be included in the process. These federal requirements have created a ripple effect, altering some mechanisms of state and local decision making even in areas not controlled in federal grants.

Several factors have contributed to citizens' expectations to be included:

The current [high level of interest in citizen involvement] was initiated by a complex set of social changes. The movement by blacks to achieve political and social equality, the decline of traditional family structure, the increase in the role of government in our lives, and the growing sense of distance from government, all contributed to demands to alter the structure of citizen participation. The party structure, weakened by the reforms of the Progressive era, grew even weaker. In addition, participation in elections decreased. As party and electoral activity declined, interest group activity increased. And as government increasingly was personified by
the bureaucrats who administer policies, the bureaucracy became the focus of citizen participation. All of these changes in participation signalled that traditional electoral forms of participation were no longer perceived as adequate. People wanted more direct forms of access that were not mediated by such intermediaries as parties or representatives chosen in elections. (Kweit 1981)

The U.S. Forest Service has been particularly impacted by the public participation trend. At the federal level, public involvement in forest management is mandated by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Forest Management Act (NFMA) among other statutes. Shands and Waddell (1988) noted that the era of "trust us, we know what's best" style of forestry has ended, and a period of "consultative management" has begun. The concept of the neutral bureaucrat defining the public interest is no longer viable. (Tipple and Wellman 1989)

Citizens Do Not Trust Government

Citizens do not trust bureaucracy to protect their interests. In the mid 1970s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers considered the possibility of developing a site adjacent to the Snake River. The agency called for a public hearing to discuss the proposal. A surprising number of local citizens showed up and the meeting became a shouting match. The agency conceived of the hearing as a noncontroversial first step to be taken early in the process. In contrast, local citizens perceived the Corps as arriving with a plan in place which
they wanted to sell to the area. The fact that the agency did not anticipate this reaction had several long range effects. Citizens never trusted the intentions of the agency after the hearing. The proposal was finally dropped, before it ever had a real chance to be considered by citizens.

"The public perceived the agency was going to do something to them, rather than with them." (Kaufmann 1977) "Everyone" is against bureaucracy in the abstract and actually opposed to specific bureaucracies, but "everyone" also expects government to solve more problems and resists the shrinking of particular bureaucracies they support. (Waldo 1982)

Bureaucrats and citizens often find themselves at odds with each other. Some argue the gap between bureaucrat and citizen is extensive, existing politically, culturally, psychologically, socially, even linguistically. Ideal bureaucracy stresses rationality and impersonality, which can dehumanize both bureaucrat and citizen. Obviously, this rift cannot easily be dismissed or overlooked.

Citizens often perceive bureaucrats as painfully deliberate, beyond the bounds of reason. They can't understand why the bureaucrat just won't give them a straight answer on why something can or can't be done. They are not thrilled with filling out a number of forms. They don't like having to go back and forth between four or five offices so that they will be able to eventually flush their toilet. In short, they are less than sensitive to the official's point
of view.

Citizens often fear that government is attempting to grow larger and resist any new proposals which will increase budget, the number of programs, or staff. They may be right. Presthus (1978) argues: "The behavior of persons who lead or speak for an organization can best be understood in terms of their efforts to maintain and enhance the organization... whatever else organizations seek, they seek to survive."

**Citizens expect government to be efficient**

One thing that citizens unanimously demand from government is that it be as efficient as possible. A common charge is that government is bloated and wasteful. From the agency's point of view, cutbacks in funding have made efficiency more critical. The extra time required to involve citizens in policy-making or to educate a community about complex scientific issues is not perceived as available.

"Despite growing concern about other kinds of values such as responsiveness to public needs, justice and equal treatment, and citizen involvement, efficiency continues to be a major goal." (Mosher 1982) Provision of public service at a minimum cost is the goal at which bureaucratic theory aims specialization, routinization and expertise. The shift in this country's economic status during the last decade has affected the nature of all environmental health operations and budgets, and the corresponding willingness and ability to
develop elaborate citizen involvement programs.

In the 60s, government could afford to try new things; the buzzword of the 80s is zero-sum economics in which someone wins and someone loses with each decision. As a result of restricted budgets, many agencies do the absolute minimum to comply with mandated citizen involvement requirements, because they can't afford it.

Conclusion

Environmental health officials have little choice but to acquire new skills and to put them into practice, if they want to be more effective and if they want to build the support necessary to get increased funding. Ironically, citizens have come to see participation in environmental health policy-making as a right, precisely at a time when officials, due to budgetary restraints and an increasing agenda, see themselves as more limited in their ability to include the public.

Officials would be wise to remember that environmental concerns are very close to the hearts of American citizens. Thomas (1988) reports that as a society, the United States spends more than $70 billion each year to reduce pollution. And that expenditure reflects a core value among citizens:

The American public has environmental protection as a core value of society, akin to civil liberty or a provision of the Bill of Rights. Just as government is expected to maintain the solvency of social security, so is it expected to treat the environmental issue as our unbreakable commitment. Public opinion polls confirm this. So does any congressman with a hazardous waste dump in his
Citizens will continue to demand to have a voice in agency policy making. It makes sense to acknowledge this concern and energy and guide it, as well as possible, for the benefit of both the agency and the community as a whole.
V. Conclusion

By taking steps to insure the appropriate definition of a problem, solid policy analysis, and the development and effective implementation of a plan to include citizens, an agency can turn the public hearing process into a key opportunity, and not a cumbersome chore.

Admittedly, it is difficult to measure whether any public hearing process actually accomplishes the goals of constituency building, increased compliance, and political support. Relative success depends on the eye of the beholder. An official, an elected policymaker, and an involved citizen will each judge the process with different criteria. The relative effectiveness of a well conceived and implemented public hearing process can be considered on at least three different levels: societal, administrative, and individual. Each level is complex and difficult to analyze and compare. With all this in mind, I believe the case study offers one example of a public hearing process which accomplished many goals beyond the implementation of regulations to restrict residential woodburning.

There also seems to be no consensus among researchers about which citizen participation mechanisms are more or less successful. Rosener (1978) claims there is little conclusive evidence indicating just what effective citizen participation is. She calls for the development of an assessment tool which
can measure how citizen involvement contributes to the achievement of predetermined, clearly articulated goals and objectives. Rosener states:

Knowing what 'works' and what does not should minimize the frustration felt by administrators who are confused about what is expected of them, and at the same time minimize the distrust felt by citizens who complain that public participation programs are charades.

Although evaluation data is difficult to find, commentary in the literature suggests that broadened participation is desirable from the citizen's point of view because it increases the representativeness and responsiveness of our administrative and political institutions, heightens citizens' sense of political efficacy and acts as an important check on the abuse of administrative discretion. (Cupps 1977) Other positive impacts noted by Kweit and Cupps, are summarized as follows:

1) political consciousness is cultivated in the public;
2) public issues emerge from problems which otherwise might never reach level of serious public debate;
3) citizen advocates can place basic personal and moral issues and values at the center of public discourse, such as "quality of life". Society's failure to recognize and address these issues is reason to require direct citizen intervention into governmental authority.
4) agencies have been forced away from restrictive
information policies, and actually must assist citizens in their effort to scrutinize the agency.

5) citizen involvement has been an effective check on administrative discretion, forcing administrators to restructure and clarify their decision making procedures.

6) administrators more sensitive to the implications of their nonactions, something common in lethargic bureaucratic organizations.

There are many ways a local environmental health agency can take advantage of the opportunities available in the public hearing process without significant extra expense. Staff reductions and lack of resources are not sufficient reasons to refrain from incorporating effective politics, planning, and work with citizens into agency policy making. Short term agency savings will result in long term costs. By incorporating various steps and processes into the four stages of the public hearing process, an agency can achieve many benefits, including:

1. **A better product.** Many environmental health issues are not black and white; they are grey. Every increment of risk reduction requires some type of expenditure from a limited resource base. An agency should not make those decisions alone, and cannot adequately anticipate all the concerns
citizens might have.

2. **Less agency liability.** Agencies are operating in an era of litigation. Many issues common in environmental health are controversial, and can result in increased costs or reduced freedoms to citizens. A court challenge is less likely if significant public participation contributed to the new requirements or restrictions in question.

3. **Increased compliance.** Compliance with new rules or requirements is likely to be increased if citizens believe they helped shape the final product. Since environmental health is largely regulatory, the issue of compliance is a large one. Enforcement is time consuming, costly, and usually unsatisfactory. Many agencies have difficulty enforcing the rules they already have in place. The extra resources required for surveillance, documentation, and legal actions might be better invested elsewhere.

4. **Improved agency morale.** One problem common in local environmental health agencies is the tiresomeness of routine tasks such as licensed establishment inspections or issuing individual subsurface sewer system permits. By leavening routine tasks with various roles in the public hearing process, job interest and the sense of being part of a team and having collective goals can be enhanced.
5. **Gain political support.** By including key players at various stages of the process, and paying careful attention to the policy making-implementation linkages, an agency can significantly enhance its political base. Community leaders become more familiar with agency officials and goals, as well as have an opportunity to influence the outcome of agency policies. This can be helpful during the budget process, as well as during future proposed actions.

6. **Stronger relationship with community.** An agency systematically builds a better long term relationship with the community, which will increase future effectiveness. It takes practice, positive experiences and mutual trust for agencies and citizens to work well together. This relationship requires time and opportunity to grow. The mission of public health is better served when an agency works effectively with citizens.

7. **Healthy process.** Healthy process is a positive end in itself. Whenever information is freely exchanged, and concerned individuals, whether they are officials, policy makers, or citizens, have an opportunity to participate in decision-making in a positive setting, the results of that process are stronger.
Bibliography


Kweit, Mary G. and Robert W. Kweit Implementing Citizen Participation In a Bureaucratic Society Praeger Special Studies, 1980.


Tipple, T.J. and J.D. Wellman. "Life in the Fishbowl.

70


CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT MECHANISMS

Brainstorming: The citizen involvement program coordinator conducts a meeting in which comments are solicited about a specific topic. Another person records the comments on butcher paper, a blackboard, or an overhead projector, so that the comments are clearly seen and acknowledged by all participants. The comments are not evaluated but are sorted into topical categories. The participants are then split into groups, and each group evaluates a specific category.

**Advantages**

* Is a fairly quick and easy means to inventory major issues, public concern, and feelings.

* Provides a setting where participation in future activities may be announced and discussed.

**Disadvantages**

* Primarily a one-way interaction, with public expressing views.

* Can result in a confrontation situation.

* Participants may not be representative.

Breakfast Meeting: This is a regularly scheduled and centrally located meeting designed for informal dialogue between the project developers, facilitators, and the public. Listening to public concerns may be recorded, summarized, and sent to other participants.

**Advantages**

* Provides an informal atmosphere.

* Helps agency/industry keep a "pulse" on public concerns and feelings.

**Disadvantages**

* May limit low-income people's attendance.

* Noises and dining activities may hinder information collection.

* Primarily a one-way interaction, with public expressing views.

* The number of participants must be kept small.

Direct Mailing: Brochures or "mini-reports" can be mailed directly to citizens who live in the subject...
community. All brochures and reports should contain a common package of information which outlines specific technical considerations, possible alternatives, and other pertinent factors, and also provides the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of individuals, organizations, or agencies who can provide further information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Distributes information to a large number of people - an effective and widespread means of communication.</td>
<td>*A one-way technique; that is, agency and technical experts are sending information to the community but are not receiving any feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Offers limited citizen/agency or industry contact.</td>
<td>*Requires extensive preparation, and can be moderately expensive.</td>
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Fast Forum Technique: The fast forum technique involves a series of brief surveys that collect citizen feedback on specific ideas or actions. It asks for only "yes" or "no" answers to concise questions. The surveys can be distributed by local organizations or they can be mailed directly. The surveys are periodically distributed throughout the community during the policy-making process in order to solicit immediate public response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*Allows decision-makers to &quot;keep their fingers on the pulse&quot; of public opinion.</td>
<td>*Is subject to short-term citizen perceptions and doesn't necessarily represent the collective view of the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Individuals may become apathetic about responding to the several surveys and give false responses or not return the surveys.</td>
<td>*Is strictly a one-way method to collect</td>
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</table>
Field Trip: Either buses are provided or carpools are arranged for transportation to the area where the proposed project is to be conducted. An on site examination is then conducted, where the guide, staff specialists, and outside experts provide information about the proposed location, activities, and possible effects, and they answer any questions that may be raised.

Advantages

* Provides firsthand knowledge of site: geology, flora and fauna, etc. etc.

* Printed materials related to the site and proposed action can be distributed.

* Provides an informal setting for discussion.

Disadvantages

* Requires much planning for advance notice, transportation, accessibility, etc.

* Weather may interfere with the trip.

* Physical condition and capabilities of participants needs to be taken into account.

* A number of experts may need to be present to answer questions.

* Citizen/agency or industry interaction is minimal.

* Insects, noises, and other factors may inhibit group interaction.

Hotlines: Hotlines provide a ready source of information which citizens can obtain at their convenience. Government agencies or community organizations can hire hotline personnel to answer questions, direct individuals to the proper sources, and register names for specific mailing lists.

Advantages

* Allow for quick information dissemination.

* Can serve as a means of receiving citizen input.

Disadvantages

* Primarily a one-way information exchange technique.

* Provide limited citizen/agency or industry contact.
*Can be expensive to operate.

**Information Centers:** Such centers are well-publicized spots where public information can be easily obtained. They can be formal centers, established exclusively to disseminate information, or they can be informal areas where citizens normally gather, such as banks, barber shops, taverns, stores, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Allow quick and easy accessibility to information.</em></td>
<td><em>Provide marginal citizen/agency or industry contact and communication.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Represent agency's or industry's desire to make information accessible.</em></td>
<td><em>Require careful planning and substantial effort.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Can be staffed by professionals who are capable of giving accurate information or providing correct information sources to the public.</em></td>
<td><em>Can be costly in terms of personnel and informational material expenses.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>♦Represent agency's or industry's desire to make information accessible.*</td>
<td>♦Can provide misinformation if not staffed by knowledgeable personnel.*</td>
</tr>
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**Information Seminars:** Information seminars bring together, in a face-to-face setting, all interested parties who are affected by potential development. In this relatively informal setting, citizens and government and industry representatives can ask questions, present specific technical information, and freely discuss alternatives and impacts upon the community. Technical advisors and program facilitators should always be present in order to answer questions and moderate discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Provide a two-way information exchange medium.</em></td>
<td><em>Require careful planning and substantial effort.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>A high degree to citizen agency contact is achieved.</em></td>
<td><em>Can provide misinformation if not staffed by knowledgeable personnel.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Problems and alternatives can be freely discussed without the need, or the social and political pressure, to arrive at formal decisions.</em></td>
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75

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*Can become confrontation meetings between opposing interests, rather than free information-and-discussion settings, unless participant discussion is guided by a neutral moderator.
The information given helps to build community awareness.

**Information Group Discussions:** Informal group meetings consist of small discussion groups which involve community leaders, general citizens, agency officials, and any combination thereof. Their primary purpose is to present information, analyze community needs, outline community opinions, and discuss ideas for stimulating community awareness of key issues.

**Advantages**

*Can begin the initial process of information exchange and community needs assessment among community leaders and agency and industry representatives.*

*Their informal nature encourages a high degree of intimate citizen/agency or industry contact.*

*Individuals who would remain silent under more formal conditions express opinions.*

**Disadvantages**

*Informal group meetings seldom reflect community-wide representation.*

**Mass Media:** This technique is the planned and systematic use of major media, such as news releases, articles in local publications, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, paid ads, posters and displays, public service announcements, participation-style radio and television programs, television documentaries, and radio and television talk shows. Using mass media can be one of the most effective ways to spread general information or provide details concerning a particular issue. Agencies can transmit directly pertinent information, and community organizations can inform citizens of important meeting dates.

**Advantages**

*Ensures wide community information coverage.*

*Enables technical advisors to debate issues and*

**Disadvantages**

*Requires careful planning, and can be costly.*

*Is generally a one-way information exchange*
alternatives before a wide medium.
audience.

*Citizens have the convenience of sitting in their own homes and assessing technical information.

**On Site Demonstration:** Participants are transported to the proposed project area or a similar site and a demonstration of the proposed activities is provided. Information is provided and experts are available to answer questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>*Provides firsthand knowledge of site: geology, flora and fauna, etc.</td>
<td>*Requires much planning for advance notice, transportation, accessibility, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Provides information about a specific topic or activity.</td>
<td>*Weather may interfere with the trip.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Printed materials can be distributed and related to site.</td>
<td>*Physical condition and capabilities of participants needs to be taken into account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Provides an informal setting for discussion.</td>
<td>*A badly run demonstration could be a negative influence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Safety of participants must be provided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*A number of experts may need to be present to answer questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Citizen-agency or industry interaction is minimal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>*Insects, noises, and other factors may inhibit group interaction.</td>
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</table>

**Open House:** A well-known public building is used to set up informational displays, maps, photographs, and brochures and handouts are available. Project developers, facilitators, staff specialists, and outside experts are
present to provide information, answer questions, and discuss the issues in an informal but potentially in depth manner.

**Advantages**

*Provides an informal, personal citizen/agency or industry contact atmosphere.*

*Allows quick and easy access to a large amount of information.*

*The public may attend at their convenience and spend as much time as necessary.*

**Disadvantages**

*Requires much planning, time, and expense.*

*Requires experts who can answer any questions presented over a long time period.*

Surveys: Community-wide surveys can be conducted in many ways and can include a wide variety of questions. Survey questionnaires can be mailed to local citizens or dropped off at their homes; or the organizer can make use of telephone interviews or direct person-to-person interviews.

**Advantages**

*Provide a means for monitoring community attitudes, knowledge, and opinions.*

*Can be relatively inexpensive information-gathering devices.*

*Individuals selected for the survey can be found by reviewing voter registration lists, telephone directories, etc.*

*Can allow for statistically random sampling, thereby ensuring representative community opinions.*

*Mailed questionnaires can include space for additional comments.*

**Disadvantages**

*Might require more time and expense than organizers desire.*

*If used too often or if requiring a lot of time and expertise to complete, citizens may not respond.*
Task Force: A task force comprises citizen representatives which form a planning or advisory body. After reviewing information about a specific issue or option, the task force recommends a course of action to a decision-making body. Task force representatives should include members of the community from all economic levels and geographic locales.

Advantages

*Generates greater citizen participation throughout the community, spreading to citizen awareness and citizen expertise.

*Giving task force groups well-defined objectives helps decision-making bodies to assess the alternatives during the planning phase.

*Encourages a creative approach to problem solving.

Disadvantages

*Members must understand that they are accountable to a citizen decision-making body.

*Members must be willing to spend considerable amounts of time in order to accomplish their objective.

*Members must be given substantial amounts of information and help from technical experts.

Working Groups: Participants are divided into groups of approximately 6 to 12 members. Each group must have members who represent a variety of views and positions within the affected area. Members act as a communication link to the organization, agency, or group they represent. Each group works with the developers or facilitators throughout a review or planning periods. The first meeting is called by the facilitator who informs the group of what will need to be reviewed, and how their efforts will be utilized. Thereafter the members call the meetings ad they deem necessary for the proper investigation of an issue. Facilitators and staff specialists assist in conducting meetings, answering questions, and collecting information. The group is given no decision-making authority.

Advantages

*Much information can be assimilated and discussed.

Disadvantages

*Requires much time and effort by citizen-agency or industry participants.

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**Advantages**

* Are a practical method of introducing new ideas.

* Offer a high degree of citizen/government or industry contact.

* Successful workshops can substantially improve the knowledge, and can mirror the perceptions of all groups involved.

**Disadvantages**

* For the best results, workshops should require some participant selectivity, with the result that community representation is not achieved.

* Care must be taken so that workshops do not become manipulative or "co-optive tools" of the government or industry representatives, or other well-informed special interest groups.

**Advocacy Planning:** Whenever a community decides to follow the course of advocacy planning, attempts to reach a citizen/government or industry consensus are abandoned. Citizen groups may employ a professional advocate, usually a lawyer, who directly confronts government agencies or industry on behalf of the community. The advocate seeks to advance and protect community interests during the policy-making process. Frequently, advocacy planning goes beyond the normal states of confrontation. When this occurs, citizens abandon all forms of negotiation, and as the ultimate strategy, attempt to wrestle a favorable decision for the community from the courts.

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Advantages

* Brings technical disputes directly to the forefront for public scrutiny.

* Can check government or industry manipulation.

Disadvantages

* Any kind of community/agency or industry consensus is usually destroyed.

* Is an expensive form of negotiation for all of the groups participating in the policy-formation process.

Citizen Advisory Committee: The citizen advisory committee is a small group of persons chosen to represent the views of the community-at-large, and it is directed to give government and industry representatives advice concerning policy decisions. Citizens selected for the advisory committee are usually chosen by an agency or industry and then tacitly approved by the community. The advisory committee reviews proposed agency or industry plans, assesses community opinions and attitudes, and then prepares a formal recommendation to government or industry based upon their interpretation of public desires. Their sole claim to power rests upon the influence of citizen recommendations.

Advantages

* Serves as a liaison between agencies and community.

* Allows government and industry personnel to work directly with a single group of citizen representatives.

Disadvantages

* Membership is seldom representative.

* Traditionally has low citizen input, thus making it difficult to obtain wide community support for its recommendations.

* Individuals who are appointed to the advisory committee must be willing to spend considerable amounts of time on their appointed duties.

* Lacks tangible power to influence agencies or industry.

Citizen Assemblies: An area where development is proposed, is divided into several districts, and a citizen representative from each district meets with other district representatives in a citizen assembly. What emerges is an
unofficial citizen congress. Representatives are responsible for reviewing technical information, meeting with agency and industry representatives, and determining the best community alternatives.

### Advantages

* Guarantee community-wide representation.

* Establish good citizen/agency or industry contact.

* Are difficult for agencies or industries to manipulate or co-opt.

### Disadvantages

* Organizing the citizen assemblies requires a great deal of time and planning.

* Citizen representatives are required to devote large amounts of time to their assigned duties.

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**Community Impact Committee:** This group's main responsibility is to determine the probable social and economic impacts of a proposed development upon a community. It conducts public meetings for information exchange and makes recommendations to government leaders, agency officials, and industry representatives. Representation on the community impact committee includes local government leaders, public service personnel community merchants, a wide range of general citizens, and agency and industry representatives. The community impact committee is an information collector, information disseminator, and advisory board to local government.

### Advantages

* Allows for a high degree of citizen/agency or industry contact, bringing significant interest groups together in a unified governing body.

### Disadvantages

* Citizens may not be adequately represented.

* Is vulnerable to agency or industry manipulation and co-optation.

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**Community Forum:** A community forum can be an information dissemination process, a citizen/agency or industry interaction process, or a combination thereof. At its best, the community forum is the answer to avoiding the pressures and confrontations of a formal public hearing. Like the public hearing, it brings together citizens, agency or industry representatives, and a host of technical experts; but the major difference is that the formal testimony is not recorded and documented as being the final public, agency, or industry position. The forum allows direct, but not binding, views to be presented. It is, in a
sense, a rehearsal of the formal public hearing, where views will go on record as being the final word. A forum gives all participating groups time to reanalyze their original positions, continue an open dialog, and anticipate the expected results of a formal public hearing.

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<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Provides excellent citizen/agency or industry contact.</td>
<td>* Special interest groups can gain control of forum presentations and information, unless a neutral moderator is present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Offers the opportunity for widespread citizen participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>* Tends to limit confrontation politics and ill feelings between active parties.</td>
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Community Planning Council: Establishing a community planning council is a long-term commitment to a community planning and policy making. It is a formally elected or appointed citizen body that becomes a permanent advisory committee to local government, state and federal agencies, or industry. The council's job is to review agency or industry planning proposals, respond to questions from the public, and recommend appropriate policy decisions.

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<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tr>
<td>* Ensures a firm citizen commitment to public participation.</td>
<td>* Is seldom a representative citizen body.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Creates an ongoing citizen advisory body for government and industry referral.</td>
<td>* Is susceptible to government and industry manipulation and co-optation.</td>
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Community-Sponsored Meetings: Community-sponsored meetings are arranged and chaired by leaders of a specific citizen group, local organization, or by local officials. The sponsoring group invites agency and industry representatives or technical experts to the meetings, and establishes the agenda or the priorities of the meetings.

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<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Give citizens the feeling that the &quot;show&quot; belongs to</td>
<td>* May be purposely designed to embarrass or discredit</td>
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them and not to the agency or industry officials.

*Tend to allow for wide citizen participation.

*Offer a high degree of citizen/agency or industry contact.

**Lobbying:** Lobbying can be conducted in various ways. Citizens may decide to limit lobbying activities to writing letters, to telephoning elected representatives, or to sending petitions or telegrams to pertinent state and federal officials. In order to gain greater influence, citizens may decide to employ a full-time lobbyist who presents, directly, community views to state or federal government legislators. Some lobbying procedures can be utilized along with other citizen involvement techniques without endangering citizen/agency or industry communication.

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<th>Advantages</th>
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<tr>
<td>*Some procedures, such as the sending of telegrams to representatives, require little citizen effort or time.</td>
<td>*Some procedures, such as the employing of a full-time lobbyist, are expensive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Is traditional citizen right.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Citizens give greater political impact to their views through lobbying measures.</td>
<td>*Does not always provide government officials with a &quot;balanced&quot; view of issues.</td>
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**Ombudsperson:** The ombudsperson serves as an independent, impartial third party who mediates citizen/agency or industry redresses, complaints, and preferences. The ombudsperson possesses no actual power, but serves to help each interest group arrive at a common viewpoint or consensus. The ombudsperson attempts to identify the positive and negative features of the views which have been presented by citizens, government, and industry representatives, and contribute to mutual understanding among participants.
**Advantages**

*Can improve attitudes and relations among citizens, agency officials, and industry representatives.*

*May receive information from citizens who are reluctant to discuss such information directly with government or industry representatives.*

*Can identify specific problems and can, in some cases, recommend alternatives or changes which are agreeable to all of the parties concerned.*

**Disadvantages**

*The power or influence of the ombudsperson depends upon the cooperation and goodwill of all of the parties involved.*

*Government agency officials or industry representatives may use the ombudsperson to avoid direct contact with citizens.*

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**Public Hearings:** Public hearings serve to legally document legally public, agency, and industry views toward particular issues. They are required in government decision making at almost all levels of public policy. Here, individuals give testimony of their opinions, or the viewpoints of groups which they represent, about certain projects. Public hearings are open for all individuals and groups to present their views for the official record.

**Advantages**

*Formally document citizen/government or industry positions.*

**Disadvantages**

*Are seldom conducive to wide-spread public representation.*

*Usually enhance confrontation and a polarization over issues.*

*Are usually dominated by a few individuals or special interest groups.*

*Citizens usually give testimony with little interaction or discussion with agency or industry representatives.*
*Can increase adverse relationships between citizens, government, and industry representatives.

*Many individuals are embarrassed to ask questions at public hearings.

*When reporting the events of public hearings, the media usually describes only confrontation situations.

*Are usually enacted after decision on a particular issue has already been reached by government or industry planners.

*There is often just pro forma reactions by government agencies in order to honor the legal mandate of citizen involvement.

Steering Committee: The citizen steering committee is an executive citizen body representing a larger citizen group. Elected by the community-at-large or community representatives, the steering committee directs information dissemination and citizen fact-finding groups, and makes recommendations to government and industry representatives. In order to implement information dissemination and citizen fact-finding, the committee may request special workshops or appoint citizens to specific working groups. The steering committee assesses information, agency or industry planning alternatives, and initiates and chairs citizen/agency or industry meetings.

Advantages

*The approach allows citizens and government and industry representatives to respond to a single citizen governing body.

*Builds strong citizen involvement leadership.

Disadvantages

*Membership on the citizen steering committee may not be representative of citizens throughout the community.
**DECISION-MAKING**

**Arbitrative Planning:** Arbitrative planning is similar to the ombudsman approach. An individual expert is hired by citizens, government agencies, and industry to serve as a hearing officer to arbitrate among community, agency, and industry in policy planning. The hearing officer evaluates each side of the story in an attempt to offer suitable compromises for all interest groups. Unlike the ombudsman's authority, the arbitrator's rulings are binding on communities, agencies, and industry.

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<td><em>Enables an outside, neutral party to make the ultimate decisions which affect the various special interest groups.</em></td>
<td><em>It is sometimes extremely difficult to convince citizens, government, and industry representatives to accept the final judgment of an outside authority.</em></td>
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<td><em>Can stimulate citizen/agency or industry communication but often in a confrontation setting.</em></td>
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**Charrette:** A charrette is an intense planning session among all of the interest groups involved in the policy-planning process. Charrette participants meet with the idea in mind that they will continue discussion and negotiation until some form of resolution or agreement can be achieved. A charrette can continue for several days or several weeks depending upon how long it takes to reach specific decisions.

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<td><em>Participants share a mutual commitment to pursue negotiation and discussion until a clear-cut course of action is agreed upon.</em></td>
<td><em>Requires a great deal of planning and can be costly to conduct.</em></td>
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<td><em>It is probably the swiftest means for citizens, government, and industry representatives to make agreements.</em></td>
<td><em>Because a charrette requires large segments of the participants' time, it may not include some key community leaders.</em></td>
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<td><em>Usually does not provide community-wide representation.</em></td>
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Citizen Lawsuit: The citizen-initiated lawsuit demonstrates an unwillingness of citizens and government or industry representatives to negotiate and discuss policy plans. In effect, it takes the decision-making process out of the hands of citizens, and government or industry representatives, and opens it up to judicial review. Sometimes, citizen lawsuits are initiated after a substantial amount of negotiation has already occurred. At this point, citizens feel that government or industry representatives are not offering them the best options available. Hoping to gain a more responsive forum, citizens seek redress through the courts.

Advantages

* Offers a means for citizens to challenge the decisions made by government or industry representatives which they feel are not in the public interest.

* Definitely leads to a decision - a decision thought to stem from a responsible governing body.

Disadvantages

* Can be initiated by special interest groups within the larger community constituency, therefore, not reflecting community-wide opinion.

* Quickly brings to an end constructive citizen/agency or industry negotiation and discussion - cooperative communication break downs.

Citizen Review Board: The citizen review board exhibits all of the characteristics of the citizen advisory council except that it wields the ultimate decision-making authority. Like the advisory board, the review board may either be elected directly by citizens, appointed by government or industry representatives, or any combination thereof. The review board analyzes technical information and proposals which have been brought forth by citizens, government agencies, and industry, and then gives a formal recommendation for future actions. The ultimate decisions reached by the review board are binding on citizens, government agencies, and industry.

Advantages

* Gives formidable power to citizens.

* Citizens in the community are more likely to accept and abide by the decisions which have been made by a citizen review board than

Disadvantages

* Does not ensure community representation.

* It is extremely difficult for government and industry representatives to accept willingly the recommendations of a citizen review board.
those decisions which government agencies and industry attempt to enforce.

Citizen Representation - Public Policy-Making Body: In this technique, citizens are asked by government or industry representatives to sit on a public policy-making body. Comprised of government officials and/or industry officials and citizen representatives, this group reviews pertinent information, solicits community opinion, and formulates policy.

**Advantages**
- Citizens may be more receptive to decisions which have been generated by a formal planning body that includes citizen representatives.
- Allows for at least a marginal amount of citizen/agency or industry interaction.

**Disadvantages**
- The appointment of citizen representatives to a policy-making board is sometimes merely a symbolic act or tokenism on the part of government agencies or industry.
- Does not ensure community-wide representation.
- Citizens on the public policy-making board are susceptible to manipulation or co-optation by government or industry representatives.

Fish-Bowl Planning: Fish-Bowl planning is used to open the planning process to a wide variety of interests. Alternatives to a course of action that have been generated by citizen/agency discussion are described in a series of public information bulletins. Citizens can express their views in space which has been designated for this purpose in the bulletins, and mail the bulletins back to the distributing source. These citizen comments are reiterated and again distributed to the general public for interpretation and analysis. In this way, the agency, planner, or industry that proposes certain courses of action can determine the most controversial aspects of the plan. Fish-bowl planning is, of course, only effective when it is carried out together with information-dissemination techniques.
### Advantages

* Generates widespread citizen participation.

* Allows the general public to react, redefine, and, in some cases, enthusiastically support final decisions.

* Definitely provides government and industry representatives with a detailed outline of public consensus.

### Disadvantages

* Citizens need time to view necessary technical information prior to the fish-bowl planning process.

* Fish-bowl planning does not necessarily guarantee that the wishes of the citizen majority, through perhaps stated explicitly, will be followed.

### Local Referendum:

The citizen referendum is an extremely democratic technique, whereby proposed planning measures are directly brought before the voting citizenry for acceptance or disapproval by a balloting process. The local referendum procedure is identical to the state referendum procedure except that local referendum is on a community scale. Citizens can vote at their normal polling stations.

#### Advantages

* Guarantees community-wide representation.

* Citizens are likely to support willingly any action that they have approved at the ballot box.

#### Disadvantages

* Fosters little citizen/agency or industry contact, unless it is joined with citizen/agency or industry interaction techniques.

* Requires that citizens be well-informed.

* The views of a narrow majority may be implemented, while minorities may find their opinions foreclosed.

### Media-Based Issue Balloting:

In this process, the mass media is used to present and discuss issues, and the public is invited to vote on their preferred alternatives. The choice of the media base is up to the discretion of citizens, government, and industry representatives. For example, local television stations can present panel discussions, and then have citizens call in their views or
their votes; or to give the audience more reaction time, ballots can be issued through newspapers.

**Advantages**

* Is conducive to widespread citizen representation.
* Can be used by government and industry representatives in order to assess citizen consensus.

**Disadvantages**

* Does not enhance direct citizen/agency or industry communication and interaction.
* Does not guarantee that citizen viewpoints will be upheld by government and industry representatives, even if a clear consensus is apparent.

**Policy Delphi:** The policy delphi is a series of questioning sessions directed toward an appointed panel which represents various community interests as well as involved government agencies and industry. The questioning can take place either in meetings or in a series of mailed questionnaires. In the first-round questionnaire, respondents are asked to list their preferences, pro or con, on the alternatives outlines. The second-round questionnaire begins by presenting opinions, viewpoints, and alternatives which were selected by the first-round process. Respondents are then asked to list their degree of confidence in, agreement with, and acceptance of the results of the first questionnaire. This evaluation process is carried out through several rounds of questionnaires until consensus on key issues and priorities begins to emerge. During the final rounds of the questionnaires, it will become apparent where consensus lies on specific issues, and the degree of support for different positions. To a certain extent, the policy delphi resembles fish-bowl planning, except that the number of respondents is reduced to a select panel.

**Advantages**

* One asset is that respondents are requested to state their reasons for their positions. These reasons are, in turn, viewed by other respondents and evaluated. After a number of questioning rounds, respondents may change their original positions if they become

**Disadvantages**

* Does not provide a representative sample of community opinion.
* Requires that respondents are well-informed.
* Requires extensive coordination by an experienced moderator.
convinced that their original justifications are not longer viable.

*Allows time for respondents to assess the material they are evaluating.

*Restricts the impact of small, special interest groups.

**State Initiative Vote:** A state's entire voting citizenry goes to the polls and offers its collective viewpoint about an alternative.

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<td>*Presents the views of a large, regional constituency.</td>
<td>*Regional attitudes may overshadow local community desires.</td>
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<td>*Allows citizens on a regional basis to vote on which alternatives should be come law.</td>
<td>*Citizens may not necessarily understand the issues they are expected to evaluate and to make final decisions upon.</td>
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