At Toxics Action Center, we envision a world where everyone can breathe clean air, drink clean water, and live in healthy, sustainable communities. Since 1987, we have organized side-by-side with over 675 communities from across New England, helping them clean up and prevent toxic pollution in their neighborhoods. When dangerous industries are polluting our air and water, when toxic pesticides are threatening our children’s health, when unresponsive bureaucracies are slow to enforce our environmental laws, we are here to help citizens protect the health and safety of their communities.

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Public Hearings

Goal of Consultation: Develop a plan to present at and recruit people to a specific public hearing.

I. Principles of Public Hearings

II. Steps to Planning a Public Hearing
   1. Campaign Goals
   2. Public Hearing Process and Logistics
   3. Public Hearing Goals
   4. Target Audience(s) and Influences
   5. Message and Testimony
   6. Tactics and Plan

III. Evaluation
I. Principles of Public Hearings

1. Know the Process
   Know the rules of the game. By knowing the hearing process—who can speak, how will the room be set up, who is the moderator—you will be able to make a more effective plan.

2. Clarify Your Goals
   You can accomplish many things through a public hearing: influencing decision-makers, getting media coverage, recruiting for your group, and educating the public. Often a public hearing is not the best time to influence your decision-maker. Make sure to set clear goals and to make a plan for how to reach them before you go to the public hearing.

3. Be on the Offensive
   In public hearings, the process is set up to put you on the defensive. Government officials set up the meeting to make it hard for you to get your message out. You need to change that.

4. Craft a Message Using the Four Cs
   You will be able to influence the government officials, media, and public best if your message is Concise, Compelling, Consistent and Controls the issue. Attendees often come away from events like this remembering just one thing. Your testimony and facts should always be sandwiched between your message. Practice.

5. Use the Hearing to Build Your Group
   A strong group lends legitimacy to your campaign and provides more resources to implement your tactics. In addition to forwarding your program, use the public hearing to build the size and strength of your group.
6. Don’t Be Afraid to Bend the Rules
   Sometimes the deck is so stacked against you at public hearings, that you lose by following instructions. If that is the case, first try to change the rules to your advantage. If that does not work, you may need to consider strategies and tactics that shake up the meeting to help you achieve your goals.

7. Consider Holding Your Own “Public Hearing”
   There are times when holding your own “public hearing” will help you reach your campaign goal. Invite the public, invite decision-makers, and set your own rules.
II. Steps to Planning a Public Hearing

Step 1: Campaign Goals

Date and time: ________________________________

Location:_______________________________________

Size Of Room:_____________________________________

Agenda/Order Of Presentation: _______________________

Will the government or the proponents take questions? _ _ _ _ _ _

Who is the moderator? _ _ _ _ _ _ Who sets the agenda? _ _ _ _ _ _

Do you need to sign up to talk? _______________________

How much time do you have to talk? ___________________

Is the group always together? _________________________

Circle the logistics of the public hearing you want to change.

Who can change it? _________________________________

Which group member will work on the change? ___________
Step 3. Public Hearing Goals

Your group can accomplish a number of goals at a public hearing. Fill in the lines first with specifics about the quantitative and qualitative goals. Then rank the level of importance (1-low, 5-high) of each goal for your group and prioritize.

Influence Decision-Makers:__________________________________________

1  2  3  4  5

Recruit Members:____________________________________________________

1  2  3  4  5

Educate the Public:__________________________________________________

1  2  3  4  5

Media Coverage:_____________________________________________________

1  2  3  4  5

Enter Testimony/Facts Into Record:____________________________________

1  2  3  4  5

Disrupt the Process__________________________________________________

1  2  3  4  5
Step 4: Target Audience(s) and Influences

Target(s) Of The Public Hearing
(ie: Decision-Maker, Public, Media)

Public:____________________________________________________

Other Groups:________________________________________________

Elected Officials:______________________________________________

Influential People:______________________________________________

Media:________________________________________________________

Experts/Information:____________________________________________

Meeting Orchestration:___________________________________________

Opposition:_____________________________________________________
Step 5: Message And Testimony

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words That Help Your Cause</th>
<th>Words That Hurt Your Cause</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Words to Use)</td>
<td>(Words to Avoid)</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Effective messages tell a good story and motivate people to get involved. The key parts of any good campaign message are problem, solution and action.</td>
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**Problem:** Paint a picture of the threat.

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**Solution:** Paint a picture of what you want to happen/your ideal outcome.

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**Action:** Getting from the problem to the solution. Include urgency.

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**Message**

Condense the problem, solution and action into a compelling and concise message that you can repeat at the meeting.

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**Slogan**

Create a slogan that you can use for signs, fact sheets and other materials at the public hearing.

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**Testimony**

What testimony or facts do you want to enter into the record?

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Messengers

Who are the best messengers to influence your targets?

Message Sandwich

Your testimony and facts should always be “sandwiched” between your message. Write out an outline of your “message sandwich” for your messengers to use.

Visuals That Complement Your Message
## Step 6: The Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Influences</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>Dates →</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Orchestration</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Turnout</td>
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<td>Media</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speakers, Testimony</td>
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<tr>
<td>Materials / Research</td>
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<td>Core Group Meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hearing Logistics</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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Write your goals for each tactic you plan on using in the “Goals” boxes and then work backward.
IV. Evaluate

Take a few minutes to evaluate your public hearing plan.

☐ Do you know the process for the public hearing?

☐ Are you clear and comfortable with your goals?

☐ Do you have a clear message?

☐ Do you have a plan to develop and present your testimony?

☐ Do you have a plan to recruit for the hearing and use the hearing to build your group?

☐ Do you have a good media plan?

☐ Do you have a plan to orchestrate the hearing, set the right tone, and respond to unexpected events?

☐ Does your group need to do additional consultation sessions for developing a campaign plan, interpreting test results, making a recruitment plan, garnering media attention, fundraising, developing materials, or winning a community vote?
Organizing with residents to clean up and prevent pollution since 1987.

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