

Observer Corps Workshop

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What is Observer Corps?



League members who

- Attend governmental meetings
- Note what is happening
- Report back to the League and (hopefully) the community.

Not a vehicle for personal or partisan agendas!

Why have an Observer Corps?

- **Educate** ourselves and public on governmental operations and issues
- **Remind** officials that we are watching
- **Elevate** our public image
- **Understand** hot issues
- **Build a basis for action** (If League has position)
- **Shine a light:** Transparency
- **Connect** officials with constituents



Who can be a League Observer?

ANY LEAGUE MEMBER WHO IS . . .

- Good listener and able to summarize fairly
- Interested in local government or issues
- A good ambassador for League
- Discrete and courteous
- Not working a personal or partisan agenda



How does it work?

As an Observer, you:

- Attend meetings on your own (not a team)
- Prepare a simple report, submitted via email
- Attend as many meeting of the agency as you can
- You monitor both **content** AND **process**



Content and Process

CONTENT

- What actions were taken
- Points pro and con
- Areas of League interest
- Hot topics based on public reaction
- Anything out of the ordinary
- Major appointments, expenditures
- ...

PROCESS

- Prompt start
- Meeting rules
- Attendance
- Agenda available
- Minutes of previous meeting
- Body Language
- Public Input
- ...

Note problems or unusual happenings

Who's being observed?

Select based on . . .

- Potential LWV impact
- Hot issues
- LWV areas of expertise (e.g. voting)
- Member interest/expertise
- Timing
- . . .

- Authorities
- Boards of education
- **City/town councils**
- **County commissioners**
- Environmental Commissions
- Planning and zoning boards
- Recreation/Parks boards/commissions
- . . .

OUR WISH LIST: County Commissioners and Planning Board, Local Governing Bodies

Before the meeting

How to prepare

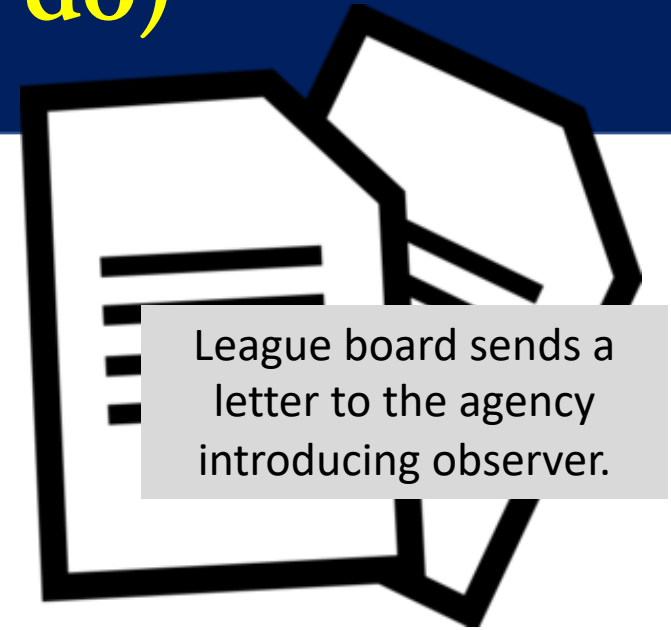
- Research meeting dates, times, locations (if virtual-get info to log in)
- Know what the agency does, areas covered
- Know number of members, whether elected or appointed

- *County or local websites*
- *Google*
- *Phone calls to town managers or clerks*
- *Call Marie or Louise for assistance*
- *County Government Hot Topic video (1st 10 minutes)*

During the meeting

What to do (and not to do)

- Wear LWW button
(or rename yourself “LWW-Observer” on Zoom)
- In person, introduce yourself as comfortable
- Watch and report (take notes)
- Do NOT speak out
(If League has a statement on an issue, you MAY be asked by League president to read it.)
- Do NOT frown or show by body language your reaction -- good or bad
(for remote meetings keep video off)



After the meeting

Documenting and reporting

- Organize notes into a report
- Include any absences, prompt or late start, conduct of meeting, issues addressed and action taken
- Report to Board at first opportunity
- Report to greater audience, if relevant, via newsletter, e-mail blast or other means OK'd by Board

Agency _____ Date: _____

FEATURE EVALUATED	YES	NO	COMMENTS
• Did meeting start on time?			
• Were all members present?			
• Were members attentive?			
• Did the members appear to have done their "homework"?			
• Were members courteous to each other and the public?			
• Were Open Act requirements followed? - agenda items posted 72 hrs before? - agenda items clearly described what was to be discussed? - adequate opportunity for public input? - was there the appearance that some action items were discussed in closed rather than in open session?			
• Was background information available to public?			

• Were any issues on the agenda relevant to any LWV state or local positions or programs?

• Do you recommend local League action on any of these issues? Yes ___ No ___ If "yes" what action do you recommend?

• Other Concerns: _____

Observer: _____ Date Submitted: _____

Report should be submitted to President or Secretary before next LWVEA Board Meeting.
Please attach agency's agenda, if possible. Thank you.

Knowing the law



SUNSHINE ACT

Any meeting of two or more members of a public agency if they are discussing agency business is considered a meeting of that agency and must be open to public observation.

EXCEPTIONS

Personnel issues
Salaries
Litigation

Workshops versus public meetings

WORKSHOPS

- Where the discussion and debate takes place
- Open to public for observation, but not for comment
- Closed session for personnel, litigation, etc. discussions

PUBLIC MEETINGS

- "Rubber stamp" the decisions made in the workshop sessions
- If public comment is permitted, can address something learned in workshop sessions



Board of Monmouth County Commissioners

Meetings begin at 1:00 on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month, except for holidays. Call 732-431-7387 for specific meeting dates or go to <https://www.visitmonmouth.com/page.aspx?ID=1808>.

For workshop and public meeting times, question instructions, and agenda:

1. Go to the county website: www.visitmonmouth.com
2. Click on “Government” in the top border.
3. Click on “Commissioner Meeting Notice” for instructions for observation and submission of comments/questions, which they prefer to receive in advance.

Attend the workshop and/or public meeting virtually:

At www.facebook.com/MonmouthGovNJ or
<https://www.youtube.com/user/MonmouthCountyNJ>.

(When meetings start, you will be able to see a box featuring it and at that point you can click onto it to observe/participate.)

Monmouth County Planning Board

Schedule and archive

- Public Notice of Meetings
<https://www.co.monmouth.nj.us/page.aspx?ID=4194> (Check for updated info)
- 2021 Meeting Schedule
Dates: https://www.co.monmouth.nj.us/documents/24/MCPB_MeetingDates_2021.pdf
- Archive of Previous Meetings
[Open Public Records Search System.](#) Previous meeting minutes may also be located at the [Document Index](#)

Attend the workshop and/or public meeting virtually:

- By Phone: Dial: 1-408-418-9388 Meeting Number (Access Code): 179 780 1661.
- To join by WebEx Web Conference go to [webex.com](https://www.webex.com). Click on the 'Join' tab (upper right on screen). When prompted to 'Join a Meeting', enter the Meeting Number (access code): 179 780 1661. When prompted, enter the Meeting Password: "planning". Members of the public will have the opportunity to give spoken comments during the public comment period.

*Questions concerning this procedure should be directed to 732-431-7460 or
via email to: planning@co.monmouth.nj.us*

Municipal Example: Shrewsbury Borough Council

Schedule and archive

- <https://www.shrewsburyboro.com/snj/Announcements/%2A%2A2021%20Annual%20Notice%20-%20Designated%20Borough%20Council%20Meetings%2A%2A.pdf?1613509071>
- All meeting information will be posted at least 48 hours prior to meetings on both the Borough website www.shrewsburyboro.com and Facebook Page <https://www.facebook.com/shrewsburyboroNJGovernment>
- The meetings will be conducted using the GoToMeeting platform. By computer, tablet or smartphone: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/548268885> By Phone: United States: +1 (872) 240-3412 Access Code: 548-268-885. Get the app ahead of time at: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/install/548268885>. Join from a video-conferencing room or system. Dial in or type: 67.217.95.2 or inroomlink.goto.com Meeting ID: 548 268 885. Or dial directly: 548268885@67.217.95.2 or 67.217.95.2##548268885

The Public is welcome, encouraged to participate virtually, and may comment during the GoToMeeting platform. Council Meetings are held on the first and third Mondays of the month except in the case of a holiday when it will be the Tuesday immediately following at 7 PM.

If you are interested . . .



1. Enter your name and the agency/body you'd like to observe in the chat box—or email Marie or Louise
(Consider signing up as an alternate—back-up observer)
2. You will be contacted by email by either Marie or Louise—or your local League president

Contact information



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Questions

