



ATTENDING PUBLIC MEETINGS

Some of the biggest AI decisions in your life won't be made in Washington.

Your school board is deciding which AI tools are used in your kids' classrooms. Your city council and county commission are approving the data centers, tax breaks, and utility agreements that power the AI buildout. These meetings are open to you by law, the seats are usually empty, and the handful of citizens who actually show up have a lot of influence. Being present lets you stay informed, hold local leadership accountable, and shape decisions while they can still be shaped. Read agendas carefully. AI items rarely say "AI." Watch for words like technology, innovation, curriculum, economic development agreement, rezoning, and infrastructure.

WHERE AI SHOWS UP ON LOCAL AGENDAS

School boards: AI tutoring and edtech adoptions, classroom chatbot policies, student data privacy, and teacher guidance on AI use.

City councils and county commissions: data center rezonings, economic development and tax abatement agreements, water and power commitments, and the government's own use of AI in services and surveillance.

Utility boards and commissions: rate cases and infrastructure plans driven by data center demand. The decisions made by these organizations affect your monthly utility bill.

SEVEN THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

1

Check the meeting agenda. It's typically posted in advance on the entity's website. Review it to understand what's up for discussion and identify items you want to speak on or learn more about.

2

Know the location, time, and format. Some meetings are in person, others virtual; confirm how to attend either way. Most bodies record their meetings and post them online, and watching one past session is the single best way to learn how these meetings run before attending your first one.

3

Understand the rules for public comment. Most meetings set aside a designated comment period. Check how to sign up, the time limit (usually one to three minutes), and any topic restrictions. Many bodies require a speaker card submitted before the meeting starts, sometimes the day before, and some require you to reference the agenda item number on the card. Learn the rules ahead of time so your remarks are properly recorded and considered.

4

Prepare your remarks. Write them out and keep your remarks to under three minutes. Say who you are and where you live, make one point, tell one story, and end with a specific ask.

5

Respect the protocol. Public meetings follow a set agenda and formal procedures. Stay respectful, never interrupt, and follow the chair's instructions. Dress formally.

6

Follow up after the meeting. Member contact information will be on the website. Send a short, courteous email restating your point, thank anyone who engaged with the issue, and come back next month.

7

Go as a group. Everything above works better with company. Bring two neighbors, split the speaking (one story each, no repetition), sit together, and have one person photograph your group outside afterward (see the photo guide). Then report what happened, and what's coming up for a vote, to your Alliance contact; local intelligence like that is how national campaigns find their next fight.



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