

Meeting expectations – how we can all set the tone

When possible, schedule meetings in a variety of locations around the state, or find ways to use meeting tools (like Skype, NetMeeting, etc.) that enable virtual participation.

If you're expecting an important phone call (like an ill family member or job crisis), please let your colleagues know at the start of the meeting. Otherwise, turn your phone to silent or OFF, and refrain from texting each other secretly during the meeting – we can all see what you're doing...

If you brought your laptop, we hope it's for note-taking or for research as necessary. Checking your e-mail or surfing during meetings isn't polite, especially when you start laughing about the YouTube clip sent by your cousin Ralph.

When running meetings, remember that this is a volunteer organization – we're not here for the money, and we're not getting paid by the hour – keep the meetings on task, but don't be so focused on the agenda that people feel squelched.

Side conversations (along with note passing) can appear to be motivated by many things: boredom, conspiracy, funny comments that may not be appropriate for the whole group (though we may still want to hear them). If it's important enough to discuss at the time, bring it into the open. If it's something strategic and you need to discuss it with someone, or if it's something that needs to be worked out in a smaller group before we can move on, ask for a break – we know that this will happen from time to time, so no worries.

Yelling is never appropriate. If a discussion gets heated, make folks raise their hands and take names. If someone doesn't want to play along, they don't get to participate. Make it a stated rule at the start of meetings. We are all colleagues here, and we should all expect to give and receive the same level of respect to each other.

Above all, this is a COMMUNITY. Make it somewhere you want to live, not somewhere you're forced to be.