

HMDC Elementary Model Congress Class (Fall 2024)

Activity: City Council Meeting (Simulation)

Activity: Simulating a City Council Meeting

In this roleplay activity, we will simulate a city council meeting to discuss whether or not to allow pets in restaurants. Each of you will take on a role as either a city council member, a business owner (who is also a member of the Chamber of Commerce), or both. Your goal is to give a speech that clearly expresses your personal or business point of view, whether you support or oppose the idea of allowing pets in restaurants. The city council will listen to arguments and then vote on the issue.

City Council Meeting: A city council meeting is a formal gathering where elected council members, along with the mayor, discuss and make decisions about local issues. During the meeting, members debate topics, listen to public opinions, and vote on proposals to help govern the community. The mayor leads the meeting, ensuring order and fairness as members speak and vote on matters that impact the community.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Mayor: The newly elected mayor will run the meeting, making sure everyone has a chance to speak and keeping the discussion organized. The mayor does not vote unless there is a tie, in which case they cast the deciding vote. This is the mayor's first council meeting.

City Council Members: As a council member, your job is to listen to the arguments from business owners and other council members, ask questions if needed, and vote on whether or not pets should be allowed in restaurants. You should consider the community's health, business interests, and public safety when making your decision.

Business Owners: As a business owner and member of the Chamber of Commerce, you represent local businesses that may be impacted by the decision. You will research the issue, decide if your business supports or opposes pets in restaurants, and present your argument. You must create a name for your business (e.g., "The Cozy Café") and explain how this decision will affect your business operations.

How to Prepare

1. **Choose a Role:** Decide whether you will be a city council member, a business owner (and Chamber of Commerce member), or both. If you choose to be a business owner, decide what type of business you own and create a name for it.
2. **Research:** Gather information about the topic of pets in restaurants. Consider health and safety concerns, customer preferences, and how it may impact businesses.
3. **Write Your Speech:** Once you've researched the issue, write a speech explaining your point of view. If you are a business owner, explain how the decision would affect your business. City council members should focus on the overall impact on the community and balance different viewpoints.
4. **Practice Your Speech:** Rehearse your speech so that you feel confident presenting your ideas during the meeting. Be ready to respond to questions from others.
5. **Addressing the Mayor:** Addressing the Mayor: When called upon to speak, always address the mayor respectfully. You can say "Mayor [Last Name]," "Your Honor," or "Mr./Madam Mayor." Start your speech with one of these formal addresses and continue speaking in a respectful tone throughout.

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Running the Meeting

We will follow a simplified version of Robert's Rules of Order to run the meeting:

The Mayor: The mayor will run the meeting by calling on people to speak and keeping the discussion focused on the topic.

Mayor's Address: At the start of the meeting, the mayor will give a brief opening statement outlining the purpose of the discussion and setting the tone for the meeting. The mayor will remind participants of the topic at hand and encourage respectful, organized debate as each person presents their views.

"Good afternoon, everyone. As Mayor, I would like to welcome you all to today's city council meeting. Our main topic of discussion is whether or not to allow pets in restaurants within our city. Each of you will have the opportunity to share your thoughts, and I ask that we all remain respectful as we present our ideas. I will call on each speaker in turn, and I encourage open but orderly debate. Let's work together to make the best decision for our community."

Speeches: Each person will give their 1-2 minute speech, stating their position. Business owners will explain how the decision impacts their businesses, and council members will respond with their opinions. Students will choose their side based upon their research and their actual opinions based upon their research.

Discussion: After the speeches, there will be time for questions and discussion. City council members can ask questions to clarify points made by the business owners. Business owners are trying to convince the council members to vote in favor (or against) the proposal.

The Vote: Once the discussion has ended, the city council will vote on whether or not to allow pets in restaurants. The decision will be made by majority vote. If there is a tie, the mayor casts the deciding vote.

Would You Like to Be Mayor?

Next week, we will elect a mayor to lead the city council meeting. If you want to run for mayor, you will need to give a short speech explaining why you would be a good leader. After hearing all the speeches, the class will vote, and the person with the most votes will be elected mayor. In the event that you win the election, please have a speech prepared to thank the attendees and you are the only one who must remain neutral (not taking a side) - so your speech should discuss how important the issue is, but not make your own opinion known.

Are You Ready (Checklist)?

1. Did you do your research?
2. Did you choose your role?
3. If you are a business owner, did you create a name for your business?
4. Did you write a 1-2 minute speech clearly explaining your ideas?
5. Do you remember how to address the mayor when you are called to speak?