



Putting in Your Two Cents

Springboard:

Students should study the “Follow the FLOWchart” transparency and suggest where and how citizens can have input into the process of creating new ordinances.

Objective: Students will be able to generally explain the process of passing local ordinances and the citizens’ role in that process.

Materials: Follow the FLOWchart (Springboard transparency and optional S.S.L. page 16)
Proposed Ordinances (7 cut-up handouts)
The Will of the People (handouts or S.S.L. page 31)

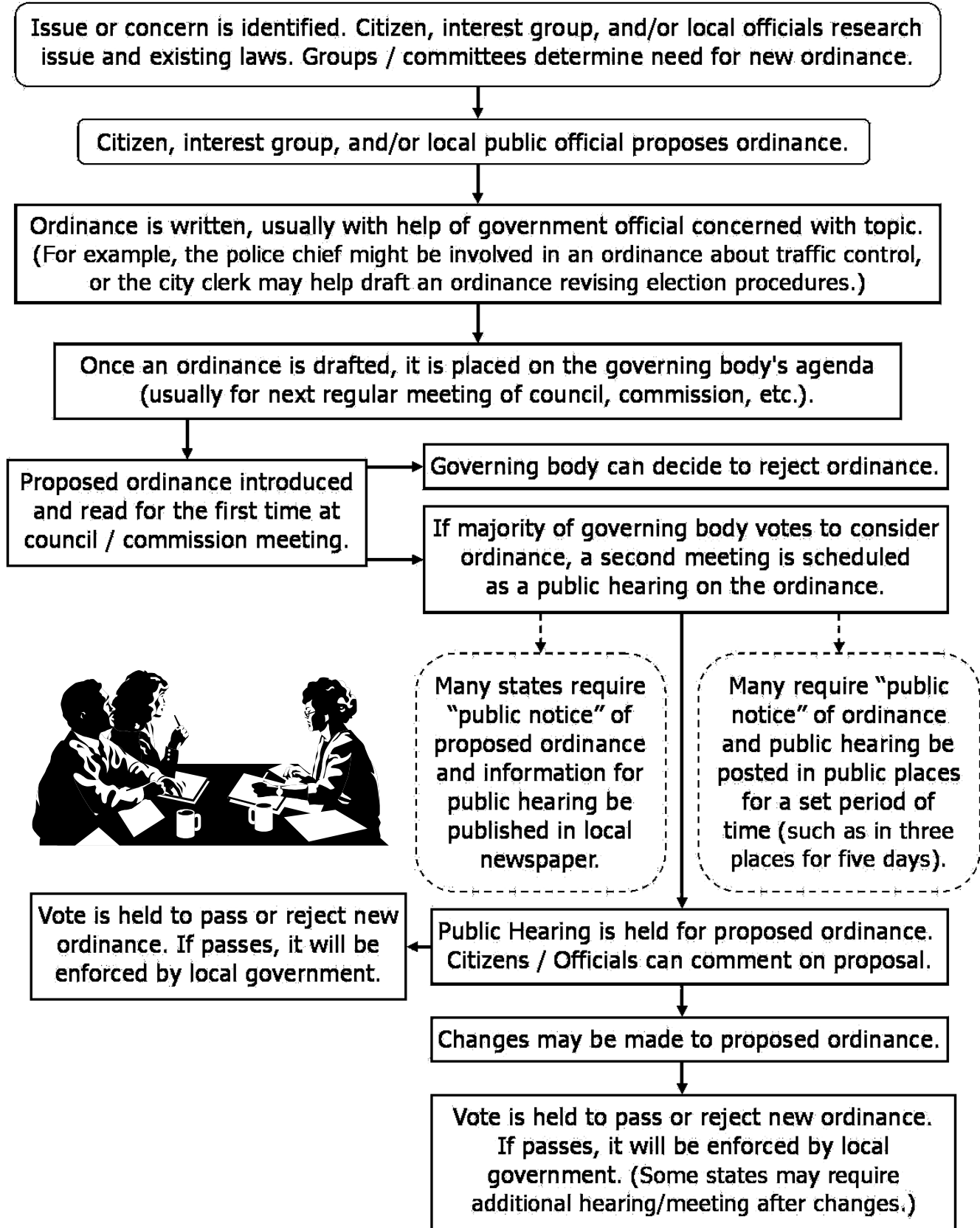
Terms to know: **common good** - that which benefits most, if not all, members of a community

Procedure:

- During discussion of the Springboard, note that *depending on the process used in your community, citizens help in the creation of ordinances by bringing a problem to the attention of a legislator, working on small groups such as committees, testifying at hearings and meetings of the council, and giving input at public hearings and meetings.* (Students may offer other ideas for input as well.) Explain that *in this lesson students will learn more about the process of creating new local ordinances and citizens’ input in that process.*
- Divide the class into groups, giving each one of the “Proposed Ordinances” and “The Will of the People” handouts. Group members should analyze their assigned ordinance and answer the questions about it. (**NOTE:** The ordinances are based upon real-life community ordinances or proposed ordinances.)
- Have each group share its ordinance and their reactions to it and discuss. During the discussion, explain that *one of the foundations of the American political system is that the best solutions for the community – the common good -- will emerge where all of the various interests present their ideas for evaluation by citizens and decision-makers.* Have students voice their opinions of this statement and suggest other ways to balance the interest of individual community members and those of the entire community. (*Answers will vary, but the topic should stimulate discussion.*) Go on to explain that *the legislative process is slow and almost designed to keep new laws from being passed.* Again have students respond to the statement and, if they disagree, suggest alternatives.
- **EXTENSION:** Invite a lobbyist (some school districts and most teachers’ organizations have lobbyists) or someone familiar with lobbying to speak to the class. He/she could discuss ways that competing interests groups present their ideas and how a legislative body like a town council then has to try to pull those together in a way that produces a solution that is best for everyone in the community.

Follow the FLOWchart

DIRECTIONS: As you follow the flowchart, make note of places in the process where citizens can make a difference in the outcome. In each case explain how.



PROPOSED ORDINANCES

Noise Ordinance: Noise in residential neighborhoods shall not exceed 55 decibels, the level of a normal speaking voice, between 7:00 AM and 11:00 PM, and must drop to no more than 50 decibels after 11:00 PM.

Zoning Ordinance: The 100-acre wooded property along the bank of the Green River shall be rezoned for mixed-use: offices, businesses, apartments, townhouses, and single-family homes.

Smoking Ordinance: No smoking shall be allowed in any public place to include: restaurants, offices, stores, and other buildings, as well as parks, beaches, and other public use areas.

Traffic Ordinance: No driver shall use cell phones, pagers, PDA's, or other electronic devices, including hands-free versions, while operating a motor vehicle.

Civil Emergencies Ordinance: An emergency response plan employing citizen response teams and neighborhood watch volunteer groups shall be organized and maintained. To that end all town citizens over the age of 18 shall have at least one working firearm available for immediate use at all times.

Elephant Ordinance: Each person who keeps an elephant shall provide an indoor climate-controlled space of at least 1800 square feet and shall provide proper food, water, rest, and medical care. It shall be unlawful for any person to use on an elephant any training technique or device that inflicts pain or causes injury to the animal.

Billboard Ordinance: No new free-standing billboards shall be erected in the community, with the exception of small political and real estate signs. Only "ground signs," which hug the landscape will be permitted with the approval of the Council. Signage shall be no higher than 40 feet and shall not obstruct any homes or businesses.



The Will of the People

Proposed Ordinance: _____

Who do you think may have proposed this ordinance and why?

Do you think this ordinance considers the common good of the community? Why or why not?

In what ways could the citizens of the community impact the future of this proposed ordinance?

What do YOU think the future of this proposed ordinance should be? Explain your answer.
