

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Concepts, Principles, and Practices (2003)



The League supports the following concepts, principles, and practices that make for effective local government.

We believe local government should maximize:

- a. Widespread and inclusive participation
 - Hearing of diverse points of view encourages involvement.
 - Being part of the process creates understanding and ownership of decisions.
 - Expression of various opinions promotes a sense of inclusion.
- b. Diversity of the community reflected in government
 - Accessibility fosters commitment, vitality, and fairness.
 - Diversity of opinion is more important than striving for demographic quotas.
- c. Openness and full disclosure
 - Citizens have a right to expect an open process in local government.
 - Openness early in the decision process allows citizens to be part of the process.
 - Agendas and decisions should be publicized in a timely fashion.
 - Adherence to Massachusetts Open Meeting Law must be strictly maintained.
 - Citizens have a right to expect full disclosure of the facts pertinent to the decision process.
- d. Checks and balance of power among the executive, legislative, and administrative branches of government and the electorate
 - Shared responsibility among the various branches of government creates balance.
 - Not all appointments should be made by any one branch of government.
 - Referenda opportunities make the electorate part of the process.
 - Referendum process should not be too easy or too difficult.
- e. Honesty and non-corruptibility in all decision making
 - Access to decision makers should be open to all.
 - Town officials and appointees should not be susceptible to undue influence or beholden to special interests.
- f. Efficiency based on professional management and timely decision making
 - Efficiency is important in the delivery of essential services.
 - In the policy-making process, efficiency is not as important as open and informed deliberation and citizen participation.
 - All issues, including those brought up by citizen petitions and requests, should be acted upon in a timely manner so that the decision will be meaningful.
- g. Accountability for political and fiscal decisions
 - Decision makers should make clear the rationale for their decisions.
 - The process of implementing decisions should be clear and understandable.
 - Full explanation of budget and appropriation items should be disclosed during deliberations.