



Polished Perspectives: *Recognizing the power of advisory committees*

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What is an advisory committee?

Minnesota Statutes, section 14.101:

“Subd. 2. **Advisory committees.** Each agency may also appoint committees to comment, before publication of a notice of intent to adopt or a notice of hearing, on the subject matter of a possible rulemaking under active consideration within the agency.”

Do I need an advisory committee?

- Complex or controversial rulemaking topic
- Increase transparency and visibility of rule development
- Leverage external expertise, needed to:
 - Inform decision making,
 - Provide diversified perspectives, and
 - Work towards innovative solutions.

Roles and managing expectations

- Advisory committee
 - ‘Advisory’ – not decision-makers
 - Brings industry best practices and expertise
 - Coordination with constituencies
- State agency
 - Manages, facilitates, and chairs meetings
 - Determines path for rulemaking
 - Manages expectations
 - Final say on rule language



Determining constituencies

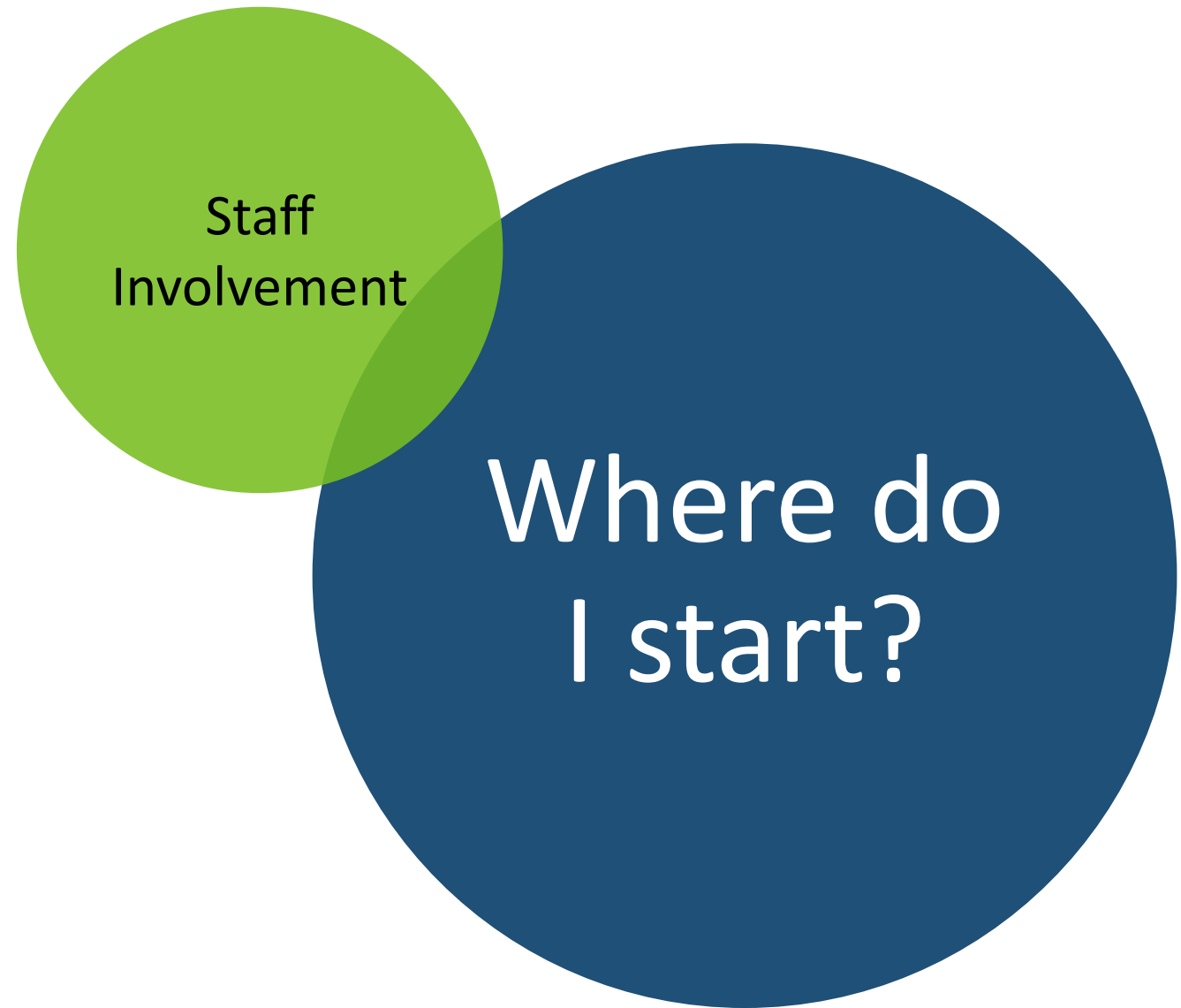
- Who should be at the table?
- Use of Additional Notice Plan
- Constituencies may include:
 - Business owners,
 - Professional associations or organizations,
 - Boards or agencies,
 - Local units of government, and
 - Members of the public.





Where do I
start?

- Roles to consider, include:
 - Room set-up/take-down
 - Technology needs
 - Subject matter experts
 - Meeting facilitator
 - Notetaker



Member
Selection

Where do
I start?

- Think broadly:
 - *Who's affected?*
 - *Who was involved in the legislative process?*
 - *Who's interested?*
 - *Who's not represented?*
- Narrowing down the list
- Establishing a selection process
- Communication plan



In-person

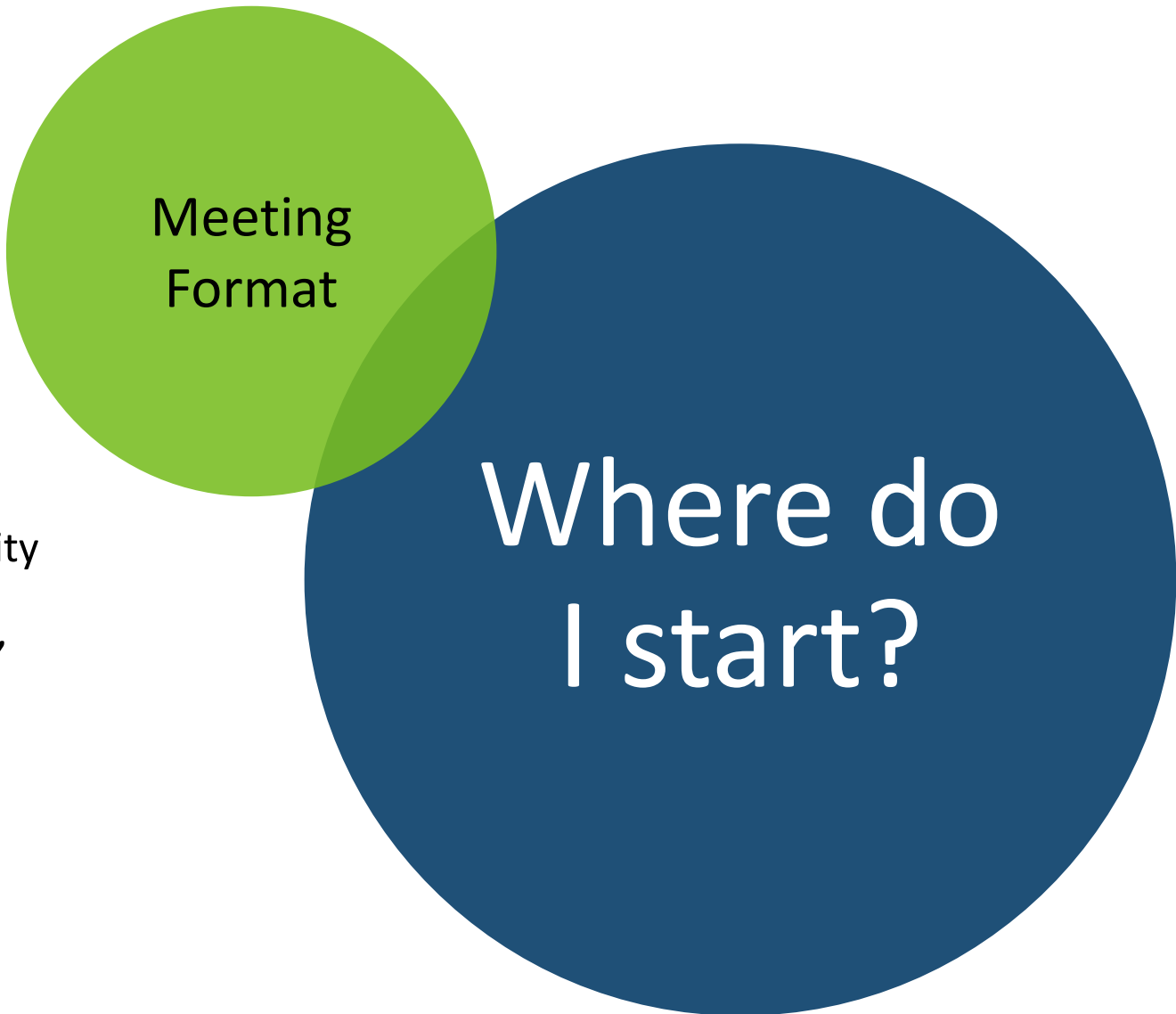
- Pros: easier to read room and establish connections, foster collaboration
- Cons: side conversations, travel and costs to attend

Virtual

- Pros: technology and geographic accessibility
- Cons: multitasking, managing participation, technology issues

Hybrid

- Pros: technology, geographic accessibility, flexibility to provide options for travel
- Cons: managing virtual/in-person attendee participation, sharing materials, technology issues



Meeting
Format

Where do
I start?

Where do I start?

Engagement Approach



Listening Session

- Useful during the early stages to understand concerns and priorities
- Encourages open sharing without requiring technical expertise
- Usually not agenda-driven



Topic-Driven Rule Revision

- Agenda-driven
- Focus on specified topics to gather more targeted input
- Useful for deepening understanding for technical concerns and priorities



Draft Language Review

- Agenda-driven
- Provides opportunity to discuss specific wording, and implications
- Helps to build consensus, and reduce uncertainty

- Providing food/beverage
- Securing meeting location
- Work through hard questions
 - *Do you anticipate contention?*
 - *Is this your first meeting?*
- Meeting design
 - Agenda overview
 - Expectations
 - Space for public comment
- Agenda and minutes



First
Meeting
Preparations

Where do
I start?

Introducing...

The committee members

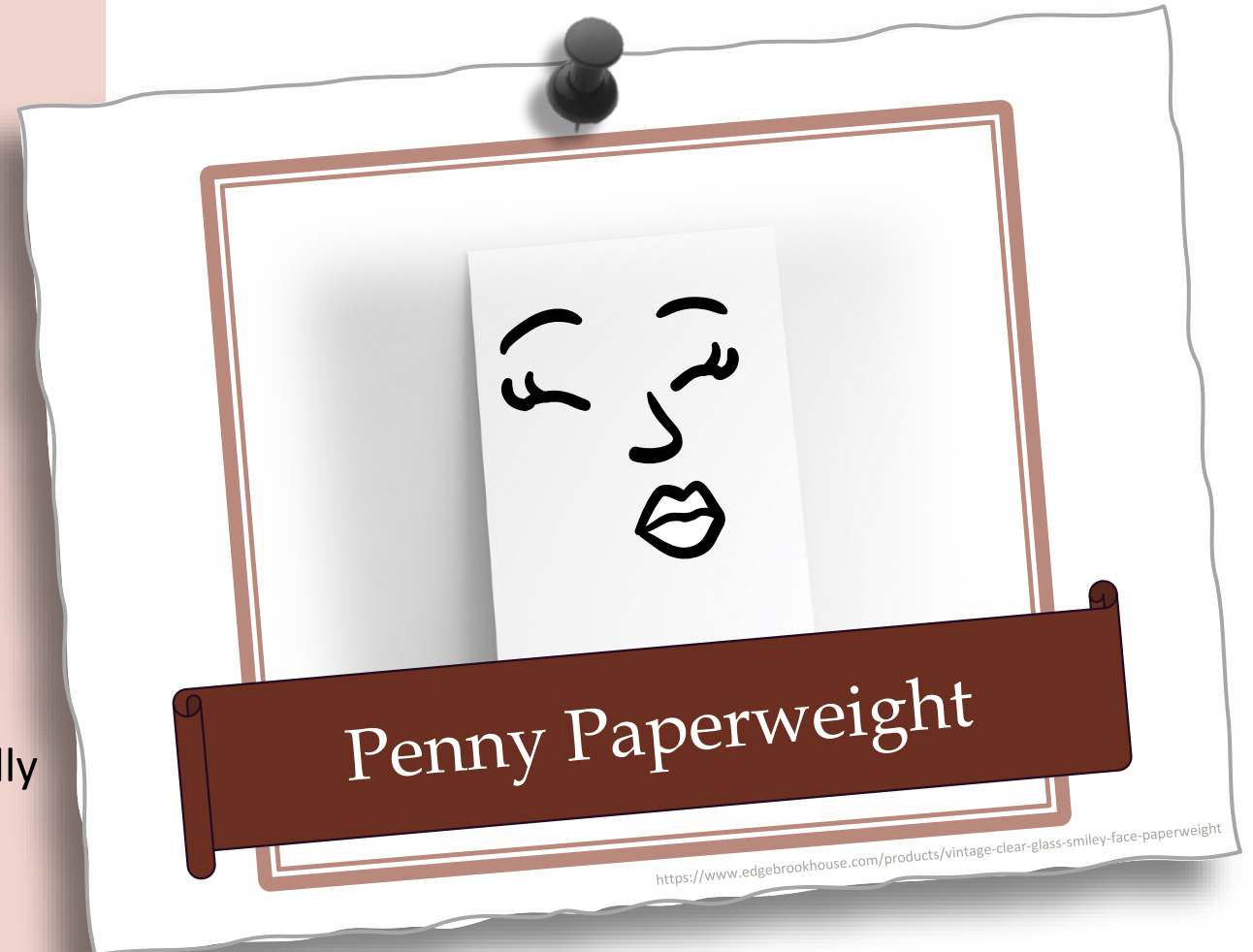
Role: The Silent Observer

Key Traits:

- Rarely shares ideas unless directly asked
- Gives brief, reserved responses
- Avoids networking; stays on the sidelines
- Hard to tell if engaged or unprepared

Stage Directions:

- Sits with arms folded or hands clasped, neutral face
- Does not initiate conversations
- Maintains eye contact but responds minimally



Role: The Fiery Debater

Key Traits:

- Frequently interrupts others when disagreeing
- Always prepared and eager to contribute
- Shares opinions openly, rarely holds back
- Holds rigid, fixed viewpoints
- Resistant to new ideas or perspectives
- Monopolizes discussions

Stage Directions:

- Speaks loudly, overpowering quieter voices
- Shows frustration when challenged
- Maintains eye contact, leans forward to assert dominance



<https://stock.adobe.com/images/vibrant-red-rough-cut-ruby-gemstone-with-inclusions-and-imperfections-on-a-white-background-showcasing-its-naturally-occurring-unique-characteristics-and-unpolished-beauty/971202480>

Role: The Reflective Collaborator

Key Traits:

- Asks thoughtful, curiosity-driven questions
- Respects and considers differing viewpoints
- Comes prepared and fully engaged
- Focused on resolution
- Sometimes struggles to keep discussion on track

Stage Directions:

- Open body language; nods in agreement
- Refers to notes with intention
- Reframes opposing views to find common ground



Role: The Unraveled Thread

Key Traits:

- Often unprepared for discussions
- Leads conversations off-topic
- Asks for background, showing lack of preparation
- Speaks frequently, but with little substance
- Dominates discussions without moving them forward

Stage Directions:

- Flips through notes as meeting begins
- Speaks at length, circling around issues
- Interrupts with off-topic clarification questions





TITLE . Advisory committee

SCENE .

SILKROAD
SSONAGI

Design by Korea / MADE IN CHINA

DATE .

MEMO .

Set the scene.

Mic Grabs and Missed Voices

LEAD: Rudy Ruby and Colin Cotton

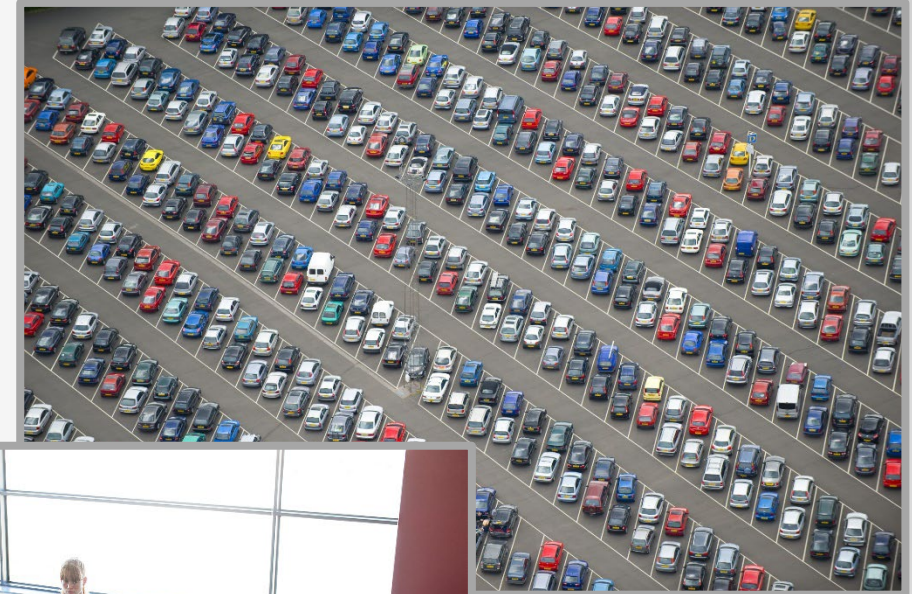
SETTING: A group discussion about a new strategic approach for an emerging technology need. Participants were expected to review background materials and come ready to share input from their constituencies.

SCENE:

- Rudy Ruby dominates the discussion with a strong, rigid opinion
- Colin Cotton adds off-topic commentary in attempt to support Rudy
- Clara Crystal attempts to redirect the committee but is repeatedly interrupted
- Penny is unable to share her perspective among the more dominant voices

Mic Grabs and Missed Voices

- Verbally or visually step in
 - Respectfully interrupt discussion
 - Raise hand or stand to signal a pause
- Parking lot
 - Acknowledges input
 - Future consideration
- Round-robin
 - Space to contribute one-by-one



Curtain Call for Civility

LEAD: Penny Paperweight, Rudy Ruby, Clara Crystal, and Colin Cotton

SETTING: An agency facilitator describes the path for a rulemaking project to the committee. Tension builds in the room as the facilitator tries to steer the visible concern.

SCENE:

- Rudy Ruby clenches his jaw and verbally challenges the facilitator, accusing the agency of leaving out constituents in the decision-making process
- Penny Paperweight withdraws from the conversation
- Clara Crystal watches with concern
- Colin Cotton shifts uneasily in his seat

Curtain Call for Civility

- Managing disrespect and facilitating productive dialogue:
 - Disrespectful comments can derail meetings and trigger strong emotions
 - Recognize underlying frustrations to prevent escalation
 - Negativity can silence quiet voices
 - Comments generally reflect process or decision frustrations
- To diffuse tension:
 - Acknowledge feelings
 - Thank participants and commit to consider their input
 - Ask clarifying questions
 - Clarify what is actionable and explain limits when necessary

Scene Stealers and Side Stories

LEAD: Rudy Ruby, Clara Crystal, and Colin Cotton

SETTING: The committee meeting begins with focus but slips off course as members discuss concerns with proposed rule language. Members were asked to prepare for a discussion on a specific set of topics.

SCENE:

- Colin Cotton leads into a side tangent on a topic unrelated to the discussion, asking questions that stray from the agenda
- Rudy Ruby adds to Colin's questions with strong opinions on the unrelated topics, steering the conversation further off track
- Clara Crystal chimes in asking thoughtful questions to better understand their perspectives, but her curiosity unintentionally deepens the tangent

Scene Stealers and Side Stories

- Strategies for refocusing discussions:
 - Recognize early when the conversation is drifting
 - Use clarifying questions to strategically steer conversation back to the topic
 - Refer to the agenda and meeting goals
 - Flag tangents for follow-up
- Keeping conversations on track:
 - Visible agendas and clear goals help maintain direction
 - Parking lot
 - Respectful redirection

The Audience Enters

LEAD: Clara Crystal and audience member

SETTING: The committee members are discussing a technical approach to a possible rule requirement. There are audience members in attendance at the meeting that belong to similar constituencies to those represented on the committee.

SCENE:

- The discussion about the technical approach is contentious between various constituencies represented on the committee
- Clara shares her opinion and when met with opposition from other committee members, she invites an audience member who is observing the meeting to speak in support of her shared opinion
- The audience member views the invitation as permission to continually chime in during the discussion

The Audience Enters

- Set clear goals and expectations
 - Clarify who can speak, when, and how the input will be managed
- Define a structure for public participation
 - Designate a specific time and format
- Make agendas visible



Whispers in the Wings

LEAD: Clara Crystal, Colin Cotton, and Penny Paperweight

SETTING: The committee members are engaging in a thoughtful discussion on a specific requirement and the possibility for impact to a regulated industry.

SCENE:

- Clara Crystal shares her perspective, trying to guide the group towards consensus
- Colin Cotton and Penny Paperweight lean towards each other, exchanging in hushed conversation
- Rudy Ruby is distracted by the side conversation

Whispers in the Wings

- Set clear ground rules at the start of the meeting
 - Emphasize one voice at a time
 - Remind participants that all voices deserve attention
- Create structured opportunities to speak
 - Round-robin
 - Breakout sessions
 - Scheduled breaks
- Use body language and verbal cues
 - Eye contact
 - Verbally pause



Cricket's Crowd

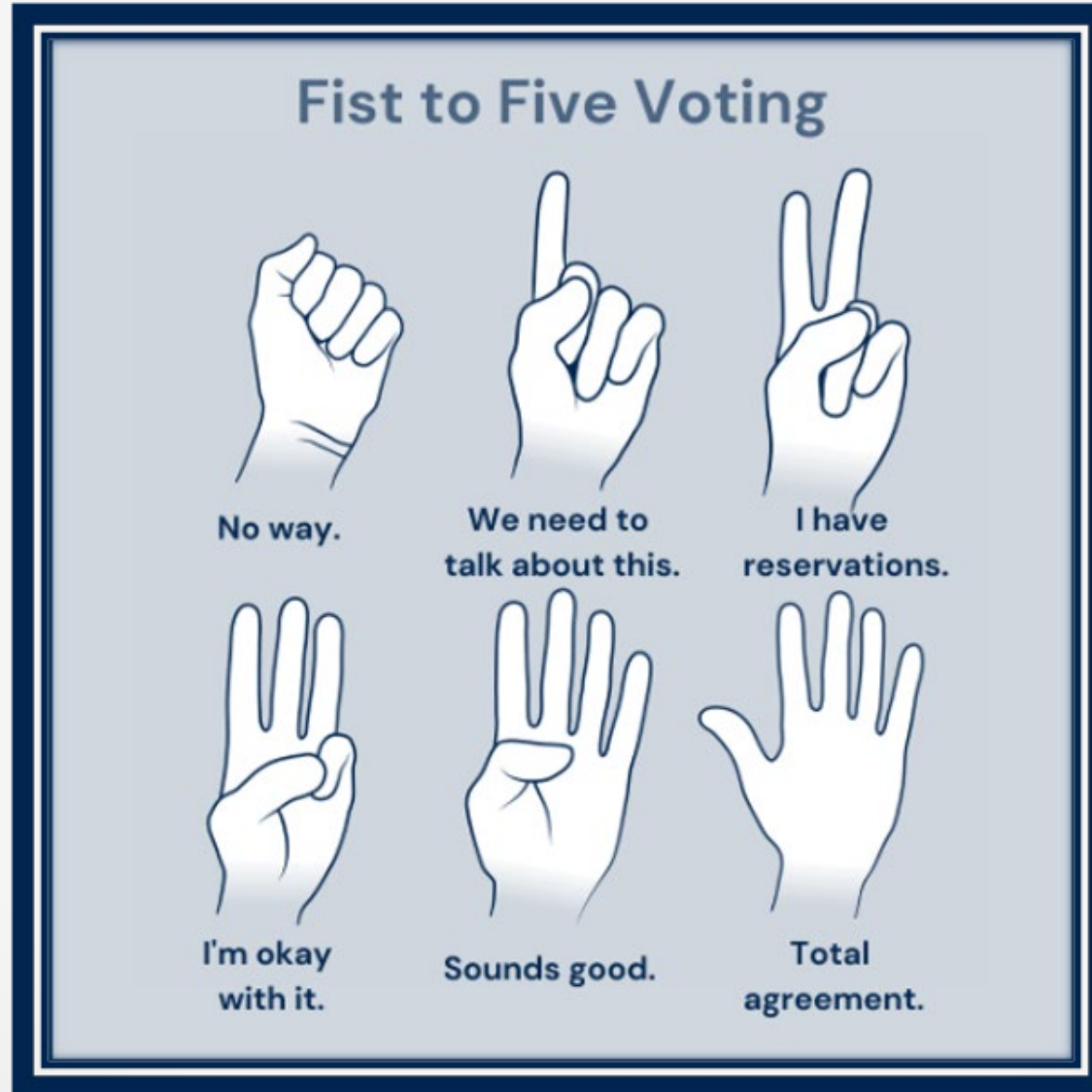
LEAD: Penny Paperweight, Rudy Ruby, Clara Crystal, and Colin Cotton

SETTING: The committee meeting is nearing the end of a 4-hour technical discussion of a contentious topic. Committee member engagement is waning.

SCENE:

- Clara Crystal flips quietly through her notes only occasionally nodding
- Rudy Ruby leans back in his chair, arms crossed, no longer voicing his perspective
- Penny Paperweight stares at her laptop, visibly distracted
- Colin Cotton has not contributed to the discussion in over thirty minutes

“Silence means agreement is an acceptable approach in committee meetings”



Crickets Crowd

- Meeting design:
 - Set time limits
 - Build in breaks
 - Front-load difficult or contentious discussions
 - End with clarity
- Read the room
- Method to gauge consensus and readiness to move on
 - Fist to Five



A close-up photograph of a person's feet as they descend a concrete staircase. The person is wearing dark blue jeans, red socks with black polka dots, and brown leather oxford shoes. A dark blue semi-transparent rectangular box is overlaid on the center of the image, containing the text "It's your turn!".

It's your turn!

Thank You!

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