

MODERATOR GUIDE

TO ACCOMPANY ISSUE BOOK ON LAND USE CONFLICT

Making choices about how to deal with community issues is difficult because different people favor different approaches, and the options for action may contradict or conflict with one another. Certainly any strategy for action will have costs that have to be taken into consideration and consequences that have to be anticipated, as best we can. At the root of the questions of costs and consequences, and behind each approach, lies a range of concerns that, while common to many people, nonetheless pulls them in different directions both individually and collectively. People have to “work through” these conflicts and deal with the trade-offs until they come not necessarily to full and complete agreement, but to the point that they have a shared sense of direction for moving ahead, and some idea of what people are and aren’t willing to do to solve a problem. Often we live all our lives somewhere between complete agreement and complete disagreement. Public action becomes possible when citizens discover where their interests are interconnected.

LAND USE CONFLICT: *WHEN CITY AND COUNTRY CLASH*

Choice 1: Reestablish the Free Market

The free market and private enterprise should determine the use of land. Private property owners ought to have the right to determine the use of their land without government interference.

Choice 2: Protect Farmland and Open Space

Prime farmland and open space areas should be protected from uncontrolled urban development. The government and the private sector should step in to save these resources for future generations.

Choice 3: Redevelop Central Cities

Blighted core areas of central cities (and rural main streets) should be rejuvenated. This would slow migration to the suburbs and lessen the urban development pressure on farmland and open spaces.

Choice 4: Manage Growth on the Rural-Urban Fringe

Incentives and subdivision design standards should be established to encourage developers to increase population density in new developments, protect prime farmland and open space, and utilize public resources more efficiently.

THE MODERATOR'S ROLE

Deliberation with fellow citizens is necessary when we have to make decisions on matters that are very important to us, when there are competing approaches to solving a problem. Deliberation occurred in America's earliest town meetings. Privately, we deliberate when we have a difficult decision to make about an important matter in our lives and have to weigh several options carefully. In our private lives we have learned that we can seldom have everything and we must make choices. Likewise, in public life citizens must choose among options, all of which may be attractive. That, in a nutshell, is what deliberation is — weighing carefully the various approaches, the pros and cons of each option, and the views of others about what should be done. A deliberative dialogue is a chance to explore, to test ideas, and to look at the ambiguities or gray areas rather than seeing only the stark black and white of polar opposites.

Deliberation requires the moderator to:

- Move the conversation beyond the sharing of stories to looking at costs and consequences of the options.
- Make sure the best case/positive side of all options are considered and understood. To diminish an option is to stop deliberation. There are major differences about which options would be best or which direction to take. These differences must be clear and not covered over. To fail to consider an option or diminish an option keeps important differences from surfacing.
- Stay with deliberation until participants see that the issue is framed on what is valuable to people and until they have identified the conflicts among the approaches.
- Recognize that forums seldom end in total agreement or total disagreement. Forums frequently end in a discovery of a shared sense of purpose or recognition of how interests are inter-connected.

To Hold Counsel
With One Another

*The whole purpose
of democracy is that
we may
hold counsel with
one another,
as not to depend
on the understanding
of one person
but to depend
on the counsel
of all.*

Woodrow Wilson 1912

Forums do change people's opinions of others' opinions. Those changes in perception create new possibilities for acting together, generating the political will to move ahead.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR A FORUM OR STUDY CIRCLE

WELCOME

Let participants know who is sponsoring the forum/study circle. Stress the cosponsorship if several organizations are involved.

BALLOT (PRE-FORUM)

Remind people that the Pre-Forum Ballot is a way to get everyone focused on the issue and a way for each participant to take inventory of initial feelings on the issue. Tell them there'll be another ballot for them after these deliberations end.

(Pre- and Post-Forum Ballots are found at the end of the issue book. You may want to provide copies to participants separately if they do not want to tear these pages out of their issue books. If you distribute separate copies, it is wise to make the Pre- and Post-Forum Ballots on different colored paper so that they easily may be kept separate.)

GROUND RULES

MAKE CLEAR THAT THE FORUM IS NOT A DEBATE. Stress that there is work to do, and that the work is to move toward making a choice on a public policy issue. The work will be done through deliberation. Review the chart "How do we do it?" (see page 6). The responsibility for doing the work of deliberation belongs to the group. Deliberation is necessary because there are competing approaches to solving the problem.

PERSONAL STAKE

Connect the issues to people's lives and concerns — in the first few minutes — by getting participants to talk about their personal experiences with the issue, and to tell their stories. This makes the issue genuine, human rather than abstract. Some questions you might ask include: "Has anyone had a personal experience that illustrates the problems associated with this issue?" "Within your family, or circle of friends, is this an important issue?" "What aspects of the issue are most important to you?" "How does the issue affect people?"

THE FORUM/STUDY CIRCLE DELIBERATION

Consistent with what deliberation is, moderators ask four basic questions in a forum:

1

What is valuable to us? This question gets at why making public choices is so difficult: the options turn on things that people care about very deeply, such as being secure or being treated fairly. This question can take many forms:

- How has this issue affected you personally? (Usually asked at the beginning.)
- What things are most valuable to people who support this option?
- What is appealing about this option?
- What makes this option a good idea — or a bad one?

2

What are the costs or consequences associated with the various options?

This question can take as long as it prompts people to think about the likely effects of various options on what is valuable to them. Examples include:

- What would result from doing what this option proposes?
- What could be the consequences of doing what you are suggesting?
- Can you give an example of what you think would happen?
- Does anyone have a different estimate of costs or consequences?

3

What are the tensions or conflicts in this issue that we have to “work through”?

As a forum progresses, moderators will ask questions that draw out conflicts or tensions that people have to “work through.” They might ask:

- What do you see as the tension between the options?
- Where are the conflicts that grow out of what we’ve said about this issue?
- Why is this issue so difficult to decide?
- What are the “gray areas”?
- What remains unsolved for this group?

4

Can we detect any shared sense of purpose or how our interdependence is grounds for action?

In the very first few minutes of a forum, the moderator should remind people that the objective is to work toward a decision. Then, as the tensions or conflicts become evident, as people see how what they consider valuable pulls them in different directions, the moderator will test to see where the group is going with questions like:

- What direction seems best, or where do we want to go with this policy?
- The moderator can follow-up to find out what people are or are not willing to do or sacrifice to solve a problem with such questions as:
 - What trade-offs are we willing to accept?
 - What trade-offs are we unwilling to accept?
 - What are we willing to do as individuals or a community to solve this problem?

ENDING A FORUM/STUDY CIRCLE

Before ending a forum take a few minutes to reflect both individually and as a group on what has been accomplished. Questions like the following have been useful:

I. Individual Reflections

- How has your thinking about the issue changed?
- How has your thinking about other people's views changed?
- How has your perspective changed as a result of what you heard in this forum?

II. Group Reflections

- What didn't we work through?
- Can we identify any shared sense of purpose or direction?
- What trade-offs are we, or are we not, willing to make to move in a shared direction?

III. Next-Step Reflections

- What do we still need to talk about?
- How can we use what we learned about ourselves in this forum?
- Do we want to meet again?

BALLOT (POST-FORUM)

The Post-Forum Ballot is a way to face the conflict within ourselves. Often we discover aspects of each choice we hold most valuable. Yet, the things we care deeply about are often in conflict. The questionnaire, along with other information, is important in discovering a Public Voice. Send both the Pre- and Post-Forum Ballots to:

David B. Patton
The Ohio State University Extension
700 Ackerman Road, Suite 235
Columbus, Ohio 43202

Suggested Time Line

Stages of a Forum/Study Circle

15% for Opening	Welcome — The convenor or moderator introduces NIF program. Questionnaire — Participants complete Pre-Forum Ballot, discussion begins. Ground Rules — Participants review desired outcomes of forum. Starter Video — The starter video sets the tone for the discussion. Personal Stake — Connect the issue to people's lives and concerns. The Deliberation — Participants examine all the choices.
65% for Deliberation	
20% for Discovering the Shared Sense of Purpose and Ending the Forum/Study Circle	Ending the Forum — Reflect on what has been accomplished. Questionnaire — Participants complete Post-Forum Ballot.

FORUMS AND STUDY CIRCLES

1 Why are we here? What are we going to do?

We are here to move toward a public decision or **CHOICE** on a difficult issue through **CHOICE WORK**.

2 How do we do it?

Through a deliberative dialogue in which we:

- Understand the **PROS** and **CONS** of every option, its **COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES**.
- Know the **STRATEGIC FACTS** and how they affect the way the group thinks about each option.
- Get beyond the initial positions people hold to their deeper motivations — the things people consider to be most valuable in everyday life.
- Weigh carefully the views of others; appreciate the impact various options would have on what others consider valuable.
- **WORK THROUGH** the conflicting emotions that arise when various options pull and tug on what people consider valuable.

3 How can we know if we are making progress?

By constantly testing your group:

Can your group make the best case for the option least favored?

Can it identify the negative effects of the option most favored?

4 What will be the effects of deliberation?

Movement from first reactions and mass opinions toward a more shared and stable **PUBLIC JUDGMENT**.

The emergence of a **PUBLIC VOICE**, one different from the voice of personal preference or special interest pleadings.

Increased **COMMON GROUND FOR ACTION** found in a greater ability to:

- Identify how people came out on the conflicts, contradictions, and trade-offs, and what they were willing, and not willing to do to solve the problem.
- Identify any shared sense of purpose or policy direction and a range of actions that were consistent with one another.
- Understand the implications of how citizens sensed their interdependence on the issue and its implications for community action.

Land Use Conflict:

When

City

and

COUNTRY

Clash



A Project of the National Public Policy Education Committee in
Cooperation with the Farm Foundation

For Further Information, Contact
David B. Patton
The Ohio State University Extension
700 Ackerman Road, Suite 235
Columbus, Ohio 43202