

The Maryland Municipal League

The Maryland Municipal League, founded in 1936, represents 157 municipal governments and two special taxing districts throughout the State. A voluntary, nonprofit, nonpartisan association controlled and maintained by city and town governments, the League works to strengthen the role and capacity of municipal government through research, legislation, technical assistance, training, and the dissemination of information for its members. Through its membership in the National League of Cities, the League offers legislative representation in Washington, urban research programs, and a national municipal government information exchange.



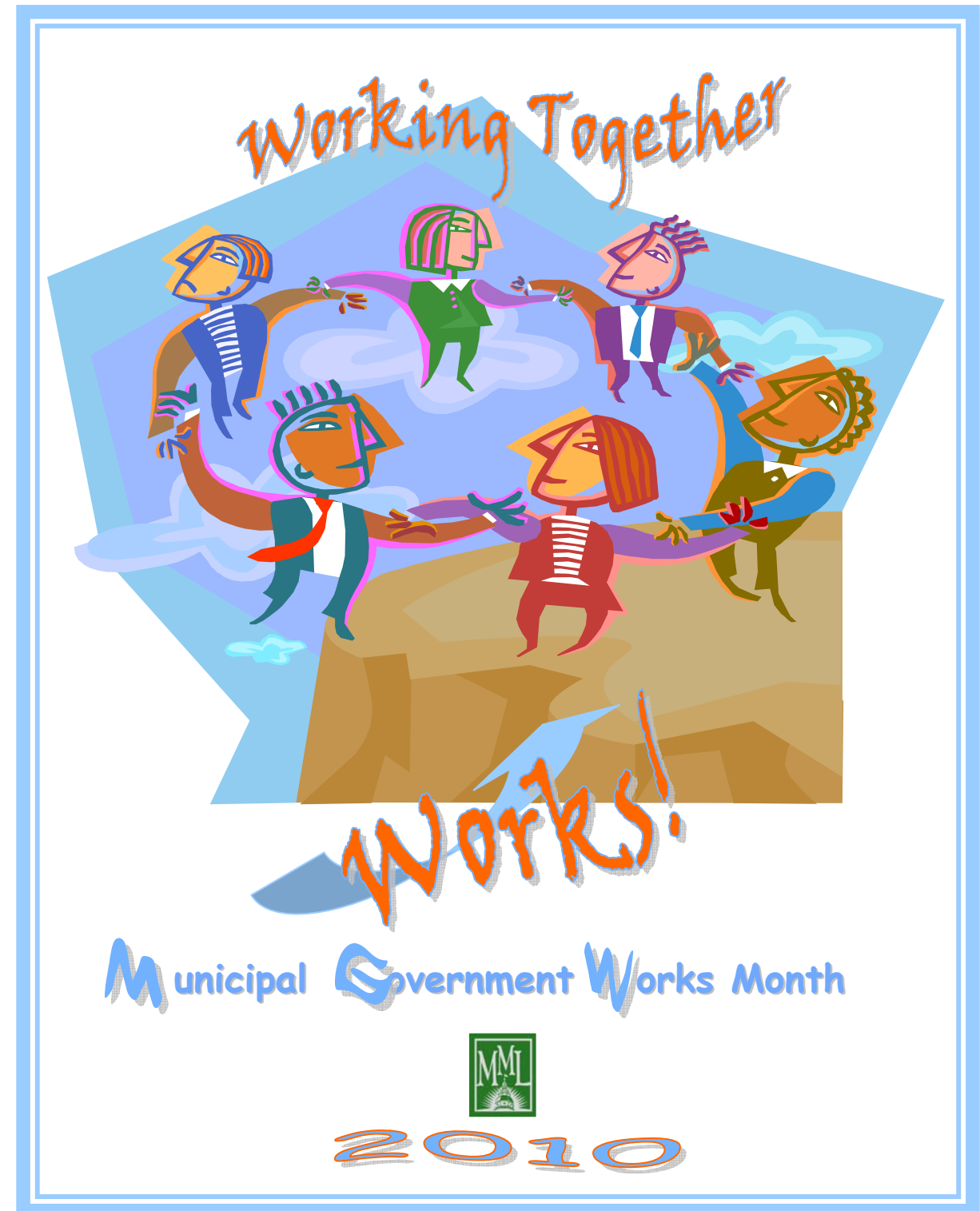
Maryland Municipal League

The association of cities and towns

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How many of your citizens know very much about YOUR city/town government?

Flag Order Form

(Please type or print)

Municipality _____

Ordered by _____

Phone (_____) _____

Mailing Address _____

Number of Flags _____ at \$60 = \$ _____

PAYMENT METHOD

Check enclosed in the amount of\$ _____

MasterCard/Visa amount\$ _____

Card number _____ - _____ - _____ - _____ Expiration date _____

Print name as it appears on card _____

Signature of credit card holder _____

Mail to Maryland Municipal League

Attn. Paula Chase Hyman

(address on back page)

Credit card users may FAX to 410/268-7004

3. Videotape the council meeting, if possible, to use later in the classroom.
4. Invite the class to the next city/town meeting, to be presented with a certificate of participation by the Mayor, Burgess or President/Chairman of the Council/Commission.

The Mock Council Meeting

Model the agenda after your own city/town meeting agenda. Use as many students as possible. With a little imagination, everyone can be involved (i.e. during your own meetings, most of those attending the meeting are afforded the opportunity to speak about an issue on the agenda).

Municipal Roles

Mayor, Burgess or President/Chairman of the Council/Commission
 Council/Commission
 City/Town Manager
 City/Town Attorney
 Other appropriate staff

Audience Roles

Issue presenters
 Citizens For
 Citizens Against
 Reporters

Citizens can present self-interest type issues or complaints under a Public Forum item on the agenda. Also have a Presentation of a Proclamation item on the agenda. This is a proclamation written by the city/town for the students to give to their teachers stating that, "they are the best teachers in the world!" This would not be announced in advance.

Why Educate Citizens about Municipal Government?

"Consider this: Public officials at one level of government are blamed for policies enacted by others...City complaints are often directed to the wrong department...Many city residents cannot identify any of their locally elected officials... Municipal elections often have voter turnout rates that are half those of state and national elections despite the fact that one vote in a mayoral race has far more impact than a single vote in a state or national contest. And, all too often, citizens are awakened from their apathy and impelled to vote only when an issue directly affects them, often enacting public policy in an atmosphere of emotion and animosity rather than decision based on meaningful debate," writes former Deputy Mayor of the City of Los Angeles and a President of the Institute for Local Self Government, Ray Remy in an article for *Western City*. Does this sound all too familiar?

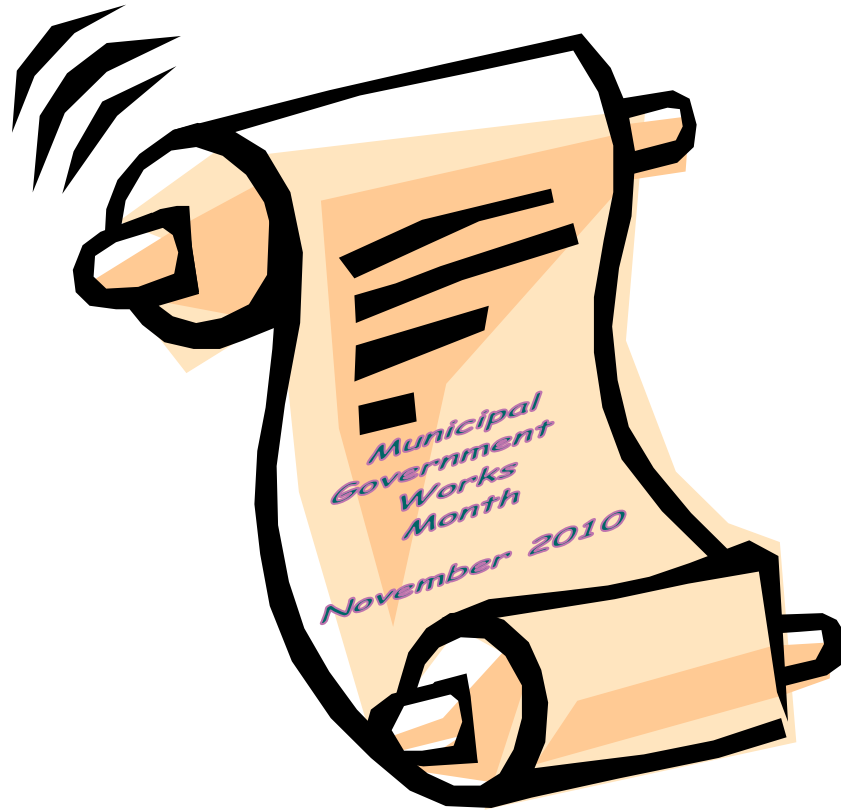
He goes on to say, *"Local government also distinguishes our democracy from all others through its independence, its variety of forms, its sheer numbers, through the lack of hierarchy found in other levels of government, and by the extent of agreement on basic values among citizens required to make community decisions. As the level of government closest to the people, local government offers its citizens the best opportunity to be heard and to influence the course of our communities. But self-governance is inherently dependent on the awareness of citizens and the level of commitment they have to participating in government."*

That's why!

Mock City/Town Council Meeting Guidelines

Suggested age group - 6th, 7th, 8th, or 9th grades

Establish criteria to select a school, if more than one school is in or near your municipality. You could also start with a random selection of those schools that are interested. Elect a minimum of 3 to a maximum of 5 councilmembers /commissioners and a mayor, burgess or president of council/commission.



Two-Week Time Frame

1. Classroom visit by an elected official:

The week before Municipal Government Week or any other week you target for the mock council meetings have an elected official visit the classroom to talk about what municipal government is. The use of charts and other hands-on materials would help to keep the classes' attention. Bring along your MGW (Municipal Government Works) flag! Involve the students as much as possible in discussions.

Discuss the following:

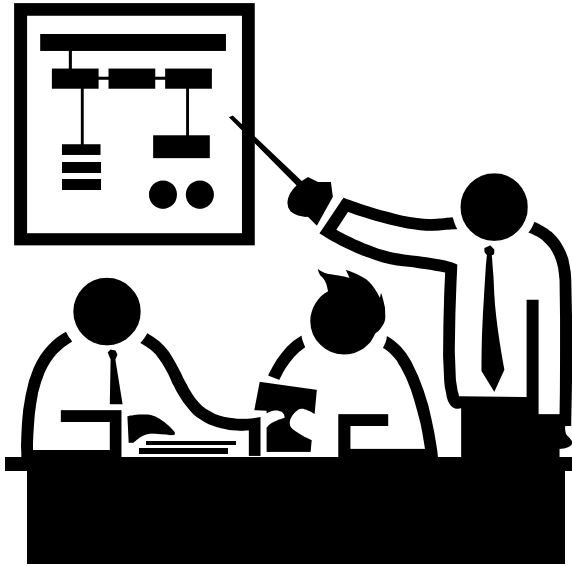
- Federal, state and local (county and municipal) levels of government
- Chain of command of your form of government
- Budget
- Types of issues with which the council or commission deals
- Municipal departments and how they affect citizens lives

Discuss with the teacher:

- Candidate selection (Will the students select their own candidates or will the teacher provide a slate?)
- Assembly for candidates' speeches
- Campaign guidelines
- Voting procedures (limited to the grade level participating)

2. Council meeting can be held during a school assembly or at city/town hall; the meeting should last approximately 30-45 minutes.

OVER..



Council Agenda

1. Government Structure

Your City/Town, Maryland

A (Sample) Proclamation

The Mayor and Council of the City/Town of _____, proclaim November to be Municipal Government Works Month.

WHEREAS, the City/Town was incorporated in _____; and

WHEREAS, Maryland is home to 156 other municipalities; and

WHEREAS, municipal government represents the most responsive level of government, allowing citizens to have direct access to elected officials; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to educate citizens about municipal government and the importance of their participation, the City/Town of _____ is proud to promote municipal government awareness; and

WHEREAS, municipalities have enhanced the quality of life for their respective residents maintaining natural and historic sites and structures and helping to make Maryland a great place to live, work, play and explore.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the Mayor and Council of the City/Town of _____, Maryland hereby joins the Maryland Municipal League in declaring November to be Municipal Government Works Month in Your City/Town.



Mock Council Meeting Guidelines



Model Press Release

(USE CITY/TOWN LETTERHEAD IF YOU DON'T HAVE A P. R. FORM)

(City/Town Manager or Clerk)

CITY/TOWN OFFICIALS CELEBRATE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WORKS MONTH

October 26, 2010 *(send out the week before)*. . . Since 1993, Cities and towns throughout the state have been celebrating Municipal Government Works in an effort to educate citizens about the role and function of the government closest to them. To help promote municipal government awareness, many cities and towns will recognize this month with local proclamations, the display of a flag with the logo MGW, "Municipal Government Works," and visits to 4th grade classrooms to talk about municipal government and the upcoming "If I Were Mayor, I Would..." Essay Contest.

Elected officials from the *(city/town)* of _____ will be making a presentation about municipal government to *(the 4th grade students at the _____ School on DATE, November 2010)* in an effort to promote student recognition and understanding of the government in their community. This exercise will help students to become informed, responsible and involved citizens.

In addition, the *(city/town)* has the following activities planned in November:
(enter specific information for your city/town. Keep information to the point and brief. Press releases are more effective when limited to one or two pages.)

NOTE: Members of the press are invited to attend the week's activities. If possible, please notify *(contact person)* prior to the activity you plan to attend.

Creating Imaginary Cities and Towns

Suggested age group - 3rd, 4th, or 5th grades

Three Week Time Frame

1. Classroom visit by an elected and/or an appointed official:

Two weeks before *Municipal Government Week* or any other week you target for this activity, have an elected official and/or a planning commission member visit the classroom to talk about what municipal government is. The use of charts and other hands-on materials would help to keep the classes' attention. Bring along your *MGW* (*Municipal Government Works*) flag! Involve the students as much as possible in discussions.

2. Discuss with the teacher:

Explain that you would like each student to design a hat and/or make a map depicting the elements of an imaginary city or town. The student should include: the name of the city/town, the street layout, parks & playgrounds, churches, businesses, restaurants, and city/town hall. Have the students begin to work on their projects immediately after the visit from city/town officials. Projects should be completed before *Municipal Government Week*. (Allow at least one week for working on the projects.)

3. Publicly recognize the students' efforts:

- Display the hats and maps at city or town hall during *Municipal Government Week*.
- Invite the class(s) along with teachers and family members to city/town hall for a reception and viewing of the students' work.
- Award a prize(s) for the best depiction of a municipality and present it during the reception.

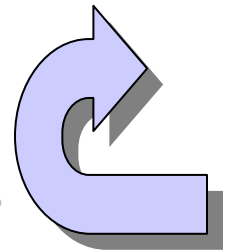


I have a great idea for my imaginary city!

Great Ideas for Observing



Municipal
Government




Works Month




Creating Imaginary Cities & Towns

Ideas For Observing MGW Month (Cont'd)


School Involvement




Visit 4th grade classrooms to talk about municipal government, the role of a mayor and the 2011 "If I Were Mayor, I Would..." Essay Contest theme. Take copies of the 2011 Mayors' Contest Study Guide to use as handouts. The guide can be downloaded from MML's website at www.mdmunicipal.org.




Conduct a "Creating a City/Town" activity with students as part of or following your visit to the classroom. (A description of this activity is on page 17.)




Sponsor a poster contest for area children related to a particular city government issue, e.g., recycling, water conservation, police services, recreation and parks, transportation, planning, etc.




Host a competition to seek the best solution to a city/town government problem. Invite the winner to present the solution to the council/commission during a meeting. Don't forget to invite the press.



Participate in MML's Student Shadowing Experience Program. Contact MML for a brochure that includes details of the program.



Sponsor a scavenger hunt with clue cards leading to specific areas in the city/town, such as the mayor's house, city/town hall, the city/town park and the public works building, etc. Present participants with awards and certificates.




Conduct mock council meetings with area students in city/town hall or in the classroom. (A description of this activity is on pages 21 & 22.)


Ideas for Observing MGW Month

There are many ways in which your city/town can observe Municipal Government Week and generate involvement and enthusiasm in your community. Following is a list of suggestions to get your city/town started:

Hold an Open House



Invite local civic groups, business leaders and community residents to the municipal building for an open house and informal question-and-answer session with elected and appointed officials. **This is an excellent way to further your efforts to Build More Inclusive Communities!** Make sure your Municipal Government Works flag is on display!




Invite city/town employees to be on hand to greet visitors and talk about their jobs.




Highlight major projects, new programs and any efforts by the city/town to save the taxpayers dollars!



Put some city/town equipment and replacement parts on display and attach the year and purchase price.



Encourage city/town employees to participate in Municipal Government Month. Conduct a friendly contest between departments for the best activity or display.




Invite local and state legislators, distinguished citizens in the community, and others you want to be certain to attend. **Make sure to invite the citizen/s that are always complaining!**




Notify the media well in advance so that they can cover the event.

Ideas For Observing MGW Month (Cont'd)


Honor Community Leaders



Plan an official ceremony to honor a past or present city/town official, employee or a community volunteer who has shown outstanding dedication to the municipal government cause and has made significant contributions to the city/town.




Honor the selected individual/s with copies of MML's book, "Maryland's 157: The Incorporated Cities and Towns" along with a plaque or certificate.




Contact your local newspaper about doing a feature story on the person/s you have selected to receive the award.


Encourage Media Coverage, Media Communication



Notify local newspapers and radio and television stations of your plans to observe Municipal Government Works Month at least one week beforehand.




Find out your local paper's copy deadlines and get information to reporters on time. Make use of the MML sample news release in this information packet.




Use your city/town newsletter to let residents know about your activities during Municipal Government Works Month. If your city/town does not have one, use this event as an opportunity to begin a newsletter.



Feature a little known or misunderstood city/town ordinance in the city/town newsletter or in the local newspaper during Municipal Government Works Month.



Put municipal government trivia questions in your newsletter or the local newspaper during MGW week as a fun way to promote municipal government awareness and educate citizens.




Participate in local cable or radio public service programs to talk about municipal government and your special activities that month.


Schedule Special Events




Proclaim the month of November as Municipal Government Works Month with a special ceremony. Display your Municipal Government Works flag.



Highlight the positive impact of economic development initiatives and achievements in your community.




Create a municipal quiz game for area students. (City of Greenbelt example is included in this packet.)




Have a city/town spring clean up and repair week. Involve students, scouts, civic groups and other types of volunteers.




Conduct a special dog and bicycle registration that week to promote awareness of those services (or ordinances) in your city/town.



Offer tours of city/town facilities. (Could be an excellent student field trip.)
Highlight your Public Works Departments.




Use a contest format to create a city/town seal during Municipal Government Works Month.



Hold a parade. Show various types of city/town equipment. **Make sure you use your Municipal Government Works flag!**



Have an old-fashioned city/town picnic in the park. Invite businesses and civic groups to cosponsor the event.



Sponsor and participate in a City/Town Summit. Provide citizens with information from planning offices and boards about projected population and demographics. Discuss issues such as infrastructure needs, available revenues, and the environmental impacts of growth. Create an opportunity for citizens to be involved in shaping the future of their city/town.