

CHAPTER FOUR

MEETING ROOMS

Libraries have been taken to court on this one particular policy more than on any other policy that they have. Before writing your policy, be sure to read the *PLA HANDBOOK FOR WRITERS OF PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICIES* as well as read the several sample meeting room policies included in this chapter. These are only samples and are not recommended per se. This is definitely a policy that a library will want reviewed by their attorney. Some of the other books included in the Bibliography also discuss meeting room policies and some of the litigation that has occurred.

Libraries are considered limited fora of free speech. They cannot discriminate on basis of content although they can reasonably restrict the time, place, and manner of the meeting. Libraries cannot restrict meetings because they are political or religious in nature. This limited forum of free speech may open the library to meetings they had not anticipated. Instead of just worrying about whether to allow food in the auditorium or how often to allow a group to use the library, administration must be concerned about the ramifications of the more controversial groups who may want to book the meeting room.

The courts' method of balancing First Amendment rights with practical consideration of the use of public facilities in a pluralistic, modern society has revolved around the nature of the place or forum. Generally we have public fora, private and nonpublic fora, and designated or limited public fora. In public fora, First Amendment rights are at their zenith and property rights are minimized, and in nonpublic or private fora the opposite is true.

Public libraries are a collection of fora. The director's office is a good example of nonpublic or private fora where the library's property rights to exclude, control and regulate are highest and First Amendment rights are lowest. Patrons cannot just enter and stay in such areas attempting to assert First Amendment rights, and the library can regulate, lock and restrict usage. On the other hand, public sidewalks are classic public fora and the library's right to regulate the public sidewalks is much reduced and First Amendment rights are highest.

While many areas of the library would be nonpublic fora (e.g. director's office, HVAC/maintenance rooms, circulation desk area, etc.) or designated/limited public fora (e.g. book stacks, study carrels, computer work stations, etc.), the meeting rooms are usually designated public fora where only reasonable time, place and manner restrictions which are content neutral are permitted. Any other regulations are subject to strict scrutiny court tests in respect of First Amendment rights.

HOW TO HANDLE CONTROVERSIAL MEETINGS:

Do not wait until the day of a meeting or program to decide how to handle a controversial meeting. By then, it is too late. For this manual, we interviewed two libraries that have handled controversial meetings. Issues to consider when writing your meeting room policy:

- Certificates of Insurance required for meetings expected to have over 20 attendees (or whatever number you may want to choose).
- Billing and/or banning groups that destroy library property.
- Banning groups that misrepresent the purpose or focus of the meeting or who the speaker is.
- Who reviews and signs off on meeting applications (and, yes, there absolutely should be a meeting room application).
- Requiring all meetings be open to staff and administration .

As soon as you become aware of a controversial meeting (this may or may not be a library sponsored event):

1. Notify your local police department.
2. You may want to also notify the State Police, the FBI, and the Justice Department. Your local police department may handle this for you.
3. Contact your attorney to ensure you follow appropriate procedures to cover the library's liability but yet stay within the law.
4. Help the police map out entrances and exits, plans for crowd control, and parking lot issues.
5. Work closely with your staff so they are aware of the problem and what your expectations for them are.
6. Fine-tune your emergency evacuation procedures and review and practice them with the staff.
7. Secure your meeting room furniture. If the library does not have the chairs that interlock, consider using computer wiring ties.
8. Lock all nonpublic areas.
9. Decide who on the staff will communicate with the press about the situation both before and after the event occurs.
10. Discuss these issues with the police and then the staff.
 - What to do if the meeting becomes violent.
 - What to do if pepper spray or other chemical is used by the police or the meeting room attendees.
 - Weapons, security, and access concern.
 - Masks.

When the event is over:

- Document, document, document.
- Debrief staff and find out what worked, what didn't, and what needs to be re-evaluated.
- Re-evaluate the library's meeting room policy in light of what you learned.

PEORIA PUBLIC LIBRARY

MEETING ROOM POLICY

The Peoria Public Library welcomes the use of its meeting rooms by persons or organizations (Users) engaged in educational, cultural, civic, intellectual and charitable activities or activities requiring the use of the library materials.

Rules for Meeting Room Use

Meeting Rooms shall not be used in any way that materially interferes with the operation of the Library or which causes a threat to the safety of Library property or its patrons.

Library sponsored activities and the programs of the Library's affiliated Users are given priority in the scheduling of the meeting rooms.

No fee may be charged, no collection may be taken and no purchase may be required of those who attend.

The Library reserves the right to revise any meeting arrangements scheduled if necessary and to preempt an established reservation upon reasonable notification to the Users.

In the event of a Library building emergency or weather-related emergency, meetings may be canceled.

Use of the Library's meeting rooms does not constitute Library endorsement of viewpoints expressed by participants in the program. Advertisements or announcements implying such endorsements are not permitted.

No User meeting at the Library shall use the Library as its official address.

Storage of items owned by Users using the Public Meeting Rooms will not be permitted.

Meeting Rooms are available for use during regular service hours on days the Library is open. Exact times may vary by location. No one may enter the Library prior to opening hours.

Smoking and alcoholic beverages are not allowed in any area of the Library.

Users using the Library Meeting Rooms must comply with all applicable State and Federal laws and regulations- such as hiring an interpreter or providing auxiliary aids required under the Americans with Disability Act when requested by the public.

Users using the Library Meeting Rooms may not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, national origin, religious belief or handicap, against any person requesting admission to the meeting.

The Library assumes no responsibility for private property brought into the building.

Users may not tape nor tack anything to the walls or door. The User is responsible for the supervision of all children who may accompany its members. Children should remain with the user or be supervised by an adult who must remain with them.

Meeting rooms shall be left in good order.

User agrees to pay for any special maintenance required and all damages done to the meeting room during the meeting. User also agrees to pay for all damage done to the Library premises as a result of the meeting.

Library staff will not take or deliver messages for meeting participants.

Food and/or beverages may be served. All refreshments must remain in the meeting area. The Library will provide a coffeepot, hot water pot and water. The User using the room must provide all other supplies.

The contact person for each User is responsible for ensuring that each member of his or her group is aware of and abides by these regulations.

Equipment Fees

The library has a limited supply of various kinds of audio-visual equipment, which may be used, within the meeting rooms. There is a \$10 fee for the use of this equipment. These items must be scheduled and rental fees paid when the room is reserved

Facility Fee

Users using the auditorium may rent the kitchenette for a \$10.00 fee.

General Provisions

Future use of meeting rooms may be restricted or denied for any violation of these rules.

User agrees to pay for any security measures that the Library determines are reasonably required in connection with any meeting proposed by the user. At least 48 hours prior to the meeting, User shall deposit such funds with the Library, as the Library reasonably deems necessary in light of the relevant circumstances, to cover the cost of such measures.

Review Process

User may appeal any decision of the Library under this Meeting Room Policy to the Board of Trustees.

Such appeal shall be filed in writing with the Executive Director of the Library within 10 days after notice of the decision is given to User. Such notice shall be deemed to have been given to the User when the decision is personally delivered in writing to User or when notice is sent to user by first class or certified mail.

In the event of such an appeal, the appeals Committee of the Board of Trustees shall hold a hearing for the purpose of hearing evidence relevant to the appeal.

Within 30 days after conclusion of the hearing, the Appeals Committee shall make a written recommendation to the Board of Trustees regarding the matter. After receipt of the written recommendation of the Appeals committee, the Board of Trustees shall make a final decision regarding the appeal. No new evidence shall be heard by the Board of Trustees.

**PEORIA HEIGHTS PUBLIC LIBRARY
MEETING ROOM POLICY**

Effective August 8, 2000

The Peoria Heights Public Library welcomes the use of its Meeting Room by organizations engaged in educational, cultural, civic, intellectual and charitable activities or activities requiring the use of library materials. Meetings or programs sponsored by the Peoria Heights Public Library will be given priority in the scheduling of the Meeting Room, after which other requests will be considered by the Director in the order in which they are received.

The Library reserves the right to revise any meeting arrangements scheduled if necessary and to preempt established reservations upon reasonable notification to the organization. Use of the Meeting Room does not constitute the library's endorsement of viewpoints expressed by participants in the program. No organization meeting at the library shall use the library as its official address or the library's telephone number for the relay of messages of the organization.

FEE (For 4 hours)

Peoria Heights Residents (for social or not-for-profit use) - \$10.00**

Non-Peoria Heights Residents (for social or not-for-profit use) - \$50.00**

** No fee may be charged, no collection may be taken, and no purchase may be required of those who attend.

Commercial Use - \$100.00

DEPOSIT (for all rentals): \$50.00

POLICIES

--Individual/groups using the Library Meeting Room may not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, creed, national origin, religious belief or handicap, against any person requesting admission to the meeting.

--Meetings or programs which in the opinion of the Library Director are inappropriate to a library because of noise or other factors will not be permitted. The meeting cannot be expected to disrupt the ability of the library to conduct its business in a normal or orderly manner.

--Smoking and alcoholic beverages are not allowed in the meeting room and any area of the library or its property.

--Any damage to the premises or library furnishings as a result of the meeting will be paid by the group. User agrees to pay for any special maintenance required

and all damages done to the Meeting Room during the meeting. User also agrees to pay for all damage done to the Library premises as a result of the meeting.

--The group is responsible for setting up chairs and tables for its members and putting them away when the meeting is finished. Arrangement can be made for setting up the room, but a fee will be charged. The set up fee is non-refundable if the meeting is canceled by the group on the day of the meeting.

--In the event of a Library building emergency or weather-related emergency, meetings may be canceled.

--The Meeting Room is available for use during regular library hours. Meetings may not begin until half an hour after the library opens and must conclude no later than half an hour before closing.

--The library will not provide audiovisual equipment for use during the program.

--Light refreshments (coffee, punch, cookies) may be served in the Meeting Room. All refreshments must remain in the Meeting Room. Individuals/groups using the room must provide all supplies for refreshments and clean-up.

--The library does not provide storage space for property or supplies of groups or organizations using the Meeting Room. The library assumes no responsibility for private property brought into the building.

--The group is responsible for supervision of all children who may accompany its members. Children 7 years of age and under must remain with the group or be supervised by an adult who remains with them. Groups younger than 18 years old must have adult supervision who assumes responsibility for the groups' activities and for the care of property and facilities.

--No signs, posters, or announcements may be placed anywhere in the building without the express permission of the Library Director.

--The organization agrees to indemnify and hold the library harmless from any and all claims, suits, damages costs, losses, and expenses in any manner resulting from or arising out of the organization's use of the room. The library reserves the right to require a certificate of insurance.

--The group must comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and is responsible for providing qualified interpreters or auxiliary aids upon request.

--All meetings must be open to staff, public, and the press.

--The Meeting Room must be cleaned of all litter and left as it was found as the meeting ends. If the room is not cleaned to the Library Director's satisfaction, the deposit will be forfeited.

--Library staff will not take or deliver messages for meeting participants.

--Organizations are responsible for notifying the library of cancellations. If an organization fails to appear for its scheduled meeting, it forfeits the deposit paid at the time of the reservation.

--The contact person for each organization is responsible for ensuring that each member of his or her group is aware of and abides by these regulations.

--Future use of the Meeting Room may be restricted or denied for any violation of these rules.

--User agrees to pay for any security measures that the Library determines are reasonably required in connection with any meeting proposed by the User. At least 48 hours prior to the meeting, User shall deposit such funds with the Library, as the Library reasonably deems necessary in light of the relevant circumstances, to cover the cost of such security measures.

RESERVATIONS

Requests for use of the Meeting Room may be made by completing a reservation form. Reservations must be made at least one week in advance to the Library Director during normal business hours Monday-Friday. A deposit of \$50.00 and rental fee should accompany the form. Separate payments for each must be provided at the time of the reservations. Requests will be honored on a first-come, first-served basis.

REVIEW PROCESS

User may appeal any decision of the Library under the Meeting Room Policy to the Board of Trustees.

Such appeal shall be filed in writing with the Library Director within 10 days after notice of the decision is given to the User. Such notice shall be deemed given to the User when the decision is personally delivered in writing to User or when the written notice is sent to user by first class or certified mail.

In the event of such an appeal, the board of Trustees shall hold a hearing for the purpose of hearing evidence relevant to the appeal.

Within 30 days after conclusion of the hearing, the Board of Trustees shall make a written recommendation regarding the matter. The written recommendation will be the final decision concerning the appeal.

Amended July 8, 2002

ARTICLE VII

MEETING ROOM POLICY

7.1 KEWANEE PUBLIC LIBRARY DISTRICT MEETING ROOM POLICY

The Kewanee Public Library District has meeting rooms whose primary purpose is in support of library functions, meetings, and programs. These rooms are available for use by individuals, groups and organizations.

THE FACILITIES

The main meeting room is a large meeting room which has a capacity of 100 persons in chairs arranged in auditorium style. With tables, the room has a capacity of 75.

CONDITIONS

The room may be reserved for groups subject to the following conditions:
(For charges see Meeting Room Fees)

1. All meetings shall be open to the Library Board, Director and staff. This does not obligate the group or organization to notify the public of the meeting or to specify in any publicity that it is open to the public.
2. Meetings should be held during Library hours.
3. Meetings may be held before or after regularly scheduled Library hours only when prior arrangement has been made and approval has been given.
4. Groups may not charge admission to meetings, except for library-sponsored or related programs, which may charge fees to defray expenses. Groups may charge attendees for the actual costs of materials used in a program, i.e. workbooks, handouts, supplies, etc. This must be indicated on the application.

PRIORITIES FOR USE

Should there be several groups wishing to use the same rooms at the same time, priorities for granting use will be as follows:

1. Kewanee Public Library district and library affiliated/sponsored groups.

2. Non-profit educational, informational, cultural or civic groups and organizations having at least one adult member who holds a Kewanee Public Library District card.

Room fees for meetings during library hours will be waived for:

1. Library sponsored and affiliated groups.
2. Not-for-profit groups with Kewanee Public Library district cardholders as members.
3. Federal, state, and county governmental groups.
4. City of Kewanee, Park District, School District, Board, committee and office holder meetings.
5. Kewanee residents for non-commercial meetings.

This means that:

1. Groups without Kewanee residents must pay \$20.00 per each hour that the meetings takes place.
2. All groups, including those with Kewanee residents must pay \$20.00 for each hour or fraction thereof that the meeting extends beyond regular library hours.

CANCELLATIONS AND REFUNDS

In the event of a meeting room request cancellation, the security deposit will be refunded as soon as possible.

GENERAL MEETING ROOM USE RULES

1. The library does not provide service to carry supplies, make coffee, provide office supplies, or photocopies. All groups, except those sponsored by the library must provide their own support for preparation and clean up.
2. Refreshment supplies such as cups, containers, paper goods, tea and coffee and kitchen utensils, towels, dishes and table service are not provided by the library.
3. Refreshments may not be taken out of the meeting room.
4. The kitchen is not to be used for cooking.
5. Alcoholic beverages are not allowed.
6. Smoking is not allowed in the library building.

7. At the conclusion of a meeting, the individual, group or organization is responsible for placing all areas in the condition existing before the meeting commenced. This includes, but is not limited to, rearranging or restacking chairs and cleaning tables, kitchen counters and appliances, if used. If a group does not leave the room in reasonable order, the group will forfeit their security deposit and may have its meeting room privileges suspended or revoked.

7.2 APPLICATION FOR USE OF MEETING ROOM

Application must be signed by an adult and submitted before use of the room.

Date of request: _____ Day of the week: _____

Time: from _____ to _____

Name of organization: _____

Name of person filling out form for organization: _____

Position in group: () Officer _____ () Member

Address: _____

Phone number: () _____ Home () _____ Work

Activity/subject
planned: _____

Attendance for statistical reporting: _____

Brief description of materials or literature to be distributed: _____

Will refreshments/food be served: () YES () NO
() The security deposit (\$25.00) is required with the application.

I have read the meeting room policy and agree to leave the room clean and orderly condition in which I found it. We agree to pay for the cost of repair or replacement for any damage to the facility or equipment not covered by the security deposit. The library is not responsible for damaged or loss of materials used or left in the building by the group or organization.

By submitting the request, I am assuring the library that the above information is correct and that any advance publicity should in no way involve the library other than as a place of meeting. I realize violations of the rules will result in the cancellation of the meeting and possible repercussions in scheduling future use of the room by this group or individual.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Library Use Only: Date: _____ () Approved () Not Approved Approved by _____

Special requirements: _____

LIBRARY MEETING ROOMS POLICY

QUINCY PUBLIC LIBRARY

1. Library sponsored activities are given priority in scheduling use of the rooms at all times. The library reserves the right to revise any schedule of meetings if necessary and to preempt established reservations upon reasonable notifications to the group(s) involved.
2. The public meeting rooms are available free of charge for public gatherings of a civic, cultural, or educational character, but not for social or religious gatherings, money-raising, political, or commercial purposes.
3. No admissions fee may be charged, nor funds solicited, nor any venture promoted, at any meeting held in the meeting rooms. Fees for participation in workshops, study groups, discussion series, conferences, institutes, and similar meetings may be collected if permission has been secured in advance from Administrative Librarian.
4. No more than 125 people shall use the large meeting room at one time. The conference room seating is determined by the number of chairs available.
5. Reservations for room use are arranged through the Administration and Circulation Departments. Reservations must be made at least two weeks prior to the event. A member of the organization must sign a **Request for Use of the Meeting Rooms** before the meeting.
6. Meetings held by outside users must be scheduled within established service hours of the building. The group will end the meeting or program in time for the building to be vacated by the normal close of the library's service hours for the day on which the room is to be used.
7. Physical arrangements of the room, equipment, and seating must be planned at the time of the room reservation. Library custodial support is provided at no charge to arrange a meeting room before and after each public use.
8. Any group wishing to meet upon a repeating basis must make separate arrangements prior to each need. The library will not accept multiple reservations at any time from any group, unless the group is library sponsored.
9. No group may reassign its use of a meeting room to any other party.

QUINCY PUBLIC LIBRARY

REQUEST FOR THE USE OF THE MEETING ROOMS

ORGANIZATION NAME _____

REQUESTER'S NAME _____

PHONE NUMBER (home) _____ (work) _____

PURPOSE OF MEETING _____

MEETING DATE _____ TIME _____

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ATTENDING _____

ARRANGEMENT OF ROOM _____

EQUIPMENT NEEDED, IF ANY _____

Permission to use the meeting room will be granted upon acceptance of the conditions for its use as expressed in the library's Policy for the Use of the Library Meeting Rooms.

Requester's signature below signifies that he or she received and understood the Quincy Public Library meeting Rooms Policy.

REQUESTER'S SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

STAFF SIGNATURE _____

QUINCY PUBLIC LIBRARY POLICY ON SPONSORSHIP OF ORGANIZATIONS

The Quincy Public Library shall sponsor outside organizations only according to the following criteria:

1. The organization must be non-profit.
2. The organization's purpose or mission must be relevant to the library's mission.
3. Both the library and the sponsored organization must agree to an acceptable reciprocity of benefits.
4. Both the library and the sponsored organization must promote awareness of the other party and must include the sponsorship agreement in their publicity of special events.
5. Sponsorship of any organization must not involve any direct or indirect cost or expense to the library.
6. Sponsorship of any organization must be approved by the Quincy Public Library Board of Trustees.

Sponsorship shall include provision of space for meeting, but all meetings of organizations sponsored by Quincy Public Library shall be governed by the library's "Policy for the Use of Library Meeting Rooms." Meetings may be scheduled yearly.

Other conditions of sponsorship may be added provided they are approved and agreed to in writing by the Quincy Public Library Board of Trustees and the governing body of the sponsored organization.

Adopted January 12, 1993
Quincy Public Library
Board of Trustees

