

**To:** Anchorage Assembly; YWCA Alaska; Federation of Community Councils (FCC)  
**From:** Assembly Member Daniel Volland  
**Date:** Sep 22, 2025  
**Re:** Recommendations for Revising “Better Public Meetings” Project Partnership and Scope

## Background

The Anchorage Assembly is considering a \$5,000 grant to support the *Better Public Meetings* project. The proposal has been presented as a partnership between the YWCA and the FCC, with the stated intent of improving public meeting processes and accessibility.

As an Assembly Member, I fully support the goal of creating more inclusive, transparent, and effective public engagement. However, I believe the project, as currently structured, could be better aligned with the community’s needs and ongoing Assembly efforts.

## Concerns with Current Proposal

- **Limited Target:** Focusing improvements primarily on Assembly meetings does not address broader challenges at the neighborhood level, where residents often have their first and most direct interaction with municipal government.
- **FCC Representation Issues:** FCC meetings and processes have sometimes been criticized as exclusionary or under-representative, with participation skewed toward narrow neighborhood demographics and interests. Without intentional reform, FCC processes may risk reinforcing inequities rather than expanding representation and participation.
- **Assembly’s Progress to Date:** The current problem statement stated on *betterpublicmeetings.com* is, I believe, inaccurate and undermines recent efforts of the Assembly, the Municipal Clerk, and Legislative Services. The Assembly has taken significant steps to improve outreach around its own work. Legislative Services staff have developed dedicated websites for major initiatives—such as proposed sales tax measures and the HOME Initiative—to provide clear, accessible information to the public. They have worked hard to engage the public in the City Nerd Night event series. There are also new efforts currently underway to create pop-up civic town squares. In addition to routine code amendments, the Clerk’s office has created a public portal for Assembly documents and is currently considering new models for accessing Anchorage Municipal Code online. These efforts serve as a strong model for transparent, effective civic engagement.

## Proposed Revision

### Project Focus:

Prioritize **strengthening FCC meetings, outreach, and inclusiveness**, rather than focusing on Assembly meetings.

Emphasize lowering barriers to participation for renters, younger residents, BIPOC communities, and others historically underrepresented in FCC processes.

Seek to improve uniformity across and support for councils in documentation of agendas/minutes/resolutions/other correspondence.

### Deliverables:

Develop best practices and strategies to make FCC meetings more accessible, inclusive, and effective.

Provide **recommendations for revisions to Anchorage Municipal Code sections governing community councils**, with the goal of institutionalizing reforms that advance representation and equity. This ensures that the project is still focused on providing recommendations to the decision-making body, as well as to advisory Community Councils.

## Rationale

Improving inclusiveness and accessibility in FCC processes will strengthen neighborhood-level engagement, which is a foundation of municipal democracy. These reforms will have positive ripple effects, enhancing participation in Assembly meetings and other city processes. Importantly, this effort would complement—rather than duplicate—the Assembly’s own progress in improving transparency and outreach.

## Recommendation

I encourage you to consider revising the project’s scope and partnerships along these lines. Doing so would maximize the project’s impact and help ensure that community engagement in Anchorage truly reflects the diversity and needs of all residents.