

Trail Specifications, No. 20-140, issued by the Boy Scout Camping Service.

Learning the Public's Business

The troop meeting plan for week 3 suggests that the troop visit a meeting of a public body, a private organization that works for the public welfare, or some other agency or group that affects the lives of citizens. The purpose is to show Scouts our democracy in action. Here are several possibilities:

- City council
- School board
- Municipal court
- County court for a naturalization ceremony
- Tenants' association, block club, or neighborhood watch group.

At meetings of this type, it is essential that the presiding officer or other knowledgeable person meet with the Scouts either before or after the regular meeting to explain the proceedings. If not, the meeting's business may seem like gobbledygook to the Scouts.

Another caution: The meetings of some city councils and school boards go on for 3 or 4 hours, and you will have a horde of restless boys if they stay for the whole meeting. So it's a good idea to check with the clerk or other official beforehand and arrange to have the boys file out early or arrive in the middle of the meeting. If you have a choice, have the troop present during the "public comment" section of the meeting because that is likely to be of most interest.

At the troop meeting following the visit, have the Scouts discuss what they saw and heard. Reinforce the idea that although it may have been confusing, it was a demonstration of representative democracy—the way Americans govern themselves.

Other possible special activities. If the troop is using this feature around Constitution Day (September 17), Memorial Day (in May), or Independence Day (July 4), the patrol leaders' council may want to observe the holiday by encouraging display of the U.S. flag or by taking part in local celebrations. The troop might march in a parade or assist at a ceremony; perform a public display of flag courtesies; or distribute fliers to remind residents to fly the flag on the holiday.