

night meetings - Because of deadline concerns, we currently are not filing many night meetings "live." If not being filed live, the reporter should do his or her best to make the story seem like a feature on the issue being reported, and not merely a recitation of agenda items.

If you are "live," the following are suggestions to help you file quickly, accurately and to the point. Note that these tips are NOT taught in journalism school and define the difference between practical newspapering and a bunch of eggheads who don't know the working end of a pencil.

CALLAHAN'S DOWN-AND-DIRTY NIGHT MEETING STORY

An editor once told me "I can train a seal to cover a night meeting."

You can start barking now.

- Decide the ONE item you are interested in. Research it.
- The lede should describe the action or inaction of the meeting. Nothing more. The SUBJECT is the acting body, the PREDICATE is the activity, the OBJECT is the ONE item, the modifier at the end describes the ONE item.

Under no circumstances should the lede be more than 30 words, 20 words is better.

e.g. WEST CHESTER - Borough Council Wednesday night rejected a proposal to ban student housing.

- In your second graph announce the vote and what it means.

e.g. The 5 to 4 vote means West Chester University will withdraw its threat to move to West Goshen.

or

The 5 to 4 vote means West Chester University students can continue to get bombed in bars and throw up in gutters up and down South Walnut Street.

- The third graph should have a quote from the winning side.

e.g. "All right, everybody party like it's 1999," said Councilwoman Mary D. Zimmerman.

- The fourth graph should have a quote from the losing side.

e.g. "I am ashamed of council tonight. West Chester's long nightmare with those hooligans posing as students will only continue," said Councilman Shannon Royer.

SPECIAL NOTE: Even if the vote is 150 to 1 ALWAYS get the one. It is the reporter's obligation to get the dissenting side. It should be high up.

- Throw in a couple graphs of either quotes or paraphrases on the action. If people were yelling and screaming or cheering you might want to throw that in paragraph five.

e.g. A group 15 fraternity brothers sitting quietly in the back row erupted in cheers and clapping when the vote was announced.

"Way to go council! Hey, Mary, wanna go dancing," yelled Nick Blade, 21, a senior in the Barpha Scarpha Blotto Fraternity.

- Get yourself another six or seven graphs on something to do with the issue. Paraphrase stuff, ladle in the history of the issue (should be back-taked).

- Shut up and file. Should be done in 20 to 30 minutes. TOPS. No excuses.

- Leave office. Quickly. You have received a tip that you must check out immediately: Someone has informed you the draft beer at the Square Bar is very cold.

WC
Media

Wayne