

**Hi, Fred Nelson for Community Comment,**

**Our local legislative bodies, city councils, county board of supervisors and the various districts, are required by the Brown Act to make available their meeting agendas seventy two hours before a meeting is held. This gives the populace a reasonable length of time to prepare and attend the meeting if there happens to be something on the agenda that is of interest. Further, according to the Brown Act, there can be no discussion of any item that is not listed on the agenda. This protects the citizen from any underhanded attempt to sneak in a subject unknown to those who might have an interest and or objections. When the agenda for the meeting is prepared, one section is reserved for what is considered routine items. This is called the "Consent Agenda" or "Consent Calendar". The consent agenda is primarily used to lump a number of separate actions into a single up or down vote. Unless someone objects to an item, everything listed on the consent agenda can be passed without discussion and with a single vote, a good way to speed up and simplify the overall proceedings. If someone, either a member of the governing body or a citizen such as you and I, does object to a particular item, it can be pulled from the consent agenda and separately considered, discussed and voted on. Each agenda item is identified by number and subject followed by the title of the sponsoring staff member. This is where a watchful eye is needed. Is each item listed in the Consent Agenda routine or has someone managed to slip in legislation in order to avoid question or discussion? Here are a few suggestions to follow prior to a scheduled meeting involving your favorite legislative body. As I said, the agenda is available seventy two hours prior to the meeting. Request a copy or go to the appropriate website where it should be posted. If you belong to a group that monitors meetings, have someone review the consent agenda and alert the group of items that should not be passed without challenge. Look for items that spark questions such as proposed actions to Endangered Species listings and other environmental actions. If you do think that an item should be pulled from the consent calendar you may make your request through one of the members of the legislative body. If you do make such a request, be prepared to discuss the issue. Also, you do have a right to comment on consent items, even if they are not pulled. Your attendance at such meetings, forces open discussions and holds the legislators accountable or liable for their actions. It is up to you to make your local government work for you. Ignoring the process through silence is the same as giving your approval to whatever subject is being addressed.**

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