

Maxiopolis:

A Game of City Council For the Present and the Future



CITY OF MAXIOPOLIS:

A GAME OF CITY COUNCIL FOR TEACHERS AND STUDENTS

**THE TAFT INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT @ QUEENS
COLLEGE/CUNY**

Conflict and conflict resolution: Learning the art of political compromise

Directions and Decisions

ISSUES: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

Before playing the game, decide on any Bills you want to introduce that reflect varying. Solutions to current problems and issues in your town, city, or community and adapt accordingly.

For Example:

1. Eat Healthy, Drink Healthy
2. Settling immigrants: Let them in or build a wall?
3. Respecting the environment
4. Rezoning Central (downtown) Maxiopolis
5. New Power Sources: Or, Do We want a power plant next door?
6. Relocating Storm Victims
7. Managing News online
8. Setting up a Rent Control Board
9. Assisting small business to survive
10. Expanding transportation services

City of Maxiopolis: Rules of Play in Ten Easy Steps

1. City Council Assembles, Mayor at his seat and The Speaker at the podium (or chair), council clerk (vote recorder) seated next to the podium. Mayor, Speaker, and Clerk can play additional roles in districts.
2. Council will be called to order by the Speaker and followed by a welcoming address by the Mayor. The Mayor will call for interests and parties to embrace a spirit of cooperation and resolve conflicts.
3. Council members will read statistics of their constituencies, who the folks are in the neighborhood? Council members confer about voting on behalf of their districts as steps toward re-election to public office.
4. Each Council Member, Mayor, and Speaker will be introduced by name and tell anything else about their biographies that they wish to share with the audience.
5. The Clerk will introduce bills to the assembled council one at a time, reading aloud the proposed law and plan, allowing discussion, and calling for a vote

6. The Speaker recognizes speakers on behalf of a proposal, followed by up by those opposed.
7. After hearing from different viewpoints, time is allowed to meet with other to discuss positions on each bill. Council members may exert leadership in organizing a vote for or against a bill, or may abstain or remain undecided.
8. The Speaker may again allow speakers for and three against a bill, and speakers may include the clear, speaker, and mayor as well as council members.
9. The Speaker will call for a vote, and the clerk will record the vote as cast, for example: Yea, Nay, or Abstain, tally the results.
10. Clerk will officially announce and post the result of the vote tally, declaring the bill as 'carried' or 'failed'. Bills carried will reward their proponents with re-election points while bills that fail will result in no points at all.

THE ROLE OF INTEREST AND COMMUNITY GROUPS

Groups are part of the life of Maxiopolis, and include those that lobby for their interests, that is, try to influence the legislators by putting pressure on them to vote the way their members or constituents prefer.

Lobbying is usually for or against specific proposals that affect each group positively or negatively in their view. Each lobbying groups meets to decide how a bill should be voted, and this is communicated to legislators by sealed secret messages passed by hand during play.

The groups may include at least five or more of the following interest groups, or the teacher or student leader may add a few that are of local interest, specific to your community.

Suggestions for Using “Maxiopolis” in a Secondary Classroom (6-12)

Maxiopolis is a simulation intended to give students hands-on experience of how government works, particularly local legislative bodies like city, suburban, or town councils. Teachers are encouraged to use the materials in any way they choose.

The following suggestions allow for approximately five days of lessons.

Students work in small groups to represent a district in a town, suburban, or city legislature, introducing, debating, and passing or rejecting bills of law. The Mayor Speaker, and/or Clerk can act as the presiding officer in managing the Maxiopolis legislative body according to Robert's Rules of Order, or any other guide to

parliamentary procedure that you prefer and that the students' can grasp most easily.

To Begin

Students should be divided into groups of three or four corresponding to the 9 council districts in the city. Each group will receive a profile of their district, a profile of all council district and the bills to be considered.

As a class, the students may review the city's profile, district by district. You, as their teacher and guide, can help them with any information they don't understand, like median income. You may increase the number and size of districts, council areas, depending on the size of your class enrollment or if classes are combined.

In groups

Students will be given a profile of their district, copies of the bills they will consider, and a work sheet for each bill. After students learn to offer, discuss, and pass bills they can develop bills of their own based on research into issues that need to be solved like police funding, economic upgrading, power needs, food inspection, zoning rules, or helping storm or catastrophe victims.

A **simple majority** is needed to pass each bill. Students should discuss the bills within their district and decide how they will vote. They should also lobby other districts to get the required number of votes. Explain to them that they can get support from their own and from other districts. Make sure that they know they can amend the bills at any time to get support from other council members. Note that the Mayor can also suggest changes and veto bills not considered desirable, but can be overridden by a vote of five districts or more.

Note that from time to time, secret messages will be sent to Council members.

These messages may be from Lobbying groups, public agencies, private businesses, or political advisors. It is entirely up to the member to decide to take these suggestions seriously.

Voting

Council members will select bills to be sent to the full council. These players will explain (using the worksheet) why they will vote for or against the bill. If time allows, they can return to their district to reconsider bills after the presentation.

Each member gets one vote, but that vote must represent the consensus of the group working together as holding a council seat. Bills pass by a simple majority. Once bills are passed, players choose a "veto card" at random. If the card says the mayor vetoes the bill, players can lobby other districts to gain enough votes for a 2/3rds majority. A second vote will be taken for all vetoed bills.

Assessment

If time allows: Have students consider the bills that were passed. Does the city have enough money to pay for them: Who will or will not be helped by this bill? Who will be harmed? Which districts came out ahead? Which lost? What are your

chances for reelection after these votes? The more bills that are passed, the greater the sense of success, and the more successful the classroom will be judged as a representative body. Which bills passed or failed will or would have been good for the entire urban community? Which bills would have been or are in the best interests of a narrow few, or particular businesses or organizations?

Lobbying Groups

(Choose at least 6 for varied interests, upper, middle and lower class) especially those that are likely to give conflicting advice!)

ASSOCIATIONS OF RETIREES/SENIOR CITIZENS FOR MAXIOPOLIS

LABOR GROUPS/UNIONS/WELKNOT WORKERS OF MAXIOPOLIS

BUSINESS INTERESTS/MAXI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

CONSERVATION-ECOLOGY/SAVE OUR PARKS COMMITTEE
'MAXIMIZE PARKS' BOARD

CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS/MAXIOPOLIS RAINBOW COALITION

COMMUNITY HELP/POOR FAMILIES CENTER/MAXICOMMUNITIES IN ACTION

REAL ESTATE GUILD/REALTORS UNITED OF MAXIOPOLIS

BIG BUSINESS LEADERS/CORPORATE MAXI-COUNCIL

OWNERS and RENTERS/OWNERS LEAGUE OF MAXI

TRANSPORTATION/COMMUTERS CLUB OF MAXIOPOLIS

SECRET MEMOS TO LOBBYING GROUPS

(Place these, one to a lobby, in sealed envelopes and distribute to the groups, who may then copy them, change them, and distribute the secret memos to any of the council members they hope to influence.

ASSOCIATIONS OF RETIREES/SENIOR CITIZENS FOR MAXIOPOLIS

{Do NOT vote for any bill that will harm the interests of the seniors, e.g., cuts in transport, cuts in medical benefits, building housing for the rich, increasing taxation, etc. But vote for increased benefits, higher wages, and nicer parks)

LABOR GROUPS/UNIONS/WELKNOT WORKERS OF MAXIOPOLIS

{Vote for higher taxes on the rich, easier loans for homes, and better wages and medical benefits. Expand transportation and vote in favor of civil rights for minorities and immigrants, and support funding for public schools, colleges, and universities. }

BUSINESS INTERESTS/MAXI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

(Vote in favor of easier loans, and less regulation. Vote against more aid for the middle or lower class, and vote against taxes going up when at all possible. You are in favor of big or little developments that aid businesses and especially the smaller companies and shop owners).

CONSERVATION-ECOLOGY/SAVE OUR PARKS COMMITTEE

‘MAXIMIZE PARKS’ BOARD {Vote in favor of new parks, improving parklands, extending conservation efforts that improve local and surrounding ecology, plant trees, pick up garbage, and promote wildlife rescue }

CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS/MAXIOPOLIS RAINBOW COALITION

{Encourage expansion of rights, especially on equality issues like pay raises, freedom to live where you wish, and expand welfare benefits, as well as be positive on transportation and education improvements, and taxes on the wealthy and business }

COMMUNITY HELP/POOR FAMILIES CENTER/MAXICOMMUNITIES IN ACTION

{Strongly favor welfare and pay raise improvements, as well as community services, and transportation networks working better; fight against tax breaks for businesses and corporations, and lobby for affordable housing in the city }

REAL ESTATE GUILD/REALTORS UNITED OF MAXIOPOLIS

{Work to obtain big housing projects for the wealthy and middle class, fight against subsidies and rent control for the poor and working classes; ask for better deals for loans from banks, and easier payment plans at higher rates }

BIG BUSINESS LEADERS/CORPORATE MAXI-COUNCIL

{Favor the biggest and most potentially profit making enterprises, seek land and buildings for both investments and development; oppose new taxes, especially on corporations, and generally oppose city taxes that assist welfare and education budgets. }

TRANSPORTATION/COMMUTERS ASSOCIATION OF MAXI

(Support all and any forms of public transportation, especially mass transit, especially in the form of unimpeded right of way, like trains or subways. Lobby for

subsidies to keep fares low and manageable for poorer commuters and fast and efficient for business and professional commuters.)

MAP OF THE GREAT CITY OF MAXIOPOLIS

(9 Election Districts for City Council (Each district has its own character and population)(Districts can elect 1 to 5 council members working as teams, depending on class size in your classroom at the time.)

The City of Maxiopolis: Fact Sheet/Profile

Maxiopolis is a large city with wide range of industries, services, and communities. Industries include a large banking sector, heavy industries and shipping, real estate and transportation, shipping and ports, and a lively arts and entertainment scene. The population is very diverse with approximately 25% African-American and about 25% Latino/Hispanic, with the other half composed of multiethnic European and Asian/Middle Eastern populations. Asian communities are growing fast, including Indian, Chinese, and Korean, while those with European origins include American born and immigrant groups hailing from Russia, Poland, Italy, Ireland, and Greece. All major religions are represented including Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. Some neighborhoods have concentrations of senior citizens, while others are composed of young families with children. Incomes vary considerably by neighborhood from high-income professionals to moderate-income office, sales, and civil service workers to lower-income labor groups. Communities tend to group by class, race, and income, as well as by ethnicity and proximity to transportation access. There is an extensive transportation network into and out of the city center. An election will soon take place for Mayor, Comptroller, Public Advocate, and City Council of Maxiopolis. Recent issues include the list below, and all require new laws to help solve the problems raised. If you were on the City Council, think about what laws you would recommend and vote in favor of for all the people of Maxiopolis.

Issues and Potential Issues

1. Police Review Board
2. Eat Healthy, Drink Healthy
3. Teacher Evaluation
4. Respecting the environment
5. Rezoning Central (downtown) Maxiopolis

6. New Power Sources
7. Relocating Storm Victims

COUNCIL DISTRICT CHARACTERISTICS MAXIOPOLIS: NINE-DISTRICT VERSION

District One

Population density: 34K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$89,234
Bachelor's degree or higher: 54%
Foreign born: 33%
White: 58%
Black: 10%
Hispanic: 16%
Asian: 16%
Major Faiths: Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim

District Two

Population density: per square mile 27K
Median Household Income: \$ 62,217
Bachelor's degree or higher: 44%
Foreign born: 38%
White: 49%
Black: 11%
Hispanic: 19%
Asian: 21%
Major Faiths: Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and Muslim

District Three

Population density: 22K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$48,631
Bachelor's degree or higher: 30%
Foreign born: 49%
White/Non Hispanic: 46%
Black: 6%
Hispanic: 26%
Asian: 22%
Major Faiths: Catholic, Protestant, and Muslim

District Four

Population density: 23K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$53,514
Bachelor's degree or higher: 37%
Foreign born: 43%
White/Non Hispanic: 46%
Black: 2%
Hispanic: 16%
Asian: 36%
Major Faiths: Buddhist/Hindu, Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim

District Five

Population density: 34K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$
Bachelor's degree or higher: 24%
Foreign born: 53%
White/Non Hispanic: 34%
Black: 14%
Hispanic: 46%
Asian: 6%
Major Faiths: Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim

District Six

Population density: 21K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$64,417
Bachelor's degree or higher: 66%
Foreign born: 30%
White: 68%
Black: 6%
Hispanic: 8%
Asian: 18%
Major Faiths: Protestant, Jewish, Catholic and Muslim

District Seven

Population density: 14K per square mile

Median Household Income: \$34,326
Bachelor's degree or higher: 12%
Foreign born: 60%
White: 15%
Black: 49%
Hispanic: 26%
Asian: 10%
Major Faiths: Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim

District Eight

Population density: 18K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$41,308
Bachelor's degree or higher: 22%
Foreign born: 27%
White: 41%
Black: 39%
Hispanic: 16%
Asian: 4%
Major Faiths: Catholic, Jewish, Protestant, and Muslim

District Nine

Population density: 11K per square mile
Median Household Income: \$66,895
Bachelor's degree or higher: 59%
Foreign born: 23%
White: 68%
Black: 10%
Hispanic: 10%
Asian: 12%
Major Faiths: Protestant, Jewish, Catholic and Muslims, and Others

SAMPLE BILLS TO INTRODUCE by COUNCIL MEMBERS

City of Maxiopolis: City Council Bill No 34

Hear yea! Hear yea!

Be it resolved that the City Council approve a substantial raise in the minimum wage by at least 20% beginning next year.

The right honorable council member from District 2 has introduced this bill to raise the living standards of our faithful public employees, office workers, secretaries, library clerks, and records keepers. There has not been a change in the minimum wage for five years although inflation has grown at a rate of 2-3% per year.

Be it resolved that the City Council of Maxiopolis raise the minimum wage for entry level public employees from \$8.15 per hour to \$10.75 per hour to improve the purchasing power and living standards of these employees and to attract and reward new and young workers who enter civil service.

As the economy has grown, it is increasingly difficult to attract and hold workers in low-paying city jobs, despite the benefits and stability offered, due to low entry-level wage rates.

To alter this situation, and provide a more dynamic and better-prepared labor force for the city, we propose changing the minimum wage to reflect inflation over the last five years.

Therefore we propose that significantly higher minimum wages promote better on-the-job levels of responsibility and service, and support the city's economy through increased purchasing power, thereby encouraging a better business climate for one and all in our local communities and throughout our great city.

City of Maxiopolis: City Council Bill No 72

Hear Yea! Hear Yea!

Be it resolved that the City Council approves the building of a new sports stadium in the city center.

The right honorable Mayor of Maxiopolis has introduced this bill to fund the building of a major sports stadium, “The MAXI-HUGE-GEO-DOME” project near the center of the city, and has worked out agreements with two sports teams, to occupy and assist in its financing. This stadium, in the view of the administration, would provide a huge economic boon to the city in terms of jobs, construction, and revenues over many years to come.

Be it resolved that the City of Maxiopolis shall, in cooperation with the Zoomers football team, design, construct, and operate a new stadium on the underused North side of the city in District 3 for the purpose of overall development, business enterprise, and tax revenues.

The city will contribute to the design and construction costs, and provide a tax abatement for the first five years of operation to amortize costs and attract business to the stadium and the stadium area. In addition, the City will authorize a study of housing, commercial zones, and agency offices in and around the new stadium as well as authorize studies for new transport networks to serve the area.

This will be a huge attraction that brings large direct and indirect revenues increases by way of taxes and tourism into the city coffers.

The City of Maxiopolis: City Council Bill No 12

Hear Yea! Hear Yea!

Be it resolved that the City Council approve investment in a new power plant on the south side

The right honorable Commissioner of Energy, Power, and the Environment proposes that, because of increasing demands for heating and air-conditioning, as

well as ordinary home and business use of electric power, a new efficient power plant, to be known as MAXI-LIGHT, be built on the shore of the City's South Side, at a point of easy delivery of fuel supplies. This plant would require the condemnation and purchase of several warehouses and shops in Council districts 5, 6, or 7, some of which are derelict, as well as moving approximately 67 homes and businesses. However, the overall value to the city outweighs the disadvantages, over the long term.

Be it resolved that the City of Maxiopolis undertake the construction of an efficient new power plant to serve the entire community for its energy, particularly electricity, needs over the next decade in an area that has available land for industrial uses, parts of which are currently not being put to use for either private or public goals. The City will provide tax incentives for the MaxiLight Company, with the land leased to them for a ten year period, to be built with a combination of public and private funds, noting the potential for assistance from the state and federal government for capital expenses.

It is anticipated that the new power plant will be as environmentally conscious as possible, with the lowest possible amounts of effluent and the best smokestack scrubbers to maintain air quality in the affected areas. Studies will be initiated of the most up to date and effective environmental controls available.

Energy needs must be met, as these are currently straining capacity especially during the summer months when demand is highest, and offer the potential for future growth of efficient electrical power.

[City of Maxiopolis: City Council Bill No 212](#)

Hear Yea! Hear Yea!

Be it resolved that the City of Maxiopolis set up a civilian police review board to oversee police practices.

The honorable member from district 4 proposes that the city council approve of a civilian review board to oversee and supervise police practices including 'stop and frisk' policies, and neighborhood patrols, particularly in areas with heavy immigrant and minority communities. The proposed board would have the right to

review, comment upon, and discipline police personnel and officers for any questionable and/or controversial actions taken on behalf of the city.

The board would be composed of civilians selected from each council district, and must include at least three with professional background in law and justice, and at least three community representatives who will speak for important community groups. There shall also be one member appointed by the Mayor's office and represent the administration point of view.

In cases where the police and communities cannot agree on the resolution of a case or incident, the review board would have the power to require that cases be submitted for official hearings in a court of law presided over by a qualified panel of judges, or hearing officers.

City of Maxiopolis: City Council Bill No 356

Hear yea! Hear yea!

Be it resolved that the City Council approve of an environmental impact bill for the purchase and relocation of homes and land destroyed by storms, floods, and other catastrophic damage.

The honorable member from District 6 proposes that the city council approve a bill to buy land and property near the shore areas of the city that were impacted by floods, hurricanes, and storms that destroyed homes and businesses.

Fair compensation will be offered for lost and damaged property including a sum of money to help owners relocate in safer and more secure areas farther inland, allowing the shoreline to recover its natural defenses such as sand dunes and grasslands, and river basins to rebuild protective wetlands and barriers in preparation for future storms.

Homeowners will be justly compensated for removal from their communities and provided advice and financial assistance in joining other communities in the city. The rationale is to encourage safer locations for homebuilders and owners, as well as to provide incentives for citizens to allow the natural environment to be restored to its original function as a protective coastal barrier against storms.

In the long run the shore will form better and more enduring beaches for public leisure activities as well as reduce insurance costs, and save the city funds for restoration that could be applied elsewhere to new building investments and the improvement of infrastructure.

City of Maxiopolis: City Council Bill No 85

Hear yea! Hear yea!

Be it resolved that a bill be approved by the city council to mandate and encourage 'healthier eating and healthier drinking' throughout the city, particularly in public facilities such as schools, hospitals, and sports facilities.

The honorable member from District 7 proposes that new taxes be placed upon all foods and drinks that play a significant role in exacerbating common diseases such as diabetes and cardiovascular problems. Taxes would discourage the purchase and consumption of these foods, especially sugary soft drinks, by all age groups, but most particularly the youth of our city.

As many as 25,000 people in our nation and 1,000 people a year are estimated to die each year from the consumption of heavily sugared drinks, most notably sodas, at a cost to private and public health systems estimated in the billions. Public health is a government concern, as health affects every community and family.

Placing new graduated taxes based on the size and level of sugar incorporated into drinks (higher taxes for larger sizes of bottles) would increase city revenue for application to local hospital networks, and increase employment opportunities for food counselors and advisors to guide citizens in consuming healthier diets.

Schools would be required to enforce new standards and offer substitute drinks and food sources for young people at subsidized rates thus encouraging healthier eating and drinking and discouraging the rate and amounts of intake of less healthy substances and liquids.

Over the long haul, health insurance premiums would be reduced for both city and individuals, and the basic health of the population would improve bringing longer life and greater joy to families and friends.