

Effective Board Meetings

Overview

Board meetings are fundamental to conducting conservation district business, yet are often inefficient, long, and discouraging. Effective board meetings can be conducted with planning and good facilitation by the board chair.

Key Points

General Tips

- Send a clear and detailed agenda to board members at least one week before the meeting.
 - Put the person responsible for each agenda topic on the agenda.
 - Write an “anticipated action” for each agenda item.
 - Put a timeline for discussion and action on the agenda.
- Start on time and end on time.
- Have staff submit written reports that are sent with the agenda. Use the staff report time at the meeting to highlight important items in the report and/or ask for feedback and decisions.
- Use at least a modified version of Robert’s Rules of Order to keep meeting moving along and on track.
- Make sure the room is comfortable (Temperature, food, and drinks).
- Write up draft minutes and distribute them to board members as soon as possible after the meeting.

Responsibilities of Individual Board Members

- Come prepared and read board packet before the meeting.
- Arrive on time.
- Respect fellow board members and staff, their opinions, and the decisions of the board.
- Represent the board decisions and positions even when they are not the individual’s board member’s position.

Responsibilities of Board Chair

- Keep the meeting on schedule. Ask permission to extend discussions.
- Manage side discussions and help board stay focused.
- Encourage “dumb” questions, respectful dissent, and authentic disagreements.
- Recap each agenda item and the resulting action.
- Make sure each person says at least one thing at every board meeting.
- Don’t be afraid to be creative!

Resources

SWCD Program Contacts:

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A Good Board Will:

- Have all members contributing
- Have trust among all
- Embrace conflict
- Have immediate resolution
- Be accountable
- Question practices
- Understand the financials
- Read and research topics before the meeting

A Good Board Member Will:

- Quiet all cell phones and refrain from using personal electronic devices during the meeting
- Be conscious of body language and non-verbal responses. Body language can be just as disrespectful as words.
- Keep an open mind and focus on the facts. Do not attack other board members or staff.
- Be respectful of differences and seek to reach a consensus.
- Listen and respect others while they speak.
- Participate in discussions respectfully and in a constructive manner.

A Good Chair Will:

- Be interested and enthusiastic
- Set ground rules for the meeting
- Ask open-ended questions
- Listen carefully to each person
- Avoid stating that a person is wrong
- Clarify assumptions
- Summarize the discussion
- End with a list of action items
- Ask for feedback