

Chapter 2: Board Organization

Here, you will learn:

- ✓ Characteristics of a good library board
- ✓ Content of library bylaws
- ✓ Duties of board officers
- ✓ Responsibilities of the Library Director, Trustees and Friends

Characteristics of a Good Library Board

Good library boards everywhere have characteristics which identify their operations as "professional":

- Trustees know what is expected of them in time, attendance, support and work to fulfill the job description.
- Trustees accept that a board acts as a unit and that differences of opinion will be worked out in amicable discussion and final decisions.
- The board will have a structure of its own, with bylaws, written policies and procedures to cover all operations of the library.
- The board will meet often and regularly with the expectation that individual absences will be justified.
- The board meeting will be open to the public and abide by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Trustees will look to the chair to run the meeting and move the agenda along. However it is the responsibility of all board members to assure efficient and productive meetings. Most boards have adopted Robert's Rules of Order procedures for conducting board meetings.

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- Meetings will be conducted with dignity and each trustee will be treated fairly.
- The library director will be encouraged to participate, but does not vote.

Bylaws

The Connecticut General Statutes, Chap. 190, Sec.11-21 empowers public library boards to adopt bylaws for their own governance. This is done in writing and by formally adopting and revising the bylaws at a regular meeting of the board.

Every library board should have its own written set of bylaws: the framework, rules, and regulations covering the meetings and operation of the board. Bylaws should be drafted and revised as needed so as not to conflict with any local, state or federal laws or regulations. Be aware that some libraries do not have bylaws that are specific to the library; instead, they use the laws laid out in their municipal charter, act of special legislation, or original municipal articles of incorporation. Each trustee should have their own copy of all the bylaws and rules which govern their library. It is each trustee's responsibility to read and familiarize him/herself with the library's governing documents.

Bylaws may include:

- Name of the organization
- Purpose and objective
- Constituency served
- Method of board and officer selection, duties, appointments and term
- Time, place and responsibility for regular meeting
- Attendance requirements
- Method for calling special meetings
- What constitutes a quorum

- Appointment and duties of standing committees. Standing committees may include:
 - Executive Committee
 - Budget and finance
 - Personnel
 - Library development and planning
 - Policy
 - Legislative
 - Fundraising
 - Building
- Provision for special committees
- Required reports and yearly timetables
- Provision for amending the bylaws
- Provision that any motion dealing with policy or regulation must be continued over for final decision at a subsequent meeting
- Provision for filling vacancies
- Removal/replacement of trustees
- Provision for recourse to Robert's Rules of Order, revised edition for procedural matters not covered in the bylaws

Duties of Officers

All boards of trustees recognize the need for officers with clearly defined duties and powers for each office, all in writing and well understood by everyone. Board position descriptions can and should be designed to meet the specific needs of the individual library. Following are some sample position descriptions. Boards of trustees traditionally elect the following officers:

Chairperson/ President

- Keeps the board operating effectively.
- Works closely and cooperatively with the library director.
- Serves as diplomatic troubleshooter to identify potential problems and issues which require advance board study and action.
- Never loses sight of the fact that the chairperson is only one member of the board, not empowered alone to set policy for the board or the library.
- Graciously walks a delicate line between front stage and back stage, doing and delegating, silent and speaking, pushing and pulling, persisting and praising, listening and leading.
- Carrying all the workload for the board is not necessarily the mark of a good chairperson. To ensure that all board members contribute and are given due credit is a greater challenge and accomplishment.
- Acts as the chief spokesperson representing the board both orally and in correspondence.
- Plans and presides over board meetings.
 - Sets agenda in consultation with director and other board members.
 - Conducts efficient and productive meetings that move the board toward its goals. Keeps the discussion focused on the major action issues to be considered, or a rambling, semi-social session.
- Appoints committees for specific assignments.
 - Considers committee chairs with the commitment and ability to lead a committee to reach the board's assigned objective within the assigned time.
 - Monitors the progress of the committee and provides help if needed, yet is careful not to dominate. Some board chairpersons serve as ex-officio members of all committees except the nominating committee.
- Some boards limit the chairperson's term of office to one year, to facilitate rotation of leadership responsibilities. This creates a stronger board and lessens the potential for one person to dominate the board.

Vice Chairperson/Vice President

- The commitment and leadership abilities of the person the board elects as vice chairperson should be similar to those of a chairperson.
- The vice chairperson automatically becomes the chairperson in the event of resignation or death unless the bylaws provide otherwise.
- Presides in the absence of the chairperson or whenever the chairperson temporarily vacates the position.
- In the absence of the chairperson, the vice chairperson is not an ex-officio member of any committee and cannot fill vacancies unless specified in the bylaws.

Secretary

It is important for the secretary to have a general knowledge of the board's statutory authority, bylaws and operating policies as well as parliamentary procedure. The secretary should understand that minutes of a public body must be a clear, concise, factual record for possible later reference or legal evidence showing what specific action was taken, why it was taken, when and by whom. The secretary:

- Issues and posts for public notice advance agendas of meetings following specific legal requirements for open meetings.
- Prepares the official board minutes and keeps on public file.
- Keeps members' attendance record.
- Presides at meetings in absence of chairperson and vice chairperson until election of a chair pro tem.
- Handles all official correspondence on behalf of the board.

Treasurer

- Understands financial accounting.
- Serves as chairperson of the board finance committee.
- Works with the library director to insure that appropriate financial reports are made available to the board on a timely basis.
- Assists the library director in preparing the annual budget and presenting the budget to the board for approval.
- Reviews the annual audit and answers board members' questions about the audit.

The treasurer's role varies with the size of the library. In small libraries, the treasurer may keep the books, deposit funds, prepare reports and even write checks or vouchers. In larger libraries, the treasurer is legal officer named to assure that financial operations are being properly handled. Bylaws should outline the specific job.

Meetings

Here's a brief outline for conducting efficient and lawful board meetings. All members of the board should be informed and active participants in the meetings.

- Call the meeting to order. A library board meeting should start and end on time. A board meeting is a business meeting that should be conducted in a businesslike manner.
- Take attendance. Note in the minutes those present and absent. The attendance record is important proof that your meeting had a quorum present to conduct official business. Note in the minutes late arrivals. It encourages on-time attendance!
- Recognize visitors. Introduce non-board guests--such as staff members or reporters. The board should know who is in attendance.
- Approve the agenda. The agenda is the board's plan for the meeting and must be formally accepted. Under Freedom of Information (FOI) requirements, the agenda for all regular meetings must be available at least 24 hours before the meeting. New business not on the agenda may be considered and acted on only on a 2/3 vote of the members. For further information please see <http://www.ct.gov/foi/>

- Approve the minutes of the last meeting. Minutes are the official record of board actions. Scrutinize them carefully before the meeting and correct errors before voting to approve them. Under FOI, the minutes must be made available to the public within 7 days of the meeting. Since the minutes are not formally approved until the next meeting, they may be marked "draft." The votes of each member on any issue must be put in writing and made available to the public with 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays.
- Hear Treasurer's financial report. The financial report should come early on the agenda and not include long discussion about where to find new revenues. This issue should be considered by the fundraising committee which reports regularly to the board. Questions about bills should be directed to the administrator prior to the board meeting unless it is a question the entire board needs to consider.
- Hear Library Director's report. The library director's report should be for information purposes only. Issues the library director wishes the board to act on should be included under the "New Business" section of the agenda.
- Hear Committee reports.
- Consider Old Business. There may be a few items such as motions tabled or actions not completed at the end of the previous meeting. These may have been intentionally carried over to allow for consideration. For instance, some policies need careful consideration and should be discussed once, then brought back for a decision. All items must be properly noticed on the agenda.
- Consider New Business. Any items under New Business should be noticed on the agenda prior to the meeting, especially ones requiring actions.
- Listen to audience input. If you have visitors attending your meeting, allow them a time to speak for a specified time.
- Make announcements. Announce future board meetings and activities.
- Adjourn the meeting. After your board business is finished it is usual for the chair to ask for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Working Together: Library Directors, Boards of Trustees and Friends

Working Together: Roles and Responsibilities Guidelines

Responsibilities of	Library Director	Trustee	Friend
General Administrative	Administer daily operation of the library including personnel, collection development, fiscal, physical plant and programmatic functions. Act as advisor to the board and provide support to the Friends and community groups.	Recruit and employ a qualified library director; maintain an ongoing performance appraisal process for the director in accordance with town charter.	Support quality library service in the community through fund raising, volunteerism and serving as advocates for the library.
Policy	Apprise board of need for new policies, as well as policy revisions. Implement the policies of the library as adopted by the library board.	Identify and adopt written policies to govern the operation and program of the library.	Support the policies of the library as adopted by the library board.
Planning	Coordinate and implement a strategic plan with board, friends, staff and community.	Ensure that the library has a strategic plan with implementation and evaluation components.	Provide input into the library's strategic plan and support its implementation.
Fiscal	Prepare an annual budget for the library in accordance with town charter.	Seek adequate funds to carry out library operations; Assist in the preparation and presentation of the annual budget in accordance with town charter.	Conduct fund raising to support the library's mission and plans.
Advocacy	Promote the mission of the library within the community. Educate the board, Friends and community regarding local, state and federal issues which impact the library.	Promote the mission of the library within the community. Advocate for the library to legislators.	Promote the mission of the library within the community. Advocate for the library to legislators.
Meetings	Participate in board and Friends meetings and ensure that there is a liaison from the board to the Friends and vice versa.	Participate in all board meetings. Appoint a liaison to the Friends board and become a member of the Friends.	Maintain a liaison to the board of trustees.
Networking	Encourage board and Friends to join state and national professional organizations and make them aware of educational opportunities.	Join the Association of Connecticut Library Boards as a resource for policies, operations and advocacy for libraries.	Join the Friends of Connecticut Libraries as a resource to better support the library.



Association of Connecticut Library Boards



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