

Chapter 2:

Board Organization

This chapter covers:

- ✓ Characteristics of a good library board
- ✓ Content of library by-laws
- ✓ Duties of board officers
- ✓ Responsibilities of the library director, trustees and Friends

Characteristics of a Good Library Board

Good library boards everywhere have characteristics that 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 has a structure of its own with by-laws, written policies and procedures covering all operations of the library.
- The board meets often and regularly with the expectation that individual absences will be justified.
- The board meeting is open to the public and abides by the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).
- Trustees look to the chair to run the meeting and move the agenda along. However, it is the responsibility of all board members to ensure efficient and productive meetings. Most boards have adopted Robert's Rules of Order procedures for conducting board meetings.
- Meetings are conducted with dignity and each trustee is treated fairly.

- The library director is encouraged to participate but does not vote.

By-laws

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

Every library board should have its own written set of by-laws that provide the framework, rules and regulations covering its meetings and operation. By-laws should be drafted and revised as needed so as not to conflict with any local, state or federal laws or regulations. Some libraries do not have by-laws specific to the library; instead, they use those laid out in their municipal charter, act of special legislation or original municipal articles of incorporation. All trustees should have their own copies of all by-laws and rules governing their library. It is each trustee's responsibility to read and become familiar with the library's governing documents.

By-laws 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 meetings
- Attendance requirements
- Method for calling special meetings
- Definition of a quorum
- Appointment and duties of standing committees which may include:
 - Executive
 - 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 by-laws
- 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 by-laws

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 a diplomatic troubleshooter to identify potential problems and issues that require advance board study and action
- Remembers that the chairperson is only one member of the board and is not empowered alone to set policy for the board or the library
- Walks a delicate line between front and back stage, doing and delegating, remaining silent and speaking, pushing and pulling, persisting and praising, listening and leading
- Ensures that all board members contribute and are given due credit in carrying the workload for the board
- Acts as the chief spokesperson representing the board both orally and in correspondence
- Plans and presides over board meetings
 - Sets agenda in consultation with the library 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
- Appoints committees for specific assignments
 - Chooses committee chairs with the commitment and ability to reach the board's assigned objective within the assigned time
 - Monitors the progress of committees and provides help if needed without dominating
 - May 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 the chairperson's resignation or death unless the by-laws provide otherwise.
- The vice chairperson 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 by-laws.

Secretary

It is important for the secretary to have a general knowledge of the board's statutory authority, by-laws 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 them on public file
- Keeps members' attendance record
 - Presides at meetings in the absence of the chairperson and vice chairperson until the election of a chair pro tem

- Handles all official correspondence on behalf of the board

Treasurer

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 write checks or vouchers. In larger libraries, the treasurer is the legal officer named to assure that financial operations are being properly handled. Bylaws should outline the specific job. The treasurer:

- Understands financial accounting
- Serves as chairperson of the board finance committee
- Works with the library director to ensure 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

Meetings

What follows is a brief outline for conducting efficient and lawful board meetings. All members of the board should be informed and active participants in the meetings.

- The meeting is called 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.
 - Attendance is taken. Those present and absent are noted in the minutes. The attendance record is important proof that the meeting had a quorum present to conduct official business. Late arrivals are noted in the minutes to encourage on-time attendance.
 - Visitors are recognized. Guests such as staff members and reporters are introduced. The board should know who is in attendance.
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- The agenda is approved. It is the board's plan for the meeting and must be formally accepted. Under Freedom of Information (FOI) requirements, the

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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 with a 2/3 vote of the members. Further information is available at <http://www.ct.gov/foi/>

- The minutes of the last meeting are approved. Minutes are the official record of board actions. They should be scrutinized carefully before the meeting and errors corrected before voting to approve them. Under FOIA, the minutes must be made available to the public within seven days of the meeting. Since the minutes are not formally approved until the next meeting, they may be marked “draft.” The vote of each member on any issue must be put in writing and made available to the public within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays.
- The treasurer's financial report is heard. This should come early on the agenda and should not include 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 the entire board needs to consider a question.
- The library director's report is heard, for information purposes only. Issues that the library director wishes the board to act on should be included under the New Business section of the agenda.
- Committee reports are heard.
- Old Business is considered. There may be items such as motions tabled or actions not completed at 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 and then brought back for a decision. All items must be properly noted on the agenda.
- New Business is considered. Any items under New Business should be noted on the agenda prior to the meeting, especially any requiring action.
 - Audience input is heard. Visitors attending the meeting should be allowed to speak for a specified time.
 - Announcements are heard, such as those for future board meetings and activities.
 - The meeting is adjourned. After board business is finished, the chair asks for a motion to adjourn.

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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