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Trustee Tale

Trustee Tale is a joint project of the Manitowoc Calumet Library System, Nicolet Federated Library System, Outagamie Waupaca Library System, Winnefox Library System and Wisconsin Valley Library System.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for future articles, contact your system director.



Tips for Effective Board Meetings

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Are your monthly board meetings efficient and effective? [Trustee Essential 4: Effective Board Meetings and Trustee Participation](#) covers the basics of running library board meetings and provides useful samples of an agenda and annual calendar. Here are some more tips to help you spend time wisely and accomplish as much as possible.

Always let the Director or Board President know ahead of time if you cannot attend a meeting. If the number of trustees expected is nearing the threshold for a quorum, the Director or Board President can send a message to the group letting them know that any unexpected absences could jeopardize the quorum and prevent the board from conducting necessary business that month.

Review the agenda and background information ahead of time. This allows you to spend meeting time on informed discussion and decision making.



Many years ago, former OWLS director, Rick Krumwiede, instituted a practice that we still follow. In addition to the agenda, each meeting packet includes a document called “agenda notes” which provides additional information about all non-recurring agenda items in the following format:

Agenda item 6: *Approve table of organization*

Background:

At their November 8 meeting, the personnel committee voted to recommend the revised table of organization for approval.

Action:

The board may take action to approve the revised TO.

Exhibit:

The current and recommended TOs are included in the packet.

<https://owlsweb.org/trustee-tale/>

The objective is to provide enough information for all board members to have a basic understanding of the agenda item and what action, if any, is required. Often, a trustee will use the language in the “Action” line as the wording for a motion.

Save time and effort for the Board Secretary by developing a minutes form. The OWLS minutes form lists all current board members at the top, so the Secretary can simply check or circle names as they call roll. Our first few motions are almost always the same – approve agenda, minutes, and financials – so those motions are typed in with blank spaces to write in who made the motion and seconded.

When the agenda is packed, and you want to keep the meeting length reasonable or you have a firm end time, consider appointing a timekeeper for the meeting. Estimate how much time you need to spend on each topic and have the timekeeper alert the Board President when a discussion needs to wrap up. You may decide that the discussion needs to continue, and then you can make a deliberate choice about which agenda items to reschedule for the next meeting.

Set aside time at each meeting for trustee education. One way to do this is to assign one chapter of Trustee Essentials to be read before each meeting and discussed at the meeting. If you cover nine chapters per year, you will have reviewed all 27 in the space of a 3-year trustee term. When possible, choose the chapter most relevant to the following month’s business. So, if you plan to do the Director’s performance evaluation in November, October is a great time to review [Trustee Essential 6: Evaluating the Director](#).

Similarly, assign one library policy to be read before each meeting and discussed at the meeting. By reviewing them one at a time on a regular basis, you can ensure that all trustees are familiar with the library’s policies and that policies are kept up to date.

Many library trustees also serve on other boards and community groups, and you have likely attended many well-run meetings, and perhaps a few of the other kind. Don’t be shy about sharing suggestions to make your library board meetings better.