**Typical Kansas Library Board Meeting**

**Questions to Consider**

**If the library board of a city has seven members, why are five members required for quorum?**

* Because the Mayor is also a member of the board even if she never attends. A quorum is half the number of board members, plus one (in this case, 3.5 rounds up to 4, plus 1 = 5).
* Quorum numbers are based on the type of library (city, township, district) and any special rules your board may have.
* If you have questions about your board’s quorum number, contact NEKLS.

**How does the president keep the meeting moving along without letting board members or the public derail business topics with side issues and gossip?**

* The president and the director create the agenda together well before the meeting.
* The president allows board members as well as the director to make reasonable, last-minute agenda changes (that must be voted on by the board members present).
* The president follows the agenda to keep the meeting on track.

**How does the president keep the meeting to a manageable length so the time of board members is not wasted?**

* Board packets! All necessary information, including but not limited to meeting minutes, financial reports and director’s report, is sent out to board members several days to a week before the meeting.
* Board members are responsible for reading the packet of materials and being ready to discuss and vote on it when they get to the meeting. No one reads minutes or reports aloud during meeting time.

**Can the president vote in a library board meeting?**

* Yes, the president is a voting member of the board.
* The library director is not eligible to vote in board meetings.

**How can the board ensure that the library doesn’t go over budget if the director is allowed to spend money without asking the board first?**

* Most libraries permit the director to spend money on approved categories of items without prior approval, including regular expenses such as utilities and necessities such as toilet paper and books. (Note that the board does not pre-approve book or movie titles to be ordered—library staff is responsible for title selection and acquisition.)
* An upper spending limit can be set and a list of bills must be presented at the next board meeting for board oversight.
* The treasurer and the director present a financial report each month that shows expenses in the current month, expenses for the year to date, and the comparison of each line item with the budgeted amount in that line.

**When there are contentious issues to be discussed at a board meeting, when can the board speak privately in executive session?**

* Library board meetings, by definition, are open to the public.
* Only a few reasons can be used for entering executive session. These are listed in K.S.A. 75-4319. The reasons for executive sessions that are most likely to pertain to library boards are: (1) personnel matters of nonelected personnel; (2) consultation with an attorney for the board which would be privileged in the attorney-client relationship; (3) preliminary discussions relating to the acquisition of real estate.
* Remember that for the board to enter executive session, there must be a motion (with second and majority vote of the board) that states the reason for the executive session, AND, the president must state the length of the executive session to be taken (e.g. “executive session to discuss personnel matters for 20 minutes.”)
* If the executive session takes longer than announced, the board must come out of executive session at the time previously stated and vote to re-enter executive session again for a stated time and reason.
* No votes may be taken during executive session.

**We don’t have good policies that can guide the board and staff in decision-making. How can we improve our policies?**

* For evaluation of individual policy wording, you can contact regional system staff for advice. However, the systems don’t have the staffing available to evaluate the entire policy manual for every library.
* There are many model library policies available on the internet that can provide a good starting point. The regional systems offer frequent policy workshops that provide guidance for library staff and trustees.
* There is no substitute for library boards and directors taking regular time during board meetings to discuss policies and to develop good policies for their local library.
* Policies can only work if all staff and trustees are familiar with them and follow them.

**What should individual library board members do if the board votes for something that he or she doesn’t agree with? What if the board doesn’t vote for something that an individual board member or two voted for?**

* All decisions of the board are binding on all board members.
* Whether or not an individual board member voted for or against a particular board action, all board members must support the board’s decision to library staff and in the community.
* Violating this principle may make individual board members subject to lawsuit/liability. As long as the board operates as a group, individuals are protected.

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