The Care and Feeding of a School Board

Q: What training opportunities are available for new board members, board chair and/or the board as a whole?
A: Summer Board Conference; Annual OSBA Convention; new board member orientation packet created by the district; review board member roles; mentors for new board members; annual board retreat with outside facilitator; periodic review of policies, especially section AB; use a small portion of each board meeting to read/discuss a pertinent article; on-site OSBA trainings like Roles and Responsibilities; OSBA website has a variety of resources and online training.

Q: How do I encourage them to take advantage of these opportunities?
A: Enlist help from superintendent and board chair to educate and prod; attend these events and report back to the board about their benefits; encourage the board to set aside money for board professional development during the budget process.

Q: How detailed should minutes be?
A: Reporting actions taken is the single most important element of the final minutes; minutes should identify the item of business, highlights of discussions resulting in an action, and the exact disposition of the item; no need to type word-for-word, except to reflect motions or changes to policy or bylaws and to record a request made or statement; reflect the official summary of what the board did, and not what each member said or did.

Q: What are the best practices for policy updates?
A: Review at agenda planning meeting and work sessions as needed; integrate regular policy review and updates year round as OSBA policy updates are published; have a desk audit and/or a full audit every 5-7 years.

Q: Do we have to keep a paper copy of our entire policy book at each school?
A: No physical copy is required; electronic copy centrally located, such as your website, meets legal requirements.

Q: How do you get board members to review packets?
A: Involve board chair and superintendent; use/develop a Board Operating Agreement (BOA); bribe them with chocolate.

Q: Tips for communicating with board members that don't use technology?
A: Technology training; cheat sheet and when all else fails – bribe them with chocolate. : - )
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Q: How to improve Board/Staff/Community Communication?
A: Ensure all parties are aware of their roles (*outside training); use/develop a Board Operating Agreement (BOA); make agenda and materials available online.

Q: How do I assist the board in their conversations with public during meetings, engaging public during discussion of motion or vice versa?
A: Training to defer conversation after the meeting; training the board on Parliamentary Procedures; use/develop a Board Operating Agreement (BOA); board develops written policies/procedures and sticks to them; publish on back of agenda.

Q: How do we interject if we see something going wrong?
A: Pass a note; ask chair/superintendent how they prefer you to interject into the conversation; physically sit next to the chair/superintendent.

Q: What to do about board members with personal agenda, micromanagers or who don’t like each other?
A: OSBA Roles and Responsibility training about the roles on the board; outside facilitator to help with difficult conversations; develop a Board Operating Agreement (BOA) and review it periodically; annual retreat.

Q: How do you get the board to read/respond to communications?
A: Work session to establish standard operating procedures; an explanation of what is included in the agenda packet, note what is of extra importance; facilitation training.

Q: How do you get your board to follow policy/procedure?
A: Cite examples of districts that haven’t followed procedure and the outcome; note that you are protecting their best interest; regular review of policies especially section AB.

Q: Who writes a resolution? Are they done on the spot?
A: Resolutions are just fancy, written motions that are created ahead of time; a general format available on the OSBA website.

Q: How do we handle social media with board members?
A: Create Board Operating Agreements (BOA); OSBA Roles and Responsibilities workshop; social media language in policy; clearly identify personal opinions; official social media site for district.