

trustee tale

Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

Monthly Library Board Meetings

By Mark Arend, Assistant Director
Winnefox Library System

From time to time we will hear from a director or trustee that their board only meets bi-monthly or even quarterly. The usual reason given is that they don't have that much business to transact and that meeting more frequently is a waste of time.

In order to properly fulfill the statutory requirement for the board to "supervise the administration of the public library" library boards should meet monthly. Here are a few reasons why:

1. You may be skipping important tasks.

Trustee Essential 4: Effective Board Meetings and Trustee Participation (available online at <http://dpi.state.wi.us/pld/handbook.html>) gives a sample annual calendar that lists board activities for every month. Here are just a few of the board's duties:

- a. Regularly review library policies
- b. Keep informed of the library's activities
- c. Annually review the director's performance
- d. Board education (*Trustee Essentials* is an excellent trustee education tool)
- e. Long range and strategic planning

2. Meeting less often may result in overly-packed agendas at the meetings you have.

There may not be time or inclination to devote as much time to some issues as is needed.

3. Less frequent meetings may lead to rushed decision making.

It's sometimes a good practice, especially with important or complex issues, to introduce an issue and discuss it but lay the decision over until the next meeting. This lets trustees think the issue through and can lead to better decisions. Less frequent meetings makes this more difficult.

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4. **Monthly meetings help develop a good working relationship among trustees and with the director.**
5. **Problems or concerns can be addressed in a timely manner.**
6. **Statutes require that the board approves all library expenditures before they are paid** *(with a few exceptions)*. This is difficult if you do not meet monthly.

Boards that meet less frequently sometimes excuse this with the explanation that they have special meetings as needed. It is probably easier on most people's personal schedules to have a regular monthly meeting than to have less frequent regular meetings and irregularly-scheduled special meetings.

Selecting new Library Trustees: Using an Application Form

*by Mark Arend, Assistant Director
Winnefox Library System*

Some libraries, or their parent municipality, ask people interested in being on the library board to fill out an application form. These can be useful in several ways:

- The municipality can build up a pool of interested persons so vacancies on the board can be filled quickly without having to search for candidates.
- If there are several candidates to choose from, a standardized form can help the appointing authority to pick the top choice.
- When a new trustee is appointed you will have all their contact information in one place on a standard form.
- Attaching a schedule of board meetings and a trustee "job description"—an outline of the trustees' duties—can help weed out those who may be interested but are unable or unwilling to fulfill the trustees' responsibilities.

Applicants can be asked to answer questions in several different areas:

- **Basic personal information**
Name, address, phone, email, number of years in the community.
- **Experience and skills they would bring to the board**
Community involvement, education, work experience, hobbies and other interests.
- **Their view of the role of the library in the community**
- **Other questions**
You may wish to ask for references, leave a space for the prospective trustee to write anything they think relevant, or ask if they are willing and able to attend the board's regular meetings.

Your form should probably include a notice stating that the application forms are public records and available for citizen inspection.



2012 Wisconsin Library Association Conference

By Mark Arend, Assistant Director
Winnefox Library System

The 2012 WLA Conference will be held at the LaCrosse Center and Radisson Hotel on 24 – 26 October. As usual there are programs of interest to trustees. Some highlights include:

- **Best Use of Donor Dollars**
What are the options available to insure the best use of these funds for the long term future of your library.
- **Creating an Engaging Library: Marketing from the Ground Up**
Join UW-Green Bay librarians as they discuss how their library built a comprehensive marketing plan, utilized the talent of students, experts, partnered with stakeholders and designed popular events for its patrons.
- **On the Hill & Under the Dome — What the State Government is Doing To (and For) My Library**
DPI staff and members of the LD&L Committee will report progress on the legislative review of library system law and other library legislative hopes and dreams. What's happening, and what we should do about it, will be discussed.
- **Project Compass and Job Creation Programs**
An overview of the Project Compass National Convening will be shared, and information relevant to local application will be highlighted. Successes and disasters will be shared.
- **Open Meetings Laws**
The subject of Wisconsin's Open Meeting Laws and how they relate to libraries and library systems will be addressed.
- **Trustee Orientation**
With a few basic principles to know and understand new trustees can hit the ground running, be effective early, and set the tone for continuous learning of all the information he/she needs to know to represent their library or system in an efficient manner.

You can find a conference schedule and more information at <http://wla.wisconsinlibraries.org/events-conferences/annual-conference>

FAQ

How detailed do minutes of a closed session need to be?

Governmental bodies in Wisconsin are required to create and preserve a record of all motions and roll-call votes at its meetings, and this is most typically done with meeting minutes. However, as long as the body creates and preserves a record of all motions and roll-call votes, it is not required to take more formal or detailed minutes on other aspects of the meeting. This is true for both open and closed meetings.

The Office of the Attorney General recommends that governmental bodies vote in open session, unless the vote is clearly an integral part of deliberations authorized by statute to be conducted in closed session. If no votes are held in closed session, then there are no minutes to worry about. Typically, bodies vote to go into closed session, discuss their issues, reconvene in open session, and vote on a motion based on the discussion in closed session.

The *WI Open Meetings Law Compliance Guide* (<http://bit.ly/I0UfXp>) is helpful with this issue. Specifically, look at “Ballots, votes, and records, including meeting minutes” near the bottom of page 16 and “Voting in An Authorized Closed Session” at the bottom of page 22.



2012 WLA CONFERENCE

Mark your calendars for the 2012 Wisconsin Library Association annual conference:

October 23-26, 2012

LaCrosse Center and Radisson Hotel - LaCrosse

Information on the Wisconsin Library Association website:
<http://wla.wisconsinlibraries.org/events-conferences/annual-conference>

Have questions?

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for future articles, send them to:

If you have questions, comments or suggestions

home system.

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