

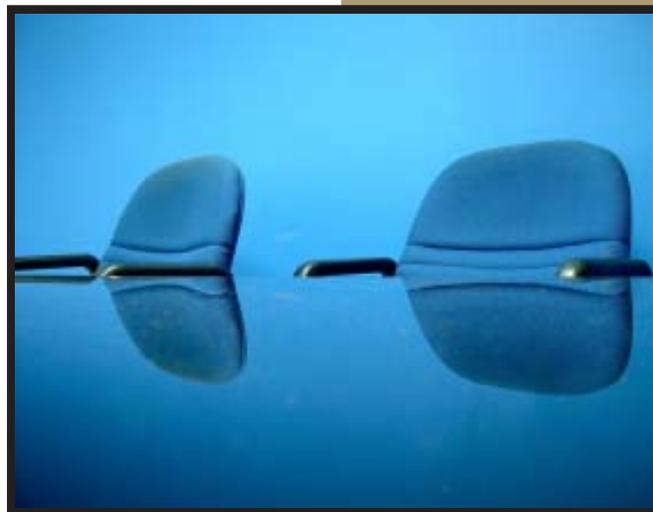
# trustee tale

## Newsletter for Public Library Trustees

### Top Ten Action List for Library Trustees

#### Ten Things Every Library Trustee Should Do:

- #10 Give a speech about your library.**  
Rotary Clubs, PTA,s and other groups are always looking for programs and the world won't know what your library has to offer unless you tell them.
- #9 Visit another library and steal a good idea.**
- #8 Don't ever stop learning.** It's hard enough to keep up even when you work at it. Seek out learning opportunities which will help make you a better trustee.
- #7 Be ACTIVE!** Being a trustee means more than just going to the board meetings every month. Write a letter to a governor about state aid. Take the editor of your local paper to lunch.
- #6 Spend your money wisely.** Don't hoard it. Your funding bodies didn't give you tax money so that you could put it in the bank. They are buying service from you.
- #5 Never forget that it's the public's library, not the board's or the staff's.** On the other hand, remember that the Library Board governs the library, not the town board and not the Friends of the Library.
- #4 Pay your staff a decent wage.** They work hard, sometimes in less than ideal conditions. Generally, library pay rates are below standards, even for the local economy.
- #3 Have a plan for your library.** If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter which road you take. But it can be a long trip with an unsatisfactory ending.
- #2 Embrace change.** Welcome it. Create it. Accept it. Make it work for the library.
- #1 Have FUN!** As trustee of a library, you should love what you're doing, and it should be obvious to others.



# Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law

By Mark Arend

The Wisconsin Open Meetings law has been getting a lot of news time in the past year, or more specifically, violations of the law have. As public bodies, library boards and library board committees have very specific rules they need to follow for notice and conduct of all meetings. In a nutshell, here are the major provisions of the law:

**Meeting Notice:** You must give notice of each meeting to:

1. the public
2. any members of the news media who have submitted a written request for notice and
3. the official newspaper, or if none exists, to a news medium likely to give notice in the area.

In most cases notice must be given at least 24 hours before the meeting, however statute provides that in cases where “for good cause such notice is impossible or impractical” a shorter notice of at least 2 hours may be given. Notice to “the public” generally consists of posting your meeting notice in several places in the community. Note that there is no requirement that the newspaper publish the notice, but notice must be sent them. You are not required to pay to have meeting notices published by the newspaper.

The notice must give the date, time, and place of the meeting. It also has to spell out the “subject matter” of the meeting; in other words, what you are going to discuss.

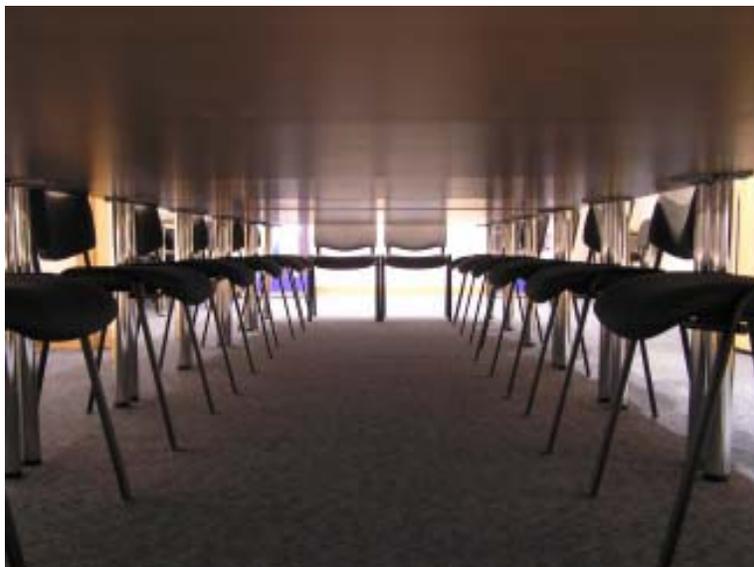
**Meeting Location:** Statute states that the meeting must be held in a place “reasonably accessible to members of the public and open to all citizens”.

**Meeting Minutes:** At a minimum, meeting minutes must indicate who was present, all motions that were made and who moved and seconded them, and the result of any votes taken. If someone arrives late or leaves early that should be reflected in the minutes. If a vote is not unanimous, the minutes should record how each member voted. Beyond the required minimum, it's up to the Board to decide how detailed they want their minutes to be.

For more information on keeping minutes check out Greta's article in this issue and the article in the Spring 2003 issue of *Trustee Tales* at <http://www.winnefox.org/trusteetale/welcome.html>

For more information on the Open Meetings Law check out these sites:

- ✓ <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dltcl/pld/openmeetings.html>
- ✓ <http://www.lwm-info.org/legal/faq/faq10.html>
- ✓ <http://www.doj.state.wi.us/dls/spar.asp>



# Recognizing the Importance of Your Board Minutes

By Greta Thompson

In his article on Open Meetings in this issue Mark mentions the required elements of Library Board minutes and refers to an article in the Spring 2003 Trustee Tale, which gives an overview of general procedures regarding minutes. Neither requirements nor procedures are identical with good practice, however. To decide what your minutes should contain, you need to begin with questions that ask why we need minutes and who reads them.

First and foremost, minutes are the official record of what your library is and has done. They are the primary resource for a new director, trustee, staff member, municipal official, or patron interested in the library's history, finances, policies, controversies, relationships and alliances, and—more nebulously, but importantly—general personality.

Is the library confident and prosperous, enjoying good relationships with other government agencies and with the community? Does the library have a history of losing battles with the municipal board? Is the board focusing on details and ignoring major issues? Has it a consistent history of working to understand and meet the changing needs of the community or does its history reflect an institution committed to traditional values and services?

The minutes are a key resource for the Board itself when it's refreshing its memory on whether or how the library has addressed a particular issue in the past. What was done may help determine whether or what needs to be done now.

The minutes are also a major resource for explaining and defending library actions when the library is challenged. For example, "The minutes demonstrate that we have a policy, approved on this date, reviewed, revised, and affirmed on these dates, of making reasonable accommodations for patrons [or employees] with special needs. Specifically, the Board has approved expenditures for A, B, and C; authorized this and this; and recommended X and Y, even though it hasn't yet received funding for those things."



In short, the people likely to look at your minutes are those who come to them with questions and little or no background. They may not be disposed to think well of the library. They may be in a hurry to find the information they need.

Considering these uses, it is immediately evident that the minutes need to be

- ♦ *Accurate*
- ♦ *Clear*
- ♦ *Specific*
- ♦ *Complete*

We may need to know whether a topic was discussed but not acted upon; exactly how a motion was stated, whether it passed unanimously or in a close vote, and whether the action occurred, was successful in addressing the issue, or was later amended. We need to know the number of a check that was approved, the name of the official appointing Abigail Jones on September 10 to complete the term of Joe Smith, who resigned on June 30; and did the Village Board revoke the residency requirement before or after we hired

Jane Doe? Leaving these and a host of other items ambiguous may lead to time-consuming debates, frustration, or even a lawsuit.

By now you're probably thinking, okay, and just who has the time and skills to do all this? It's not enough that we have to deal with the budget and policies and not enough staff, now we have to write a mini-masterpiece every month. I feel your pain. Really. Next time I'll try to suggest some practical tips to make the job manageable.

# Changes in new Certification Manual

By Greta Thompson

NOTE: If you think that the director of your library is affected by the changes described below or if you're not sure about your director's certification, please discuss it at a board meeting to be sure you understand his/her status. You may also contact your system validators ([Arend@winnefox.org](mailto:Arend@winnefox.org) or [greta@mail.owls.lib.wi.us](mailto:greta@mail.owls.lib.wi.us)) or Peg Branson at the Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning ([peg.branson@dpi.state.wi.us](mailto:peg.branson@dpi.state.wi.us)) if you have questions or concerns. The director of every public library system must be appropriately certified.

Public librarians recently received copies of a revised *Certification Manual* from the Division for Libraries, Technology, and Community Learning.

This one has a blue and cream cover and is dated November 2004. It replaces all previous versions of the *Manual*.

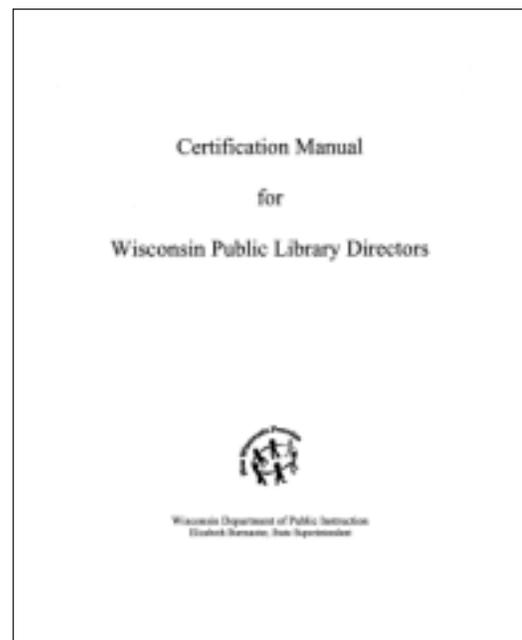
The new *Manual* incorporates changes in the *Wisconsin Administrative Code*:

- ◆ Temporary Grade II and III certification is available for up to four years for otherwise qualified individuals to complete the four library courses needed for regular Grade II and Grade III certification. The required courses include: public library administration, selection of library materials, organization of library materials, and provision of reference and information services. Applicants must complete the public library administration course by the end of the first year, at least one of the other courses by the end of the third year, and the remaining courses by the end of the fourth year.
- ◆ The Division has determined that the basic library management course offered by UW-Madison, School of Library and Information Studies, Continuing Education Services, may be taken as an equivalent for the required public library administration course for grades II and III certification.

Individuals with temporary or initial Grade III certification as of November 1, 2004, must comply with the rules in effect at the time they were granted those certificates. This means they must complete a basic library management course within one year and the three additional library courses in the five years prior to their initial recertification.

Individuals with temporary Grade II certification on November 1, 2004, may have up to four years to complete the four library courses.

You can read about these changes and all the requirements for certification in the *Manual*, which is available from your library director, the Division, or online at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dltcl/pld/pdf/certmanual.pdf>.



## Q&A Column

### Q: Can we have term limits for library trustees?

A: The question of term limits for library trustees is decided locally; Chapter 43 is silent on this issue. There are good arguments for and against term limits.

On the pro side:

- ♦ Long tenured trustees may have a better understanding of library issues.

And on the con side:

- ♦ Long tenured trustees can get 'stale'. Having a regular turnover can help bring new ideas and viewpoints to the board.
- ♦ As your community changes a board with many long-term members may no longer represent the community makeup.

You and your municipality will have to decide what's best for you.

—Mark

*If you have more questions contact Mark Arend at Winnefox Library System ([arend@mail.winnefox.org](mailto:arend@mail.winnefox.org) or 920-236-5222) or Greta Thompson at Outagamie Waupaca Library System ([greta@mail.owls.lib.wi.us](mailto:greta@mail.owls.lib.wi.us) or 920-832-6194).*

## TRUSTEE SOAPBOX

*Do you have a question, comment or topic to suggest for a future TrusteeTale? Send an Email to Mark at:*  
[Arend@mail.winnefox.org](mailto:Arend@mail.winnefox.org)

*or phone Greta at  
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