

## Interesting Facts & Anecdotes

from your District Operations and Member Services Committee

November 2014

### Did you know?....

A basic responsibility of the district board is to ensure legal and ethical integrity and to maintain accountability. The board is ultimately responsible to ensure adherence to legal standards and ethical norms.

Another board responsibility is to enhance the district's public standing. The board should clearly articulate the district's mission, goals, and accomplishments to the public in order to garner their support.

High-functioning boards institutionalize a culture of inquiry, mutual respect, and constructive debate leading to shared decision making. They question assumptions; seek sound, objective information; and challenge conclusions and "quick-and-dirty easy-outs" so they will reach solutions based on analysis.

Transparency ensures donors, stakeholders, and the public have access to appropriate and accurate information regarding finances, operations, and results. Transparency also goes inward so every board member has equal access to relevant information when making decisions.

Hiring the right district manager ("chief executive employee") is often the most important decision a board makes. This duty assumes a very clear job description, specific delegations of responsibilities and authorities, and a professional performance evaluation process. The board's role is to ensure the district is well run, while not intruding into the defined and assigned domain of the manager.

Board meetings are for making decisions. To identify what decisions need to be made, agendas should have an "anticipated action" for each item. Examples::

Finance Committee > Report and discussion > No action needed

Policy Issue > Explain need for policy > Establish committee and charge

Budget Committee > Explain proposed budget > Vote

A "Consent Agenda" can save time by quickly handling routine, non-controversial items.

Ideally, the board chair and district manager should function as partners – like being co-captains of a team. While their responsibilities and scope are different, how they relate to each other greatly impacts how well the "team" plays "the game." In order to be successful:

- The relationship between the board chair and the district manager should reflect trust, respect, and a shared vision of where the district is headed and how it should be run.
- Their personalities and management styles should be compatible.
- Each should alert the other of potential problems.
- No secrets are allowed.
- The chair and the entire board must respect that communication to employees should be directed through the manager (or at least with the manager's prior knowledge and concurrence).