

The Caring and Feeding of Boards

“Sometimes our job is to bring the doughnuts....”

Scott R. Koons, AICP, Executive Director
Presenter

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Gainesville, FL



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Outline

- ❑ Know Your Place - *check your ego at the door*
- ❑ Logistics - *but for the want of a ...*
- ❑ Board Relations - *feed their ego without creating a monster*
- ❑ Tactics - *strategies for success*
- ❑ Roles - *get them straight, keep them straight*
- ❑ Communication - *the key to any relationship*



Know Your Place

Check Your Ego at the Door



Know Your Place

Check Your Ego at the Door

- ❑ You are great, **I am nothing**, how can I help you, thank you very much!
- ❑ All good ideas come from your Board; all bad ideas come from you.
- ❑ **Never** put your picture or a message from you in your annual report or newsletter.
- ❑ Do not put your name on your letterhead.



Know Your Place

Check Your Ego at the Door

- ❑ If it is not illegal, immoral or fattening and the Board wants it done - **Do It!**
- ❑ **Do Not** dress better than Board Members.
(Do not wear Armani when J.C. Penney will do.)
- ❑ When you mess up, admit it readily and heartily.



Know Your Place

Check Your Ego at the Door

- ❑ Do Not Engage In Debate With Board members - Period!
- ❑ Your signature needs to be smaller than your Chair's signature.
- ❑ Do not use Board Members' first names in public; do use appropriate titles.
- ❑ Turn your cell phone off during the meeting.
- ❑ Know when to resign.



Logistics

But for the want of a ...



Logistics

But for the want of a ...

- ❑ Spell and pronounce Board Member names correctly - **Period!!!**
- ❑ Where should the executive director sit at Board meetings?
 - ❑ Convention
 - ❑ New Board - negotiate with Chair
 - ❑ Elected Officials generally like separation from staff



Logistics

But for the want of a ...

- ❑ Keep copy of Bylaws and *Robert's Rules of Order* with you for reference at meeting.

- ❑ Meeting times - general consensus.
 - ❑ Mondays are generally bad
 - ❑ Fridays are generally bad
 - ❑ If your Board has Elected Officials, then Tuesdays are generally bad.



Logistics

But for the want of a ...

- ❑ Be careful where you place Members' name plates in relationship to other Members.
- ❑ Turn down thermostats prior to meetings.
Bodies will raise temperatures and cool bodies are conducive to *happy* minds.
- ❑ Take notes on assignments given to you/staff during Board meeting.



Logistics

But for the want of...

- ❑ Limit the number and complexity of handouts at the meeting.
- ❑ Mail out/post agenda packets at least seven days in advance.
- ❑ When canceling a meeting, make sure contact is made with each Member and as many of the regular non-Member attendees as possible.

Logistics

But for the want of a ...

- ❑ Do not meet if there is no reason to meet.
- ❑ Make sure each Member has a name plate; preferably double sided.
- ❑ **Refreshments are mandatory!!!**
Use good aromatic coffee for the meeting.
- ❑ Note action items on the agenda.
- ❑ Introductions as a general order of business (Members, staff, audience and media) is a good idea.



Logistics

But for the want of a ...

- ❑ All items should have a summary memorandum with a recommendation from staff.
- ❑ Make yourself available to greet each member individually before the meeting.
- ❑ Create an annotated agenda for the Chair.
- ❑ Mail meeting handouts to absent Members after the meeting.



Board Relations

Feed Their Egos without
Creating a Monster



Board Relations

Feed Their Egos without Creating a Monster

- ❑ You Are Great, I am nothing, how can I help you, thank you very much!
- ❑ Credit the Board with the good ideas, even if they were not the author of them and get them good press.
- ❑ Take lots of pictures!
- ❑ Do not encourage Members to have organizational business cards.



Board Relations

Feed Their Egos without Creating a Monster

- ❑ Separation momento, plaque or resolution - *standardize* it to avoid hurt feelings.
- ❑ Generally avoid personal relationships with Members - especially intense relationships.
- ❑ Learn all you can about your Members.



Board Relations

Feed Their Egos without Creating a Monster

- ❑ Take/return Member calls.
- ❑ Engage in at least one written in-between-meeting communication with Members.
- ❑ **Do Not** use Members first name in public - do use appropriate titles.
- ❑ Visit with each Member at least once a year.
- ❑ Manage Expectations - under promise/over deliver.
- ❑ Be known as a “straight shooter” - no secret agendas.



Tactics

Strategies for Success



Tactics

Strategies for Success

- ❑ Never let them see you sweat, have negative reactions or look bored.
- ❑ During a meeting avoid too much eye contact with Members, but do watch faces and body language.
- ❑ Do Not Use Acronyms In Front of Board.



Tactics

Strategies for Success

- ❑ Bring your worst enemy/biggest antagonist “inside the tent” and make them Chair.
- ❑ Do not vote until you have the votes - learn to count votes.
- ❑ Committee assignments/Chair appointments.
 - geographic/demographic diversity
 - accommodate member requests to maximum extent possible
 - and remember, better the camel on the inside of the tent



Tactics

Strategies for Success

- ❑ Financial data - appropriate level of detail. Too much tends to confuse them (have detailed backup readily available) - monthly, budget and audit.
- ❑ All sustainable policy is directed and incremental.
- ❑ We are paid to make recommendations; do not dodge this responsibility.



Tactics

Strategies for Success

- ❑ No Thin Agenda Packets!!!
- ❑ Debrief (autopsy/post mortem) the meeting with key staff members as soon after the meeting as possible.
- ❑ Read/edit draft minutes carefully.
- ❑ Review basic governance documents, enabling statutes, operating rules (Bylaws) and key contracts at least annually.



Tactics

Strategies for Success

- ❑ Conduct post separation Member interview/survey.
- ❑ Know *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- ❑ It is better to lose the battle and win the war!!!
- ❑ Perception IS Reality.



Roles

*Get them Straight -
Keep them Straight*



Roles

Get them Straight - Keep them Straight

- ❑ Board = Corporate Board of Directors - they set policy.
- ❑ Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer - recommends and carries out Board policy, and manages day-to-day operations.
- ❑ Do not allow Board Members to involve themselves in operational matters.
- ❑ Stay out of politics.



Communication

The Key to Any Relationship



Communication

The Key to Any Relationship

- ❑ Produce an Annual Report, Year-in-Review presentation or similar document.
- ❑ Hold an Annual Meeting, at a minimum to change officers.
- ❑ Do a new Member Orientation.
 - go to them
 - schedule two hours minimum



Communication

The Key to Any Relationship

- ❑ Meet with incoming Chair to establish lines of communication and protocol.
- ❑ Talk to the Chair prior to meeting - remember to provide them with annotated agenda.
- ❑ Board/subordinate staff communications.
 - do not prohibit
 - require notification
 - if a problem, use follow-up communication to discourage Member and counsel staff



Communication

The Key to Any Relationship

- ❑ Staff members should be taught not to blurt out “helpful” information during a Board meeting.
- ❑ When in doubt ask for/provide clarification.
- ❑ Send personal handwritten note of thanks to guests who participated in the meeting.
- ❑ Keep communications consistent, Member after Member.



Final Thoughts



Final Thoughts

- ❑ Think big - act little
- ❑ Be in charge - by not being
- ❑ Lead by following
- ❑ Gain credit by giving it
- ❑ Live to fight another day
- ❑ Perception *is* reality
- ❑ Read "The Art of War" - Sun Tzu



“Sometimes our job is to bring the doughnuts...”

