



MEETINGS – ROLES

Meetings

Within the course of a meeting, there are several components that will come into play. Understanding these components will allow the meeting to proceed smoothly.

Roles

One of the major reasons meetings are inefficient lies in the fact that individuals do not know what is expected of them or the roles of their position. Establishing clear roles and reminding each other of these roles will help.

Presiding Officer Role

The presiding officer, also referred to as the chair, is the person in charge of running a meeting. The president serves as the presiding officer. In his/her absence, the vice president(s), in order of rank, assume the duty. If neither the president nor vice president(s) are present, the next highest officer or director would preside over the meeting.

By being the individual responsible for running the meeting, the presiding officer has the greatest responsibility of anyone at the meeting. For the most part, the presiding officer's responsibilities at meetings consist of the following:

- Determine if a quorum is present
- Call the meeting to order (start the meeting)
- Ensure the "ground rules" are adhered to
- Recognizing members who are entitled to speak
 - To avoid the perception of bias, recognize all members in the same manner. For instance, do not recognize someone you know by his/her first name (John) and someone you do not know by something else (the man in the green sweater)
- Use a "parking lot" – keep discussion to the issue at hand
- Handle motions and debate (See the Parliamentary Procedure document on the Association Resource Center (ARC) page of BOWL.com)
- Rule on points of order
- Paraphrase comments and questions
 - Are you saying....?
 - Would you like to put your comment in the form of a motion?
- Work to control dominant personalities – do not show irritability and ensure speaking limits are adhered to
- Recognize accomplishments of others

Other prominent roles of the presiding officer include reducing confusion, reducing unnecessary debate, and facilitating the meeting.

Reducing Confusion

To reduce confusion at meetings, it is important the presiding officer makes certain attendees understand the motions or actions being proposed. Clarifying motions eliminates confusion and allows attendees to make well-informed decisions. Therefore, after a motion has been made and seconded, the presiding officer restates the motion before debate ensues. Then, after debate is complete, the presiding officer should again state the motion before the attendees' vote. By continuously restating the motion the chance of misinterpretation is diminished.

Reducing Unnecessary Debate

Unnecessary debate can be restricted if the presiding officer addresses it immediately. By doing so, attendees will be appreciative. For example, there is a motion on the floor to buy a new computer



for the association. As the motion is debated, an attendee states: "we really need to paint the office before we buy a computer." The presiding officer places "painting the office" in the parking lot and redirects the debate to the issue at hand - purchasing a new computer. The presiding officer can redirect the discussion by stating:

- "Is there any more discussion on the motion to purchase a new computer?" or,
- "Please limit your discussion to the specific motion, purchasing a new computer."

Similarly, if attendees repeat the same opinions regarding the purchase of a new computer, the presiding officer could state: "Are there any new opinions on the motion?" Doing so will keep the meetings moving.

Facilitating the Meeting

One of the misconceptions regarding the presiding officer has to do with his/her role at delegate/membership meetings. In many instances, he/she tries to be an active participant in the discussion/debate. However, the presiding officer's role at meetings is to facilitate the meeting. This requires the presiding officer to remain neutral, not providing his/her opinions on matters. The presiding officer should be focused on treating everyone fairly, letting everyone be heard (e.g. - ask quiet members for their perspective), and keeping the meeting on track.

Too often a presiding officer dictates or dominates a meeting. In other instances, he/she routinely interjects in debate. If this is the case, the association board should work with the presiding officer to clarify what his/her role is at meetings.

However, from time-to-time the presiding officer will have valuable knowledge to share or be extremely passionate regarding an issue. In this case, the presiding officer could feel compelled to speak on the subject. Before doing so, the presiding officer needs to vacate the chair. When vacating the chair, the chair is turned over to the vice president, provided the vice president has not spoken on the motion. After vacating the chair, the president does not resume the role of presiding officer until the motion/issue is finalized.

The presiding officer's role at board meetings is generally dependent on the culture of association board meetings. If board meetings tend to be unproductive, too long, or commonly result in heated discussion, it is probably best for the presiding officer to continue his/her role as a neutral party.

On the other hand, if the culture of association board meetings is fairly informal, the presiding officer should have the opportunity to partake in debate and provide his/her point of view when necessary. Regardless of which presiding officer role fits better at board meetings, the board needs to establish some parameters for the position, so the presiding officer knows whether he/she can participate or is expected to remain neutral.

Voting

An individual does not forfeit his/her right to vote by serving as presiding officer. The presiding officer may, however, choose to refrain from voting until all other votes are counted, and then cast a vote only if it would affect the results.