



BOARD TALK

Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association

This page is an exciting new venture through the Massachusetts Recreation and Park Association, and will be a regular feature of the monthly newsletter. It is being created **WITH and FOR** members of appointed and elected boards, to provide an opportunity for them to share and learn from each other. Please make copies of this page and hand it out to board members each month.

NEWLY ELECTED BOARDS

The spring season often brings new members to elected boards, so it's a good time to review the roles of board members!

The Chairperson serves as the voice of the board, but must always remember he/she is accountable to the board, working with the members. At times, the chairperson may be the lone dissenting voice, but still must speak for the majority.

Board Members, as representatives of the community, are acting as the residents' representatives on a recreation and parks board. The feedback they receive, if related to daily business, should be provided to the administrator, or to the chairperson if related to policy. All board members should have an understanding of the legal boundaries under which they must operate.

One member of the board, including the chairperson, does not hold more power than any other board member. The authority of the board comes from the majority vote, only!

The Administrator is the paid professional and is accountable to the board or the executive branch, depending on the type of local government. When supervision does not come directly from the board, the administrator must serve as the line of communication between the various groups. The administrator is also responsible for communicating with and supervising other members of the organization's staff and sharing the staff's triumphs and concerns with the board and his/her direct supervisor. The administrator should strive to alert board members about potential problems, before they hear about it out in public.

The Chairperson and Administrator should work together to keep communication moving between board members, the staff,

and the residents. They should also work together to orient new board members.

Meetings are held to update board members on all relevant information on the organization, seeking their advice or action on particular issues. For everyone's benefit, there should be a regular meeting schedule, with additional meetings added for emergencies or time sensitive matters. The chairperson and administrator create the meeting agenda, with input from board members, and must provide information ahead of the meeting. It is more efficient to contact the chairperson or administrator prior to the agenda being set, so that all members are prepared for discussions ahead of time. All members need to read the information prior to the meeting, in preparation for discussions and potential votes. It is appropriate to contact the administrator ahead of time to request additional information, but care must be taken to avoid violations of the Open Meeting Law, so discussions between board members should not be held.

The chairperson presides over the meeting, following the set agenda. The chairperson makes sure that all board members and the administrator have the opportunity to participate in the conversation. The chairperson also insures that all legal standards are upheld, including the Open Meeting Law, as well as runs the meeting under an agreed upon set of standards, such as Roberts Rules of Order. The chairperson decides on whether to keep the discussions within the board or to invite comment from others attending the meeting.

The Administrator will provide background information, and act as a resource to the board on finances, policies and regulations. The Administrator should also keep the board up-to-date with relevant information from other Town or state committees, as well as the latest professional recreation and park information.

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