Trustee Topic 18

Board Appointments and Composition

Chapter 43

- In Wisconsin, citizen board govern public libraries. Citizen governance partially isolates the operation of the library from political pressure—an important concern especially in the development of your library's collection and policies.
- Public library collections and policies have traditionally supported the ideals of freedom of expression and inquiry—free from any partisan or political pressures.

Diversity of Viewpoint and Expertise

- Another traditional public library ideal is that the library serves all members of the community equitably.
- It is appropriate for the library board to suggest potential appointees to fill upcoming vacancies on the library board. When developing lists of candidates for appointment, keep in mind the importance of having a board that is representative of the entire community and any special need for added expertise on the library board.

Statutory Requirements

- The appointment, composition, and terms of office for all types of library boards in Wisconsin (municipal, joint, county, and system) must be in accordance with Chapter 43 of the Wisconsin Statutes.
- To qualify for membership in a library system, your library must have a legally appointed and constituted library board that exercises the statutorily required duties and powers.

Municipal Library Boards

- The mayor, village president, town chair, or tribal chair makes appointments to a municipal public library board, with the approval of the municipal governing body, for three-year terms.
- Not more than two board members may reside outside of the municipality.
- Terms of office for library trustees begin on the date set by local ordinance (usually May 1) and are for three years unless the appointment is to fill an unexpired term

Municipal Library Boards

- One of the members must be a school district administrator or the administrator's representative, to represent the public school district(s) in which the public library is located.
- Although the law does not require that a member of the municipal governing body be appointed, this is a frequent practice and one that often improves communication between the library board and the municipality. The law does, however, specify that at any one time not more than one member of the municipal governing body can be a member of the library board.

Municipal Library Boards

- If a board member leaves office before the expiration of his or her term, the appointment to fill the position is made in the same way as other appointments, but the term of office is for the unexpired portion of the term (which will be less than three years).
- If a county (or another municipality) provides financial support to your library, it may have the option of appointing members to your board.

Municipal Library Boards

- Wisconsin Statutes Section 43.60(3) provides that whenever a county (or another municipality) appropriates funds for a municipal library equaling at least one-sixth of the amount appropriated by the establishing municipality, the county (or other municipality) may appoint a library board member to serve in addition to those appointed by the municipality.
- Outagamie County does allocate 1/6 and could have a member on our Board, which would be in addition to the municipal appointments.

Second and Third Class Cities

- Kaukauna falls under the population definition of Third Class. Library boards established by a Second or Third Class City have nine members appointed by the mayor, with approval of the city council. However, the city council may, by a two-thirds vote, reduce the number appointed by the mayor to seven.

Discussion Questions

1. What are possible reasons why the statutes provide for a school district representative on the library board?

2. What are possible reasons why the statutes limit board membership to one elected official from the governing body?

3. What groups (demographic, occupational, etc.) are currently represented on the library board? When board positions become vacant, what community groups could be looked to for possible candidates?