

Trustee Training Chapter 3

Bylaws- Organizing the Board for Effective Action

Legal Requirements

- Generally, no compensation may be paid to the members of a library board for their services.
- Normally, a majority of the membership of a library board constitutes a quorum, but the library board may, in your bylaws, legally provide that three or more members constitutes a quorum.
- Annually, within 60 days after the date of the beginning of local library board terms, your library board must hold an organizational meeting and elect officers.

Crafting Language

- If your board wants to develop new bylaws or amend existing bylaws, it is recommended that a special committee be appointed to develop drafts for full board review. To change your bylaws, you must follow any procedures required by your current bylaws.

Bylaw Basics

- Library board bylaws are the rules established by the library board that govern the board's own activities.
- Bylaws need to include the following:
 1. The library board officers to be elected, how they are elected, and the powers and responsibilities of each officer.
 2. When meetings are held, and how meetings are conducted.
 3. What committees are appointed, how they are appointed, and what they do.
 4. How the bylaws are amended.

Crafting Language

- Bylaw language must be clear and unambiguous. Imprecise language can result in confusion and disorder.
- For example, Library board bylaws should make clear that actions by board committees are advisory only. A library board committee cannot act on behalf of the full board—only actions by the full board have legal authority.

Discussion Questions

1. Can our board bylaws provide for library board membership to individuals who are not appointed according to the relevant provisions of Chapter 43?
2. Can our board bylaws provide for term limits for library board members? What are the pros and cons of library board member turnover?
3. How can your board encourage good meeting attendance?
4. What could you do if a board member regularly misses board meetings?
5. How often should bylaws be reviewed?