NRPA Advisory Board Member Resource Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Congratulations!
You have volunteered, been appointed, been nominated or been cajoled into serving on your community parks and recreation board. Your next question is, or should be, "*Now what do I do?"*

The training and orientation available to citizen board members is as varied as the existing agencies, geographic areas of the country, and types of boards. This Resource Guide seeks to present an overview of information needed to assist citizen board members in the area of parks and recreation to perform their roles effectively. This Resource Guide was created primarily as a tool for new citizen board members, particularly those who do not have access to meetings and conferences that offer training opportunities for board members.

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) Citizen Branch encourages attendance at face-to-face gatherings because of the invaluable networking that occurs, but sometimes attendance is not possible due to time or agency budget constraints. By developing a printed resource, we are able to reach more citizen board members. NRPA and the Citizen Branch of NRPA offer sessions and training opportunities as part of the NRPA Annual Congress (usually held in September or October) and at regional meetings and schools. These trainings offer information that is specifically oriented toward citizen board members and their agency directors as well as an opportunity to network with other citizens and professionals.

This Resource Guide also serves as a refresher for long-time board members who want to stay current with the latest educational materials. Other relevant resources can be found at www.nrpa.org.

BOARD STRUCTURES

There are three basic board structures among the majority of park and recreation boards: independent boards, s, and semi- independent board independent boards. The semi-independent board independent boards are most often combinations of the first two but tend more strongly toward one or the other type of structure. The three boards are considerably different in their function and level of authority. Most of the information provided in this guide will apply to advisory board members; however a description of the three types of board is included below so that the reader will clearly understand the different board structures.

The Advisory Board

The advisory board is typically associated with a park(s) and/or recreation department administered by a division of government: state, county, parish or municipality. In most cases, the governmental entity is administered by an elected body, which has management and policymaking responsibility for a broad range of governmental services including park(s) and/or recreation. This elected body has the final authority for making all decisions but often looks to an advisory board for recommendations and input regarding decisions that affect the park(s) and recreation department. The advisory board may provide community input to the department director and staff regarding facility operations and programming.

The optimum size for an advisory board is generally five to nine members but larger advisory boards do exist. Boards composed of at-large members, representatives of the entire community, regardless of where they live, their particular interests or memberships, normally fall within this range.

Larger advisory boards often represent geographic areas, school districts or school service areas, or major sub groups that make up the parks and recreation community such as youth and adult sports associations, tree commissions, natural areas, friends groups, arts organizations and preschool or teen councils to name some of the most common.

In the case of at-large advisory boards, members are appointed by the elected body either as a whole, or by the elected chairperson, mayor, governor, etc. In some cases, existing advisory board members will provide the first screening of new members, making recommendations to the elected official(s), who may or may not appoint the recommendations. Appointments are generally for a specific term

In the case of an advisory board representing specific groups or geographic areas, the representative can be a political appointment, chosen by the organization they represent or they may serve because of becoming the president or chair of their respective group. In this case, it is possible to have some representatives change annually while others serve for various lengths of time, depending on the election criteria of the individual organizations.

In all cases, the role of this type of park(s) and/or recreation board is just what the name implies: advisory. The group serves as a resource to the decision makers, be that staff, director or elected officials. The advisory board can convey how the citizens as a whole, or the segment/organization/program they represent, feel about policies, programs, proposals, or decisions.

The Independent Board

(May also be know as an Administrative, Governing, or Governance Board)
The independent board is an autonomous group whose final authority lies with the board members, not another unit of local government. This type of board develops and implements policy; buys, sells and holds title to property, assesses taxes, and has the final authority in financial matters. If a board is the governing body of a public agency, members are usually elected, often in a non-partisan election, by the citizenry within the agency boundaries. In rare instances, a head of government such as a mayor or a city council or county board of commissioners may appoint public agency independent board members. However, when one comes to public board service in any way other than public election, it is usually to serve on an advisory or semi-independent board instead of an independent board. If the board functions on behalf of a nonprofit organization, the members or recipients of services may elect the board or board members are sometimes appointed by officers or elected by a portion (other board members perhaps) of the membership.

Independent boards range in size from five to fifty plus. The majority of local park and recreation agency boards are composed of five to seven members. Private sector and nonprofit boards dealing with parks and recreation are quite varied. Local agency boards are generally elected at-large and do not represent specific areas or interests. In fact, it is important for the members of these boards to have a “big picture” view. Some independent boards may also look to advisory boards and local friends groups to provide input related to geographical areas or special interests.

The roles and responsibilities of the independent board are the most clearly defined. These boards are the final authority on all matters related to their domain.

Governmental independent boards are determined by statutes that spell out and define their right to exist in a state, county, parish or municipality. Likewise, non-profit independent boards are governed by state and local statute and established by the organizations' charter and bylaws.

The Semi-independent Board

(May include aspects of both the independent or governing board and the advisory board)
The semi-independent park and recreation board is a hybrid of the independent board and the advisory board and has some aspects of both of these two boards. Members serving on a semi-independent board may be either appointed by the elected entity to which they answer, or as in the advisory board, hold their seat by virtue of having been elected to chair another group or organization, which is represented on the semi-independent board. (See paragraph 4 of the advisory board above).

What separates the semi-independent board from the advisory board is that the semi-independent board still advises another independent body, which is usually elected and a unit of government. The semi-independent board does have some decision-making power where its decisions are not subject to a higher authority. Often these semi-independent boards will have limited policy-making authority for park operations, programming fees, and facility operating hours so long as they operate within the guidelines of federal, state or local codes and ordinances. In addition, the semi-independent board may advise the independent body in areas such as staffing, park development, and property sales and acquisitions. Some semi-independent boards have general policymaking responsibility, do not have taxing authority but may hire their director. Taxing authority is the major distinguishing feature among the boards.

In some cases, the semi-independent board will be found when two or more jurisdictions have merged or have overlapping geographical boundaries. This often occurs when a formerly independent park and/or recreation board with property, programs, and taxing authority, is annexed into an existing municipality or when a new municipality is formed. While the employees, fiscal functions, even ownership of the facilities may transition into this new or existing entity, the authority to collect taxes to operate the program may remain with the existing board. In this case, the semi-independent board retains their control over the funds raised from their taxing authority but those funds may or may not be the total budget required for the operation of the agency. This arrangement requires a cooperative working relationship among the funding/policy-making entities.

Other semi-independent boards may actually operate as an advisory board in certain aspects, and be a legally constituted not-for-profit board doing fundraising and programming. This is often found when one entity or unit of federal, state or municipal government, or an independent park board, owns the facilities but the semi-independent board advises them as to the development and programming of these facilities and also does fundraising and some programming in the name of the facility or under the auspices of the independent board.

These varying types of boards are as different as the communities or locales where they exist. The important thing to remember is that they only have decision-making authority for part of the operation and they must refer other recommendations or decisions to a higher authority for a final decision.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Roles and Responsibilities of a Citizen Board Member

If you are a recently appointed board member or a prospective member, this section is especially for you. First, allow us to congratulate you and extend our appreciation for your community involvement and your commitment to providing high quality park and recreation

services to your community. This section will provide you with a perspective of what you should expect as a board member, what roles and responsibilities come with the position and a listing of some questions that you may have and some answers to those questions. The NRPA hopes you find this information helpful and wishes you the best in your service as a citizen board member in your community.

Role of a Citizen Board Member

Most of this section pertains to all types of boards. You will need to understand the function and level of authority for your specific board and determine what information is applicable for your use. Citizen boards play a critical role in public parks and recreation, offering agencies an advantage in gaining public trust, fostering partnerships and securing necessary funds, which allow their organizations to thrive. Citizen board governance identifies parks and recreation agencies as accountable to the community. Citizen board members also lend organizations their personal credibility. This becomes increasingly important in raising public and private funds, which can be a necessary and critical component to your agency's existence. Finally, citizen board members bring a vision and enthusiasm to the cause. Your infectious drive and dedication can literally propel an organization to new heights.

The degree to which citizen board members benefit public parks and recreation agencies depends, in part, on their relationship with their director. Staff can act either to negate or to multiply the impact of citizen board members. Perhaps this quote by board development expert John Carver says it best:

"No single relationship in the organization is as important as that between the board and its chief executive officer. Probably no single relationship is as easily misconstrued or has such dire potential consequences. That relationship, well conceived, can set the stage for effective governance and management." John Carver, 1990.

The role of the citizen board is directly related to the age and stage of development of the organization for which it serves. The external environment, culture and values of each member, as well as the habit and leadership of its chair and executive also affect the role of the citizen board.

While this statement is particularly true of the independent board, is it also true, to a lesser extent for other boards. Good relations with and among the board members, especially the board chair, can affect the success of the parks and recreation professional's career in any community. The citizen board offers multiple perspectives and skills and helps sharpen organizational focus.

Some advisory and semi-independent boards work under the policies and procedures established by their governing body. Every board should adopt a comprehensive set of by-laws or operating procedures. Advisory boards may need to have their rules or procedures approved by their governing body but it is important that they, too, have by-laws or governance procedures so everyone has a clear understanding of roles, expectations and responsibilities.

The by-laws or the rules of procedure or operation should clearly identify the administrative and governance policies of the agency or department. These may be separate documents or one document with specific chapters or sections. By-laws should include, but not be limited to; board structure, terms of board members, and how business will be conducted during all meetings. Illustrated in Appendix C –Board Manual Template is an outline of the various

components that should be considered in a comprehensive set of by-laws and/or governance procedures.

It may be the responsibility of the board and chief executive/ director to recommend or develop policy.

Many policies concerning the day-to-day operations of the agency are the sole responsibility of the director. It is the responsibility of the chief executive/ director to inform board members of implemented policies. Board members should not attempt to usurp the authority of the chief executive or staff at any level. The chief executive is hired to direct the agency and oversee the day-to-day operations of the agency.

Another role of the board may be to plan for the future. Long-range planning can be a time consuming process but it is necessary for a well functioning agency/department. Potential future problems, needs and opportunities must be identified. The key to the success of this planning is the corresponding development of a long-range financial plan that properly allocates identified resources to implement the plans. Significant levels of financial and human resources are required to develop a meaningful and useful long-range plan. The board and director/chief executive should conduct these planning processes together. The board should avoid delegating this important responsibility solely to the director/chief executive and staff. .

The advisory board and director will likely need to brief and gain support from their governing body before moving on to the next step. It is then the responsibility of the director/chief executive to prepare reports and inform the board about progress, performance and financial status on a pre-determined timeline.

Another vital function of citizen board members is to establish and foster relationships with other governmental and community entities. The park and recreation agency is part of the public system. It should be the goal of each board member and the director/chief executive to build and maintain healthy working relationships with service groups, the Chamber of Commerce, religious groups, neighborhood associations and civic associations. Good relationships with other tax-supported units of local government like school districts, city or village government, police, fire, county officials, etc, are also very important. . Some helpful hints in ensuring this are to:

- Involve groups in future planning - especially if it will affect their operations.
- Send groups agency brochures and publications to keep them informed about the agency.
- Invite groups to important events, groundbreakings, dedications, and ribbon cuttings.
- Coordinate with other agencies to avoid duplications of services or overstepping established boundaries.
- Encourage and look for partnership opportunities.

The most important function of a citizen board member is working with the community residents. Whether elected or appointed to a board position, you are representing the residents served by the agency and must be fair and impartial when working with the public. As an ambassador to the public, a citizen board member shall endorse the following protocol:

- Commit to conducting agency affairs in a manner that wins public respect and support for the agency and guarantees its integrity in the community.

- Welcome suggestions and constructive criticism from the public. Board members should seek opportunities to explain to the public the services and programs of the agency and to correct false impressions. It is important to bring such feedback to the attention of the chief executive/ director.
- Represent the interests of the entire community responsibly and responsively.
- Have knowledge and understanding of the laws and legal requirements of the jurisdiction in which the park and recreation agency exists.

Responsibilities of a Citizen Board Member:
Citizen board members are expected to:

- Attend meetings regularly - commitment is paramount.
- Do your homework and contribute to the discussions - review the information provided, be prepared with questions and relevant discussion points. Clarification of agenda items or need for additional information should be discussed with the director/chief executive prior to the meeting.
- Vote based on what you believe is best for the community, recognizing that you may need to occasionally compromise. A board member must be willing to abide by and support the decisions, policies and programs agreed upon by the board.
- Be aware of the importance and value of parks and recreation in your community– gain knowledge, ask questions, and work closely and in cooperation with the director/chief executive.
- Resist political, personal and special interest pressures – have courage, maintain integrity, set high personal standards for yourself and fellow board members, and avoid potential or perceived conflicts of interest.
- Be familiar with and adhere to Robert's Rules of Order or whatever source your agency has identified for meeting protocol.
- Serve as your agency's ambassador – promote and support agency events, programs, services, etc.
- Encourage citizen participation – recruit your fellow residents to participate in agency events, programs and services, and encourage them to volunteer in the park system.

The Role of the Citizen Advisory Board Chair
The role of the citizen board member chair, if the advisory board has a citizen chair, is different than the role of other citizen board members. More responsibilities are given to the board chair than to other board members. If the advisory board has a citizen chair the responsibilities of that position are usually clearly defined. Some of these responsibilities may include being a planner, organizer, communicator, consensus builder, caretaker, housekeeper and troubleshooter. All of these are examples of leadership, which is why the role of board chair can be summed up in the term "leader".

A citizen board chair must be willing to invest time and energy in a job that commands the respect of both the governing board members and the community served. , Board members look to the chair for guidance, support and leadership. The board chair must assess and direct board and committee assignments to ensure that the work is on target with the vision of the organization and achieved in the most effective way.

Responsibilities of the Citizen Advisory Board Chair:
The advisory board chair maybe expected to:

- Lead board meetings - making sure everything runs smoothly.
- Prepare the agenda and other information needed for the citizen board meeting in cooperation with the director/chief executive.

- Coordinate the planning of the board's activities for the year and ensure that an ongoing planning process exists.
- Ensure that new citizen board members are provided an orientation to the organization.
- Encourage others to voice their opinion.
- Help organize and maintain committees of the citizen board.
- Be aware of the performance of all citizen advisory board members and committees. *This role generally falls to the elected official of the local unit of government (City/County/Township/State) for an advisory board.*

Deleted: committees.*This*

Conducting the meetings of the board is an important chair responsibility. One key to a successful citizen board relationship involves effectively run meetings. Some pointers that the chair and director/chief executive should consider:

- Putting thought into the agenda design and clarifying desired outcomes.
- Using meetings as board development opportunities, such as communicating what is new in the field, hearing from "customers", having an in-depth review of a popular program or issue, etc.
- Getting materials out ahead of time so board members have time to prepare for the meeting.

By keeping the following goals in mind during meetings, the board chair's leadership qualities will be obvious.

- Start and end the meeting on time.
- Create and maintain a positive tone during the meeting.
- Keep the meeting moving by following the agenda.
- Introduce each agenda item and facilitate discussion.
- Do not let discussions stray from the agenda issue.
- Understand and have a working knowledge of parliamentary procedures.
- Bring items to a conclusion.

Just because you are leader of the citizen board does not mean that you have any less right or responsibility to participate as a board member. Although you may want to let others voice their opinion first, you are certainly entitled to express your own opinion. However, your opinion should not dominate nor force itself onto other members of the citizen board.

The Role of the Director/Chief Executive

A director/chief executive is responsible for the daily on-going operations of the park and recreation agency. In order to perform these duties, the director/chief executive today wears many hats. Today's director/chief executive must be a visionary, a leader, a manager, a communicator, a conflict solver and a technology wizard. He or she must add value by increasing resources via fundraising, grant writing, fee-for-service contracts, partnerships, levies, etc. He or she may face difficult challenges including budgets that are tightly stretched, not allowing much variance or discretionary spending. This makes it difficult to respond to new opportunities, especially when these opportunities present themselves between budget cycles. Part of the growing complexity within parks and recreation agencies involves technology infrastructure. Technology advancements can increase the effectiveness of an agency, but require significant investment of time and fiscal resources for successful implementation. To accomplish all of this, including the long-range goals of the organization, the director/chief executive must continually enhance the visibility and image of the organization. Enhancing and developing the board can extend the agency's visibility in the community for optimum effectiveness.

The director/chief executive encourages staff development, and prioritizes work for the board or (commission/council/administrator/city manager and staff, always keeping his or her eyes on the highest priorities.

The Responsibilities of the Director/Chief Executive

The beginning of a relationship can set the tone for the lifetime of that relationship. This rule applies to the unique association between the director/chief executive and his or her board.

In an advisory board, this may have already been set forth by the governing body or in local statute or code. It is especially important to provide a thorough orientation program for new board members. The director/chief executive may even want to consider an informal "mentoring" program. See Appendix D for the Citizen Board Orientation Manual template.

The director/chief executive has little margin for error. The director/chief executive must report the input of the advisory board to another commission/ board and/or elected official(s). Staff, the advisory board, and the governing entity are counting on him or her, so it is important not to under-manage. The director/chief executive must build a strong relationship with all board members, including the chair. Both roles are critical to any organization, so the two must support each other. It is important for members of an advisory board to understand that the director/manager is responsible to another elected governance body (city/county/township council/commission or other unit of government) and in many cases to another paid administrator (city/county manager).

The most important relationship to the successful operation of any agency is the one among the city/county/township manager, the commission/council, and the director/chief executive. The relationship must maintain open communications, clear expectations, vision and direction, trust, and mutual respect for the roles each plays. Care must be taken to avoid misunderstandings and misperceptions of both verbal and non-verbal communications.

All parties are responsible for the development and maintenance of these relationships. Identification and mutual understanding of the expectations on behalf of the board members, governing officials, and director/chief executive is the key to forging an effective relationship and achieving smooth day-to-day operations. While there is no single prescription for an effective partnership and various dynamics and personalities come into play, a clearly defined set of guidelines and parameters of where one authority begins and another stops can help clarify each party's role and responsibility.

Guidelines for Advisory Board and Director/Chief Executive

The director/chief executive must be trained and educated in the ability to lead the delivery of high quality park, recreation, open space, and conservation services to the community.

In the case of an advisory board, the director/manager and staff are employees of the local unit of government that has authority. .

The board shall communicate its direction to the director/chief executive corporately or through the chair of the board. Routine communications and informational flow from board members may take place directly with the director/chief executive. Advisory board members should recognize that the director/manager receives his/her direction from a city/county manager/administrator who manages under the direction of the mayor and commission/council or directly from elected official(s).

An advisory board working within a local unit of government such as a city, township, county, parish or state does not generally have final decision making or policy setting authority. The director/manager of the department generally works for a city manager/administrator or, under certain forms of government, a strong mayor or a professional commissioner in charge of two or three other departments in addition to parks and/or recreation. In this case, the following chart indicates the possible roles that the board and the director/manager of a local unit of government department play within a successful partnership towards effective agency operations.

Advisory Board/ Director-Manager Responsibility Chart

	Director/Manager	**Board**
Accounting/auditing	-oversees -reviews & monitors monthly financial reports from accounting department -identifies problem areas	-reviews reports and assists with establishing budget priorities. -may assist in budget presentations
Attorneys	-works with legal department or contract attorney	
Board meetings	-prepares agenda with board input and chair assistance -forwards information/direction from local unit of government	-requires progress reports from director/manager -forwards recommendations to decision makers
Budget	-plans -develops -administers -recommends funding sources -submits to the city manager/administrator/finance director	-makes recommendations to director/manager -supports at budget hearings -supports/lobbies for approval or increases -defends cuts or lobbies for reinstatement.
Consultants	-conducts background checks -prepares specifications -interviews candidates -submits choices to the local unit of government as a report to the council/commission	-reviews applicants/proposals -makes recommendation to elected officials
Facilities	-develops reports and master plans -reviews reports and forwards recommendations to council/commission	-reviews reports and master plans -gathers public comments, if appropriate. -makes recommendations to local unit of government if necessary and/or appropriate
Lobbying	-provides information on local, state and national legislative initiatives	-does not participate in partisan politics - lobbies for legislation and funding at local, state and federal levels under the guidance/ authority of the local unit of government
Maintenance	-ensures well maintained and safe facilities and park lands -develops standards -develops risk management plan	- may review director/manager guidelines for facility development and standards and may make recommendations to local unit of government

Personnel	-recruits with assistance of personnel department -hires with assistance of personnel department -supervises -trains -evaluates	- may provide input to personnel department on job description for director/manager -if asked, reviews applications and/or participates in the interview panel for director/manager
Planning	-conducts research -develops goals and objectives -hires consultants	-holds public meetings on plans -makes recommendations to elected officials
Policies	-researches -drafts language	-reviews -recommends to director/manager, city manager/administrator or elected officials, depending upon procedures in place.
Public	-actively seeks public input -works with citizen advisory Councils, civic groups, and neighborhood associations -addresses complaints	-solicits public input -receives complaints and refers to chief executive for resolution -identifies public input on board meeting agenda
Vendor contracts	-reviews bids -recommends to board or directly to elected officials of local government depending upon procedures in place	- may review -may make recommendation to elected officials

Source: Adapted from; Are You on Board? Theodore B. Flickinger, Ph.D.[1]

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS for/by CITIZEN BOARD MEMBERS

How do I know I can be an effective citizen board member?

Let's face it, not everyone is cut out for this job. For you to be successful as a board member, you must be interested in serving the community in this capacity. You should also closely examine your motivations and abilities to serve the community in an effective manner. The following self-examination chart, found here and on the next page, will be helpful in determining whether you have what it takes to be an effective citizen board member:

ANSWER EACH QUESTION TRUE OR FALSE.	**TRUE**	**FALSE**
I understand my role as a member of the park board/advisory committee.		
I understand my relationship to the agency's chief executive and other employees.		
I make positive contributions toward helping the board establish clearly stated and coordinated goals and objectives.		
I am committed to all citizens of the community or district.		
I am prepared for every board meeting.		
I always ask the director/chief executive for an explanation in private if I don't like something that a staff member is doing.		
I support needed legislation at both the state and federal levels.		
I attend educational meetings and conferences to further my knowledge as a board member.		
I am comfortable receiving and considering citizen suggestions and/or complaints.		

[1] Theodore B. Flickinger, PHD, Are You On Board?, p.111

Deleted: ,

I respect my fellow board members.		
I recognize excellent performance of the staff.		
I encourage and support effective public information programs.		
I encourage effective press, media, and public awareness programs.		
I regularly set aside time to study and learn so I can become a better board member.		
I am able to function effectively under pressure.		
I try to be reasonable and consider the workload of those involved if I make requests.		
I show a willingness to try new ideas, approaches or methods.		
I ask questions when I don't understand a policy, suggestion, recommendation or situation.		
I try to treat board members and staff in an unbiased, impartial and friendly manner.		
I try to create a feeling of openness, unity and enthusiasm when dealing with agency matters.		
I maintain a sense of humor.		
I try to be conscious of the needs and problems that exist on the board.		
When asked to serve on a committee or handle a special assignment, I do so with accountability and pride in the pending results.		
I know the importance of attending all board and related committee meetings.		
I have the courage of my convictions and will voice my concerns during discussions, but will fully support the group decision once it is made and is final.		
I identify with the agency's purpose, goals and objectives, and I put the welfare of the community ahead of my own interests.		
I believe that I am capable of earning the trust and mutual respect of my fellow board members, staff and the citizens of the community.		
I believe my community deserves high quality park and recreation services within the community.		
I believe that all public business should be discussed at an open public meeting, except for the areas of land acquisition and personnel matters.		

*If you answered **TRUE** to 25 or more of the aforementioned questions, you are or will be an effective citizen board member.* Source: Adapted from Are You on Board?, Theodore B. Flickinger, Ph.D. [2]

What is the advisory board's role?

The role of an advisory board depends upon the board's charter, by-laws and legal authority bestowed on it by the governing board. In almost all cases the citizen advisory board is only advisory in nature.

What should be covered in a board meeting?

The advisory board should focus agenda items on issues put to it by the governing authority. The advice provided by the advisory board should promote the organization's vision and mission, not day-to-day operations unless so requested. Public sessions should be focused on:

- Long range planning
- Design approval
- Committee reports
- Community/visitor comment
- Policy Issues

Citizen board members should be actively involved in the work of the board. When they have information that needs to be discussed by the entire board, members should contact the board chair, or in some cases the director/chief executive, to have this item placed on the next meeting agenda.

The board-meeting packet should include the agenda, director's report, supporting material, meeting minutes, and committee reports.

[2] Theodore B. Flickinger, Are You On Board?, p 40-43

How should the citizen board operate?
A sample agenda for a park and recreation advisory board could include:

1. Call to order
2. Call the roll
3. Recognize visitors
4. Approve the agenda
5. Review previous meeting minutes
6. Report on good news
7. Present the director's report
8. Present committee reports
9. Conduct unfinished business
10. Call for new business
11. Announcements
12. Public comments
13. Adjournment

What role should citizen board members play with the media?
The media can quote anything said in an open forum, but the citizen advisory board chair should be the only individual addressing the media on behalf of the advisory board.

What are the main tasks of the advisory board? These include serving on board committees, long range and strategic planning, making recommendations and representing the public point of view to the elected representatives of a unit of government.

What can a citizen board member do to remain effective during their tenure on the board?
Just like a park and recreational professional, citizen board members need to remain informed on current industry and community trends, issues, and initiatives. Therefore, training for citizen board members does not end at the completion of the orientation program, but rather is an on-going process with a personal commitment to continue your education as a board member. This can be accomplished through many approaches. A few are illustrated below:

- Attend local, regional, state and national conferences and workshops on parks and recreation.
- Choose sessions that relate to your interests and matters relevant to the agency you represent. Share the information you gather with fellow board members and the chief executive.
- Read related park and recreation industry publications, trade magazines, newsletters and browse related websites.
- Attend agency and board member retreats and actively participate in discussions.
- Network with board members from other agencies. Typically, other agencies are experiencing or have experienced the same issues and initiatives as yours. Share information and experiences with the other attendees. Relate that information to your board and director/chief executive.
- Become involved in state and national citizen parks and recreation advocacy organizations. .

What are the important qualities and motivations for being a citizen board member?
The most important quality a board member can possess is the "right attitude". Knowledge, expertise and interest are certainly helpful, but a positive attitude and sincere interest in the importance of parks, recreation, conservation and open space in your community and beyond are the most important qualities.
Other qualities of effective board members are:

- Believing in the agency's mission, purpose, goals and objectives.
- The ability to place the larger interest of the agency above personal concerns or convictions.
- A willingness to serve as an effective intermediary between the agency and outside affiliated groups and organizations.
- A willingness to give freely of one's time and possessing the energy to learn.
- Respecting the varied opinions, points of view and backgrounds of fellow board members, staff, elected officials in the decision-making chain, staff and community at large.
- Being able to inspire the community's confidence, respect and support.
- Having the ability to accept board decisions.
- Respecting the democratic processes.
- Participating in discussions with demonstrated reasoning, good judgment and the courage of personal convictions.
- Demonstrating support for the director/chief executive as manager of the agency/department.

Individuals join park and recreation agency boards for different reasons. Many have a desire to serve their community by improving conditions and contributing to the welfare of the community. Some individuals gain a sense of satisfaction and power that comes with board service. Others get involved to have a new experience or find opportunities to make new friends. Other motivations for serving stem from social status, peer endorsements or even family tradition. Some individuals may have aspirations for higher political office and use this as a stepping-stone on their way to other civic service. Regardless of the motivations, a citizen board member must realize and accept that he or she is a leader who has accepted a major civic responsibility. The citizen board member must be committed to advancing the agency /department's mission and must do so within the defined roles and responsibilities enumerated in a previous section of this document.

Whether it is a sense of civic duty, belief in the importance of parks and recreation or wanting to provide service and value to a community, serving as a citizen board member is an important and vital position in every community across this nation, regardless of whether you serve in a governance or advisory capacity.

BOARD MEMBER ORIENTATION

Orientation of a new board member can make a major difference in the time it takes for that person to become a fully participating member of the board and their effectiveness. Board orientation is intended to prepare new board members for their role in the organization. It is extremely useful for **all** members to ensure that everyone is operating from the same "script." Orientation is a strong team-building activity that should be conducted once a year, either before a regular board meeting or during a retreat. Orientation of new board members shortly after election/appointment is essential.