



Running a successful board meeting:

Having a successful board meeting starts long before the meeting starts. Your board should all know what is expected of them while serving in their position, they should have the tools they need to successfully serve in that position, and they should understand the mission and rules of the organization. Assuming this is already done, let's talk about board meetings.

It will vary from Club to Club, or even board year to board year, but it needs to be clear who is running the meeting. It is usually either the President or the Parliamentarian. The Parliamentarian works for the President directly and therefore can be the person to keep the meeting going in the right direction. They track who has "the floor," when a vote is needed, who is up next to speak, but also should jump in and redirect discussion that has gotten out of hand or if someone has the floor for too long. The President can work with the content while the Parliamentarian works with the procedures of the meeting itself.

1. Before the meeting is to take place:
 - a. Make sure your agenda is sent out one week prior to your meeting so that members know the topics that will be discussed.
 - b. If you can annotate those topics that may require a vote, this is also helpful for them to understand there may be some kind of discussion on the subject so they can gather information to contribute if needed.
 - c. This is usually written by the President or the Secretary depending on how your club has this set up. Agendas usually set by the President or the Secretary. Some clubs will have the President set the agenda, and the Secretary adjust it based on the board reports that they receive prior to the meeting. *(Please click [here](#) for a sample agenda)*
 - d. Most agendas will follow this order: Welcomes, Vote on last month's Minutes, potentially the Treasurers report as well, then Old Business, around the room board reports, then New Business.
 - e. Many Clubs require Board Reports from each Board member that can be written into the agenda. Individual Board Members should each send the Secretary their report on what they accomplished that month and what they hope to accomplish the next month. They should also include whatever they might need help with or if there is something that they need feedback on from the board. They should "tag" this as business to discuss to see if it needs to be Old Business or just brought up in their report. If they don't have anything that needs discussion or a vote, then they can just say "report as written, no vote or discussion needed" when it's their turn to present at the meeting.
2. Setting up for your meeting:



- a. The way you set up the room can influence the productivity of your meeting. Be sure everyone can see each other. Try not to have people without a seat at the tables. If people have to stand in the back, they will inevitably feel that they are not a part of the meeting and will end up chatting with each other and not engaging with the rest. Not only does this make it hard for them to contribute, but it is also distracting for the rest of the people in the meeting.
 - b. Setting up the tables in a “U” shape is helpful or a big boardroom table. It may be a good idea to have people assigned to setting up the room so that it is done before everyone arrives and there is no question who is responsible.
 - c. If you can have name tents and Board Meeting Folders already set at each person’s seat, then people know where they are supposed to sit, and everyone is reminded of that person’s name and title on the board. It helps to reinforce the professional nature of the meeting. *(click here to see the recommendation for Board Meeting Folders)*
 - d. Keep in mind that you also want to be able to close doors and keep the meeting private from others. You may be discussing topics that should not be heard by those outside your board.
3. Starting your meeting.
- a. Set the tone up front. Think about reading your mission prior to every meeting. This will instill a sense of purpose and direction in every meeting.
 - b. Request that people raise their hand and only speak when called upon. This helps to keep discussions calm and controlled. The Parliamentarian should be the person to call on people to speak and help them understand they only can have about 2 minutes to share their concern.
 - c. Make sure everyone understands Robert’s Rules of Order. For a topic to be discussed that is not already on the agenda, someone must make a motion, then someone else must second the motion (So time is not taken up by one person who is passionate about something, but no one else shares this opinion). Once the topic has a 1st and 2nd, THEN it can be discussed by the board. The initial person should be given the chance to put forth their thoughts, then others can share. The Parliamentarian will then let people share in turn and decide when to cut off discussion and when to call for a vote. If the expectation is that you will always follow these guidelines, then there is no cause to conduct your meetings in any other format.
 - d. It is also important to have everyone pledge to be respectful of others and accept the majority vote no matter how they may personally feel about it.
4. Following the Agenda:
- a. The Meeting is called to order by the President or Parliamentarian and that is when the Secretary should start taking minutes. There should be attendance to know who all is
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present, to make sure you have a quorum for voting and to know if there is a need for follow up with someone missing later on.

- b. Welcome your board, congratulate them on something that they did the previous month, and have the minutes brought up for a vote. 1st and 2nd motions are needed to vote the minutes in as written, however, if there is a change that needs to be made because of an inaccuracy, then you must 1st and 2nd the motion to make the change and then accept them as amended. These minutes are turned in each month and are a record of your organization's work, so they need to be accurate.
- c. The Financial statements should be discussed and voted in as well. Your previously voted in budget should show what was spent the previous month and how much is left in each budget category for the rest of the year. This should also balance with the Treasurer's reports that show the credits and debits from the accounts that month.
- d. Next, the Executive board should all have the opportunity to present what they are working on if it is new business. *(There should be no surprises to the other members of the executive board, so if things are happening that others don't know about, you should have already had an executive board meeting to discuss. The Executive Board should be putting on a united front to the rest of the board.)*
- e. Old Business – this is usually whatever was not finished up last month or was new business last month and now moves to Old Business. It is a good idea to label the items for discussion with the person who will share information about the topic. Some Clubs will use Old Business as a time for the Committees in play to give their reports. (Fundraising committee talking about their upcoming event, Nominating Committee to discuss their progress etc.) Other Clubs will have that discussion when it comes to the Round Table reports.
- f. Next, this is when you would go around the room and ask people to share their board reports. As previously mentioned, they can choose to share verbally and ask for feedback, or they can just have what they turned in on their board report serve as their report. Board Members are often called on to give their reports in alphabetical order because that is how they will be set up in the agenda. The Secretary/or designee may change the agenda order based on the importance of an upcoming event or put two reports back-to-back because they feed off of each other. As long as the agenda is in the order people will report, it is fine to change the order from month to month.
- g. When that is complete, then you will move onto any new business. This is stuff that is not part of your normal business or something completely new to the club. It can also be something that will happen long into the future.
- h. After new business then the Honoraries and Advisors are given the opportunity to share thoughts about the progress of the club or something about the community, etc. *(As a side note these positions are used to give sage advice and share experience or*



connections. They are “allowed” to speak up during the regular course of the meeting if asked for their opinion or if they need to redirect discussion that has turned towards something not allowed, illegal or unethical.)

- i. At this point, the President usually thanks everyone for coming, may reiterate an action plan or “due outs” that need to be done and reiterate the date and time of the next meeting.
5. Closing out the meeting:
- a. The secretary will stop taking minutes and the formal meeting will conclude/adjourn. People will chat afterwards, but it will not be anything official.
 - b. The Secretary should then write up the minutes and get them sent out to everyone within 48 hours of the meeting. If they share them with the President prior to sending out within this window, it allows for a second person to double check the validity of the document. Doing this within the 48 hours allows those present to remember what took place during the meeting, allows for them to reach back to the secretary with amendments, and allows for those not present to understand what they missed. Many clubs will send them out right before the next meeting, but for those that missed the meeting, that is too late to take care of the things that needed to happen over the course of the month.

A few thoughts to add:

1. Add in a social section before or after your meeting starts to cut down on the side chit-chat.
 - a. We have often heard that many meetings are disruptive because people are catching up and chatting on the side as the meeting is trying to progress. One hint is to invite people to the meeting 30 minutes prior to the start of the meeting for a “Social Time.” People can take turns bringing coffee and muffins or something like that and give people a chance to say hello so that when the meeting is called to order, the chit chat time is over.
 - b. Another club had a standing open invite for whomever was available to go out to lunch after the meeting. This allowed people to know they would get a chance to catch up in an informal setting at the conclusion of the meeting.
2. Don’t be afraid to have your parliamentarian jump in a stop discussion if it starts to get out of control. If someone is getting too empathic about something or there is any form of disrespect in the discussion, have them shut it down. It is not productive conversation for a board meeting. Ask for a small group discussion on the subject with those who are most vocal and get to the bottom of the problem at the “committee” level. If this is a known action for a board meeting, it will usually not get this far in the first place. Small group remediation is usually the best way to handle conflict.