How to *Plan for* and *Have* Effective Board Meetings

GCSA

Today's Session

Session Objectives:

1) Understand the key components of an effective and efficient board meeting.
2) Understand and be able to use basic parliamentary procedures.
3) Understand best practices for before, during and after your board meeting.
4) Be able to troubleshoot meeting issues.
5) Gain insight into how you can increase transparency at your meetings.

Today's Session

Essential Questions:

1) Are your board meetings effective? How do you know?
2) Why are effective meetings so important?
3) Do your meetings create a culture of **inquiry** and **transparency**?
4) How consistently are your meetings aligned with the GA Open Meetings Act **as well as** *best practices*?

Today's Session

Format:

Pre-Meeting
How do you prepare for meetings?

Meeting
What are best practices and procedures that help your meeting flow and increase transparency?

Post-Meeting
What happens after the meeting is over?

Pre-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

The following steps should be taken before each meeting:

1) Agenda development - set policy on how the agenda is developed

1) Board packet - should be distributed 5 business days in advance of the board meeting

1) Agenda / notice transparency requirements

1) Meeting location, time and set-up

Pre-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

GCSA

Agenda Development:

1) Who should be developing the agenda and when?

1) Best practices for agenda development

1) Common issues with agenda development-

   ○ Role Confusion

   ○ Timeliness

2) What happens if your agenda is not posted before the meeting?

Developing an Agenda

- Work with administration

- Use the strategic plan, vision, and mission statements as a guide

- Consider time allocations for each item

- Note items for action or discussion on the agenda

- Use consent agendas when appropriate

Consent Motion

- To expedite business for routine items

- A single motion to approve several items at one time

- Complete supporting information should be provided in board packets

- Items that should not require questions or discussion

- Single items can be moved to the regular agenda for governing board consideration

- Once approved, items cannot be removed

Pre-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Board Packet:

1) What should be included in the board packet?

2) How far in advance of the meeting should the packet be distributed?

3) Best practices for developing a thorough and timely board packet

4) Common issues with board packet development & distribution

Board Packets

- Distributed one week in advance

- Include the meeting agenda

- Include minutes from previous meetings

- Meant to provide governing board members with information in advance of the meeting

- Include written reports from committees and administration

- Synopsis should be thorough, but not burdensome

- Packets should enable governing board members to formulate questions and opinions in advance

- Packet information that is not protected under privacy laws should be posted online

Pre-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Agenda / Notice Transparency Best Practices:

1) Why does transparency matter for charter school boards?

1) What are some barriers to maintaining compliance/best practices?

2) How to address transparency issues and increase trust among your stakeholders?

Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (1)

- **Open Government Guide:**
  http://www.rcfp.org/ogg/index.php?op=browse&state=GA

- **MEETING** defined:
  - Gathering of a quorum of board members or committee of the members

  - Official business, policy or public matter is:
    - formulated
    - presented
    - discussed
    - voted upon

Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (2)

◆ What is <u>not</u> a MEETING:

- Inspections of physical facilities or property
- State-wide meetings or trainings
- Meetings with other agencies
- Travel
- Social or ceremonial events

No official business is permitted at these gatherings.

+ **Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (3)**

◆ Open access of meetings:

- ❑ Open to the public and the press.

- ❑ The public and the press can observe and record

- ❑ Public does not have the right to participate in the meeting, just to observe.
    - ❑ You can give them the right to participate through public comment.

- ▪ Votes taken in violation of the law are void.

Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (4)

◆ Notice and Agenda:

❑ Establish a set schedule of meetings
❑ Post meeting dates in a conspicuous location (date, time, location)
❑ Post agendas not more than 2 weeks in advance but as soon as possible (at least 1 week)
❑ 24 hour notice for emergency called meetings must be posted and placed in a local news vehicle (e.g., paper). MUST state the reason for the emergency meeting in the notice.
❑ Agendas for meetings should be specific enough to advise the public of the matters expected to come before the board. Matters outside of the agenda can be addressed if they were not anticipated before the meeting by amending the agenda.

▪ Minutes must be kept of all Board Meetings including members present, description of motion or proposal, record of votes.

+ Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (5)

◆ Minutes:

- Summary minutes, final minutes, and executive session minutes are required for every meeting. That includes committee meetings.

- Final minutes must state what agency members were present, describe each motion, and record all votes.

  - If the vote is not unanimous, the votes of participants must be recorded.
  - They must also show executive session votes, as the actual vote must take place in the open meeting.

- Executive session minutes are not released to the public. They are used in court if there is a dispute.

  O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-1(e)(2), 50-14-4(a)

Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (6)

◆ Exceptions:

❑ Closed meetings may be held with counsel to get advice on actual or threatened litigation. If litigation is not involved (or if there is no tangible threat of litigation) then the discussion must be public.

❑ The mere presence of counsel does not make executive session proper.

❑ The acquisition or disposal or lease of real property may be considered and voted on in closed session. There must still be a subsequent public vote.

O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-2, 50-14-3(a)(5), (b)(1)

Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (7)

◆ Personnel Exception:

❑ Executive sessions shall be permitted for:

"Meetings when discussing or deliberating upon the appointment, employment, compensation, hiring, disciplinary action or dismissal, or periodic evaluation or rating of a public officer or employee or interviewing applicants for the position of the executive head of an agency. The vote on any matter covered in this paragraph shall be taken in public."

O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-3 (b)(3)

+ Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (8)

◆ Executive Session Requirements:

❑ Requires a vote

❑ Regular minutes must show the specific reason for closing the meeting, those present, and those voting for closing the meeting

❑ Requires that the chair execute a sworn affidavit showing the basis for the executive session and that the closed part of the meeting was limited to these provisions

❑ Chair has the duty to keep the meeting limited to the proper purposes of the closed meeting, and if it is not, to adjourn the closed meeting

O.C.G.A. §§ 50-14-4

Georgia Open Meetings Act – Operating in the Sunshine (9)

◆ Telephonic Meetings:

❑ "Governing board, agencies, or committees with <u>statewide jurisdiction</u> may hold telephone conference call meetings, provided that public access is assured and the public notification provisions of the statute are followed......"

Types of Meetings: Regular Meetings

- Take place once per month

- Must have a quorum for voting

- Are held for the purpose of conducting business

- Include committee reports

- Include administrative reports

- Include an examination of unfinished business

- Include new business or emerging issues

Types of Meetings: Training Sessions or Workshop

- Address a specific issue
  - Strategic planning
  - Budget development
  - Facilities design and construction

- Are generally longer than a regular meeting

- Are for developing new skills or knowledge

- Are for team building exercises

- Boards should not vote at training sessions and workshops.

- A regular meeting may be conducted after a workshop or training, but only if posted according to Open Meetings Law and the bylaws of the school.

Types of Meetings: Chance or Social Meetings

- According to state law, "meeting" does not mean a chance or social meeting

- Law explicitly states a chance or social meeting may not be used to circumvent the provisions of Utah's Open & Public Meetings Act

- Examples of chance or social meetings
  - Board socials
  - Dinners at conferences

Pre-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Meeting Time, Location, and Set-up:

1) Does the time of the meeting matter?

2) Where are most board meetings held?

3) What should you consider when selecting the meeting room and set-up?

Pre-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Pre-Meeting Resources to Have on Hand:

1) Summary of GA Open Meetings Act
2) Agenda Template
3) Notice Template
4) GA Open Meetings Law Checklist
5) Others?

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

1) Establishing quorum

2) Rules of order

3) Bylaws

4) Public comment

5) Amendments to the agenda

6) Time management

7) Troubleshooting meeting

Beginning the Meeting

- Chairperson opens the meeting on time

- Set a standard for beginning on time

- Greet governing board members, board guests, and members of the community

- Read vision and mission statements

- Verify a quorum is present

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Establishing Quorum

❑ What do your bylaws say about quorum requirements for a meeting?

❑ How do you make sure that you have quorum prior to the meeting? Who is responsible for this?

❑ What should the board do if there is no quorum and it's time to start the meeting?

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Rules of Order
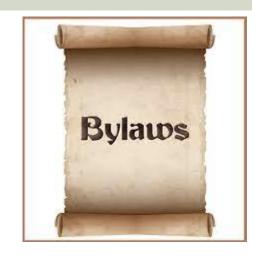
Why do boards use rules of order?

Basic Rules to Know

- Call to order
- Motions / taking action
- Rescinding a motion
- Executive session
- Voting on executive session matters
- Closing the meeting

Who keeps your board on track with parliamentary procedures?

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Bylaws

1) What is the purpose of the bylaws?

2) What are some situations where you might need to use the bylaws during the meeting?

3) Who is responsible for making sure that the bylaws are updated?

4) How often should the bylaws be updated?

5) What are the consequences of not acting in accordance with the bylaws?

6) What should you do if you are in violation of the bylaws?

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Public Comment

1) What is your board's procedure for public comment?

2) Public comment best practices/considerations

   ○ Sign-up requirements

   ○ Freedom of speech and public comment

   ○ Time limits

   ○ Agenda placement

3) How can the public access your policy?

How would you advise this board?

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Amendments to the Agenda

1) How often does your board need to adjust the agenda after it is published?

2) Do your agendas have placeholders for committee reports?

3) What procedure does your board use to amend the agenda? Is this procedure in the bylaws?

4) What are some common agenda issues?

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Time Management

1) How long are your board meetings?

2) Do you ever delegate something to a committee or table a matter due to a prolonged discussion?

3) Do you put time limits on your agenda?

4) Best practices for time management

5) How does committee work impact time management during the regular board meeting?

Maintaining the Pace

- Stick to the agenda whenever possible

- May note the expected time allotted for each agenda item

- Respectfully remind governing board members of time

- Manage lengthy or ineffective discussions

- Discuss only updates or questions regarding written reports

- Allow each governing board member an opportunity to speak

- Provide breaks when necessary

- Avoid long meetings, and end meetings that run late when efficiency declines

Considering the Issues

- Present the issue or problem

- Brainstorm potential solutions

- Establish a committee if more information is required to make a decision

- Cull the list to the most viable choices

- Evaluate the choices in light of the vision and mission statements

- Evaluate the costs, benefits, and impacts

- Make the decision

Ending the Meeting

- End meetings in a timely manner

- Review individual assignments and clarify tasks

- Establish topics for the next meeting

- Place unfinished business on the agenda for the next meeting

- Thank governing board members and guests

- Adjourn by majority vote

Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Resources to have on hand during the meeting:

1) Summary of GA Open Meetings Act

2) Rules of Order Summary

3) Sample Public Comment Policy

4) Executive Session Affidavit

5) Bylaws Checklist

6) Others?

Post-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

1) What are post-meeting transparency considerations?

2) Are there any other post-meeting requirements or best practices to share?

3) Acting as a united front after the meeting.

4) Post meeting discussions

Evaluating Board Meetings

- Meeting effectiveness should be evaluated periodically

- Reflect on efficacy

- Recommend for improvement

- Model continuous improvement for the school community

- Means for evaluation
  - Formal governing board self-evaluation (annually Brief written surveys of meeting effectiveness
  - Informal debriefing at the end of meetings
    - *Was this an effective meeting?*
    - *Why or why not?*
    - *How could it have been improved?*
    - *What percent of our time was reactive vs. strategic?*
    - *+What was good about the meeting?*
    - *– What wasn't effective about the meeting?*
    - *Δ What they would change?*

Summary

- Consider the environment and the timing of the meeting.

- Prepare in advance.
  Develop a reasonable agenda.

- Use consent agendas, board packets, Robert's Rules, and subcommittees

- Stick to the agenda and watch the clock.

- Document meetings properly.

- Evaluate for efficiency and productivity.

Post-Meeting Tasks & Considerations

Resources to have on hand after the meeting:

1) Draft minutes
2) Summary of GA Open Meetings Act
3) GA Open Meetings Law Checklist

STANDARD 5: BOARD MEETINGS

STANDARD 5: BOARD MEETINGS

DESCRIPTION: In order to conduct official business for the purpose of improving student achievement and organizational effectiveness, the governance leadership team plans and conducts board meetings in accordance with the Open Meetings Act.

CONSIDERATIONS:
1. Transparency and access are key considerations.
2. GA Open Meetings compliance - what systems are in place to ensure compliance

MEETING CONSIDERATIONS AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Most Common Best Practice Issues

- Motions are not stated clearly

- Lack of data to support actions

- Sidebar conversations

- Excessively long meetings

- Lack of meeting preparation

- Lack of board member engagement

- Lack of decorum

- Agenda development

- Handling of quorum or lack thereof

- Overly deferential to the leader, or board chair

- Lack of knowledge of pertinent institutional knowledge

- Lack of transparency

Most Common Best Practice Issues

- Micro-managing staff

- Avoiding hard questions

- Insufficient conflict management

- Board / committee leadership not effective

- Airing (personal) disagreements during the board meeting

- Failure to cultivate diversity and ***inclusion***

- Issues with interpersonal relationships among board members

- Lack of objectivity

- Lack of engagement

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