Meeting Agendas

Generally, the CEO consults with the board chair in the development of meeting agendas. The CEO and board chair may meet to review a draft agenda or a draft may be sent to the board chair for comment. The chair assures that agenda items reflect the business of the board, provides advice on the timing of items, and suggests background information that might be needed.

Boards generally have policies or standard practices on how to handle requests from the public, trustees, and staff members to place something on the agenda, and chairs should be very familiar with how different requests are handled. Requests from trustees for agenda items are generally directed to the CEO, board chair, or both. Requests from staff and the public should be directed to the CEO’s office. The CEO and board chair should ensure that requests are addressed at the appropriate time and meeting, and that there is sufficient staff time to prepare background information.

Prior to the meeting, the chair reviews all of the agenda items with the CEO, and is familiar with pertinent issues. The chair often depends on the CEO for support during the meeting on handling various situations, answering questions, or providing background on a topic for discussion. The CEO is in an excellent position to observe the dynamics of the meeting and provide an objective perspective.

The chair should clearly state what is expected from the board in addressing each agenda item. The item itself should clearly state what is needed from the board.

Consent agenda. The consent agenda contains all routine items that require board approval or ratification. For the most part, these are actions that the board is legally required to take but are routine or in areas in which the board has delegated significant authority to the CEO. They usually include approval of warrants, personnel actions, and contracts.

All items on the consent agenda are moved in one motion. Any trustee may request an item to be removed from the consent agenda to be addressed separately.

Action items. Action items require the board to act. They almost always include a staff recommendation for board action. The item may also include reference to the board policy or law that mandates board action, background information on the issue, and pros and cons of alternatives, if any.