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bob@rchcae.com

Prelude to a Board Meeting

Bob Harris, CAE

“We are volunteers, we have real jobs. How do we know where to focus our energy and what to expect at board meetings,” are questions from busy directors.

Board meetings are infrequent. When the meetings do occur, it is an occasion that benefits by preparation.

To build excitement and understanding for a meeting, use a video prelude and a consent agenda. A prelude is an action to introduce something important.

Consent Agenda

Volunteer leaders are expected to arrive ready to conduct business. A consent agenda can save board time by not having to read or hear the reports throughout the meeting’s agenda.

Listening to reports is not the best use of volunteers’ time and talents. The average number of reports on a board agenda is 17.

Use a consent agenda to save time and to focus on important issues. Circulate support materials and reports in advance to give leaders a chance to read them on their own time.

Problems can occur with the consent process. Possibly the reports were not prepared in time to circulate before the meeting.

Board members did not read the reports. Or directors approve the consent agenda and then rehash the reports later in the meeting. The concept requires discipline.

Prelude to the Board Meeting

You hope board members will be enthusiastic about the approaching board meeting. How can you help them prepare? It is their fiduciary duty.

Circulate a brief video about director expectations at the upcoming meeting. Produced by the chief elected officer or executive director, it is shared with directors a few days before the meeting.

The prelude video will elevate awareness of the business and intended results of the next board meeting.

The script may follow this outline:

- **Reminder:** We are excited about the scheduled meeting and want to remind you of the location, access, and logistics.
- **Reading:** You will recall receiving reports with the meeting announcement and agenda. The reports should be read in advance so we can discuss with knowledge and be ready to adopt a motion to accept the reports. Of course, anything that needs to be removed from consent to regular agenda can be noted at the board meeting.
- **Focus:** We are especially excited about some projects we will discuss. Be sure to read the briefings the committee and staff have prepared. If you have questions, please direct them to the executive director or designated person.
- **Gratitude:** We thank you for serving as a volunteer leader and want to make the best use of your valuable time.
- **Questions:** If you did not receive the agenda or reports, please let me know.

The video highlights the purpose and value of the meeting. It builds enthusiasm among the team. It facilitates better outcomes.

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Note: Bob Harris, CAE, provides free governance tips and templates at www.nonprofitcenter.com.