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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Library Advisory Board

As stated in Chapter 2, there are two types of library boards. If the library is a non-profit, it will have a governing board. Municipal libraries have an Advisory Board that assists the director in developing plans and policies and advocates for the library to the governing entity (select board or city council). Advisory boards serve as a liaison between the library, community and governing entity; as such, membership should represent the diversity of the community.

The Work of the Advisory Board

The library director can turn to the board for input on library policies and planning. Advisory boards are the first entity to approve library policies and then the governing entity has final approval. Advisory boards serve as the final hearing in the materials challenge process (See Chapter 12).

Advisory Boards DO:

- Advocate for library support, including seeking support for annual or operational and capital funding
- Advocate for support for the library for local, state, regional and national initiatives
- Promote library services and programs
- Assist library management to develop policies and budget proposals
- Provide support for library management initiatives and decisions
- Advise their governing entity on actions to take for the library

Advisory Boards DO NOT:

- Govern the library
- Hire, manage, or fire the library director
- Hire, manage, or fire other library staff members
- Make decisions concerning policies, budgets, hiring practices, salaries and other library management tasks and issues

Advisory Boards also:

- Have input on library management performance evaluation
- Clarify library policies (e.g. access, confidentiality, etc.)
- Attend and participate at regularly scheduled meetings and other board activities and events
- Serve in an advisory capacity to the governing entity in library matters
- Serve as a liaison and representative from the community in library matters
- Advocate for the library for support from governing entities

- Support the public library's vision and values, such as intellectual freedom and the right to access content

Board Roles and Responsibilities

The responsibilities of an advisory board are very different from those of a governing board. For example, governing boards have fiduciary responsibility for the library's budget and must adhere to Maine's Non-Profit Corporation Act (See Chapter 17). An Advisory Board helps the director develop and review a budget proposal, the long-range plan and library policies.

Advisory Board responsibilities include:

- Providing input and recommendations, when invited and as appropriate, in support of the governing entity's interviewing and selection of the library director and the performance evaluation of the director.
- Assisting the library director in determining the library's mission and vision
- Participating in short and long-range strategic planning
- Advocating for adequate resources
- Assisting in managing resources effectively and efficiently by providing guidance and recommendations to the library director
- Being familiar with and assist the library in communicating about the library's resources, services and public image
- Providing a forum for public communication on library issues
- Assisting the library in assessment
- Reporting library activities and issues back to the governing entity
- Assisting in succession planning for new board members by identifying and motivating others to serve on the advisory board when openings occur
- Being knowledgeable about existing and new populations in the community
- Participating in processes that ensure effective board team work
- Maintaining knowledge of contemporary librarianship through ongoing training and attendance at library and board meetings, committee meetings, other community meetings and state library conferences whenever possible
- Being familiar with the library and its policies and procedures
- Being aware of 21st century librarianship values and responsibilities such as copyright, confidentiality of patron records/data and the public's right to information versus intellectual freedom.

Advisory Board Meetings

Boards should meet at least four times a year and meetings should be scheduled in advance so that all members can plan to attend. Meetings should follow parliamentary procedure (Roberts Rules of Order or the Sturgis Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure) and use an agenda. See Chapter 6 for more information on effective board meetings.

Sample Agenda

- Call to order
- Approval of minutes
- Public comments
- Discussion items
 - Library reports
 - Committee reports
- Director's report- review library goals/ objectives from the strategic plan
- Action items (for example discuss and approve disruptive children policy)
- Adjournment

Meeting Minutes

Recording the discussions and outcome of every meeting is a critical role. It is the responsibility of the board secretary, NOT the director or board chair, to record the minutes of the meeting. Minutes provide structure for the meeting and support the agenda to formalize the process. Minutes provide:

- A short review of the discussions, identify the types of decisions and recommendations made, an overview of assignments and who is responsible for that assignment including timelines and deadlines.
- An accurate account of meeting activities for those not in attendance, including board members, staff, constituents and governing entity members
- A body of knowledge (record, history, archive) of the organization for recordkeeping, reference and reporting
- A legal record of topics discussed, actions taken and decisions made for constituents, staff, members and the governing entity.

Minutes should include:

- Date, time and place of meeting
- Meeting purpose
- Board members present/absent
- Library staff present/absent

- Names and, as required, contact information of visitors, guest and other non-board members present
- The agenda
- Assignments, owners and deadlines/timeframes
- Copies of all handouts distributed during the meeting including research, data, reports or correspondence
- List of reports made
- Motions made, decisions reached and any votes taken, including any individuals required to be recognized according to parliamentary procedures
- Guidelines for handling written minutes (timelines for the distribution of draft minutes, approved minutes and notification of approval and access to minutes)

The Library Director and the Advisory Board

The library director and the advisory board must work in equal partnership to provide the very best services and resources for the community. A good working relationship is essential.

The library director's duties and responsibilities relative to the advisory board include:

- Orientation and ongoing education of board members
- Meeting with the library board at regularly scheduled meetings and additional meetings with either the full board, individual members and with board subgroups and committees
- Distribute and review the Public Library Annual report for the purpose of assessment, strategic planning and advocacy
- Assisting with the preparation of meeting agendas with the board chair
- Informing the board of library activities
- Attending meetings, workshops, seminars and conferences of organizations appropriate to the library and management fields related to board work
- Keeping informed of library trends through professional reading both in general and related to the library
- Identifying, annotating and disseminating advocacy information to board members to inform and enlist support
- Coordinating and scheduling advocacy outreach by board members and needed and appropriate

Decision-Making, the Library Director and the Advisory Board

Advisory boards do not make governing decisions for the library. They do, however:

- Review library decisions on patron concerns and indicate support, as appropriate
- Review policies, on which decisions will be based, for knowledge and recommendations
- Work with the director to identify which library decisions and recommendations must be sent for approval to the governing entity
- Review and participate in strategic planning to assist the library in identifying strategic directions and development
- Assist the director to develop a three- to five- year strategic plan (see Chapter 13 for information about planning) by:
 - Reviewing existing plans
 - Identifying benchmark plans and libraries
 - Surveying the community
 - Speaking with community organizations
 - Receiving input
 - Generating support

The Board's Essential Tasks

An advisory board must represent the library on many levels, in the community, region, state and at national levels. The essential business of an advisory board includes advocacy, communicating need, persuasion, influence and promotion and awareness.

Advisory boards should network with a variety of groups:

- Other library advisory board members
- Other library-related organizations such as the Friends group or library foundation
- Local government
- Business and industry
- Community groups (for profit and non-profit)
- The state library
- State and national legislative efforts.

Sources of Additional Information

- United for Libraries www.ala.org/united/
- The Trustee Listserv MELIB-Trustee@lists.maine.edu
- Sample Advisory Board Job Description (attached)
- Sample Advisory Board Bylaws (attached)

Sample Job Description

Library Name

Advisory Board

(City, Town Name)

Library Vision, Mission _____

Position

The advisory board of the _____ Public Library exists to advise, recommend and advocate for the library to the policy-making governing body, the Town of _____. The board supports the work of the library and provides leadership to the library director as well as leadership to the community regarding library services and resources. Although the operations are managed by the library director, the board-director relationship is a partnership.

Specific board member responsibilities include the following:

- Knowledge of the services and resources available in the library
- Understanding of the governing authority reporting structure for advisory boards
- Understanding /knowledge of community members
- Knowledge of board processes, such as effective teamwork
- Knowledge of local, regional, statewide resources, and /or other libraries near or contiguous to your service area
- Knowledge of liability issues for advisory board members
- Serve as an advisor to the library director

Fundraising

Advisory board members may assist the library in development and fundraising activities that include assisting the library director, the library foundation board or other groups by making annual gifts, by identifying potential contributors (e.g. individuals, foundations, organizations), or assisting in special projects such as book sales and fundraising activities.

Board Terms/Attendance

Advisory board members will serve a ___-year term to be eligible for re-appointment for one additional term. Board meetings will be held _____ (e.g. monthly, quarterly) and any board committee meetings will be (e.g. held in conjunction with the full board meeting). Board members must attend a minimum of ___ board meetings to retain membership on the board.

Board Member Qualifications

Enthusiasm for volunteer service, commitment to a literate community, passion for the vision and mission of the library, and a successful track record of community leadership, including board leadership. Selected board members will possess (specific competencies such as knowledge of and/or experience with area populations, law, finance, etc.) Personal attributes desired include integrity and credibility.

The ___ Public Library in the city of _____ is committed to diversity and seeks board members who represent the diverse community.

Service on the _____ Public Library advisory board is without remuneration. Board members may, however, be reimbursed for certain expenses, e.g. travel to and from regional, state or national meetings and accommodation costs not to exceed \$_____.

General Outline for Advisory Board Bylaws

ARTICLE I

Name

As authorized by the (City, Town) Charter _____ and Ordinance number _____, this body shall be known as the _____ Public Library Advisory Board.

ARTICLE II

Meetings

Section 1.

The regular meeting of the library board shall be held at a time designated by the board in the library or such other place as the board may determine.

Section 2.

Special meetings may be called by the chair or at the call of any two members of the board, provided that notice thereof be given to all board members and the library director.

Section 3.

A simple majority of the members shall constitute a quorum at all meetings of the board. A meeting may be held without a quorum but is identified as such in minutes and board communiques.

Section 4.

All questions presented for a vote of the library board shall be decided by a simple majority of the quorum. *(The vote may or may not include the vote of the chair.)*

Section 5.

Any member of the board who misses three consecutive meetings without good cause shall be deemed to have resigned, and the board will recommend to the governing entity that a replacement be appointed for the balance of the unexpired term. *(The board should determine, in consultation with the library director, if board members appointed to fill out terms are then eligible for appointment to the board given term limits.)*

Section 6.

Board business should be conducted according to parliamentary procedure or rules of order. The process should be chosen by the board and the latest edition of the rules should be used to conduct business in all business meetings and board forums. *(Boards should work within the town structure to determine if specific parliamentary rules are required or if they may choose another.)*

ARTICLE III

Officers

Section 1.

The officers of the board shall be a chairperson, vice-chairperson and a secretary.

Section 2.

Officers shall be elected and take office at the first regular meeting after new board members have been appointed and sworn in.

Section 3.

Vacancies in office shall be handled as follows:

- (a) In the event of resignation or incapacity of the chair, the vice-chair shall become the chair for the unexpired portion of the term.
- (b) Vacancies of officers other than the chair shall be filled for the unexpired term by special election.

Section 4.

Duties of the officers shall be as follows:

- (a) Chair
 - Presides at all meetings
 - Represents the library board at public functions of the town and at events such as special library events, local, state or national advocacy activities for the library or for local, state or national association activities
 - Appoint standing, special or ad hoc committees
 - Assist the library director in establishing the agenda for each meeting. Agenda items requested by any board member should be included.
 - Liaison with the governing entity regarding library issues.
- (b) Vice-Chair
 - Assist the chair in directing the affairs of the board and act in the chair's absence
 - Serve as chair of ad hoc or special committees or projects such as chair of an advocacy initiative.
- (c) Secretary
 - Be responsible for the accuracy and posting of the minutes of the board meetings and bring any corrections to the attention of the board at its next meeting. The secretary shall sign the approved minutes and complete recordkeeping activities as required by the town.

ARTICLE IV

Committees

Section 1.

Committees may be appointed for completing regular business of the board and/or special purposes by the chair and by special request of the library director or the governing authority. Committees, following requests, are formed with the consent of the majority of the board. All committees will have at least one library member serving on them. Standing committees are typically formed annually and reviewed for continuation annually. Ad hoc or special committees are automatically dissolved upon completion of the activity or project.

ARTICLE V

Librarian

The library director serves as an ex-officio member of the board.

ARTICLE VI

Powers and duties of board members

Section 1.

Library board members provide opinion, support and expertise as needed, but do not have governing authority. Board members shall:

- (a) Abide by applicable ordinances of the Town of _____
- (b) Act in an advisory capacity to the library director and the (select board, city council, city manager) of _____ Town.
- (c) Review existing policies and recommend new ones to govern the operation and program of the library
- (d) Review the Public Library Annual Report each year for the purpose of assessment, strategic planning and advocacy
- (e) Assist in strategic planning
- (f) Provide opinion and guidance, as appropriate, for special issues to include, but not be limited to, new facilities, the expansion of existing library facilities, and the performance evaluation of the library director.
- (g) Provide opinion and guidance, as appropriate, for new library services
- (h) Assist in interpreting the policies and functions of the library to the public
- (i) Encourage in every possible way the development and advancement of the public library at local, regional, state and national levels
- (j) Participate in advocacy initiatives including, but not limited to, local issues, including funding issues and requests, state advocacy requests, and federal advocacy initiatives.

ARTICLE VII

Amendments

Section 1.

These bylaws may be amended by a majority vote at any regular meeting, provided all members have been notified of the proposed amendment at least ____ days prior to such a meeting. Such amendment would then be subject to the approval of the town.