

CHAPTER TWO

Types of Boards

2

There are two types of boards of trustees—governing and advisory. A governing board is one that has the final authority and responsibility for the library and its services. Governing board members are generally elected to their positions or appointed by elected officials. The governing board has both *legal* and *fiduciary* responsibilities, hires and fires the library director, sets policy, determines the library mission, and is **directly accountable** to the public.

If the library is a city or town department, it is very likely that the board will be an advisory board. The director will be hired and fired by the town/city manager and will be directly accountable to him/her as a department head. This is generally true of a library that is established by town charter.

An advisory board is typically appointed by the governing authority, such as the town council, and has the responsibility *to give input* into the library's planning process, policy setting, and marketing plan. In some towns and municipalities, the advisory board may even participate in the hiring and evaluation of the director. An advisory board **does not** have the same legal and fiduciary responsibilities as a governing board, but the members are still representatives of the community and can be extremely important volunteers and advocates for the library.

Regardless of whether the board is governing or advisory, both boards do have responsibilities in common. Both should know and understand the local ordinances and state laws that impact the library and its operations. Both boards should be familiar with the library's budget and where the funding is derived. Both boards should promote the library's budget to the funding authorities. Both boards should be involved in the planning process and both should have input into the developing of library policy. The most important role, however, is that both boards should be strong library advocates.

Some advisory boards may have more authority granted to them due to local agreements, circumstances, and history. Note that **written agreements** with the local governing entity are the best way to assure that a library board continues to exercise the power it believes it has. There should be a *Memorandum of Understanding* (MOU) between the municipal governing body and the board of trustees that delineates the roles/responsibilities of each entity. This documentation helps all concerned in the carrying out of their duties. This agreement should be reviewed at least every five years.

Municipalities can help the library in an infinite variety of ways. They may help with purchasing, or with private fund raising for a building addition; they may provide invaluable consulting on building maintenance issues; in many smaller communities they may even take over building maintenance for the library. By

the same token, the most successful libraries are often partners in promoting municipal service agendas. For example, the library director will attend department head meetings with other administrators. He or she may attend city council meetings and give a report. The library may provide services on behalf of the municipality, such as maintaining the town/city webpage. Just as the municipality is a partner in providing library service, the library can be a strong partner in providing municipal service to the community.

Selection and Makeup of the Board

The methods by which board members are selected vary. They may be appointed by a local government body, elected by the membership of a local library association or corporation, elected by public vote, selected through an application process, or named by the board itself. Anyone is potentially qualified to be an outstanding library trustee, but trustees who run for a seat on the board or are appointed in some way should be elected or selected for the special talents that they might contribute. Representatives to the board should bring expert knowledge such as accounting, banking, legal expertise and represent the diversity of the community they serve. Potential or new trustees need to know that service on the library board will take time and energy. Trustees most frequently serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for trustee education or library-related business.

Whether elected or selected by municipal officials, the new library trustee should bring a strong interest in the library and its welfare. Board members need to have personal experience, skills and talents that will benefit the library and its services to the community. Balanced representation should characterize the library board with a representation of both men and women and representation from all community groups.

Typically a library board of trustees is composed of five to seven members, although the municipal governing body, corporation bylaws, tradition, or the board's functions may determine its size. The chair position should be rotated among board members. One good way to involve board members in the work of the library is to appoint members to standing committees reflecting the authority of the board. Special committees may be appointed to deal with special situations.

Sources of Additional Information

- Doyle, Robert P. and Robert N. Night. Trustee Facts File. 4th ed. Chicago: Illinois Library Association, 2012.
- Hopkins, Bruce. The Legal Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards; a Guidebook for Board Members. 2nd ed. Washington: BoardSource, 2009.
- Ingram, Richard T. Ten Basic Responsibilities of Nonprofit Boards. 2nd ed. Washington: BoardSource, 2009.
- Moore, Mary Y. The Successful Library Trustee Handbook, 2nd ed. Chicago: American Library Association, 2010.
- Reed, Sally Gardner and Jill Kalonick. The Complete Library Trustee Handbook. New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 2010.
- Sample Memorandum of Understanding (attached)

Sample Memorandum of Understanding

Town of _____
_____ Library

Memorandum of Understanding

The Town of _____ (the Town) and the _____ Library (the Library) both acknowledge that the two organizations serve the same constituency and have the same goals and objectives. Both organizations want to maximize service to the _____ residents and patrons of the Library.

The Town and the Library also acknowledge that the Town has the capacity to provide certain services that the Library needs. Examples of these services include payroll processing and accounts payable processing. Both organizations acknowledge that there are potential dollar savings and other benefits to having the Town perform certain functions for the Library.

The Town and the Library now agree to the following arrangements for services:

1. The Town will process all payroll related functions for employees at the Library. This is intended to include regular payroll processing as currently provided to Town employees, officials and other entities with similar memorandums of understanding. This includes but is not limited to regular paycheck processing, direct deposit, tax deposits, necessary and selected deductions and any other service that may be appropriate.
2. The Town will process accounts payable upon receipt of coded invoices from the Library. The Library will have full authority over purchasing decisions. On an as-needed basis, the Town will pay out on manual checks invoices that need to be paid prior to the regular processing of an AP warrant.
3. The employees of the Library remain under the control and direction of the Board of Trustees of the Library.
4. This memorandum of understanding is considered to be in place until such time that either the Town or the Library chooses to modify or discontinue the terms of the agreement. Any modification will be subject to mutual agreement. Either the Town or the Library may choose to discontinue the terms of this agreement. In the event of termination of the agreement, the entity wishing to terminate will provide 60 day notice.

Town Manager	Date
--------------	------

Library Board Chair	Date
---------------------	------