

Being an Effective Board Member

Despite the different sizes and types of Washington boards and commissions, it is imperative that board members recognize they are in a critical position to shape and influence board decisions and actions. It is important that each member keeps informed and up-to-date on issues, legislative activity and statutes affecting their board.

Attendance. Regular attendance is essential so that decisions will represent the opinions of the board as a whole. In addition, regular attendance enables board members to keep abreast of board concerns and helps ensure that issues are examined from a variety of perspectives. The bylaws of your board should define attendance requirements. A person may forfeit his or her position on the board as a result of poor attendance.

Preparation. Adequate preparation is another requisite for effective board membership. Your board's staff members will provide reports, proposals and other information to help you make informed decisions. Do not hesitate to request additional information you need to make thoughtful and appropriate decisions.

In a nutshell, effective board members:

- »» Attend all board meetings.
- »» Are well prepared for meetings.
- »» Recognize that serving the public interest is the top priority.
- »» Recognize that the board must operate in an open and public manner.
- »» Are knowledgeable about the legislative process and issues affecting the board.
- »» Examine all available evidence before making a judgment.
- »» Communicate well and participate in group discussions.
- »» Are aware that authority to act is granted to the board as a whole, not to individual members.
- »» Exhibit a willingness to work with the group in making decisions.
- »» Recognize that compromise may be necessary to reach consensus.
- »» Do not let personal feelings toward other board members or staff interfere with their judgment.

Resignations. If you are unable to complete your term, it is important to inform the Governor's Office and the appropriate staff from your board. A letter of resignation should be sent to the Governor indicating the date your resignation is effective and whether you are able to serve until a replacement is named.