

The Signs of a Strong Board – Presented by Karen Robert

In the book, “Called to Serve” by Max De Pree he says that as a Board we have two key questions to consider:

1. What would a really good board look like?
2. Would we know one if we saw it in operation?

He believes that in order to achieve “good board status” we need to agree that the chief responsibility of boards is to be effective on behalf of the organization. This may sound simple enough, but what does being “effective on behalf of the organization” look like? According to De Pree, he suggests that there are at least eleven good marks of an effective board.

1. An effective board has a mission statement.
2. An effective board nurtures strong personal relationships.
3. An effective board stays in touch with its world (whatever its world is). Our world includes those we serve, where we serve, and what we do. According to DePree, *“management should be invited into the board’s world but that the board should not go into management’s area.”*
4. An effective board does very good planning. What is it that we wish to be? – Whom do we serve? – what are the far-reaching implications of our planning?
5. An effective board gives itself competent and inspirational leadership.
6. An effective board works seriously at the growth, needs, and potential of its members. Where do we get good people and how do we keep them?
7. An effective board provides wisdom, wealth, and meaningful work.
8. An effective board is intimate with its responsibilities.
9. An effective board decides what it will measure and does it. How are we doing against our plan?
10. An effective board plans time for reflection.
11. An effective board says “thank you.”

It is my hope that we can continue to be an effective board on behalf of the Friends and the Morro Bay Library. One way to achieve this is to be clear about our own expectations in our roles. Here are some ideas:

Expectations of the Chair/President:

1. Build community. What do followers need from their leaders in achieving organization and personal goals, and what are their needs for the future? – Important to draw out the contributions of each member.
2. Design the agenda. Purposeful and thoughtful agenda – focus on review of plans, assignments, opportunities, and/or problems identified.
3. Communicate.

4. Hold the group accountable.

Expectations of Board:

General

1. Support the Friend's mission, purposes, goals, policies, and programs, while knowing its strengths and needs.
2. Suggest possible nominees to the Board or committees who are people of achievement who can make significant contributions to the work of the Board and the progress of the Friends.
3. Serve actively on committees as requested by the President.
4. Provide input and feedback to the President on the performance of volunteers.
5. Attend activities and events sponsored by the Friends, whenever possible.

Meetings

1. Prepare for and participate in Board and committee meetings, including appropriate organizational activities.
2. Ask timely and substantive questions at Board and committee meetings consistent with personal conscience and convictions, while supporting the majority decision on issues decided by the Board.
3. Maintain confidentiality of the Board's executive sessions, and speak for the Board or the Friends when appropriate to do so.
4. Suggest agenda items periodically for Board and committee meetings to ensure that significant policy-related matters are addressed.

Avoiding Conflicts

1. Serve the Friends as a whole, rather than any special interest group or constituency.
2. Avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest that might embarrass the Board or the Friends, and disclose any possible conflicts to the Board in a timely fashion.

Fiduciary Responsibility

1. Exercise prudence with the Board in the control and transfer of funds.
2. Faithfully read and understand the Friend's financial statements and otherwise help the Board fulfill its fiduciary responsibility.

Fund Raising

1. Assist the Friends by implementing fund raising strategies through personal influence with others.
2. Participate actively in all Friends fund raising special events, programs, and activities, whenever possible.

We have a strong history of community, giving and support, as well as a love of libraries. It is my hope that as we work together we can continue to be reminded of this history, as well as having focus on the future.

20 Effective Group Discussion Guidelines for Our Friends Meetings:

In order to maintain efficient and respectful meetings, the following guidelines will be helpful to all who attend:

1. Everyone participates; no one dominates.
2. Help us stay on track.
3. Listen as an ally.
4. Be willing to share.
5. One speaker at a time.
6. Feel free to ask specific questions of others after you have been given the floor to speak.
7. Keep a positive tone.
8. Be respectful and considerate of others.
9. Be an active listener.
10. Give freely of your experience.
11. Respect that we may all have different perceptions, and that our perceptions matter to us.
12. Keep an open mind.
13. Maintain confidentiality.
14. Focus on “what” not “who.”
15. Take initiative.
16. Lead by example.
17. Be honest with yourself and others.
18. Be accountable.
19. Ask for help, if needed or wanted.
20. Understand and support our mission.

Thank you!