

Audubon Center
of the North Woods

SOUNDING BOARD

Promoting Quality
Charter School
Governance

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Setting the Agenda for Charter School Board Meetings

There are no MN Statutes that specifically reference or require a process for setting meeting agendas for Charter School Board meetings, and there is a lot of variety in the manner in which this activity is accomplished in ACNW authorized schools. Usually the school leader/director plays a major role in establishing board meeting agendas and, beyond that, participation in agenda setting varies considerably.

Sometimes, board chairs are also involved with the director in setting board meeting agendas and that involvement ranges from an informational role to an active decision-making role where the board chair must approve board meeting agendas based on the recommendations of the school leader/director.

And, some charter schools establish an annual calendar and tentative schedule for their board meeting agendas in advance that anticipate when certain topics will most appropriately and most effectively be considered by the board. In such cases, the board creates a draft calendar by month with tentative agenda topics for each month. Some topics are recurring topics such as monthly financial reports, and some are “seasonal” or less often than monthly, such as annual audits or review of MCA data.

There are likely other processes used by charter school boards, and regardless of the process a charter school board decides to use, the process should provide the best structure for the board’s governance work. It is recommended that the school’s bylaws, or a board-approved policy, spell out the process by which the board’s meeting agendas will be established. This allows for consistency over time and eliminates board meeting agendas from being haphazardly and ineffectively developed, to the detriment to the board and ultimately to the school. *Continued on p. 2.*

This paper is not intended to be legal advice. Please check with the school’s legal counsel and / or relevant Minnesota state statute for additional information.



Continued from p. 1. Effective charter school boards most often use an annual calendar as the basis for their monthly meeting agendas. In so doing board members can anticipate well in advance of particular topics appearing on their board meeting agendas, allowing them ample time to prepare by reading, asking questions, gathering information, and to just have time to think about the topics. Then, when the time arrives for those topics to be considered, board members are well prepared to constructively contribute to the dialogue, discussion, and decision-making process of the board.

In addition to pre-planned agenda items from the board-approved annual schedule/calendar, effective boards also realize that from time to time topics will arise that could not be anticipated when the original annual board meeting schedule/calendar was approved by the board. Thus, on a monthly basis agenda items may be added in order for the board to consider them in a timely manner. In such cases, board members will become aware of the additional items, if any, and any materials related to them, when they receive the monthly proposed agenda and meeting materials packet. It is recommended that the meeting materials packet be provided to board members at least five calendar days in advance of each regular board meeting.

Note: Only in emergency or unique and compelling situations should new agenda items be added to a board meeting agenda at the time of the actual board meeting. If agenda items are “added at the table” as the meeting begins, board members will not have had time to review the topic or any materials related to it, and therefore may not be able to provide their best thinking on the topic without adequate research and reflection time.

Sample Board Meeting Agenda Setting Process Policy

Policy: 123. Agenda Setting for Regular Board Meetings of the Sunrise Charter School

(a totally fictitious charter school in Minnesota)

Date Approved: July 15, 2017

Date Reviewed/Revised: June 27, 2019

Purpose

In order to establish an environment for Sunrise Charter School board meetings that will maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of the Sunrise Charter school board relative to its regular monthly governance meetings, the following process will be followed:

1. After consultation with the Board Chair, an annual draft board meeting schedule/calendar for the subsequent school year will be presented by the school director for the board's consideration no later than its regular meeting in June of each year. The DRAFT calendar will contain topics/items the director believes the board should consider at each of its regularly scheduled meetings during the upcoming school year. It will contain recurring items such as monthly financial reports as well as items that arise less frequently than monthly such as the annual audit, academic and environmental literacy reports relative to the ACNW contract, and the evaluation of the director's professional performance.
2. Each year the board will consider and approve a draft annual schedule/calendar by no later than its regular August meeting.
3. The draft board meeting schedule/calendar will be used as the basis to set the Sunrise Charter School Board's regular meeting agenda and it will be the responsibility of the Board Chair, after consultation with the school director, to approve the upcoming meeting agenda and to electronically distribute the agenda and related meeting materials to the other members of the board no later than five calendar days prior to the scheduled meeting.
4. Board members wishing to have a topic of interest to them included on an upcoming board meeting agenda should inform the entire board of his/her interest, the board chair, after consultation with the school director, will make a decision as to if and when the topic will be included on a regular board meeting agenda. If the board member disagrees with the board chair's decision in this regard, he/she may, at a regular open meeting of the board, propose the topic for discussion/consideration at a future board meeting, and request that the full board consider and vote to include or not include the topic.
5. At the beginning of each monthly meeting, the draft monthly board meeting agenda that had been distributed in advance of the meeting will be approved as presented or as amended, in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order. Except in emergency or unique and compelling situations should items be added to the agenda on the day of board meetings since, as indicated above, to do so does not allow board members ample time to gather information and consider the topic as would be in keeping with effective practice.

Sample Annual Charter School Board Meeting Agenda

Ongoing Monthly Board Meeting Agenda Elements

Call to order:

Board Members Present:

Establishment of a Quorum:

Declaration of No Conflicts of Interest by Board Members

Consent Agenda:

Reports:

Action Items:

Adjournment:

Next Meeting Date:

Topics for the next meeting:

Note: The below is for illustration purposes and is not all-inclusive. Some topics may be best discussed/acted upon during monthly meetings other than those in the example and other topics can be added.

July:

- Confirm director evaluation process: Affirm job description , set goals, review evaluation process, and identify measurable outcomes.
- Identify outstanding needs to successfully operate the school in the coming year (e.g. staffing)
- Review budget to projected enrollment status
- Review monthly financial reports
- Conduct board strategic planning retreat

August:

- Review monthly financial reports
- Establish job description, professional performance goals, and evaluation process for the school leader
- Adopt board training plan for the year

September

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Receive a school opening report from the school leader
- Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals.

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October:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- First budget adjustment
- Conduct board training (topic TBD from board training plan approved in August)

November:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Accept annual audit and discuss any findings, taking action if needed
- Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals.

December:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Begin to gather data for school leader's mid-year formative evaluation
- Receive an update from the Building Company (or equivalent)

January:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Conduct school leader's mid-year formative performance evaluation

February:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Second budget adjustment
- Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals.
- Begin gathering data for proposed budget for next year

March:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Conduct board training (topic TBD from board training plan approved in August)

April:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Review and discuss a draft of next year's operating budget

May:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Third budget adjustment
- Conduct board training (topic TBD from board training plan approved in August)
- Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals.

June:

- Review monthly financial report and budget to actual enrollment
- Complete school leader performance evaluation
- Adopt budget for next year