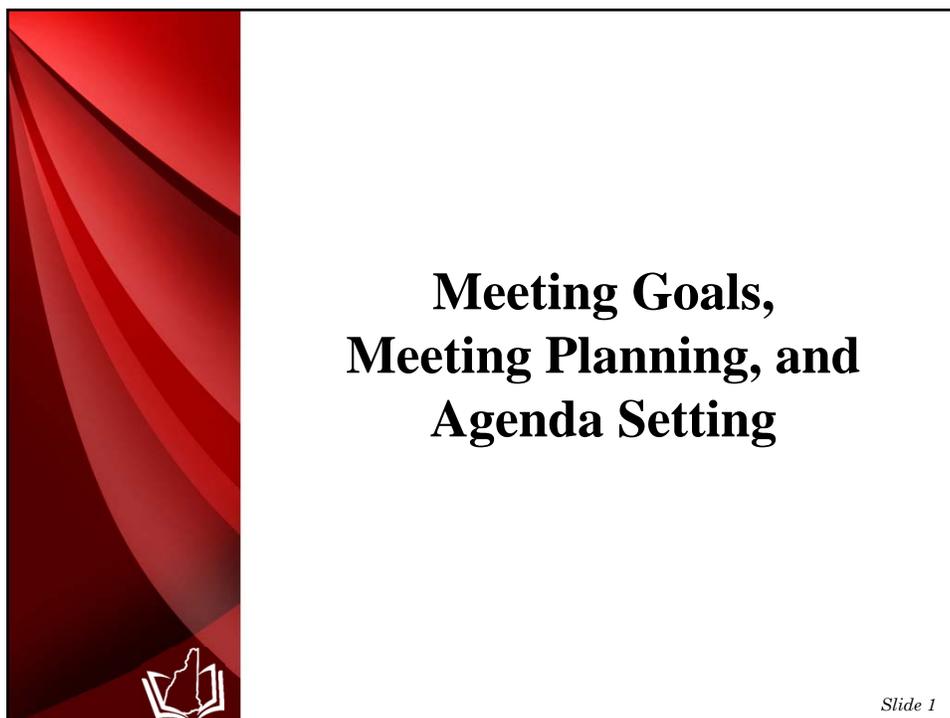


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Meeting Goals

- Effective and productive meetings require forethought.
- The starting point:
 - Desired objectives & required actions
 - What are the board's desired – or required – outcomes?
 - What are the administration's desired – or required – outcomes for each meeting?
- The objectives and outcomes inform and define the agenda.

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Meeting Goals

- Meeting goals & desired outcomes should relate to the primary functions of the school board.
 - Adopt a policy?
 - Finalize the budget?
 - Have a hearing/make a finding & decision?
 - Receive reports?
 - Ratify a contract?
 - Vote on a committee's recommendation?
- For most meetings there will be more than one desired outcome.

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Agenda v. Notice

- “Agenda” = a list of matters which are to come before the meeting for consideration and/or decision.
- Distinct from “notice” as used in RSA 91-A:2, which only requires date, time and place of meeting.
- Board policy may include additional requirements, however –

If the rules of procedure of any public body require a broader public access to official meetings or records then those provisions will govern. RSA 91-A:2, II.

** Public body – school board, its committees (including so called “e-boards”) or statutory committees*

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Agenda Setting

- Refer to the board’s policies relative to agenda setting process.
- If none, and things are at times disorganized, consider adopting.
- As day-to-day operations officer of the District (and someone with administrative staff), Superintendent often formulates initial draft agenda.
- Usually in consultation with the Board Chair.

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Agenda Setting

- Board policies/rules sometimes include provisions to allow:
 - individual board members to have items placed on the agenda as a matter of right;
 - members of the public to request agenda items but authorizes screening of such requests as part of the ordinary agenda setting process. (*While a board's business meeting is open to the public, it is not a meeting of the public.*)

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Meeting Planning – Agenda Setting

- When planning for a meeting and the corresponding agenda, consider:
 - required personnel for each item;
 - required space and technology;
 - appropriate amount of time for each item;
 - information board members need prior to the meeting;
 - wording of anticipated motions or resolutions; and
 - The order of business ...

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Meeting Planning - Agenda Setting

- Order of business:
 - is the “normal order of business” appropriate?
 - Consider:
 - the audience and necessary or invited participants pertinent to specific items;
 - anticipated non-public sessions;
 - reduction of transitional disruptions; and
 - issues warranting extra time or special placement.
- Place notation on agenda regarding changes.

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Agenda Setting – Individual Items

- Ask: What is the desired outcome for the agenda item?
 - Consent items addressing routine matters, e.g. as minutes, reports, monthly expenses, etc., considered/approved w/one motion without discussion;
 - Action items on which the board is expected to reach a decision during the meeting;
 - Discussion or presentation items that require comment but do not require action; and
 - Information items requiring no action/discussion.

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Agenda Setting – Individual Items

- When setting the agenda, it can help to identify what category each agenda item falls within.
- Consider whether to include notations for each item. Examples:
 - Finance Committee report. Discussion item. No action needed.
 - Volunteer recruitment and philosophy: *Anticipated action:* form committee of 3-4 board members.

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Agenda Setting – Individual Items

Agenda notations continued...

- Policy Committee: Second reading of policies ABC & XYZ. *Anticipated action:* Review and adopt.
- Presentation by 5th grade social studies class. *Information item.* No action required.
- Sketching out the anticipated time for items can be helpful in planning a meeting and constructing the agenda.
 - use only as guides or benchmarks.

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Sticking to the Agenda Practice Tips

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Sticking to the Agenda Practice Tips

- Start on time.
- Stay organized and stay on task.
 - Parliamentary procedure can help.
 - But procedure should not be the focus.

More on this later.....
- Stay on time.
 - Stay focused on the desired outcomes.
 - If using a timed agenda, be mindful of how/when to stray.

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Sticking to the Agenda Practice Tips

- Have an endpoint.
 - Establish an end time in advance - and adjourn the meeting when you reach it.
 - Not hard and fast usually, but a helpful goal to keep folks on task.
- Don't ambush – no surprises.
 - Effective meetings and good decision making are dependent on good information.
 - “New business” is not the place for board members to deliberate and decide.

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Sticking to the Agenda Practice Tips

- Resolve unnecessary debate.
 - “General consent” - The board chair asks if there is any objection to closing discussion on a particular topic. If no one objects, debate is closed.
 - Make a motion.

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Parliamentary Procedure - Rules of Order

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Parliamentary Procedure

- Parliamentary procedure, i.e. rules of order, help keep meetings efficient, and provide a clearer public record of the board's actions.
- Too much process – e.g., Roberts Rules, can lead to sluggish, unproductive meetings.
- Roberts Rules, by its own admission, does not apply to small legislative bodies.
- Simple rules of order help maximize meeting efficiency and can engender greater participation and collaboration.

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Rules of Order – Examples/Considerations

- Common principles:
 - Each motion may deal with only one issue/idea.
 - Debate must be limited to the motion at hand.
 - When a motion is on the floor, no new motions may be made.
 - No member can speak twice on the same issue under debate until everyone else wishing to speak as spoken to it once.
- *NHSBA sample rules BEDD-R, or alternative BEDDA.*

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Rules of Order – Examples/Considerations

- Limit practice of reconsidering issues that the board has already voted on and acted upon barring new information, or newly constituted boards.
- Should debate follow or precede a motion???
- Efficiency may depend as much on the board itself as it does the specific issue.
- The late Senator from Arizona, Mo Udall, once said, “Everything has been said, but not everyone has said it.”
- Make a motion – call the question.

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Abstentions & Recusals

- Abstentions are not votes but count toward a quorum.
 - Present and voting
 - 3-0 w/3 abstentions passes
 - 2-2 w/2 abstentions fails
 - 2-1 w/2 abstentions passes
- Elected to decide.
- Reserve abstention for missed meetings, etc.
- Recusal - vote unless a personal conflict of interest or bias/prejudice issue is present.

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Role of the Board Chair



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Role of the Board Chair

- Functions of a board chair is largely based upon tradition, reformed by board policy (*NHSBA sample –BBAB*).
- Common roles include:
 - Preside at board meetings;
 - Sign documents on behalf of the board;
 - Consult with the administration re: agenda setting;
 - Confer with the administration on crucial matters that may occur between Board meetings;
 - Committee appointments;
 - Call emergency meetings of the Board as necessary;
 - Board spokesperson.

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Role of the Board Chair

- Meeting responsibilities:
 - enforce board's meeting procedures, and
 - guide the flow of agenda items, discussions on the same and formal board votes.
- As the moderator of debate, the chair should consider withholding his/her position until after others have spoken.
- Recognize all who have comments or questions;
- Keep the group on the topic;

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Role of the Board Chair

- Clarify questions;
- Practice the art of summarization;
- Restate motions to eliminate confusion and help create a clear record;
- Demonstrate and request respect for and by all speakers;
- Vote on all matters!

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Public Participation at Board Meetings - “Public Comment”



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Public Participation

Public Meetings v. Meetings of the Public

- The primary purpose of school board meetings is to conduct the business of the board.
- A school board meeting is one that the public has a right to attend, rather than a meeting of the public where everyone might have the right to speak.
- Neither US or NH Constitutions, nor RSA 91-A require public comment at board meetings.
- Different than annual meeting, or public hearing.

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Public Participation

Public Comment at Board Meetings

- As there is no legal mandate to do so, the “power” to create the opportunity for public comment is reserved to the school board (public body).
- Public input is essential to good governance, and public comment is a long-standing tradition in most communities.
- NH Constitution, Pt. 1, Art. 8.: “*Government ... should be open, accessible, accountable and responsive.*”

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Public Participation

Public Comment at Board Meetings

- When a board allows time at its meetings for public comment, the board creates a “forum” for speech, implicating both the Federal and State Constitutions.
- School boards can enact rules about public comments, but must adhere to 1st Amendment standards.
- Rules may include “time, place and manner” restrictions, as well as other parameters, provided that in all instances, the limitations are viewpoint neutral.

Note: A full discussion of public comment and the 1st Amendment is beyond the scope of this presentation.

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Public Comment

Refer to your own local policy.

NHSBA Sample Policy BEDH.



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Public Participation *Practice Tips*

- Make sufficient copies available of the agenda and other items of general concern (e.g., meeting policies, outline of Right-to-Know Law regarding non-public sessions, report summaries, etc.).
- Place controversial issues early on the agenda.
- Similarly, place participation items (staff, student groups, consultants) early.
- Use language the audience can understand – avoid jargon.

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Public Participation *Practice Tips*

- Summarize public comment rules/policy before the start of public comment period.
- Safest rule to enforce under the 1st Amendment is one limiting speakers to X minutes.
- Administer public comment rules consistently.
- *Public comment is for input, not debate* – Avoid exchanges and arguments. Keep exchanges to a minimum, and never argue.
- For highly controversial topics, consider a “public forum” (special board meeting).

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Public Participation *Practice Tips*

- Be adept at deferring direct response –
 - no single board member can speak for the board until the board has taken a position;
 - deferring reduces the risk of overly emotional responses;
 - deferring – as with agenda setting - helps assure that the information required for meaningful and accurate deliberation is in hand;
 - develop a pattern of integrating meaningful input into future agendas or board business part of the meeting.

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