

## Good Board Member/Elected Official

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As I sit to write this article, I reflect back on last week, when I attended a training event in Albuquerque, New Mexico, hosted by the National Rural Water Association. There were many of my peers present and the very first day a general discussion took place on what makes for a good Board

Member/Elected Official. I sat back and listened closely to what the group was stating as good qualities and what we should look for in bringing in new volunteers: friendly, bright, young, good communicator, willingness to be around for some time.

As I thought about this, I was imagining someone that would “go with the flow”. I believe these were all good qualities and I considered what else I would want my Board to be. I believe a good Board Member/Elected Official should have good leadership qualities including: dedication, knowledge, a good listener, a good representation of those we serve, someone who brings experience and vision to the group, thinks outside the box, is able to attend meetings and serve on committees, has good public relations skills, has the ability to contribute new ideas and has an encouraging attitude, to just name a few.

When I returned from this weeklong training event, I summarized the week's discussions and sent an email to my Board of Directors briefing them on what was discussed. I included the short list of what makes a good Board Member and our President, Florence Braunius responded to the email just as I had hoped she would. Her thoughts and mine were very close to the same and she let me know what she felt was missing from the list. I do admire the fact that she contributes to everything I send her and I am confident she is right in the position that the Board has elected her to. I feel fortunate to have a great Board of Directors to work for and with.

So this is what my article is about - What Makes a Good Board Member/Elected Official.

A Board Member/Elected Official functions as part of a group, a team player, and not as an individual. The job of the Board is a critically important leadership role in the community or in an Association. Whether you're new to the Board or a residing member, it's vital to know your responsibilities.

Ask yourself, do you provide orientation for new Board Members, and do you have a Board Job Description. Does your Board support your staff? This is important to develop a partnership with Board and Staff; it is essential to

your systems management team. It is only through working together that you can achieve lasting and significant benefits to your community.

Do you know your legal and financial responsibilities? Do you have a long-range plan for the future of your water system, and are you aware of the funds available for improvement projects? You must know where you are now, and then decide where you want to be, and how you will reach your ultimate goal for tomorrow. Focus on the ends while setting guidelines for the means. Have you considered a Board Retreat, which could provide a good atmosphere for a productive planning session without many distractions? It's good to establish reasonable deadlines for the goals you set. It's important to remember to let the staff implement these plans, you must move forward in concert to achieve good results. Be sure not to micromanage, have the confidence in your staff.

As a good Elected Official/Board Member, you must ensure compliance with all applicable state, federal and local laws. You must see that all records and minutes are maintained and made available. You must assure system revenues cover the operations, debt service, and reserve. Be sure to review your rates to provide adequate funding.

These are just some thoughts I wished to share with you. Proper Elected Official/Board responsibilities can result in your service being a positive experience and provide for an atmosphere for action, rather than reaction.

Volunteers are the backbone of our communities and organizations. These individuals step forward and take on the charge set before them; we applaud their volunteerism and their dedication. ♠



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