



from your Associate Director

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AS WE DIVE INTO the new year (2021), the association is starting to gather information and finally confirm plans for our events this year (2021). As of this publication, we have webinar dates reserved but we are finalizing the programs and speakers. It is my hope to have the schedule confirmed for publication in the March 2021 edition of *Perspective*. Delayed a few months because of the Pandemic but not reduced in delivery in any way. We have been waiting to confirm the calendar in response to the pandemic in this first quarter of 2021.

The message this month by the association is to be effective, continue to promote and create a sound township community, and most of all continue incorporate health and safety guidelines in your township communities to help combat the pandemic. This can first be achieved by having effective township board meetings that encourage participation and overall efficient use of resources in your community.

We encourage you to watch the TOI website at www.toi.org for any updates on the pandemic as well as the legislature and overall township news items.

The following are some suggestions from YOUR Association on how to be **effective** at Township Board Meetings:

BE PREPARED AND PLAN AHEAD

It is important to have a well-prepared board for the regular monthly meetings of the Township. The time you meet as a board is important to everyone involved. This time should not be wasted on the expectations of other board members that are not prepared. Knowledge is power, work to prepare a well-informed board prior to the meeting on the issues currently on the agenda. A well-informed board is an effective board.

HAVE A SOLID AGENDA WHEN MEETING

Develop a process with you board members on the monthly preparing of the agenda. Specifically, the action items and informational items included. Ensure that the board members receive all relevant information regarding formal action items prior to the board meeting. There are various electronic ways to ensure receipt of valued information.

Make sure that the board understands the impor-

tance of action items and the placement of those items on the agenda regarding posting and final voting. This is required to be done in advance of the scheduled meeting.

KNOW THE RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Traditions are great. Every Township has traditions on meeting procedures. However, the requirements of the Illinois Open Meetings Act, the Freedom of Information Act and other various laws in Illinois dictate the progression of all items and information that comes before your Township board. ALL meetings are open to the public as public meetings. All information is open information unless provided for by state law. Build credibility on the process and your positions prior to active engagement. Build credibility in representing the Township's best interest. Avoid looking like a self-serving organization. Become familiar with your requirements, embrace incremental change if it is needed to promote the overall goals and objectives of the township.

BUILD TRUST

Politics brought you into the Township process do NOT let it define your attitude, personality, and position upon the Township board. Long-term success with any public body is contingent on encouraging others to believe you mean what you say. Making sure that TRUST is established takes time. Especially with a new board. Do not dismiss this with your community as it is a vital component to you as an elected official and to your Township board.

KNOW THE RULES OF PROCEDURE

Proper rules of procedure are important to the success of any public board. Although not mandated by state law, it is encouraged that public bodies like townships follow *Robert's Rules of Order* exactly as General Robert's intended. There are several publications on this process, and it can contribute to the success of all meetings. Most of all, a defied accurate process assists the clerk in recording the minutes of the meeting from a formality perspective.

Establish procedures of decorum for the board meetings. Adopt public comment policies and encourage brief concise engagement to encourage well prepared

understanding of events. Become familiar with what is permitted with public comment and avoid restricting it in any way.

REMAIN CALM AND PROMOTE POSITIVITY

There is often excitement and emotions that become part of public meetings. However, this is not the place for one to lose control. It is important to keep your temper under control and not insult or bring ill behavior to the table so that your positions are taken seriously and in their full intention. Promote a positive attitude among the board members. Avoid political battles among the board practices. You are representing your electors and their best interests.

PROMOTE TRANSPARENCY

Since the early 1970's the transparency of government at all levels became apparent. You must remember that your duties as an elected official are exactly that—elected. You are a steward of the public's financial contributions to provide the services deemed within your government bodies jurisdiction.

The money you are managing is not yours but the township residents. It is TAX DOLLARS collected to benefit the township community. Hidden agenda and personal intentions are not permitted. There are statutorily enacted provisions that mandate you report all income and expenses within the guidelines of state law.

PROMOTE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

It is imperative for you have promote communication to achieve success as a township. There are many effective and efficient ways to establish a communication plan between you, the board, and the electors. This plan can be used to promote and generate community support for the township. Some of our suggestions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Establish email for the township specific as well as the individual elected positions. It is important for elected officials to NOT utilize their personal email with a township email. Remember that email regarding official business of the township is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 ILCS 140). *If an official combines personal and township email under one account that account may be subject to the requirements of the Act.*
- Develop a township website. This is a very effective way to communicate with your electors and overall community.
- Interact with your township community.

- Work on developing programs and services to promote effective, efficient and most of all beneficial to the residents.

PROMOTE BOARD EDUCATION

An educated board is an efficient board. Encourage your board to become familiar with new laws and practices needed for efficiency in your township. There are many programs proved by the association to assist elected officials and staffs.

READ AND KEEP ISSUES OF TOWNSHIP PERSPECTIVE

The Township Officials Illinois provides 11 issues annually of the *Township Perspective* magazine. This publication coincides with the calendar of events and requirements for township officials. It is a guide to “what you need to be focused on” as an elected township official and includes a variety of beneficial information. We encourage you to keep the monthly issues as a desk reference annually to assist in your day-to-day duties as a township official. Please make sure all your officials are receiving a copy as an association member benefit.



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