

Recreation and Parks Board Handbook



A Resource Guide for Recreation, Parks and Conservation
Fourth Edition

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Recreation and Parks Board Handbook

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Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

in partnership with

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Fourth Edition

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Imagine...you are serving on a recreation and parks board with great support from your elected officials. One of your elected officials serves as a liaison to your board and even attends your meetings. You always have a quorum and members come to meetings with ideas and the willingness to take on a new project or two. Your citizens support recreation and parks services and want to see money spent to improve your parks and programs. Your board works closely with your school district and community groups to coordinate your efforts and promote the opportunities you offer for your citizens. You are a positive group, focusing on what is best for your community at all times. People understand the important role you play as a board member and appreciate your efforts...

Maybe your board experience is just like this...and maybe it isn't quite so perfect.

The *"Recreation and Parks Board Handbook"* provides answers and advice to help move you towards that perfectly functioning board. Written for advisory board members, it covers the basics of your roles, responsibilities and relationships, plus how to strengthen your board's operation, develop community support for recreation and parks and establish credibility in the eyes of your elected officials. It is designed in an easy-to-read format to give recreation and parks boards and those interested in establishing them the information needed to successfully provide this important government service.

With our state's fragmented local government structure, it is understandable that you may need some guidance. We use real-life examples from recreation and parks boards across Pennsylvania so you see that you're not alone in most of the challenges you're facing. Others have successfully solved problems and moved projects forward. We share their success stories with you.

Our overall goal is to get you informed and excited about your volunteer job. Why be a "bored" member? There is so much you can do to improve your board's operation. We want to get you off to a good start.

We encourage you to read *"Community Recreation and Parks"* before this handbook. It provides a foundation on the basic concepts of public recreation and parks services in Pennsylvania and a directory of available resources. You can download *"Community Recreation and Parks"* from DCNR's website at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/publications.

You care about your community or you wouldn't be reading this. To effectively carry out your responsibilities, there is a lot to learn. Let's get to it. Read on!

Introduction

“Our park and recreation board members are hard working, community-minded folks...an unbelievably dedicated group of people that is extremely important to the township. They’ve been instrumental in helping us greatly expand the number of park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs offered for our citizens. In particular, they’ve done an outstanding job getting input from residents to find out what the needs are, and keeping residents and me and my fellow elected officials informed about what’s happening.”

*Chip Behr
Township Supervisor
Lower Gwynedd Township
Montgomery County*

When municipal officials recognize the importance of providing recreation and parks services for their residents but need help to do it, they often create recreation and parks boards. These boards are comprised of volunteer citizens whose job is to focus on the needs of the community and advise local government on recreation and parks matters. In Pennsylvania, the first recreation and parks boards were created over 60 years ago.

There are two basic types of boards, advisory and policy-making. The vast majority of Pennsylvania’s recreation and parks boards are advisory, meaning they provide valuable input but have no final decision-making or enforcement authority. They make recommendations that aren’t adopted unless their local elected officials approve them. Many of our state’s advisory recreation and parks boards do not have part-time or full-time staff. Boards with no staff serve in a much more hands-on way than those with staff.

Policy-making recreation and parks boards are independent governing boards with final decision-making responsibilities. In Pennsylvania, policy-making boards have full control over recreation and parks services, but do not have taxing authority. The municipal governing body controls the appointment and removal of board members, the level of tax support and the approval of the policy board’s budget. Most of our state’s policy-making boards either function as municipal authorities or regional recreation commissions serving multiple municipalities. These types of boards have the power to employ staff and a budget shared by the participating municipalities based on a formula. They include representatives from the participating municipalities and often a school district. Pennsylvania’s Intergovernmental Cooperation Law serves as the foundation for municipalities to create an intergovernmental agreement of cooperation to form a joint recreation and parks board or commission.

This agreement becomes a legal contract which specifies the regional agency's purpose, responsibilities, funding and board membership structure. The scope of a regional agency can range from recreation programming to developing parks and trails, operating a large park complex and managing a community swimming pool or recreation center. Municipal partners usually retain ownership of their park areas and recreation facilities. They may maintain separate advisory recreation and parks boards and still be a part of a regional recreation and parks board.

This handbook is geared towards advisory boards without recreation and parks directors, to help them get organized and operate efficiently and effectively. Many sections will also be helpful to those boards with directors, and to policy-making boards. Keep in mind, too, that every region of Pennsylvania has its own distinct character and that no two municipalities are alike. So there may be instances when this handbook doesn't seem to fit your situation.

Fulfilling the role of a recreation and parks board takes money and time, plus one essential ingredient - people. Recreation and parks is the only municipal service where participation is a matter of choice. Think about it. Other services that local government provides like police protection, roads, water and sewer are not like that. To develop municipal park areas and recreation programs that residents will use, it's important to know their needs and interests. How do you find out what they are?

Forming a recreation and parks board, a group of people that represents all residents and focuses its attention on local recreation and parks needs, is part of the answer. Recreation and parks board members are citizen advocates who play a key role in determining, implementing and gaining financial support for recreation and parks services. As an advisory board it may only make recommendations to your governing body. It has no legal powers or

The Role of Local Government Recreation and Parks

To provide opportunities that guarantee every resident quality recreation experiences.

This is accomplished by
1) developing and maintaining park areas and recreation facilities for citizens to enjoy, and at the same time, protecting and preserving the environment for future generations and
2) offering recreation programs and services that are consistent with citizens' needs and interests and add to their health, sense of well being and sense of community.

“We recently completed a Regional Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Guess what came out as the number one project our residents want? A hiking trail from Rye Township to the swimming pool in the borough! This opened everyone’s eyes to the fact that our citizens want our local governments to provide recreation. Our next step will be to form a recreation and parks board.”

*Marita Kelley
Municipal Secretary
Marysville Borough
Perry County*

ability to implement its recommendations. Members do, however, offer lots of people power. A board allows for the vital involvement and participation of citizens that is necessary to meet your community’s needs. Municipal recreation and parks is strengthened as the board gains more spheres of influence and more people who are interested in the success of your services. Even though a recreation and parks board only makes recommendations, it *will* affect the policy decisionmaking of your elected officials because of its people power.

How are Recreation and Parks Boards Created?

Pennsylvania municipalities must pass an ordinance at a public meeting of the governing body that spells out the board’s title, number of members (depending on governmental unit, this is designated by law), powers, duties, responsibilities and organizational structure. (See Appendix A for a sample board ordinance.) All municipalities in Pennsylvania have the ability to create a recreation and parks board. Over 900 of our 2,566 municipalities have done so.

Even though your elected officials have the authority to establish a recreation and parks board, they aren’t mandated to do so. It’s often up to a community’s residents or your municipality’s staff to recommend that a board be established. If your municipality doesn’t have a recreation and parks board and you’re interested in establishing one, consider the following:

- Contact the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation for general assistance, sample ordinances and contact information for other recreation and parks boards close to your community. (See Appendix B for information on the Bureau’s regional offices.)
- Attend several municipal public meetings to get a sense of your elected officials’ views on work, before suggesting they establish a board.

Why is an Advisory Recreation and Parks Board a Good Idea?

A recreation and parks board is a group of conscientious volunteers who work to improve life in your community by providing citizens with close-to-home park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs. This board benefits your community by:

- Being aware of the needs and viewpoints of their neighbors, friends and fellow citizens. A board helps your municipality become more customer-driven by providing ongoing public input. As the eyes and ears of your community, a board also knows how and when to broach a subject with residents.
- Selling the worth of recreation and parks to elected officials. As citizens themselves, a board carries clout and political influence. Elected officials listen to voters. A board can gain financial support for parks and programs and can effectively negotiate with elected officials.
- Developing the recreation and parks vision of your community, helping your municipality become forward thinking and encouraging it to be proactive rather than reactive.
- Extending the capability of your local government by providing support for the operation of your recreation and parks system, especially if your community has no staff.
- Enhancing the image, developing community pride in and enlisting public support for your recreation and parks system. A board helps spread the word about your great parks and programs.
- Monitoring the public expenditures of citizen tax dollars and raising funds to supplement budgeted funds.
- Serving as a buffer between citizens, recreation and parks directors, other municipal staff and elected officials on controversial issues.
- Providing continuity from year-to-year for the operation of your recreation and parks system.
- Planning and conducting recreation programs and special events and involving more citizens as volunteers.

Introduction

“Seeing how much people enjoy our parks and programs keeps me active and involved. Our residents support and appreciate our hard work. I feel that what we’re doing makes our township a better place.”

*Mary Catherine Noel, Chair
Robinson Township Parks and
Recreation Board Allegheny
County*

- Introduce yourself to members of your governing body so that they know who you are.
- Talk with other community residents about recreation and parks board and make a list of people who are interested in serving.
- Talk informally with your elected officials about recreation and parks boards, explain what they are and what work they can do, and ask for their suggestions on how you can promote the idea of establishing a board. Tell them you have other residents who are interested in serving as board members.
- Make sure your elected officials know that they appoint members and that the board provides advice to the governing body. Instead of a new layer of bureaucracy, recreation and parks boards advise and inform the governing body on issues facing the community.
- Submit a written proposal outlining your ideas for a recreation and parks board and a list of projects you think the new board should undertake.

The Benefits of Public Recreation and Parks

When your municipality invests in park areas and recreation programs, you create many opportunities that benefit your citizens and your community as a whole. A quality recreation and parks system positively impacts people’s lives and makes your community a better place to live. As a recreation and parks board member, remember these important benefits as you do your work. These are the things you’re helping to make happen. Do your best to educate your elected officials about the important role recreation and parks plays in many different areas.

The following page highlights some of the many benefits public recreation and parks services can provide to your citizens.

Meeting the Basic Needs of Your Residents	Improving Your Local Economy	Enhancing Your Natural Environment	Strengthening Your Community
<p>Improve health and fitness</p> <p>Enhance creativity and cultural growth</p> <p>Build relationships among people</p> <p>Develop character</p> <p>Reduce stress</p> <p>Provide experiences that meet people's needs for belonging, identity, relaxation, happiness, recognition, achievement, affection, social approval, adventure, excitement and competition</p> <p>Provide experiences that help people grow, develop self-confidence and increase self-esteem</p> <p>Offer diversion from routine</p> <p>Provide life-long learning and self-discovery opportunities</p>	<p>Attract business relocation and expansion</p> <p>Serve as a catalyst for tourism by bringing visitors to spend money and time in your community</p> <p>Contribute to healthy and productive work forces</p> <p>Enhance real estate values</p> <p>Bring increased revenue for services with new home construction caused by business expansion</p> <p>Reduce the high repair cost and unsightly look of vandalism</p> <p>Aid financial stability in families by providing affordable activities</p> <p>Help supplement citizen income through part-time employment opportunities</p>	<p>Encourage preservation and conservation of the environment</p> <p>Preserve plant and animal wildlife habitats</p> <p>Foster community pride in natural resources</p> <p>Provide accessible places to enjoy nature</p> <p>Protect natural resources and open space areas</p> <p>Help to control pollution</p> <p>Enhance air, water and soil quality</p> <p>Provide buffers between residential and industrial areas</p> <p>Link parks, schools and other places with trails and greenways</p> <p>Provide safe places for biking and walking to cut down on traffic congestion</p>	<p>Encourage a sense of cohesion, unity, belonging, pride and appreciation for your community's traditions and heritage</p> <p>Build stronger families</p> <p>Reduce loneliness and alienation</p> <p>Promote ethnic and cultural understanding and harmony</p> <p>Allow people to meet their neighbors and develop friendships</p> <p>Provide citizen involvement opportunities that build leadership skills for tackling other community concerns</p> <p>Provide alternatives to self-destructive behavior</p> <p>Help prevent crime</p> <p>Keep children out of trouble</p>
Source: National Recreation and Park Association			

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Board Roles and Responsibilities

The Purpose of a Recreation and Parks Board

To help your local government provide the best possible recreation and parks services for your community's residents, keeping in mind the finances you have available, the constraints of your board's structure and the politics of your municipality.

Do any of these questions sound familiar?

- *What's our role?*
- *What are we responsible for?*
- *How do we get organized?*
- *What's our relationship supposed to be with our elected officials?*
- *Why don't we seem to get anything accomplished?*
- *What do our citizens really want?*
- *What's expected of me as a board member?*
- *Why do projects take so long?*
- *Where's the money going to come from?*
- *How can we get help?*

These are normal questions to ask. In recent years, there's been little help available for Pennsylvania's advisory boards...only a handful of training opportunities and few written materials, especially ones geared to our state.

Those of you who already serve on a recreation and parks board know there's quite a bit to this volunteer job.

This chapter covers the basics to help you understand your board's roles and responsibilities, your responsibilities as a board member, and how to organize your board to do its work.

Like most board members you have a strong interest in recreation and parks, but you may have limited experience. To meet the recreation needs of your community's residents you may need help.

What Does a Recreation and Parks Board Do?

A recreation and parks board watches over and often administers recreation and parks services for municipalities. To be an effective board, it's important for you to know your responsibilities and level of authority. In fact, the success of your board depends on how well you and your fellow board members understand your role and how to accomplish your work. Your elected officials also influence your board's success to a great extent. When your advisory board produces good results and earns the respect of elected officials, they may be willing to give you full authority to carry out your assigned responsibilities.

A recreation and parks board should:

- **Give Advice and Provide Recommendations**

A board advises its elected officials on all aspects of municipal recreation and parks services including setting policies and accepting grants, gifts, donations, personal property or real estate.

- **Evaluate Services**

A board helps insure that quality municipal recreation and parks services are provided by giving feedback to elected officials. Members 1) observe recreation programs and interact with participants, 2) visit park areas and recreation facilities and evaluate how well they are maintained, 3) assess how recreation and parks services are managed to identify accomplishments, problems and future direction, and 4) report findings to municipal staff and elected officials.

"For years, we had citizens coming to our parks and recreation commission meetings requesting more playing fields. At our commission's request, municipal council established a committee to research the issue. At the time, I was the chair of the parks and recreation commission, and was asked to head this study committee. We included representatives from all youth sports groups, our school district athletic director and a municipal council member. Our final report evaluated the sports field situation and included specific recommendations. As a direct result of our committee's work, council passed a \$1.4 million bond issue and purchased a 305-acre future park site. Because of the hard work of this group of citizens, we were able to take a very big step toward our dream of a community park focused on active sports."

*Barry Van Germer, Chair
Municipality of Murrysville
Planning Commission
Westmoreland County*

“Ours is a small borough of only 1,300 people. We have a large community park that needs improvement, so funding is always an issue for us. Our park and recreation board has been instrumental in raising money for park projects. We’ve paid for new picnic pavilions, restrooms, playgrounds and a walking path. We run a very successful monthly fundraiser called Family Fun Night that’s also a great recreation program. We open the high school swimming pool, gymnasium and cafeteria for events. Overall, we raise about \$5,000 each month for park improvements and to hold other community recreation programs.”

*Christine Nacovich
Municipal Secretary
Hastings Borough
Cambria County*

- **Determine Budget Needs and Monitor Finances**

A board helps to determine community needs and establish priorities for spending to ensure that funds are available to provide an adequate system of park areas, recreation facilities and programs. The extent that a board is involved in budgeting varies with municipalities and available staff. At a minimum, a board should fully understand how recreation and parks services are funded, make recommendations on operating and capital budget needs as well as fees and charges, and monitor the recreation and parks budget throughout the year. Some boards draft the budget and submit it to the governing body for approval. Others supplement the budget through a variety of methods including fund raising events, sponsorships and donations. In addition to the operating budget, a board should be involved in adopting a longer-term capital budget.

- **Become Knowledgeable about Funding Sources**

A board should know which federal, state and county grant programs it is eligible to apply for, as well as the foundations that may supply monetary support for recreation and parks.

- **Develop Relationships**

Creating and maintaining cooperative working relationships with citizens, community organizations, businesses, elected officials, school districts and government agencies is essential for a board to improve services and effectively serve its community.

- **Serve as Liaisons**

A board promotes the need for and importance of recreation and parks services to the general public and municipal governing body. Unless citizens and elected officials are kept informed with progress reports, they can’t be expected to support recreation and parks services.

When it's necessary, boards serve as a buffer between staff, elected officials and special interest groups.

- **Plan for the Future**

A board develops goals, inventories the existing park areas, recreation facilities and programs within the community, determines what the needs are and sets priorities. This process is typically done in cooperation with elected officials and through the development of a comprehensive recreation, park and open space plan. Boards also help to develop individual park master plans and establish short and long-range park development goals. Boards should focus on cooperative planning with neighboring municipalities whenever possible.

- **Implement Plans**

A board is an action-oriented advocacy group that helps to get plans implemented. It should be involved in all major decisions that involve expenditures, particularly those concerning land acquisition and park facility development.

- **Coordinate Services**

A board researches recreation and parks related services provided by other community organizations and coordinates activities with them. This encourages maximum use of facilities and lower cost recreation services.

- **Recommend Programs**

A board sets recreation program goals and helps to make decisions on the types of programs to offer. Board members participate in activities and special events and monitor them to see community reaction to programs and recommend improvements. Some advisory boards are responsible for all aspects of recreation programming including planning, staffing, promoting and registration.

“Establishing and working towards achieving two or three major goals each year helps to avoid getting frustrated and feeling like work isn’t being accomplished. As a recreation and parks board member, you’ll hear a lot about what residents want (more ball fields, for instance). Your role is to determine what your community really needs, versus what they want, and put those needs in priority order.”

*John Roche, Former Member
Monroeville Recreation
and Parks Advisory Board
Allegheny County*

Board Roles and Responsibilities

A recreation and parks board continually seeks feedback and asks questions like these to find out what citizens and fellow board members think:

- *How well are we meeting your needs?*
- *Why do you visit our parks or participate in our programs?*
- *When you think of our services what words come to mind?*
- *How could we serve you better?*
- *What is our key strength?*
- *What is our biggest weakness?*

- **Help to Hire Staff**
If the municipal budget allows for this, a board helps to define the duties and responsibilities, conduct the search and interview process and recommend the best recreation and parks director candidate for part-time or full-time employment. Helping with the selection of the director who will manage the recreation system is one of the board's most important tasks. The board also advises in the hiring of additional staff like seasonal employees if no director exists.
- **Promote and Publicize Services**
A board promotes parks, recreation facilities, and recreation programs and services to the community by distributing materials, interacting with residents at sponsored events and sending press releases about activities to the media.
- **Inform Community and Build Public Support**
A board serves as an ambassador and grass-roots connection for recreation and parks by supporting programs and services, working to enhance its image, defending policies and programs, keeping elected officials and citizens informed about progress and enlisting their help and support. It's important for a board to educate local residents about recreation and parks and build public support for services.
- **Encourage Citizen Participation and Input**
A board serves as a community forum for new ideas, programs, policies and procedures for recreation and parks. To improve recreation and parks operations, boards welcome citizen involvement by seeking suggestions and constructive criticism. A board surveys residents to ask what they think are the most important recreation needs of the municipality. The survey results help set priorities and convince local officials that there's popular support to improve and expand recreation and parks services.

- **Recruit, Orient and Train Members**
It's part of a board's responsibility to recruit and orient new board members. To learn more about the recreation and parks industry and provide effective services, the board should join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS). This nonprofit organization is Pennsylvania's leader in providing recreation and parks resource materials and educational conferences and workshops. Board members should be encouraged to attend training opportunities and have their expenses covered by the municipality. It's an excellent opportunity to meet board members from other communities. (See Appendix C for PRPS membership information.)
- **Stay Knowledgeable About Legislation**
A board works for legislation that positively impacts recreation and parks and contacts legislators at the local, state and national levels for their support.
- **Understand the Scope of Authority**
A board must read and be familiar with its bylaws and abide by them, and understand its authority, structure and legal responsibilities.

Attending Board Meetings

Attendance at board meetings is extremely important, both to get business done and to keep members involved and informed. If your board is to reach its established goals, regular attendance by members at business and committee meetings is crucial. Most members will make honest efforts to attend meetings. There may be reasons for poor attendance such as involvement in too many other activities or lack of progress toward goals. But when a member misses meetings regularly, your board can't function correctly. Your first

Board Member Do's and Don'ts

Do:

Accept responsibility
Learn your duties and roles
Be aware of community needs
Participate at all board meetings
Be friendly with fellow board members
Voice your opinion
Encourage citizen input
Keep elected officials informed
Build support for recreation and parks
Visit facilities and programs

Don't:

Try to run the show
Involve partisan politics
Make promises you can't keep
Try to always get your way at meetings
Become a one-interest board member

If you have staff, don't:

Try to do the staff's job
Break the chain of command
Manage day-to-day operations

Board Roles and Responsibilities

“In my mind the number one responsibility of a recreation and parks board member is to work for the good of the entire community and not for the interests of one special interest group. Special interests can ruin a board. Supporting one particular group over any other is unfair. We’re on a recreation and parks board to represent all of our citizens.”

*Erich Rudolph, Vice Chair
Bethel Park Board of
Recreation, Parks and
Leisure Services
Allegheny County*

responsibility as a board member is to attend meetings. It isn’t the same when you read minutes after the fact instead of being present at a meeting.

You should have an attendance policy that outlines the difference between an excused and unexcused absence and provides guidelines on how many absences are allowed before a board member is replaced. Unless you have a policy in place, asking a municipal governing body to remove a member can be awkward. Even more important than having an attendance policy in place is actually enforcing the policy. That’s the job of your board chair. Keep in mind that members sometimes miss a meeting due to unavoidable circumstances like emergencies, vacation or sickness. A board member who regularly misses meetings should be asked to resign.

A Sample Board Attendance Policy

If a board member doesn’t contact the board chair before a board meeting to let the chair know that he or she won’t be in attendance, the absence will be considered unexcused. Two unexcused absences in one calendar year is cause for a request for removal of the board member. If a member misses three consecutive board meetings, the chair will, in written form, ask the member of his or her intentions concerning the board. If the member indicates an interest in continuing with the board and attendance improves, the problem is resolved. If the member is no longer interested in serving or continues to miss meetings, the governing body will be asked to remove the member from the board.

Recreation and parks boards can use the pledge of commitment form on the following page to help board members understand their responsibilities.

Board Member Pledge of Commitment

As a member of the _____ recreation and parks board,
I promise to:

1. Stay informed on the proper duties, responsibilities and functions of a board member and carry them out to the best of my ability.
2. Come well prepared to meetings having read and reviewed all materials provided to me.
3. Take part in discussions and be a good listener.
4. Seek out training sessions to learn more about recreation and parks.
5. Be willing to give my time and energy to my position.
6. Respect those with differing views and opinions and work harmoniously with them.
7. Vote according to my convictions and support board decisions.
8. Speak up at a board meeting when I disagree with an action.
9. Work to build support for recreation and parks in my community.
10. Welcome suggestions and constructive criticism from citizens.
11. Represent the interests of the entire community.
12. Visit park areas and recreation programs so that I can see them in operation first-hand.
13. Explain and promote the board's services to the public.
14. Be aware of community needs.
15. Be progressive and positive in my outlook.
16. Devote the time necessary to attend community, board and committee meetings and work on committee assignments.
17. Attend board retreats and special work sessions.
18. Recruit quality members for the board.
19. Pay attention to the board's finances.
20. Talk often with my elected officials to get their support for board initiatives and understand their priorities and goals.
21. Review, sign and comply with the board Code of Ethics.
22. Realize when I am no longer contributing and step down from my position.
23. Resign if I can't live up to this pledge.

Board Member Signature _____ Date _____

Board Member Authority Outside of the Board Meeting

“For a long time our Board included two high school student (non-voting) representatives. In theory it’s a great idea. In reality it was hard to get the students to attend on a regular basis and speak up when they did attend. When my youngest daughter got involved and became scarce like so many other students in the past, I asked her about it. She told me that the older folks intimidated her. That sparked our thinking that we might get the input we wanted from our teenagers if we organized a separate committee for them. We now have a real effective Youth Board.”

*John Roche, Former Member
Monroeville Recreation
and Parks Advisory Board
Allegheny County*

As an individual board member, you have no authority apart from the full board. This means, for example, that you can’t order a staff member to perform an assignment for you. Without the full board’s blessing, you can’t make decisions such as hiring someone or doing business with a certain vendor. It may be tempting to make decisions on your own, but it’s very disruptive to the board’s operation.

As a board member, you may speak only for yourself, not for the entire board, unless the board has authorized you to do so. Know the board’s official positions on important issues so that you can explain and support them. You have an obligation to support majority decisions of the board, even if you disagree with them.

Since you have no power as an individual, you can’t promise a resident that your board will take specific action on an issue. Your authority comes only when acting as the full board in a legally constituted meeting.

Board Size

The number of appointed recreation and parks board members is controlled by Pennsylvania municipal codes. For example, the First-Class Township Code states that the board will have five or seven members. It also states that in a township that has a school board, two of the members shall be members or appointees of the school board. To determine the required number of members for your board, consult your municipal code.

When a recreation and parks board has five members, there’s little room to include the variety of experienced people who can make useful contributions. Seven is the preferred size to maximize group dynamics and allow each member to participate. Very large boards (12 or more members) are often not effective because a small group of vocal members can dominate the

discussion, subgroups develop and it can take a long time to reach a decision. On the other hand, the advantages of a large board are that there's still a quorum when a few members can't make the meeting and there's more diverse input. Whatever the size of your board, it's best to have an odd number of members so that there won't be ties when voting.

Terms of Office

Board members should have established formal terms of three to five years, with only one-third of the terms expiring at the same time. This staggering of terms allows time for your members to develop the chemistry that can improve the quality of decision-making. Board members who work together long enough develop a sense of each other's strengths which enables them to tap expertise efficiently.

Writing and Adopting Bylaws

Once you've formed your recreation and parks board and appointed its members, your real work begins. As we have already stated, your governing body should have adopted an ordinance creating your board that details its name, purpose, duties and responsibilities, and membership. Typically a governing body gives its recreation and parks board the authority to develop its own bylaws. The bylaws include details concerning the operation of your board and clarify how it is to govern its work. It is the document that directs the way your business is handled. Each board member should have a copy and be familiar with its requirements. Your board's bylaws should be approved by your municipality and reviewed from time to time to make sure they're still effective. (See Appendix D for sample bylaws.)

Bylaws generally include the following information:

"To organize a new recreation and parks board, your first action is to write and adopt bylaws. Bylaws give you the structure to operate. It's a good idea to appoint an organizing committee to draft your bylaws and present them to the full board. There are a lot of details in them that form the basis of how your work will get done. They are much more than a couple pieces of paper. Taking the time to write and adopt bylaws will avoid problems later on."

*Erich Rudolph, Vice Chair
Bethel Park Board of
Recreation, Parks and
Leisure Services
Allegheny County*

Board Roles and Responsibilities

An Effective Board Chair:

- Has leadership ability
- Can lead discussions
- Has the time to devote
- Handles responsibility well
- Is organized and able to plan
- Understands the board's goals and objectives
- Has a sense of humor
- Listens well
- Can accept another's point of view
- Is optimistic and has a positive outlook
- Wants to acquire knowledge and a deeper understanding of people
- Is friendly and likeable, and has a genuine concern for people
- Has the ability to "get on the same wave length" with people easily

- Board membership rules: the number of board members, the length and rotation of terms, composition or representation of membership, and methods for appointment to and removal from the board. Your board may also want to have non-voting members appointed annually to advise the board. This includes student representatives, school board liaisons or municipal government staff.
- Board leadership information: officer positions, responsibilities and length of terms.
- Voting rights: who has the right to vote on officers and board decisions, how to designate a proxy, and quorum requirements.
- Meeting requirements: types of meetings, how often the board will meet, agendas, minutes, and order of business, how notice will be given for meetings and methods for calling special meetings.
- Record keeping procedures: timeframe for fiscal year, and procedures for executing documents, recording and distributing minutes of meetings, keeping financial records and amending the bylaws.

Electing Officers

The best way to get a slate of officers is to utilize a nominating committee. After the nominating committee report is presented at your board meeting, you open up nominations from the floor. Then you elect officers. At a minimum you need a chair, vice-chair and secretary. Terms of office are typically for one year. A list of officer duties is on page 20.

You want your board chair to be someone whose focus isn't the power of the position. You don't want decisions made between board meetings without the board being consulted. Your leader should be interested in finding the best way to accomplish your

goals, rather than wanting to get his or her own way. You can judge the effectiveness of a board chair by the number of board members who actively participate and take responsibility rather than on the amount of direct work performed by the chair. When a good working relationship, based on trust and mutual confidence, is developed, board chairs are able to effectively involve members.

Forming Committees

Committees allow your board to delve into issues in greater detail. Standing committees are based on functions, comprised of two or three board members and meet at separate times. Committee findings and reports are provided at regular board meetings. It's essential that standing committees have written guidelines for their operations and an explanation of their committees' functions, requirements and restrictions.

If your board has paid staff, they often perform the functions of these committees and provide reports at monthly meetings.

To look at single issues that don't fall under the responsibilities of a standing committee, your board can create special ad-hoc committees that may include additional community representatives. Ad-hoc committees are formed for a purpose and then disbanded when they are no longer needed.

You can also use an executive committee of the board's officers. It must be empowered by your bylaws. An executive committee acts between meetings of the full board, can exercise all board powers except changing your bylaws, and reports on its activities at each board meeting. If you do have an executive committee, be careful with its use. It can tend to exclude viewpoints of board members and opens your board up to criticism that decisions were made with political bias. An executive committee is best utilized for emergency situations when you need an immediate decision.

Typical Standing Committees

Finance Committee:

Develops budget requests for the governing body, oversees revenue collection and seeks other sources of funds.

Buildings and Grounds/Property Committee:

Advises on the maintenance and operation of all buildings, grounds and equipment and reports on needed repairs and renovations to existing park areas and recreation facilities. Assesses need for new areas, facilities and equipment.

Program Committee:

Evaluates existing recreation programs and recommends what changes or additions are necessary to ensure program quality. Investigates new possibilities and develops programs.

Publicity Committee:

Keeps the public informed about park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs and works with the media.

Duties of Board Officers

Board Chair

- Presides at all board meetings. Presides means to:
 - Open the meeting at the scheduled time by calling the members to order
 - Review the business agenda
 - Keep business moving by recognizing members who wish to speak and maintaining order at all times
 - Guard against wasting time by obtaining motions and focusing discussion to lead the board to decisions
 - Summarize the discussion on an issue for the record and state the motion correctly before calling for a vote by the board
 - Announce the outcome of each vote
- Creates the agenda for board meetings
- Signs official papers that are prepared or approved by the board
- Speaks to members about problems with their board attendance or conduct
- Serves as an ex-officio member of all committees
- Suggests approaches to board problems and operations
- Leads the board in the preparation of an annual budget request and annual report
- Serves as the board spokesperson, clearly understanding the issues and the board's positions, speaking for the majority whether personally agreeing or disagreeing with its view, and not expressing personal views
- Communicates formally with elected officials at least twice each year
- Includes all board members in discussions if possible and serves as the moderator when problems arise
- Considers postponing action for the next meeting or appointing an ad-hoc committee that represents both points of view (if votes appear to be even) to study the matter and make a recommendation
- Insists on courtesy among members and runs board meetings in a business-like, cooperative manner
- Appoints all committees and committee chairs subject to board confirmation and attends as many committee meetings as possible to become familiar with issues
- Assures that the board adopts objectives annually and focuses work on achieving these objectives
- Trains the next board chair

Board Vice-Chair

- Performs the duties of the chair in his or her absence

Board Secretary

- Insures that complete and accurate records are kept of all board, committee and special meetings
- Insures that regular and special board meetings are properly advertised to the public

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Recruiting and Retaining Board Members

A recreation and parks board is only as good as its members! So you need to find the best people you can, convince them to serve on your board and keep them interested and involved. Selecting members should be done carefully, since your board provides advice to elected officials and municipal staff on many issues that are important to your community. Even though your governing body actually appoints members to your board, as a board member you can play a key role by identifying and recommending qualified citizens to your elected officials. It's also helpful for the governing body to appoint an elected official as a liaison to the recreation and parks board. This keeps the lines of communication open.

The Importance of Diversity

Diversity fosters innovation and creativity. Diversity promotes learning and responsiveness to citizens. It broadens your board's perspective, which improves your decision-making. When your recreation and parks board is diverse, with members of different ages, educational and cultural backgrounds, gender, race, religion and so on, it is better able to understand and serve your citizen's needs. It's also important to have members with different interests on your board such as organized sports, conservation and performing arts.

Differences will make your board stronger. Working to make your board a more diverse group will strengthen its operation in ways you'd never realize.

"Our Council President attends every park and recreation board meeting. This helps so much. Not only is communication better, our work stays on track. We have lots of plans for our community park and we need our Council behind us."

*Christine Nacovich
Municipal Secretary
Hastings Borough
Cambria County*

One of the biggest changes in recent years has been the increase of single parent families in Pennsylvania. As a result, the recreation needs of families are changing. Pennsylvania also has one of the highest percentages of adults over the age of 65 in the nation. This age segment is expected to continue to increase substantially. Our minority population will also continue to increase. Working hard to make your board representative of your community's demographics will help you better serve your residents' needs.

Why Do People Volunteer For Boards?

Having an understanding of the reasons why people join boards can help in your recruiting process. Here are the top reasons why citizens might volunteer for your recreation and parks board:

- To contribute to the community
- To make friends
- Because they were asked
- Because they have a genuine interest in recreation and parks
- As a stepping stone to run for public office
- To keep busy
- To represent another organization's agenda
- To feel needed
- To do something different than their daily jobs
- To gain leadership skills
- To be part of a team
- For recognition
- For social status
- To get business contacts
- For career advancement
- To fulfill corporate obligation
- For power and influence

Recruiting New Board Members

Ask your elected officials to allow your board to help recruit candidates for their consideration as recreation and parks board members. Recruiting members is recommended if you want your board to be an effective one. While the following steps may seem like a lot of work, the pay-off of having better quality board members is well worth the effort. You'll get more work done, faster and smarter, than if you just let your elected officials appoint "bodies."

1. *Establish Your Needs* - What types of people do you need to improve your board? Look at what you need by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of current board members. Identify your gaps, whether they're demographic (age, gender, race, ethnic background), skill (legal, public relations, fundraising, finance), or influence gaps (political clout, community contacts, government policymakers). (See Appendix E for a form to help you evaluate how balanced your board is.) Also, look at your board's upcoming work schedule. If you're planning a new special event, you may want an expert in that area. If you're starting a new park fundraising campaign, you'll need a board member with serious community clout.
2. *Develop a List* - Start your list of prospects with business associates, friends, neighbors and members of other community boards. These people already know something about your community recreation and parks system and your board members know something about them. People who've volunteered, contributed money or supported your community's parks and programs in some way are great prospects. They take less time to become productive members because they're familiar with your board's mission. Also look in places like these: local corporations, volunteer groups, professional organizations, youth sports associations, service groups, retired executives, the religious community and local universities. The two categories of people you don't want on your board are relatives of board or staff members, and competitors. They may not put the interests of *your* board first. Your board members need to care about your board and its mission more than anything else.

"We've had a steady stream of candidates for our park and recreation board, thanks to the board itself. They know the type of person who will do a good job, and when they find someone, they recruit them. They give the names to me and I share them with our elected officials. When there's a vacancy, Council has always appointed someone off the recruit list."

*Christine Nacovich
Municipal Secretary
Hastings Borough
Cambria County*

Recruiting and Retaining Board Members

How to Find Potential Board Members

Here are a few ways to get the word out that you're looking for board members:

- Circulate printed announcements to local business and civic organizations
- Advertise in local news media
- Post vacancies in and around municipal facilities
- Make announcements at special events and at meetings of service clubs, parent-teacher organizations and other similar groups
- Post a list of recreation and parks board members on public bulletin boards and get it in your local newspaper or municipal newsletter

3. *Advertise for Members* - To give every citizen a chance to join, advertise the need for members, requesting that residents submit letters of interest or resumes. In your publicity, encourage residents to contact current board members with concerns or questions.
4. *Evaluate Your Prospects* - Stick to your criteria for new board members, keeping in mind the gaps you want to fill. Talk about whether candidates are genuinely interested in and enthusiastic about recreation and parks and if they realistically have the time to serve.
5. *Meet with Potential Members* - Hold a face-to-face meeting with each prospect, with one or more board members. At the meeting, discuss your board's goals, needs, what qualities you're seeking, the board member's responsibilities, time commitment and any other expectations. Find out what other organizations your prospect is involved in. If possible, determine if your prospect has any axes to grind, is involved in partisan politics or has a special interest that might negatively impact your board.
6. *Forward Names to Governing Body* - Forward the names of the best candidates to elected officials for their action. Your board chair should meet with elected officials to review the process. It's important to help them understand why they should care about your needs and show them how a stronger recreation and parks board will benefit the community.
7. *Say Thank You* - When your elected officials make an appointment thank them and keep them informed on how it's going with the new member.

The “Perfect” Board Member

The most important qualifications for a board member are: an interest in, enthusiasm for and belief in the value of community recreation and parks. Look for people who also:

- Live in your municipality (this is a requirement)
- Are friendly and people-oriented
- Can give or raise money
- Are sensitive to the residents of your community and their needs
- Have the ability to work well with others and a sense of fairness
- Have time and energy to give and a willingness to give it – for reviewing materials, attending meetings and working on projects and programs
- Have a genuine desire to serve your community for the common good rather than self-interest
- Have good judgment, intelligence and an open mind
- Are honest and reliable
- Bring special skills and talents that support and make a direct contribution to your board’s work
- Have excellent community visibility and credibility
- Can accept board decisions and respect other’s points of view, opinions and backgrounds
- Represent a cross section of ages, neighborhoods and ethnic backgrounds
- Are influential and have many community contacts
- Can inspire the respect, confidence and support of the community

The Best Ways to Retain Good Board Members

- Keep them busy by giving them a responsibility to perform (committee member, program assignment, public relations task)
- Send the previous meeting’s minutes, any special reports and correspondence and the next meeting’s agenda out in advance
- Hold regularly scheduled meetings
- Start on time and keep your meetings to less than two hours
- Follow a written agenda at meetings
- Add variety at times by holding a board meeting at a park
- Enforce attendance policies and encourage members to attend and be involved in meetings
- Celebrate success by recognizing and thanking them when they’ve made worthwhile contributions
- Evaluate the performance of your board on a regular basis and make corrections to improve your operations

Limiting Terms of Office

If board members can say “yes” to the following questions, the chair should recommend that they be considered for appointment for another term, unless they’re causing problems on the board.

- *Do I continue to enjoy working with the public?*
- *Am I maintaining a strong interest in the board and its services?*
- *Do I attend meetings regularly? Do I make contributions?*
- *Do I get along with my fellow board members?*
- *Am I continuing to look at the progress of the board without having an ax to grind or special interest that affects my decisions?*
- *Will my continued membership strengthen and unify the board?*

Should the length of a board member’s service be limited to a certain number of years or terms? This is a tough question to answer. Being a good board member doesn’t happen overnight. There’s a lot to learn, not just about serving on a board, but about recreation and parks. On the other hand, new members bring new skills, ideas and fresh energy to a board. When terms expire, most governing bodies reappoint board members without much thought. The board chair should talk with members who have terms expiring to evaluate their continued interest.

The board chair can evaluate board member performance. (See Appendix F for a sample evaluation form.) Board members can also evaluate their own performance using the form on the following page.

The Importance of Board Orientation

When board members are informed and educated about their roles, not only is your board more effective, your members get more satisfaction from their board service and they stay board members longer. Board members need orientation to know what’s expected of them and to fully understand the purpose and work of your recreation and parks board. Don’t assume that new members know anything about recreation and parks. Many board members join with one special interest.

Orientation isn’t done enough. It’s not uncommon that the only orientation new members get is their introduction to fellow board members.

To check on the effectiveness of your orientation process, have each board member fill out the form in Appendix G. This will tell you how well your board members understand their roles, relationships and board goals.

Board Member Self-Evaluation

Before you decide to serve an additional term of office as a board member answer these questions:

1. Have I attended:
 - a. all board meetings? ☐yes ☐no
 - b. a majority of the meetings? ☐yes ☐no
 - c. less than half of the meetings? ☐yes ☐no
2. Have I participated on at least one board committee? ☐yes ☐no
3. Have I served as a liaison to elected officials and kept them informed? ☐yes ☐no
4. Have I served as a public advocate for the board? ☐yes ☐no
5. Have I evaluated services through in-person program observations and park visits? ☐yes ☐no

How do you rate yourself? Use the following scoring chart to assist you.

Scoring: Score one (1) point for each positive response to questions 2 to 5. For question 1, score one (1) point for a positive response to a, one-half (1/2) point for b, and zero (0) points for c.

Interpretation:

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 5-4 points: | You're great and must continue! |
| 3 points: | You should definitely consider continuing, but should try to do a bit more. |
| 2 points or less: | You should consider not returning. Your interests probably lie elsewhere or you're over committed. |

Working with Other Municipal Boards

It's important for recreation and parks boards to understand the roles of other municipal advisory bodies such as planning commissions and environmental advisory councils. This builds the basis for good working relationships. There are obvious reasons for a recreation and parks board to work together with these groups, since a planning commission advises and makes recommendations about all aspects of land use and development, and an environmental advisory council focuses its work on the protection of natural resources. For instance, the planning commission should be involved in any discussions about mandatory dedication to provide parkland and preserve open space, and the environmental advisory council should help to develop the municipality's Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan.

Orientation programs for new board members include information on three major areas: municipal government structure and operation, community demographics and needs, and recreation and parks board responsibilities and functions.

- **Municipal Government** - New board members need knowledge on how your municipality does business and how the recreation and parks board fits within your government structure. How many elected officials are there and what are their names? Is there a municipal manager/secretary, finance director or public works director and how does your board relate to these staff members? Highlight the other boards they'll work with.
- **Community** - What is your community's population, key neighborhoods, ethnicity and general characteristics? Take new members on a tour of community recreation and parks areas and facilities. They need information about the needs of your community and how your board is attempting to meet these needs.
- **Recreation and Parks Board** - The most important information the new member needs is about your recreation and parks board itself. Members should learn about the board's purpose, roles and responsibilities, typical tasks and present activities. They should receive an orientation manual: a summary of important information about the board. Put your manual in a three-ring binder and provide it to new board members before they attend their first meeting, to give them time to read through it. The goal of this manual is to orient board members to the workings of your board by providing as much essential information as practical. This helps ensure that valuable meeting time isn't spent presenting basic information. The board chair should meet with new members to review the

contents of the orientation manual and answer questions. See page 30 for a suggested orientation manual format.

Ways to Orient New Board Members

- **Board Mentors** - Pairing a new member with a long-time member is a good way to educate him or her about your recreation and parks board and explain who the players are and how decisions are made. At the first meeting your new member attends, a board member can greet him or her at the door and make introductions.
- **In-Person Meetings** - Hold an orientation session with all new board members. Listen to their goals for being on the board, share the boards's needs, and communicate expectations. Get to know them as individuals and find out their strengths. This helps to build trust, or at least an understanding of where they're coming from and what their causes are.
- **Tours** - At least once each year, take new members on a tour of all park areas and facilities and visit all recreation programs. It's important to get out to see the parks and programs in action. Members can't serve effectively if they've never experienced your services.
- **Board Retreats** - Board retreats help build team spirit, friendships and good relations among board members. People work together better when they have a chance to learn about each other's skills, interests, backgrounds and philosophies.
- **Conferences and Training** - Have board members attend conferences and training workshops provided by the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society. Check out its website, www.prps.org, for available training opportunities.

Tips for Conducting a Retreat

Retreats can focus on long-range or strategic planning, reviewing board performance on parkland acquisition and development, examining finances, discussing the roles and responsibilities of members, and evaluating recreation programs. Bringing in an outside facilitator to conduct retreat sessions, especially when you're exploring changes, developing your mission and vision, or setting goals, can help to keep discussions focused. Keep discussions informal and make no major decisions. A retreat is not a regular meeting and official business is not conducted. Consider holding the retreat at a place where you can get away from regular activities and offering social and team-building activities, good food and an upbeat atmosphere. To make the retreat most productive, survey board members beforehand on the items they'd like to discuss.

Orientation Manual Format

1. *Preface*: how to use the manual as a reference tool and a summary of what's included in it
2. *Historic review of recreation and parks*: a description of the board, its history, purpose and objectives, and key people involved in the board's founding and early years
3. *Legislative authority*: a copy of the ordinance that formed the board and any subsequent amendments, plus copies of other ordinances that govern recreation and parks services
4. *Board composition and function*: a list of board members with home and office addresses, telephone numbers, email addresses, length of service on the board, a list of board roles and responsibilities and a copy of the bylaws of the board
5. *Board calendar*: an annual schedule of meetings, events and work plans for the board
6. *Committees*: a list of standing and special committees with their functions and a list of appointed members, an explanation of how to submit a committee report and copies of standing and special committee reports
7. *Areas and facilities*: a map of park areas and recreation facilities, site plans of each park area owned and operated by the municipality and a list of their recreation facilities and equipment
8. *Recreation programs*: a copy of the program guides for the previous year, if they exist, or program flyers for all programs held within the year
9. *Municipal structure*: a copy of the municipality's organizational chart and a list of names, office phone numbers, email addresses and emergency contact numbers
10. *Policies and procedures*: a copy of any recommendations approved by the board and enacted by the municipality such as a list of fees and charges and park rules and regulations

11. *Finance*: a copy of the previous year's operating and capital budget, current year's operating and capital budget, a list of vendors used and a chart comparing the recreation and parks board budget to that of the other municipal services
12. *Minutes*: copies of agendas attached to minutes from board meetings for the past year
13. *Projects*: a description of any capital development projects underway and the status and final reports on special projects
14. *Reports*: copies of monthly reports for the past year, including statistics on park use and recreation program enrollment, and the most recent annual report
15. *Plans*: a copy of any comprehensive plans, park master plans, current short and long-range plans, strategic plans and mission and vision statements for the community, if they exist
16. *Intergovernmental relationships and contracts*: a copy of board and school agreements, leases or agreements in writing for the use of any area or facility not owned by the municipality, and an explanation of the board's relationship with key community organizations
17. *Any other information*: whatever else is helpful in acquainting new board members with the procedures and operation of the board

3

Board Meeting Basics

Board Meeting Packet

At least three days before the board meeting, members should receive the agenda, minutes of the previous meeting and all supporting materials. Doing this:

- Gives members a chance to organize their thoughts prior to the meetings
- Keeps members focused to ensure that appropriate amounts of time are spent on items
- Identifies and gives backgrounds of guest speakers
- Reminds members of actions they're to take before your next meeting
- Shows members that their commitment is respected

Effective board meetings are the key to a productive recreation and parks board...and being well organized is the key to an effective board meeting. Poor organization leads to ineffective boards that plan poorly, communicate badly, waste time and money and don't reach their goals. Well-run meetings keep recreation and parks board members interested and involved.

After some board meetings, you may hear comments like these: "Another meeting where we didn't accomplish anything...People ramble all around and don't stick to the topic under discussion...We spend all of our time talking about the unimportant items and never get to the major ones...Our board chair doesn't make the meeting move along"...What are these board members saying? What do people do wrong that makes the meeting dull, uninspired and ineffective? What do these complaints really mean? What they're saying is there's a lack of emphasis on the letter "p." *Planning, preparing and presiding* haven't been done well.

At least half of the reasons for good business meetings lie in what you do before the meetings actually begin. This chapter covers the ways to plan and prepare for board meetings. How well your board chair conducts the meetings can make all the difference in the world. When your board chair is prepared and knows how to preside effectively, your meetings are more productive and worthwhile. The chapter ends with some of the common board meeting problems and gives tips to help members be more active participants.

Scheduling and Advertising Meetings

The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act requires all public agencies, including recreation and parks boards, to present all official actions and conduct all deliberations leading up to official actions at advertised public meetings. Votes and approval of expenditures can only be taken at regularly scheduled or specially advertised meetings.

Hold your board meetings on the same day and time each month and publish meeting dates in your local newspaper at least three days prior to your meetings. Since your meetings are open to the public, hold them in the municipal building or another public place and post your meeting schedule. Schedule your meetings at a time that doesn't conflict with the meetings of your municipal governing body. It's important for your board to have member liaisons who can also attend those meetings regularly.

Your board meetings can be closed to the public when discussing sensitive personnel and litigation issues. Considerations of land purchases may also be kept confidential in initial discussion stages to prevent land speculation and increase in price.

The Importance of an Agenda

An agenda keeps your meeting on track, establishes boundaries and indicates who is responsible for specific reports. Your board chair prepares the agenda (if you have a director, the board chair prepares it with him or her).

Typical agenda items include information-only items that require no action or routine action, discussion items and recommendations. Discussion items usually have a problem-solving focus and are used to get guidance on a subject. Recommendations require action by the board.

Board Meetings Don't Have to Be Painful

Bring good news to the board such as the 15th anniversary of a class instructor or the Eagle Scout who coordinated a trail clean up. At least two times each year get the board together for a social event such as a summer picnic, holiday party, ribbon cutting or special presentation. Take whatever opportunities arise to thank them publicly. Give out board polo shirts or coffee mugs or special board stationery.

“Our agendas always include a report from each board member on the needs or concerns of the parks in their neighborhood.”

*Cindy Pascoe, Chair
Monroeville Recreation
and Parks Advisory Board
Allegheny County*

A well thought out agenda leads to better meetings. Good agendas help keep order and guide good discussion. They make sure that important items aren't forgotten and that meetings progress in a logical and timely manner. Agendas should meet the following criteria:

- *They are realistic in a time sense.* The agenda isn't overcrowded with items that can't be dealt with in the available time.
- *The items require thought on the part of board members.* If your agenda is cluttered with too many informational items, valuable discussion time is wasted.
- *The items are arranged in a logical sequence.* This usually includes warm-up items of lesser importance, then the main items in the body of the agenda, followed by closing items.
- *The agenda contains suggestions on how the board should deal with each item.* This means identifying items for discussion and items that need to be voted on.
- *Public comment must have a place on the agenda.* Placing it early on the agenda allows citizens to make comments without having to sit through the entire meeting. It's best to set a time limit on the length of comments so that your meetings don't drag on. Remember, your meetings are public meetings, but not meetings of the public. Reasonable time for a citizen to address a concern is three to five minutes. Everyone who wants to speak should be given the opportunity.

Review your meeting materials *before* the meeting. Opening your envelope at the meeting for the first time shows a lack of interest in the board. Members who do this aren't prepared for discussion and decision-making. The best meetings are those when members come prepared.

A Typical Board Meeting Agenda

1. Call to order
2. Approval of minutes (from previous meeting)
3. Acknowledgement of guests
4. Public comment (can go after item 11, depends on your preference)
5. Treasurer's report (money spent and for what, approval to pay new bills)
6. Board liaison reports (from members who serve as liaisons to planning commission, governing body, school district, etc.)
7. Committee reports
8. Board chair report/communications
9. Staff report
10. Unfinished business
11. New business
12. Review of agreed upon actions and who will take responsibility for them
13. Adjournment

Brief written reports should be submitted for the record for items 5, 6, 7 and 9.

Place special guests or presentations at the beginning of the meeting and set a time limit prior to the meeting.

When a meeting is called to order, all board members should have an opportunity to add agenda items. After this, your board chair shouldn't allow discussion on any non-agenda items.

Meeting Room Set-Up

Your surroundings can impact the meeting and the way board members work together. Your meeting place should be conveniently located for members, free from noise and distractions, well lighted and ventilated, and above all, have comfortable chairs around a table. Set up your meeting room in advance, with any equipment needed. There should be a clear position at the head of the table for the board chair. Your minute taker sits to the right of the board chair.

Items to Include in Meeting Minutes

- Meeting type
- Name of board
- Date, time and location of meeting
- Names of board members present and absent
- Names of guests and others in attendance
- Action taken on last meeting's minutes
- Treasurer's report
- All motions and the board members who proposed them
- Action taken on the motions – decisions made and tasks assigned
- Action items like resolutions and appointment of committees
- Time the meeting is adjourned

If there is a space opposite the board chair, leave it empty for anyone making presentations to your board. Only board members, your minute taker, and director if you have one, are seated at the meeting table.

If you schedule your board meeting in connection with breakfast, lunch or dinner, eat first and then have the meeting, or have the meeting and then eat. Combining the two activities doesn't work well. What happens is your members will have either an enjoyable meal or a productive meeting, but not both.

Taking Minutes

As a legal record of what occurred at your public meeting, take meeting minutes carefully and completely. Once they're approved, they are an official record of actions of the board. The use of a tape recorder is recommended to help with confirming statements.

To allow all board members to actively participate in the meeting have a municipal staff person take your minutes. If there is no staff, your board secretary takes your minutes. The chair and the secretary should review the minutes prior to mailing them.

Do not include meeting conversations. The written record of minutes is to state exactly what happened, not all that was said. Withdrawn motions aren't recorded in the minutes.

Minutes are approved at the next meeting. Before minutes are approved they may be corrected. Make corrections in the margins rather than erasing them. After they're approved, the board secretary writes "approved" on the minutes, dates it and initials it. As a permanent record, the municipality should keep one copy of your minutes.

For better communication, send your minutes to your elected officials, planning commission and other government agencies. Your minutes can be posted on your municipal website, or on a public bulletin board in the municipal building or library to help keep your residents informed about recreation and parks business. If you have a municipal newsletter, summarize your meeting minutes for a column.

Making Motions

Somebody has to make a motion that is seconded for your board to take action on anything at a board meeting. It's a good idea to get a motion on the floor early in a discussion to help focus it. Wording is important so that members clearly understand the motion. Your board chair coordinates discussion on the motion. If it's been on the floor for a long time and may not pass, the board chair can ask for an amendment to the motion. If the member who sponsored the original motion doesn't like the amendment, the wording can be changed. An amendment is a motion and can be debated and voted upon. A board member can also ask the board chair to close the discussion and call for a vote on the original motion. All members must agree to close the discussion, and to pass, the motion needs a two-thirds vote. If amending the motion or calling for a vote doesn't work, the original motion should go on the next meeting's agenda as unfinished business.

Most boards follow Roberts Rules of Order. Board members should all have a concise version of the basic rules.

"It can be useful to put times next to agenda items estimating how long each item will take, and check your watch every now and then to make sure you're on schedule. When you do this, you can make better decisions on letting discussion continue or cutting it off. This can also help you know if you're cramming too much into a board meeting. Don't publish the times to the members; just use them as a tool to keep the meeting moving."

*Cindy Pascoe, Chair
Monroeville Recreation
and Parks Advisory Board
Allegheny County*

How to Control and Conduct a Meeting

Most of us want and expect a board meeting to *begin and end on time*. Members may have other plans and don't like long delays in the start of the meeting. The same holds for adjournment. Meetings that drag on past the agreed-upon hour make people uncomfortable. Meetings should not last more than two hours. Set a curfew time to end your meetings and stick to it. If it looks like your curfew won't be met, let members know approximately how much longer the meeting will go.

"Our board meets twice each month. The first is a workshop meeting where residents are encouraged to share ideas and concerns and ask questions. The second is a voting board meeting."

*Judy Kuzman, Chair
Bethel Park Board of Recreation,
Parks and Leisure Services
Allegheny County*

The board chair's first responsibility is to make members comfortable and at ease with one another. By arriving early and meeting people as they come in, the chair has a good chance for a friendly personal greeting and for introductions of newcomers. Board members who know one another are sure to be better participants in the meeting. The chair starts the meeting on time, explains the nature of the meeting, introduces and explains each item on the agenda and facilitates board action.

If you want to do more than just take care of routine business, you'll need to meet more than once a month. To accomplish all the work, committee meetings should take place between regular board meetings. Special meetings such as in a neighborhood where a new park is being developed are also sometimes needed. Committee meeting minutes should be taken and distributed at the regular board meeting to all board members.

Your board chair plays a key role in making meetings productive and worthwhile. He or she:

- Checks to see that all equipment is present and working and that the room is correctly set up
- Introduces new members
- Welcomes any guests who are present
- States the goals for the meeting
- Reviews the agenda and background materials

- Keeps members on task
- Sticks to the agenda
- Involves all board members in discussions and doesn't allow a few to monopolize them
- Stays objective
- Asks questions
- Gives credit for ideas
- Stays aware as to whether members are comfortable
- Makes sure everyone understands discussion items
- Doesn't back members into corners or embarrass them
- Summarizes periodically
- Helps the board reach decisions
- Wraps up discussions
- Does a quick review of the meeting prior to breaking up
- Makes sure assignments are clear

Common Board Meeting Problems

- The meeting room isn't set up properly to make people feel comfortable. Chairs are too close together, too far apart, it's too hot or too cold or a variety of other things are wrong with the room.
- There's been no preparation for the meeting. Minutes of the last meeting weren't sent out in advance, there's no agenda, or the work assigned at the last meeting wasn't written down or followed up on. Board members didn't complete their assignments.
- Board members don't understand what decisions they can make or what their roles are. They don't know what's expected of them.
- You don't have a quorum present. No motions can be passed, which limits the business you can conduct.

Check List for a Good Board Meeting

- The location is comfortable
- The agenda has been planned carefully
- The meeting begins and ends on time
- The board members stick to the agenda and get business done
- There's full discussion of vital points of business
- The board chair keeps the meeting in focus
- The board members feel their time has been used wisely and can sense real accomplishment

Managing the Public During a Public Meeting

Many of those who show up have something they want to say. When it's time for public comment on the agenda, your board chair tells those who want to speak how much time they'll be permitted (normally two to three minutes). When speakers go beyond the time limit, they should be politely thanked for their comments and then the meeting should move on. No citizen has the right to dominate your board meetings. Establishing the right balance between freedom of speech and long-winded complaints is important.

- Discussion rambles, gets off track and wanders into what's wrong, rather than into constructive dialogue to improve situations.
- There's no wrap-up to the meeting to make assignments and review decisions made.
- There's a lack of participation by some board members and an excess of participation on the part of others. When one person dominates discussions, good discussion by others is difficult if not impossible. You can also over discuss or repeat material that's been covered or talk past the point of decision.
- You talk all around the problem but don't seem to get anywhere. Members may be unclear about the discussion's purpose or good leadership is lacking.
- Board members focus on each other instead of on the business at hand. Such sessions may range from unproductive gossip meetings to meetings where harmful personal statements are made.

What Makes a Board Meeting a Good One?

First, *you had a chance to talk*. You and the other members of the board had an equal and fair chance to participate.

Second, *you helped to create something*. Maybe it was a program idea or an important decision; at any rate, you and the others pooled your thinking and came up with something better than any one person could think of individually.

Third, *you felt relaxed and comfortable with the other members*. Instead of feeling worn out from tension you went away feeling stimulated for the next meeting because the atmosphere you worked in was free, open and relaxed.

Fourth, *you had good leadership*. The board chair was well prepared for the meeting, summarized the issues on the agenda and was prepared with the facts for the board at the proper points in the discussion.

Fifth, *you were clear on what the board was trying to accomplish*. You were able to see progress and see the steps required of you and the others to reach your goal.

Sixth, *you learned something*. This learning may have been about yourself, your fellow board members, your chair, your community or some topic of interest. A good board meeting is generally a “mind-stretching” exercise for members. There’s nothing wrong with taking something away with you.

Seventh, *there should be follow-up work to do*. Members, board officers and committee chairs should leave the meeting with assignments and it’s the job of the board chair to see that they do their jobs.

How to Improve Meeting Participation

Board meetings are most successful when everyone participates. Use the following suggestions on page 42 to become a more active participant at your board meetings.

Making Meetings “Fun”

Why not liven up your board meetings a little? This is recreation, after all. It’s always nice to have refreshments. Food puts people in a better mood and can help them to relax. Take your meetings out to the parks, invite program participants to your meetings or recognize great accomplishments from your volunteers. You have to get business done but you can have fun too. Inviting resource people to your board meetings such as the police chief, conservation district representative or school district athletic director can help to break up the monotony of routine business.

Ways for Board Members to Become Better Meeting Participants	
What You Should Do	How You Can Do It
Review the meeting materials in advance of the meeting	Take a minute to jot down ideas, concerns and suggestions you have on the agenda subjects
Communicate your experience and thinking	You can't communicate effectively without actively participating in discussions
Keep an open mind	Although you have your own ideas about the solutions to problems and issues, consider your fellow board members' viewpoints
Be prepared to courteously disagree with ideas	Agree to disagree and don't take it personally
Welcome challenge since it may produce other ideas	Ask others what may be wrong with your ideas and solutions
Respect your fellow board members	Give everyone the opportunity to contribute their experience to the board's discussions

4

Board Relationships

Why be concerned about how you relate to your fellow board members, other municipal boards, staff and elected officials? The answer is simple. It's because you have a common purpose – working for the good of your community. With mutual respect and cooperation, you can work together and do a more effective job serving your municipality's residents. Being aware of each other's roles and the kinds of relationships you should have leads to better coordination and fewer challenges.

One way to improve communication is for a municipal staff person or elected official to attend your recreation and parks board meetings, to explain municipal policy, clarify the roles of other boards and handle concerns about municipal procedures. Another way is to receive copies of your governing body's and other municipal boards' minutes, and share yours with them.

How Should a Recreation and Parks Director Work with a Board?

While many Pennsylvania municipalities have advisory recreation and parks boards, many do not employ a recreation and parks director. Smaller municipalities (those with populations of 10,000 or less) often can't afford to hire professional recreation staff, so they must rely on volunteers to provide this important service to citizens.

Getting Recommendations Approved

Your board's role is to advise your governing body. The decisions that are made ultimately depend on your elected officials. It's up to them to approve your recommendations and if they don't vote "yes," your recommendations will not happen. Establishing strong lines of communication between your recreation and parks board and elected officials is essential. Doing your homework and making sure your municipal leaders know you have explored the pros and cons of making a decision also helps them when it's time to vote. And when elected officials know that your recommendations have been made with significant citizen input, your recommendations have greater weight. So tell your governing board what your process was.

Board Relationships

How to Develop Successful Relationships			
With Your Fellow Board Members	With Your Governing Body (Elected Officials)	With Municipal Staff and Other Municipal Agencies	With the Media
<p>Provide orientation and training for new members</p> <p>Be open and honest with each other</p> <p>Compromise when necessary</p> <p>Develop respect and trust for other points of view</p> <p>Try to minimize political actions</p> <p>Work to develop ethical relationships with each other</p>	<p>Remember that you serve at their pleasure</p> <p>Develop a rapport with them and gain their confidence</p> <p>Never knowingly embarrass them or put them on the spot</p> <p>Learn when it is and isn't reasonable to take a stand on an issue</p> <p>Keep them informed and involved</p> <p>Make regular reports to them to show progress</p> <p>Provide timely advice to assist with their decision-making</p>	<p>Know the roles of other boards and departments</p> <p>Develop lines of communication like exchange of minutes</p> <p>Establish a liaison with other boards such as planning commission and environmental advisory council</p> <p>Learn about the operation of municipal government</p> <p>Understand the responsibilities of municipal staff</p>	<p>Get to know the municipal policies for press releases</p> <p>Draft press releases and call the press to cover programs and projects</p> <p>Remember that board members speak for themselves unless authorized by the board</p> <p>Provide the media with factual information</p> <p>Research key media contacts, the audiences you wish to reach and the best ways to reach them</p> <p>Check out what other boards do to promote their activities</p>

If your board is fortunate enough to have a director, when a vacancy occurs help to select and recommend to your governing body the best candidate possible.

Clearly outlining who does what sets the basis for a cooperative working relationship between a director and a recreation and parks board. A complete job description for the director and written guidelines for the board on its roles and responsibilities are a necessary starting point. It's important to adopt a policy that individual board members can't give instructions to the director except as related to specific assignments and only after official board approval. Boards also should not give work orders to any staff; contact is with the director.

The director seeks advice from, consults with and involves the board in the decision-making process. The board's role is important, and members should never feel like they're on the outside looking in, detached from the director.

The director provides educational training opportunities for board members and gives them a chance to attend workshops, meetings and seminars. The more knowledge and skills board members have, the better they can advise the director and promote recreation and parks services in the community.

The foundation of a director's relationship with a recreation and parks board is trust. A director needs to respect the board's role and keep them well informed. Communication should be open and honest at all times. A recreation and parks board can do the best job for the community when it has the information it needs.

"You have obviously heard the saying, too many Chiefs and not enough Indians. One major reason to hire a director is when there are too many Indians and not a single Chief. There comes a time when board members can no longer be the over-dedicated volunteers. What our recreation and parks board was offering to the community amounted to second full-time jobs (unpaid, though) for many board members. One day our board woke up and realized that the task of supplying community recreation services required some dedicated professional management. We offered some great recreation programs for our residents, but we needed better coordination. So we joined forces with our neighboring municipalities and hired a recreation and parks director. It's made a world of difference!"

*Hank Baylor, Chair
Lewisburg Area Recreation
Authority
Union County*

To strengthen the relationship with the board, the director:

Relationship Between Director and Board Chair

The director and board chair have to spend time building trust and confidence. The first task is to assure each other that there'll be no surprises during the board chair's term. The director provides the board chair with publications and articles about board leadership and assists the chair with public speaking responsibilities by writing short speeches. The board chair does not hold an executive committee or board meeting without the director (unless an emergency or other unavoidable conflict occurs). The exception would be when the executive session is about the director. The board chair supports the director's interaction with elected officials, municipal staff and citizens. Whenever a problem occurs, the director lets the board chair know.

- Provides regular reports to keep board members well informed on department activities
- Works toward a strong committee system
- Works to appoint qualified community people to the board
- Gives members feedback on how board recommendations may impact the public
- Tells them what issues and options there are and makes recommendations to them
- Discusses direction of the department
- Surveys the desires of the board
- Lets them know about problems and changes right away before someone else does
- Copies them on important correspondence
- Gets their reaction to new ideas
- Knows what the board expects of director and knows what the needs of the board are
- Respects their role as citizens and sees them as a resource, not a threat
- Provides opportunities for their participation and involvement
- Makes sure the public knows about their involvement and recognizes them
- Doesn't waste their time
- Takes a stand and communicates his or her thoughts to the board
- Conducts facility and program visitations for evaluation purposes
- Provides direction for and works with the board as a partner to develop a team approach to problems
- Does not condemn the opinions of any board member to staff, citizens or public officials
- Supports to the public the positions the board may take, even when the director disagrees

How Does a Recreation and Parks Director Benefit a Board?

- With full-time professional and administrative leadership, more work gets accomplished.
- Grants can be applied for and other revenue sources can be found to help supplement local funds.
- There's better coordination with other recreation providers in the community.
- A director has advanced knowledge in many different areas that board members know little about like comprehensive recreation and park planning, recreation programming, and park design, operation and maintenance.
- Communication with municipal staff is improved.
- Citizens receive faster, better service by having a recreation and parks office manned during the day. They can have their questions answered, register for programs or reserve facilities.

How Does a Board Benefit a Recreation and Parks Director?

- A board provides a buffer between elected officials, the municipal manager and the director.
- There's a group to coordinate the input of citizens, which is necessary to improve services.
- A board has less of a vested interest than the director, so it can take a position, lobby and voice an opinion as an independent representative of the citizens. A director can't do this without being in an awkward and sometimes tenuous position.
- As citizens they are a sounding board for the director to try out new ideas, programs and policies before implementing them.
- Elected officials, municipal staff and directors are affected by turnover. A board provides the continuity necessary for a good operation.
- A group of actively involved supporters exists for recreation and parks services.

Many smaller communities in Pennsylvania do not have recreation and parks directors. The issue of when it's time to hire a full-time director has many facets. Is your community large enough to support a full-time director? If not, you may consider a regional approach to funding a position. DCNR has grant funding available through its Circuit Rider program when two or more municipalities decide to join forces. What qualifications should you look for in a director? What salary should be offered? DCNR operates a personnel referral service, and PRPS and NRPA also offer job vacancy services. If you are thinking about hiring a recreation and parks director and would like help, contact your DCNR regional recreation and park advisor. (See Appendix B for contact information.)

If your board is a governing board, it sets the policies and your director administers the policies. The easy way to remember this is, the board decides what to do and the staff decides how to do it.

Regional Board and Staff Relationship

Unlike many advisory recreation and parks boards, most regional governing boards have staff support. Understanding the proper relationship of the board to staff members helps the board run smoothly. In practice, the board has one employee – the director. The board hires this individual to make all personnel decisions. This includes hiring and firing staff, evaluating staff, settling grievances, determining the amount of and awarding raises, and disciplining staff. Regional agency board members and staff members need to clearly understand each other's roles. Overall, the board makes decisions that guide and direct the agency. The staff makes decisions on a daily basis to get the job done.

Regional board members acting as a group set policies and goals for the director to implement. The director takes direction from the full board, not from individual board members. Policies and goals are directed toward “what” the agency does and will do, not “who” will do it. Regional board members are policy makers, not policy enforcers. It is important not to cross the line that separates policy making from administration. Board members don't implement policy. That's the director's responsibility. He or she is hired to run the day-to-day affairs of the agency.

A poor understanding of the regional board's relationship with staff hurts the director's ability to effectively manage the agency and distracts the board from its proper role, governance and setting policy. The chart on the following page outlines which decisions are governing board responsibility and which decisions are staff responsibilities.

Regional Board and Staff Roles and Responsibilities		
Area	Board Role	Director Role
Audit	Hires auditor, reviews and approves audit	Obtains bids, recommends auditor to board
Billing, credit, collections	Adopts policy	Proposes policy and implements
Budget	Approves	Develops and recommends
Capital purchases	Approves	Prepares requests
Cleaning and maintenance	No role	Sets up schedule
Day-to day operations	No role	Makes all decisions
Decisions on building, renovation, leasing, expansion	Makes decisions	Recommends
Emergency repairs	Works with Director	Notifies Board Chair and acts with agreement from Chair
Fees	Adopts policy	Develops fee schedule and recommends policy
Firing of staff	No role	Makes final termination decisions
Goals and priorities	Approves and monitors	Recommends and implements
Grant applications	Approves	Writes and submits
Hiring of staff	No role	Makes all hiring decisions
Major repairs	Approves	Obtains estimates and prepares recommendation
Minor repairs	Sets policy on amount that may be spent without Board approval	Authorizes repairs up to authorized amount
Needs assessments and planning tools	Reviews and evaluates	Conducts research and prepares analysis and recommendations
Personnel policies	Adopts	Recommends and administers policies
Programs	Approves program proposals	Creates program proposals and implements programs
Staff assignments	No role	Establishes and assigns work
Staff evaluations	Evaluates only Director	Evaluates staff
Staff salaries	Allocates line item for salaries in budget	Approves salaries
Supply purchases	Establishes policy and budget for supplies	Makes purchases, maintains accurate records

Who Does What?

Reaching agreement as a regional board and staff about who does what is an excellent way to separate policy (board issues) from management (day-to-day operations). Discuss items such as those on the following page with your staff and board to make sure everyone is clear on how to handle decision making.

The Five Primary Responsibilities of Regional Boards

- 1) *Meet the needs of your residents.* The only reason your board exists is to serve people. The bottom line for every board decision is: “How will this help us serve people better?”
- 2) *Set policies to guide your agency.* Your primary function is to create the policies that ensure your agency is run legally, ethically and effectively. The policies you set give your director the guidance to manage the agency.
- 3) *Develop the strategic plan and monitor its progress.* The board’s role is to see the “big picture” and set the direction for the agency’s future growth and development.
- 4) *Ensure that you have adequate finances and that the money is spent responsibly.* You’ll approve a budget which is used to deliver the services you’ve authorized. As you make plans, you have to be sure there is money to pay for them.
- 5) *Support your director.* Your role is to provide the direction you want the director to take the agency, and then allow him or her to manage its daily operations. Expect feedback and communication from the director, evaluate his or her performance and offer your support.

Who Can Make the Decision?			
Only the Board May Make the Decision	Director must Seek Prior Approval from the Board to Act	Director has Authority to Act and then Inform the Board	Director has Complete Authority to Make the Decision
Change board meeting times or frequencies	Have preliminary plans drawn up for a building project	Submit a grant proposal to a funding source	Write a grant proposal
Initiate a ban on smoking at recreation facilities	Award contract for a construction project	Purchase a new telephone system with budgeted funds	Discipline an employee who arrives at work intoxicated
Select a firm to audit the finances	Plan a board/staff retreat to revise the strategic plan	Send an employee to a training conference	Decide the director will represent the agency at a business function
Decide how to evaluate the director	Hire an employee for an unbudgeted position	Hold a press conference to announce board-approved building expansion plans	Give a staff member a 10 percent raise
Give recognition awards to community members for their contributions	Approach citizens about serving on an advisory committee	Decide the director can go to a week-long seminar	Have the director's office redecorated and refurnished
Award contracts to vendors	Decide what to cut to meet budget demands	Promote a staff member from a direct service position to an administrative position	Communicate information to another organization
Retain legal counsel for the organization	Change the director's evaluation form	Fire a popular, long-time employee for poor job performance	Notify contractors of bidding results
Award a bonus to the director	Set annual schedule for board training activities	Hire a person for an administrative assistant position	Decide how to invest surplus funds
		Determine the type and number of clerical positions for the office	Change billing procedures
			Change computerized recordkeeping system
			Establish guidelines for evaluation of employees

Regional Board Chain of Command

For staff and board members to better understand their relationship, create and support a chain of command that defines lines of authority.

For instance, what should you do if a staff member comes to you with a complaint or grievance? It's your responsibility to remind the staff member about the chain of command, and remind him or her to take the matter up with their supervisor. In addition, if board members attempt to give out assignments and micromanage staff, it will completely disrupt the chain of command.

The following outline provides an example of a chain of command for a regional board to follow.

Regional Board/Staff Communication Chain of Command

1) When Seeking Information or Input

- a) Any board member may contact any staff member at any time. Staff member notifies director of every major contact.
- b) Any staff member may contact any board member at any time. Director can make exceptions for particular board members, staff members, or topic. Director notifies board chairperson of every major contact.

2) When Giving Assignments

- a) All board members other than chairperson contact chairperson with request for board or staff action.
- b) Chairperson gives assignments to director.
- c) Director may ask for assignment from board.

- d) Director gives assignments to staff. Staff gets assignments only from director and not from chairperson, board members, or board. Board members never tell staff to do anything. They make requests at board meetings. Staff works for the director, not the board members. Director works for the board.

3) Board Decisions

- a) Board receives director's recommendation regarding policy making matters requiring staff time to implement.
- b) Matters relating to director's position (hiring, salary, performance evaluation) are conducted according to written procedures.
- c) Staff grievance of director's decision is conducted according to written grievance procedures.
- d) Board overrules director's decision sparingly, if at all. The decision must have been incredibly bad, an illegal act, or violating board policy. If these exceptions aren't present, then board supports director's decision, even if the decision wasn't the best decision. Board tells director privately that he/she has made a mistake.

4) Director Decisions

- a) Input options: May ask for input from board members informally. May ask for input from board at board meeting. May make decision with no input from board members.
- b) Board information options: May inform board of preliminary decision before implementation to see if there are objections. May inform board after decision has been made. May not inform board.

5) Additional Information

- a) Chairperson disciplines board members. Director speaks to chairperson about any problems.
- b) Staff can't complain to board members. Board members shouldn't allow it and should refer all complaints to director.
- c) When board members receive complaints from the general public, they get specific details and notify director. Director investigates and replies to complainant directly.

To be effective in your role as a recreation and parks board member, it's important to understand how *your* municipal government functions. Having an understanding of Pennsylvania's other forms of municipal government is also important to help you work together with your neighboring municipalities.

Municipal Government in Pennsylvania

The five major categories of municipal government established by the Pennsylvania General Assembly are boroughs, townships, cities, counties and home rule municipalities. Pennsylvania has 2,633 municipal (also called general purpose) units of government. Of these, 67 are counties and 2,566 are boroughs, townships, cities and home rule municipalities. In most cases local government boundaries were established in the early stages of Pennsylvania's development by natural barriers such as rivers or ridges, not by state mandate. The majority of local municipal governments in our state are small, with 79.2 percent of them having less than 5,000 residents.

To add to the numbers game, Pennsylvania has over 5,800 governmental bodies, which include all of the municipal units of government mentioned previously plus school districts, commissions and special purpose authorities. Pennsylvania has 501 school districts that are divided into five classifications according to population. They are governed by the Public School Code and administered by nine-member school boards elected for four-year overlapping terms. Each school board appoints a district superintendent who oversees the administration of the school district. Authorities are set up to borrow money and issue bonds to finance and perform a special service. Projects such as public buildings, transportation facilities, highways, airports, parking facilities, waterworks, sewage treatment plants, recreation facilities, hospitals and industrial development projects are funded by authorities. Authorities are also used to organize and execute joint municipal projects.

The state legislature has delegated much of the power to regulate use of land to local municipalities. Each local government has only the powers specified by the legislative code that created its form.

What follows is a brief description of Pennsylvania's five major municipal government categories.

Pennsylvania Units of Government

1. Boroughs (961)

- Are governed by the Borough Code
- Have a strong and dominant council, the official governing body, which has extensive powers over the whole range of municipal functions
- Have a “weak” mayor
- Council may appoint a borough manager or secretary to carry out the day-to-day activities of the borough
- May be divided into wards, with one, two or three elected council representatives from each ward
- Have three, five or seven council representatives elected at large (if not divided into wards)
- Include elected officials independent of the council such as a tax collector and assessor

2. Townships (First Class - 91, Second Class - 1,497)

- The governing body may appoint a variety of officials, including a township secretary, engineer, solicitor, township manager, police chief, zoning officer, planner, building inspector, parks and recreation director, emergency management coordinator and sewage enforcement officer
- Are either First Class or Second Class (All townships are Second Class except those that have approved First Class status by local voters through a referendum)
- Are governed by the First Class or Second Class Township Code

First Class Townships:

- Generally serve urban and suburban areas
- Must have a population density of at least 300 people per square mile
- Have a governing body of five to 15 elected commissioners with staggered four-year terms

Second Class Townships:

- Generally serve more rural areas, although many townships that meet the First Class density requirement have remained Second Class
- Have a governing body of three or five at-large supervisors elected to staggered five- or six-year terms

3. Third Class Cities (53)

- Are governed by the Third Class City Code or Third Class City Optional Charter Law
- Have an elected mayor, council members, controller and treasurer. These officials, the controller and treasurer are elected at large for four-year overlapping terms. Council appoints all other officers and employees.
- Operate under commission, mayor-council or council-manager form of government
- Mayor-council form (11 cities) has a five, seven or nine-member council elected at large for overlapping four-year terms. A mayor, treasurer and controller are also elected for four years. The mayor is the chief executive of the city and enforces the ordinances of council. The mayor supervises the work of all city departments and submits the annual city budget to council.
- Commission form (22 cities) has elected mayor and four other council members, with mayor as president of council. Each council member is in charge of one of the five major city departments.
- Council-manager form (four cities) has five, seven or nine members elected at large for four-year overlapping terms. A city treasurer and controller are also elected. Council appoints a city manager. The manager is the chief administrative officer of the city and is responsible for executing the ordinances of council. The manager appoints and may remove department heads and subordinates.

4. Home Rule Municipalities (71)

- Have adopted home rule charters
- Include Philadelphia (First Class City), Pittsburgh (Second Class City), Scranton (Second Class A City), 16 other cities, 19 boroughs and 27 townships
- Reflect variations of the mayor-council, council-manager, weak mayor and commission forms of government
- May have adopted the title “municipality” to distinguish themselves from units operating under borough and township codes
- The mayor or municipal executive has broad appointive and removal powers and control over the administration of the municipality, is responsible for preparing the annual budget and recommending measures for consideration by council, and can veto legislation (can be overridden by a two-thirds majority vote of council)

5. Counties (67)

- Are governed by the County Code
- Provide and coordinate a number of services to the municipalities that are located within their boundaries
- Are funded through taxation and bond issues
- May adapt the basic organization of county government established by the state to conform to their particular needs
- Have a three-member board of elected county commissioners, and 11 other elected officials, including sheriff, district attorney and recorder of deeds who operate independently of the commissioners

Source: *Citizen's Guide to Pennsylvania Local Government*, Governor's Center for Local Government Services, Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development

For information on your local government municipal code contact your municipal office.

5

Strengthening Your Board

Q: What does a productive recreation and parks board look like?

A: The board members cooperate wholeheartedly and work well together. The pronoun “we” is used many more times than the pronoun “I.” The word “our” is used with much greater frequency than the word “mine.” Each member contributes to the welfare of the board and is able to lose himself or herself in the larger whole.

This chapter provides more in-depth suggestions on ways to strengthen your board and the participation of your members.

To provide the best possible recreation and parks services for your residents, you have to work hard to improve how your board functions, including how your board chair leads and follows up on work assignments. A recreation and parks board is not one where your only responsibility is attending monthly meetings.

Many recreation and parks boards do a good job when things are going well, but that might not always be the case. Things get tough now and then. Most of the challenges facing Pennsylvania recreation and parks boards are normal and almost every board has experienced them at one time or another. You are not alone. We cover ways to deal with problems and conflict and turn them into growth for your board.

Accomplishments and success breed more accomplishments and success. We provide several board success stories from across Pennsylvania to show you what can be done when a board works together. The chapter ends with some tips on evaluating your board and how to make the most of your service as a recreation and parks board member.

The Importance of Active Involvement

As a recreation and parks board member, you will make decisions that affect the lives of many people, now and far into the future.

To do your job well, you'll need an enthusiasm for and belief in the value of recreation and parks. However, your board service will require much more than believing that recreation and parks benefits your community. Simply attending board meetings won't cut it. A strong board is an active one, with involved board members who get things done. You'll need to dig in and be a hands-on volunteer.

There'll be plenty of opportunities to get actively involved in your community's recreation and parks services. Your help may be needed to plan and conduct recreation programs, and maybe even maintain park sites. By being actively involved, you'll truly understand your operations and help to provide the quality services your residents deserve. You'll be helping to develop community pride in and support of your recreation and parks system.

If your board is fortunate enough to have a director, he or she will need lots of help to make your park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs the best they can be. Don't sit back and expect your director to do it all. Roll up your sleeves and get involved.

Essential Components of a Productive Board

- The atmosphere is a positive one. A board gets things done better, more quickly and with much more effectiveness if its members are doing the job because they want to do it.
- The members care about, respect and enjoy being with each other. The members spend time getting to know each other.
- The board is businesslike in the way it conducts its affairs and is well organized.
- The board chair and the members truly understand the basic purpose of the board. They know what it's "all about" and why it exists.
- The members fully understand and give 100 percent effort to attain board goals because they help form them.

How Can a Board Chair Strengthen Your Board?

Suppose that you're about to begin your duties as the chair of your recreation and parks board. What should you know and understand about your board? It may not be possible to learn all these things at one time. Over a period of a few weeks or months, follow these steps:

1. *Review your board's bylaws.* The bylaws detail your rules of procedure and operation. Become thoroughly familiar with them and keep a copy with you for reference during meetings.

Your board chair plays a very important role. As the leader and central force for your board's work, he or she is ultimately responsible for assigning tasks and ensuring that work gets done. The chair is your public spokesperson. Who your board chooses as its leader is going to affect how capable and active your board becomes.

Board Chair Tip #1

As you look at your board members ask, “What needs are these people hoping to have met through their participation here?” Some of your members will crave recognition for their contributions. Some will want to express their ideas. Some will need to work with others on projects. You’ll be more effective as a leader if you help members meet their personal needs. Also, try to understand how important membership on your board is to each member, as well as how members feel about each other.

2. *Read the history of your board.* You’ll learn a lot from studying the minutes of past meetings, committee reports, reports of outgoing officers and press clippings.
3. *Think about the people who make up your board.* Each member brings something different to the board. Variations in background, experience and point of view make this natural. Part of your role is to help each individual become a real part of the board.
4. *Deepen your grasp of your board’s purpose.* Your understanding of the purpose will influence every decision, choice and judgment you make.
5. *Review the activities of your board over a period of years to discover its interests.* Here you’ll find the program areas that have the most meaning to members and the customs, traditions and values that have become a part of the way members carry on their work.
6. *Review the relationship between your board, municipality, other boards and groups in your community.* What groups does the board work with? When you see your board in relationship to others it gives you perspective in your efforts to understand it.
7. *Look into the working procedures of your board.* Boards set up certain ways of doing things. Learn these ways and evaluate them. In time you may wish to suggest that procedures be modified, but don’t move faster than your members are ready to move.
8. *Understand how stable your board is.* How much turnover in membership is there? How many members are “veterans?” How many are new to the board this year?

The Fine Art of Follow-up

If you want your board to be stronger and more effective, learn how to follow up. No other phase of working with a board is so important.

Follow-up is the art of making sure that tasks get done. Your board and committee chairs have the job of helping members learn how to carry out their responsibilities and come through on their assignments. When assignments are agreed to, your board leaders expect them to be done at the right time, but stand by to be of assistance.

Here are proven techniques for good follow-up:

- *Start while the meeting is in progress.* Your follow-up tasks are much easier if you start them while the meeting is going on. It's perfectly natural to pause after each decision in the meeting and state the what, who and when of each assignment.
- *Keep a list or notebook.* Unless you have a great memory, jot down the follow-up items that must be done just as you would your shopping list. Items can slip your mind unless you have some system of keeping track of them. Also, the follow-up list is helpful in preparing the agenda for the next meeting.
- *Make specific assignments.* People who have jobs to do, do them better if they have a clear understanding of exactly what their responsibility is. On complicated assignments it's better to put them in writing. Email can be a good way to follow up on assignments.
- *Inquire about progress.* You don't want to make a nuisance of yourself but it helps to regularly ask members how they're doing with their assignments. Sometimes this is a "reminder" call in case members have forgotten about the job they're supposed to do.

Board Chair Tip #2

Part of your role as a board chair is to help members confirm *what* they've decided to do, *who* is to do it and *when* it's to be done. Setting time limits is particularly important. Also, it helps if there's some discussion of *how* to go about doing it. When all board members are informed about individual assignments, work is better coordinated.

What Type of Board Do You Have?

Active:

Will lobby for resources
Recruits board members and staff
Has team attitude
Is an advocate

Passive:

Reactive, figurehead role
Lets leadership work with no interference
Has little ownership
Is not an advocate

Managerial:

Fully engaged in details
Micro-manages operations
Scrutinizes everything
Can be an advocate

- *Get an early start.* Sometimes we put off tasks thinking that the next board meeting is a month away. We don't get an early start on follow-up tasks. Begin at once and keep ahead of the work. Never let details pile up.
- *Stick to the deadlines.* You have deadlines in follow-up work. When your board agrees on a date, stick to it. People like to know when assignments are due. We may wait until the last minute to complete our income tax returns but most of us mail them on time. We wouldn't be so likely to do so if our government were wishy-washy about the date.
- *Help but don't take away.* Most board members will come through 100 percent on their assignments. However, some may need your help. Be firm in saying that "this is your job to do," or "I'm ready to help, but I won't do the job for you." Help by reviewing the assignment, clarifying questions, suggesting alternative ways to tackle the agreed upon task and sharing personal experiences. The fine art comes in being able to help without taking away the person's feeling of responsibility.
- *Commend people who have done a good job.* People like to be recognized and appreciated. A friendly telephone call or an email note will be a tremendous encouragement for a member who has just completed an assignment for the board. Give credit where credit is due.
- *Be ready to handle emergencies.* No matter how well you plan your work or how careful you are about follow-up, there'll be emergencies. Members will become ill or be called out of town. Be ready to step in and take over or have some substitute in mind to do it. This underlines the importance of regularly asking how work is going so that you are up-to-date on projects and able to take over smoothly.

- *Face the fact that some people won't come through.* Some people will let you down. They won't carry their share of the load, even though they agreed to do it. Be friendly but direct and honest with people who aren't doing their job. Don't let the situation drag on or it'll be harder to face. Inform the person that you're willing to relieve them of their responsibility. The member might be overextended and glad to have relief.

Five Steps to Building that All-Important Board Spirit

The key ingredient in building a dynamic, productive recreation and parks board is helping people feel comfortable. How should a board chair do this?

1. *Reinforce Names* - To feel comfortable, members should know everyone's names. When new members are appointed, do introductions for a few consecutive meetings.
2. *Provide a Relaxed Environment* - Providing a comfortable, warm atmosphere produces board bonding and helps board members be productive. Tabling a discussion until another meeting or referring it to a committee are two ways to diffuse a difficult situation. Acknowledging the importance of a decision and the concerns of board members or giving credit for work done can put them back on task. For instance: "We all appreciate Meg's time and dedication on this project and how much she cares about the children we serve. Let's give this more time."
3. *Clarify Expectations* - Being clear about expectations and boundaries is another comfort builder. Once people join your board, be sure to let them know what you

Board Chair Tip #3

Sometimes board members won't do the job and won't let anybody else do it. This kind of person is a problem not only to the leader but to the board as well. It's important that you report to the board exactly what steps have been taken. Ask the board what to do about it. After all, the member who fails to come through hurts the whole board. Board pressure can be used to improve individual performance. Formal board action can be used to reassign duties and set new deadlines.

Board Chair Tip #4

Try starting every board meeting by thanking members for what they've done in the previous month. A typical opening might go something like this: "We've had an incredibly productive month. Because of Dan's contact with XYZ Company we now have a \$5,000 grant for the pre-school playground." Doing this starts the meeting on a positive note. Acknowledging progress is a good way to keep committees on task and keep the board updated. For instance: "Steve is making progress with the newspaper. He has an appointment with the editor for next week. Keep up the good work, Steve."

want from them. Present your expectations in different ways because people absorb information in different forms.

4. *Ask Questions* - It helps to use phrases such as "Do you have time to...?" or "Would you be interested in...?" On the other hand, it's often useful to ask "Why?" when people say "No." Maybe they're interested in a task but have never done it before and are afraid to try. You might ask, for example, "Is this something you really don't want to do, or would you be willing to try it with a co-chair?"
5. *Give Plenty of Thanks* - Acknowledging contributions of time and money helps people bond with your board. Say thank you early, often, publicly and creatively.

Becoming an Effective Board Member

When board members all actively participate, your board is stronger. How do you become an active participant? Think about the members who contribute the most to the work of your board.

The effective board member has these characteristics:

- Accepts the importance of the purpose and work of the board
- Gets along with individuals with different backgrounds and points of view
- Shares the workload and takes advantage of opportunities to learn new things and carry out jobs for the board
- Is a good interpreter for the board and can clearly explain its purpose to people who aren't familiar with it
- Is a helping person, sticking to discussions, giving other members a chance to talk by remaining silent and serving as a mentor for new board members

- Adopts a positive attitude toward the board, looking for its strong points and avoiding the negative “everything is all wrong” attitude that can destroy a board
- Accepts the fact that every board encounters problems from time to time, but doesn’t get discouraged by pessimistic attitudes
- Is willing to learn from others and to change on the basis of the combined experience and thinking of the board members
- Is alert to good timing and knows when it’s appropriate to press hard for a decision and when it’s better to encourage the board to explore further before taking action
- Behaves responsibly toward the board and completes assignments

Accomplishments Lead to Stronger Boards

The key to a more effective board is simple. It’s getting things done.

As a group, you decide what needs to be done, plan how you’ll do it and then carry out the plans you’ve made. When you’ve worked together to make projects happen it’s a great feeling. It gives you confidence to tackle other projects.

Although your dreams may be large, start small. Get some successes under your belt before you take on bigger projects. Eventually, you can use groups such as ad-hoc committees and task forces to help accomplish your work.

“Our park and recreation board started a summer recreation camp over 30 years ago and it’s still going strong. Its great reputation has parents standing in line the day of registration, sometimes an hour before we open our doors at 7:30 a.m., to get their child in before we hit our limit of 320 children. We keep the price down through a partnership with our school district for use of its buildings. We also serve a need for decent paying jobs for local teenagers, as most of our 20 counselors are between 17 and 20 years old. Our camp offers special theme days and events, plus the usual arts and crafts, sports, games and music, so children are exposed to a lot of fun activities. We have partnered with our adjoining borough in the last four years. Their part of the deal is to provide swim time and swim lessons for the kids each day.”

*Susan Herczeg
Municipal Secretary
Stroud Township
Monroe County*

Most conflicts fall into a gray area where ethics and public perception are more relevant than any legal definition could ever be. For instance, a board member may perform professional services for your board, or ask that a relative or friend be considered for a staff position. Items like these are perfectly acceptable if 1) they benefit your board and, 2) your board made the decisions in an objective and informed manner.

Communicating with the Public

Listen to reasonable comments from your residents, but channel any complaints, problems and issues you hear about through your board's chain of command.

If your board has paid staff, view them as your best defense against public criticism. If you make your staff member aware of a complaint or concern, the matter can be researched and given the best response for all concerned. If your board has no staff members, designate specific board members to handle resident complaints. You've done your job by informing the correct person about the problems.

It's important to get complete details from the resident plus their contact information so that your staff or board member can investigate and address the concerns and get back to the resident.

Know your board's policy about board members communicating with the media. Refer all inquiries from the media that seek official comment on board actions to the director (if you have one), board chairperson or other designated board spokesperson.

Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest comes up whenever the personal or professional interests of a board member are potentially at odds with the best interests of your board.

Conflict of interest is difficult to define. Potential conflicts usually aren't illegal. But, they are vulnerable to legal challenges and public misunderstanding.

Loss of public confidence and a damaged board reputation are the most likely results of a poorly managed conflict of interest.

Take these steps to avoid even the appearance of impropriety:

- Disclose conflicts when they occur so when board members are voting on a decision, they are aware that another member's interests are being affected. Allow board members to briefly state their potential conflict and to answer pertinent questions about it from other board members.
- Require your board members to withdraw from further discussions on transactions that present a potential conflict.
- Require your board members to withdraw from decisions and not participate in a vote on transactions that present a potential conflict.
- Establish procedures, such as competitive bids, that ensure your board is receiving fair value in the transaction.
- Decide to hire or contract with the board member only if they are the best qualified individual available and/or they are willing to provide the goods or services at the best price.
- Record in your board meeting minutes the potential conflict of interest and the use of the procedures and criteria of your conflict of interest policy.

Recreation and park boards should adopt a conflict of interest policy that prohibits or limits business transactions with board members and requires board members to disclose potential conflicts. Have all board members fill out and sign a conflict of interest statement.

Strengthening Your Board

Sample Conflict of Interest Statement

No board member shall derive any personal profit or gain for himself or herself or a member of his or her family, directly or indirectly, by reason of his or her participation with the recreation and parks board. Each individual shall disclose to the board any personal interest which he or she may have in any matter pending before the board and shall refrain from participation in any decision on such matter.

Any board member who is an officer, board member, committee member or staff member of a vendor, supplier or other party doing business with the recreation and parks board shall identify his or her affiliation with such agency or agencies; further, in connection with any committee or board action specifically directed to that agency, he or she shall not participate in the decision affecting that agency and the decision must be made and/or ratified by the full board.

Any board member shall refrain from obtaining any list of park and program participants for personal or private solicitation purposes at any time during the term of their affiliation.

At this time, I am a board member, committee member, or an employee of the following organizations:

Now, this is to certify that I, or any member of my family, except as described below, are not now nor at any time during the past year have been:

1. A participant, directly or indirectly, in any arrangement, agreement, investment, or other activity with any vendor, supplier, or other party doing business with the recreation and parks board which has resulted or could result in personal benefit to me or to a member of my family.
2. A recipient, directly or indirectly, of any salary payments or loans or gifts of any kind or any free services or discounts or other fees from or on behalf of any person or organization engaged in any transaction with the recreation and parks board.

Any exceptions to 1 or 2 above are stated below with a full description of the transactions and of the interest, whether direct or indirect, which I or a member of my family have (or have had during the past year) in the persons or organizations having transactions with the recreation and parks board.

Date: _____

Board Member Signature: _____

Printed Name: _____

Problem Board Members

Consider the board member who uses the board to work out personal grudges against people. Think about the extremely negative person who is the complaining, suffering board member. He or she certainly fails to contribute to board morale and may drive other members away.

Then you have the irresponsible person who says, "Oh, please let me do this. I'd love to do it." But, nothing happens. The member agrees to do the job, but never does it. All you get are excuses for why it hasn't been done.

How about the "eager beaver" member who runs around town speaking for the board when he or she has no authorization to do so? He or she makes commitments for the board without consulting anyone, then gets the board into all kinds of trouble and replies, "I was only trying to help."

Some boards have "empire builders." They are the "I" members who consider every board responsibility in terms of "what's in it for me." They are the ones who never work for the good of the whole board.

Then there are the board members who use their board position and the power associated with it for personal gain or to assist someone on an issue that will result in a conflict of interest. Those who do this alienate the public and reflect poorly on public officials and fellow board members.

Three Categories of Board Problems

All board problems can be placed in one of three categories: 1) problem board members, 2) problems in the way boards function and 3) problems between groups. All boards will encounter some problems along the way. Recognizing them...and how you deal with them...are the keys to turning negatives into positives. If your board isn't careful, problems can hinder your success and cause considerable stress.

Other Kinds of Problem Board Members

Can you see yourself or fellow board members in any of the following descriptions? When people such as these are on your board, the board is almost certain to have problems. The problem board member:

- Is distrustful and suspicious of fellow board members
- Sleeps during the meeting
- Repeats what others have already said
- Is always critical and questioning
- Interrupts members in mid-sentence
- Doesn't want to spend any money
- Wants to spend money the way his or her business would spend it
- Seeks recognition
- Dominates board discussions
- Resents the salary of the director (if you have one)
- Always votes "no" on every issue
- Has a definite opinion on every issue
- Has only one interest (Little League baseball, swimming, etc.)
- Never follows through on commitments
- Always insists on doing something regardless of what it is
- Relates everything to "my child – as a parent I know"
- Is a snob about education and won't respect anyone's opinion if they don't have at least a college degree
- Wants to give jobs to friends
- Believes all parks should be sports facilities
- Borrows equipment constantly
- Wants to be in the newspaper all the time
- Doesn't believe anything
- Is a know-it-all
- Wants exposure to run for political office
- Is a member in name only
- Says "yes" to everything
- Is usually absent
- Supports a fellow member's view to get support on something else
- Comes to meetings late and/or leaves early
- Pays attention only to items he or she is interested in
- Is stuck in the thinking that the current way is the best and only way
- Criticizes board decisions after meetings
- Likes to hear themselves talk
- Is too focused on a special interest

Problems in the Way Boards Function

When any group of people get together who don't know each other well, problems can result. These are typical challenges for boards:

1. *Lack of understanding of the board's goals.* You can't have unity and good morale and provide quality services if your members aren't clear about the goals of the board.
2. *Lack of leadership.* This is expressed in ways like, "Too few people are willing to do the work." "The old guard is in charge and new members don't get a chance." "The same people do all the work; you see them at dozens of meetings in our community." This is a serious problem for many boards because you need experienced people ready, willing, able and welcomed into leadership positions.
3. *Cliques, factions, people that try to take charge of the board.* It's difficult to know what to do about this. A clique can wreck the board if it's allowed to damage its services and operation.
4. *Conflict.* It's not unusual to have personality conflicts among board members. At times they can be very destructive to your board and can keep you from accomplishing your work.
5. *Red tape.* Boards can become all wound up in red tape. They get so much organizational structure, so many committees and so many rules and regulations that all the fun goes out of the work of the board. People go through the motions and meetings take place as usual, but nothing of real significance happens.

"Our board recently decided to require that a representative from each athletic group that uses borough fields attend our monthly meetings during their seasons. It's been very successful. Communication has improved so much, and we've resolved conflicts before they became bigger problems. We've actually learned a lot from each other."

*Gene Hughs, Chair
Lewistown Park and
Recreation Board
Mifflin County*

"We have lots of volunteer groups involved in operating Denver Memorial Park. A Park and Playground Association actually owns the park and schedules its use, the Denver Athletic Association maintains the ballfields, the Denver Recreation Board runs programs at the park, and the boy scouts and the Denver Fair Committee maintain the buildings. The borough has taken a more active role in the park, becoming responsible for grounds maintenance a few years ago. We did a Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space plan to help us sort through the issues and decide how to work together to make the best use of all of our resources. The borough has helped to solve problems and disagreements between the volunteer groups. We've found that constant communication is important. We try to make sure everyone knows what's happening at the park."

*Mike Hession
Borough Manager
Denver Borough
Lancaster County*

6. *Indecision.* This is expressed in words like, "Our board doesn't get anywhere." "We are in a rut." "We work hard, but never decide to move and never make any progress." Indecision destroys the vitality of the board.

Problems Between Groups

A third area of common problems is between recreation and parks boards and organizations in a community. Too often groups and boards compete against each other for limited resources.

For example, how about Little League baseball versus the soccer association, with your recreation and parks board in the middle? Many communities don't have enough sports fields for the parent-run youth sports groups to schedule practices and games. You want to please both the baseball and soccer groups, but if you're not careful, it's possible that both will be unhappy.

How to Fix Problems When They Occur

When your board has a problem, it's likely to have been caused by people; most problems are "man-made."

- Almost every big problem faced by a board was at one time a little problem. Even though it's unpleasant, if boards would face problems early on they won't grow into bigger problems.
- Sometimes the wrong people are assigned to a task. More thought needs to be given to the work assignment process so that the right members and jobs are matched together.
- Sometimes board chairs and members become very set in their ways and resist change. As a result, they become afraid of new ideas and cling to the old ones. Appointing a new chair and adding new members can bring a fresh outlook and approach to the board.

- Boards don't do an honest job of evaluation. Boards should look at what they've done and how they've done it at least once each year.
- When boards try to rush things too fast, they're headed for trouble. Boards that work at a steady, even pace allow all board members the time necessary to become comfortable with decisions.
- When board chairs don't share problems with the board, they can worsen. All problems need to be out in the open for the board to decide as a group what to do about them.
- Board members become dissatisfied when they don't understand their roles and level of authority. Review this periodically so members are clear about their responsibilities.

Coping with Problem Board Members

Before your board considers asking your elected officials not to reappoint problem members when their term expires, here are a few ideas to think about.

- Recognize that some members are really striving for recognition and give them a major task or position to satisfy them.
- Keep them involved and bide your time. Many board members come in with an ax to grind but see the big picture eventually.
- Keep the board meeting agenda lean with to-the-point discussions to reduce agonizing over trivial subjects.
- Don't let board members catch the board off-guard. If you hear rumors about negative actions planned for a board meeting, relay them to the board chair.
- Deal with self-serving board members by having the board chair speak with them privately. When there's even a possibility of a conflict of interest immediately resolve it. Have all board members sign a Code of Ethics like the one on the next page.

"There are times of the year when boards need to take a break. Boards need time to reenergize, reflect and relax just like people do. Why not skip your meeting in the busy month of December? We did away with July and August board meetings. September was a real good jump start."

*John Roche, Former Member
Monroeville Recreation
and Parks Advisory Board
Allegheny County*

Board Member Code of Ethics

By signing this Code of Ethics, I am making a commitment to honest board service. As a recreation and parks board member, I will:

1. Make recreation and parks services available to all residents without discrimination.
2. Invite all residents to express their suggestions and opinions so I am properly informed prior to making my decisions, make them based solely upon the facts available to me, and respect and support the final decisions of the board.
3. Together with my fellow board members, see that recreation and parks services are properly run, but not try to run them myself.
4. Make no disparaging remarks in or out of board meetings about other members of the board or their opinions.
5. Recognize that to promise in advance of a meeting how I will vote on any proposition under consideration is to close my mind. I agree to think through other facts and points of view that are presented at meetings.
6. Consider unethical and will avoid “secret” sessions of board members held without the presence of all board members.
7. Avoid conflicts of interest at all times and not use my service on the board for my own personal advantage or for the advantage of my family, friends or associates.
8. Represent the interests of all people served by the board and not favor special interests inside or outside of the board.
9. Approach all board decisions with an open mind, prepared to make the best decisions for everyone involved.
10. Focus my efforts on the mission of the board and not on my personal goals.
11. Never exercise authority as a board member except when acting in a meeting with the full board or as delegated by the board.
12. Do nothing to violate the trust of those who appointed me to the board or of those we serve.
13. Keep confidential information confidential.
14. Consider myself a “trustee” of the board and do my best to ensure that it’s well maintained, financially secure, growing and always operating in the best interests of those we serve.

Board Member Signature

Date

Dealing with Conflict within the Board

Your board chair should make it clear that 1) whenever people get together to solve problems, there's bound to be disagreement, and 2) members should be courteous to each other and allow all views to be shared. Hearing another's point of view is never a bad idea and disagreement can bring out sides to issues that are important to think about.

Conflict and controversy can be common with active, productive boards. Think of conflict as neither good nor bad. Consider it as the appearance of differences of opinion, interests and experiences. Many times the differences remain undisclosed until some situation between members brings the differences out in the open. Although you may not like conflict, it can be the "stuff" out of which comes progress. It may not seem possible at the time your board is going through it, but a great deal of value will come out of a difficult situation if your board reviews the experience and makes up its mind to learn from it.

Tackling the "A Few Do It All" Problem

Time after time the same people take on multiple responsibilities. There seems to be a shortage of people willing to tackle important jobs. To determine why, you've got to break it down. If the problem exists in your board, your members must *want* to do something about it or nothing will or can happen to solve it.

Maybe some of your members only feel secure with experienced leadership. They want projects to succeed and don't want to take a chance on a new, untested person. But, how will new members prove themselves if the old-timers are so possessive that they won't step aside and give new people a chance? Take a look at the people who are doing too much. They must be receiving great satisfaction

How to Turn Conflict into Constructive Good

1. Bring the differences into the open. You can't integrate differences unless you know what those differences are.
2. Define the problem and focus on the problem rather than the personalities involved.
3. Search for the significant features of the conflict and look for small points of agreement (the "common ground") as a starting point for reconciliation.
4. From time to time check back and determine exactly what the points of disagreement are. You can suggest partial solutions that will be acceptable.
5. When the conflict has been resolved and an agreement has been reached move on to the next order of business.

Getting Inactive Board Members Active

Look at the unused potential leaders on your board. Aren't there some members who have talents that might be put to good use? Is that "indifference" you suspect as real as you think? Maybe they haven't been asked to take responsibility. The indifference may vanish with opportunity. You'll find it's possible to discover, train and utilize many more members than ever before. When new leadership emerges the board will be healthier and at the same time make a greater impact on community life.

from their work. To step aside and give others a chance may mean that these members will have to give up power and prestige.

As you face up to the problem you'll begin to develop a plan for solving it. Some of the plan elements include listing the jobs that have to be done by the board, the members who are doing the jobs and the members who aren't doing much to help. These inventories will reveal some useful things. You'll develop a strategy for searching out new leadership and look for ways to involve new members.

Why not set objectives and assign responsibility to each board member for one objective? This is also good because a board member who feels very strongly about one issue can choose that objective to foster progress.

Evaluations Strengthen Boards

If you asked two simple questions of all board members, you'd learn a lot about your board's functioning. First, why does our board exist and why should it exist? Second, is our board doing its work in the most effective manner possible? The fact that citizens visit your parks and come to your recreation programs is no guarantee that your services can't be improved.

During an evaluation, some members may have their toes stepped on and others may have their feelings hurt if shortcomings are discovered. Keep the focus positive! There's an element of risk in every kind of evaluation, but it's far better to know the facts than to continue to make mistakes. High board morale grows out of board achievements; real board achievements come out in a good evaluation process.

How to Go About Evaluating Your Board

There are a number of little things that your board chair can do as evaluation activities. He or she can make a regular habit of studying the attendance records of your board members and asking those who don't attend why they don't. He or she can "listen around" after each meeting and pick up impressions of how things are going. Some boards use a simple board meeting check-up sheet after each meeting to give members a chance to say what they thought of the meeting and to offer suggestions for improvement. An annual report, a written year-end account of board activities and accomplishments, is another avenue for evaluation and serves as a record of board achievement. (See Appendix H for an example of an evaluation process that will assess your board's ability to impact the important recreation and parks issues and needs of your community.)

The best evaluation any board can have is the "on-the-spot" kind of analysis that can be done after a special event or project has just been completed. How did we do? How could we do better next time? Ask positive questions that lead to more careful scrutiny.

Surviving as a Recreation and Parks Board Member

Before long, many challenges present themselves when you serve your community as a recreation and parks board member. Keep these points in mind:

- *Remember the boundaries of your authority and whom you represent.* You have authority as part of a group during your public meeting and over only those things delegated to you. You represent all the residents of your community. Always ask how an action will affect them.

Why Do An Annual Check-up?

A good evaluation isn't something that your board chair does alone. Everyone on the board has responsibility for it. The evaluation won't be very effective if it's forced on a board. Your board members need to be willing, able and ready to look at themselves and their work. Recreation and parks boards should conduct an annual "check-up" on their progress to:

- Determine how well they are meeting community recreation and parks needs
- Confirm that planned projects and activities are happening
- See if the board is moving too fast or too slow for members
- Prevent problems from occurring
- Point out ways to improve services and recognize what's being done well

“Our township is surrounded by communities that have full-time recreation and parks departments. Our citizens were demanding that we provide services for them. So we partnered with Montgomery Township to hire our first recreation and parks director, with the help of a DCNR Circuit Rider grant. Within five years, we knew we needed someone to work for our township alone. The number of recreation programs we offered kept growing, plus we had our brand new 77-acre Penllyn Woods Park. Today, both townships have full-time directors.”

*Sandy Feight
Parks and Recreation Director
Lower Gwynedd Township
Montgomery County*

- *Keep problems in-house first.* If there’s something that you don’t like about the board’s operation, don’t tell the residents or the media first. This creates controversy and reflects poorly on your municipality. Talk to board members, elected officials and staff first and try to solve issues in-house.
- *Get out and be involved in your services.* Hearing about a park area or recreation program is nowhere near as good as seeing it in action. Your help is always needed as well.
- *Take time to study issues.* Don’t take action on something new that you’ve never heard of before a board meeting. Insist on time to study both sides of the new issue, and get it on the agenda for your next meeting.
- *Treat people like you’d wish to be treated.* When residents complain, show concern for their point of view. Promise to get the facts and get back to them. You may not be able to change things, but at least you’ve made an effort.
- *Get to know fellow board members and treat them well.* By taking time to know each other, you’ll recognize the skills, backgrounds and interests of members. This will help you work more effectively as a group. Develop trust, respect and empathy for other points of view, and be open and honest. Your board is part of a municipal team with elected officials and staff that is collectively responsible for overseeing your recreation and parks system.
- *Learn more by asking.* Question new proposals and programs that come before the board. Ask residents what they like and dislike about your services and thank them when they tell you. If you get questions you can’t answer, check into it and get back to them.

- *Never take an anonymous call.* When a resident contacts you by phone, get the name of the caller first. If he or she won't tell you, don't continue the conversation. You deserve to know who you're talking to and people need to respect that. Obtain specific information so that you'll be able to get an answer for the resident. Promise to call back within a reasonable amount of time.
- *Don't exaggerate when talking.* Members realize you are exaggerating. Rather than saying, "A lot of people have been calling me," it's much better to state the name of the caller(s) and bring the concern before the board.
- *Don't always come to meetings with problems and complaints.* When you do, be prepared to provide some solutions.
- *Get beyond the single issue.* Starting out as a board member with a burning issue isn't a bad thing. The key is not to focus only on your special interest. Strive to understand all of your recreation and parks services so that you can make more informed decisions.
- *Report regularly to your governing body.* Keep your contact with your governing body open and don't circumvent your board or staff. Never knowingly embarrass or push your appointing authority into a corner. Give them regular reports so that they stay informed.
- *Don't hire relatives, accept free services or take equipment for personal use.* There's no explanation that residents will support for hiring your spouse, swimming for free at the pool or borrowing the park truck to pick up furniture. This creates a bad image for your municipality.
- *Make sure you're having fun.* This should be something you enjoy. If it's not, step down and spend this time doing something more enjoyable.

"Our township has a severe shortage of athletic fields. This has caused our local youth sports organizations to fight with each other over the little space that's available. We formed a park and recreation board to focus on increasing the number of park facilities, coordinate scheduling for them, and bring back the peace to our community."

*Marty Dreibelbis, Chair
Walker Township Park and
Recreation Board
Juniata County*

How to Establish the Value of Recreation and Parks

The key to developing community support is to build the most positive reputation possible for your recreation and parks services, regardless of the size of your community, how many parks exist or the number of recreation programs you offer. To do this, you need a well-planned approach. There are many elements to consider and coordinate to make municipal recreation and parks services something that all of your citizens, including your elected officials, value. This chapter covers these and other ways to build a positive image and identity for your recreation and parks board:

- Maintaining park areas and recreation facilities to high standards
- Providing excellent customer service
- Finding out what services residents want
- Involving your citizens and elected officials in strategic planning and as volunteers
- Spending time on marketing and promotion
- Forming partnerships

6

Developing Community Support

The goal of this chapter is to show you how to develop community support for recreation and parks. There is no easy answer, but there *are* proven techniques that do work. It's certainly an ongoing process that touches every aspect of what your board does. And it won't happen overnight.

The phrase "developing community support" means the support of your citizens *and* the support of your elected officials. Of course, if you successfully obtain the strong backing of your citizens – and your elected officials know it – that goes a long way toward garnering the support of your municipal leaders. After all, it's your citizens who elected them in the first place and will make the choice whether or not to re-elect them.

Your police department doesn't need to explain or establish its value to the public. Everyone understands the need for and importance of police protection. Your elected officials can provide municipal funds to hire more officers or purchase police cars, and citizens usually never question it. Why is it different for recreation and parks?

It's different because the value of recreation and parks hasn't been established in most Pennsylvania communities. People don't understand how the services will benefit them and the community as a whole. They only see the costs associated with building and maintaining parks and offering recreation programs. Some residents don't see the need to spend public funds on recreation and parks. Plus, citizens often take local government services for granted. The grass at the park gets mowed and the trash cans get emptied, just like the snow gets plowed

from the streets and the potholes get filled. This “take-for-granted” attitude makes getting strong community support for public recreation and parks even more of a challenge.

Remember though, that your park areas and recreation facilities and programs are where residents play, relax and enjoy life. You don’t give out speeding tickets or dig streets up. Yours is a positive, citizen-centered service. This gives you a good start.

Building a Positive Image and Identity

The support of your taxpayers and municipal leaders is essential to maintain your current level of service *and* to increase it. To obtain this support, work on building a positive image and increasing the public’s awareness of your recreation and parks services. Never assume that elected officials and citizens understand the role your board currently plays or could play in making your community a better place to live. It’s up to your recreation and parks board to tell them.

What do your citizens really think about your services? Just what *is* your image? Is it good or bad, or are people indifferent? Do people even know your board exists? If you ask people to pick a word or phrase to describe your services, what will they say? What important services and programs do you offer that define your reputation? Hold a candid discussion where all board members have the opportunity to state what they think your image is currently.

Come to some agreement on what people’s perceptions are of your services, as they exist today. Then, decide as a group what you want your image to be. For instance, do you want to be known for well-maintained parks, great program instructors, quality special events or putting people’s needs

“I am a board member for two reasons. First, each participating municipality must have one elected official on the board and I’m East Buffalo Township’s representative. Second, I sincerely believe in the role our recreation authority plays in the community. The first reason can be a real negative. If the elected official representing a municipality is a reluctant participant, the board suffers greatly in terms of its effectiveness and the quality of services it provides. Unfortunately in a small township of the second class, the person who may end up on the board is there as the default candidate. The second reason is the winner! I really enjoy serving and am proud to be a part of this board. I am amazed at how far we have come in three short years. I guess the saying is true that, ‘if you build it they will come.’ Provided of course that what we build is what they want. I feel like we’re making a difference in the quality of life for our residents. That’s my major motivation.”

*Hank Baylor, Chair
Lewisburg Area Recreation
Authority
Union County*

Developing Community Support

Another step to build your image is to develop a logo for your recreation and parks board. A logo ties together your facilities and services in an identifiable way. Marking park signs, program flyers and recreation facilities with your logo helps to build an identity and image for your board that citizens will recognize.



first? Remember, people's perceptions can always be changed.

Your fellow board members are the best people to start word-of-mouth enhancement of your image. Making statements to neighbors and friends such as "Did you see how busy the park was on Saturday?" or "This new program is fantastic!" go a long way toward developing a positive image for your board.

Distributing "*Community Recreation and Parks*"

Get your board members copies of "*Community Recreation and Parks*." This handbook is available from DCNR and provides an overview of the basic concepts of public recreation and parks in Pennsylvania. It shows how establishing or improving this important government service can greatly benefit Pennsylvania communities. It has hands-on information you can use to help develop community support for recreation and parks and strengthen your services. Make sure your elected officials and other partners have a copy, and encourage them to read it.

Keeping Park Areas and Recreation Facilities Well Maintained

Show the public that you care about making their stay in your parks comfortable and enjoyable by keeping restrooms clean, litter picked up, grass cut, weeds pulled and trees trimmed. If you experience vandalism, clean it up right away. When you maintain your park areas and recreation facilities to high standards, people notice. They'll support continuing that standard of care.

Getting your residents to help maintain park areas develops a feeling of ownership for them. Why not organize a spring park clean up? Maybe you can get a garden club to do plantings around your park entrance sign.

Your recreation and parks board can help to make maintenance tasks easier to perform and keep maintenance costs lower through good park area and recreation facility design. The overall goal of maintenance is to provide clean, safe and attractive areas and facilities for public use. Proper design can help your board achieve this. For instance, put walkways where the public will walk and put pads under park benches. This will help keep the grass looking nice and make it easier to mow around benches.

Building Park Areas and Recreation Facilities to High Standards

Do the best quality job possible when constructing new recreation facilities or renovating existing facilities. When you have popular, well-visited facilities citizens favor increasing financial support for improvements to other recreation facilities. Incorporating features into your building and renovation plans that citizens desire also gains you support for your overall services. In addition, when you offer high quality recreation programs, citizens value them and will support providing more program opportunities for all ages.

Providing Excellent Customer Service

Make people feel good about their involvement in recreation and parks by providing excellent customer service. Treat everyone with the same degree of courtesy, friendliness and kindness. Be aware of and adapt to the variety of languages and cultures in your community. You must be prepared to serve *all* of your residents. Being very responsive to questions, complaints and problems creates a climate where citizens are encouraged to contact your board when they have a concern. Asking for a chance to correct the situation before complaints are taken to your public meeting and addressing what's wrong within a day or two gives you an image of putting citizens first. Always be honest

“With the help of a number of other volunteer groups, our park commission oversees the operation and maintenance of our seven-acre community park. We’ve slowly but steadily improved the basketball courts, picnic pavilions, swimming pool and baseball field. Our most recent project was rehabilitating the park’s deteriorated tennis courts and replacing outdated playground equipment. We could never have transformed our park without the help of all the volunteer groups. Because we work together, the residents of our small rural community have a park they can be proud of.”

*Sharon Kindt, Chair
Millville Park Commission
Columbia County*

and own up to mistakes if you've made them.

Finding Out What Residents Want

Spend time identifying what citizens want to see provided at your parks and offered as recreation programs. Asking for residents' opinions about recreation and parks on a regular basis provides valuable information. It helps you better understand your image by getting constructive comments from citizens on your services.

Here are some ways to find out what your residents want:

- Have comment cards that people can fill out at your parks and programs
- Mail a community survey to people's homes
- Bring together focus groups such as youth sports associations, people who rent your picnic pavilions or fitness class participants to get their opinions
- Ask people to fill out surveys after finishing a program or visiting a park area
- Have someone (not a board member) visit your facility or program in person and report back his or her observations
- Have a volunteer group interview people visiting your parks or participating in your programs
- Ask participants who have stopped using your services why they left, to identify potential problems
- Ask your board members their views about the way services are provided and their perceptions of what participants think about your services

"So much had changed in the community since our first Comprehensive Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan, and very few of the plan recommendations were ever implemented. We needed to know what recreation and parks services and facilities our citizens wanted, so we applied to DCNR to update our plan. Now our work is really focused. We have the structure and strategies we need to develop a quality recreation and parks system that best serves our residents. Without this tool, we'd have no direction. The plan lays out what we need to do and when we need to get it done."

*Chip Brown, Chair
Murrysville Parks and
Recreation Commission
Westmoreland County*

- Talk to your municipal manager, public works director, police officers and other staff to get their input
- Observe your parks and programs in person and talk informally with participants

Ways to Keep Political Leaders Informed

Your board may need to improve communication with and gain the respect of your elected officials and municipal staff. Your elected officials shouldn't be caught by surprise, finding out something important about your board from someone else. It may happen anyway, but chances are they will be less upset if you have a track record of providing timely information.

Here are some good ways to keep them informed:

1. Involve your elected officials in recreation activities and get them out to see your parks and programs in action. Give them a volunteer job alongside other citizens. They can't fully support what they've never seen or don't understand. Having elected officials present is something that your citizens enjoy seeing as well.
2. Send elected officials your monthly board meeting minutes.
3. Make verbal reports at municipal public meetings at least twice each year.
4. Have citizens speak for you at public meetings to share their positive experiences. This shows your elected officials that residents value your services.
5. Invite elected officials to attend your board meetings at least once each year.

"It's important to show your elected officials that your board...and your citizens... value recreation and parks services and want municipal funds spent on them. Our summer recreation program for children is still offered free of charge. We've also convinced our supervisors to spend nearly \$3 million on a new outdoor sports field complex, something our community definitely needs."

*Mary Catherine Noel, Chair
Robinson Township Parks and
Recreation Board
Allegheny County*

“Get your comprehensive recreation, park and open space plan actively endorsed by your elected officials from the start. Make doing it ‘their’ idea. When you involve your elected officials and citizens in your planning efforts, it’s important that your board follows through with actions, implements your plans and shows results.”

*John Roche, Former Member
Monroeville Recreation
and Parks Advisory Board
Allegheny County*

6. Attend public meetings on a regular basis so that you can answer questions or address concerns that may come up.
7. Allow elected officials to be the spokespersons and get them in front of the camera when the media is present at your special events or programs. Politicians like positive publicity, and recreation and parks provides it better and more often than any other government service. Let them cut the ribbon to open your new trail or give out the awards at your 5K race.
8. Have your elected officials honor your special volunteers, program participants, winners and others involved in recreation and parks at their public meetings.
9. Share thank you notes and praises given to your board with elected officials. Let them see that your recreation and parks services are appreciated.
10. Have an elected official serve as a liaison to your recreation and parks board.

Involving Citizens and Elected Officials in Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is an inclusive, collaborative process that involves your board, elected officials and citizens working together to develop a vision of your recreation and parks future and figure out the best way to make that vision come true. It provides direction so that everyone understands where your recreation and parks system is headed. A strategic plan has a three- to five-year time frame and answers three basic questions: *Where are you now? Where would you like to be? How do you get there?*

Strategic planning is one of the most important aspects of your service as a board member. With social, political and economic factors changing so rapidly, a

strategic plan allows you to anticipate and be ready to meet what the future will bring. Failing to plan is planning to fail!

The purpose of strategic planning is to develop a three to five-year blueprint for your board's future. Strategic planning helps to guide the allocation of resources in order to achieve your goals and be a more productive board. Strategic planning involves choices about:

- The mission and vision of your board.
- Whom you serve.
- Your board's role in the community.
- The kinds of programming, services and facilities you offer.
- The resources you need to succeed – people, money, expertise, relationships, facilities.
- How you can best combine these resources to accomplish your board's mission.

Strategic planning positions your board to take a proactive role in the process of community planning and community problem solving. It will also help your board to position parks and recreation as an essential community service.

Strategic planning is different than traditional planning because it emphasizes the process as well as the end product. In strategic planning, the external environment and how it affects your board is a very important factor. For instance, changes in the needs and service expectations of your residents are determined. The second difference is the focus on developing a shared vision of future success, which drives the planning process. Strategic planning stimulates creative thinking about the future.

A shift to focusing on creating strong communities, family togetherness, outdoor recreation and health and wellness has begun in parks and recreation services throughout Pennsylvania. Strategic planning mobilizes your board to identify and

Developing Community Support

define the issues and challenges facing public parks and recreation services in your community. The ability to respond to community needs with flexibility is more essential than ever.

You don't want your strategic plan to end up on a shelf. To insure that your board's strategic planning efforts are successful:

"We have adopted our own mission and vision statements. Our mission: enhance the quality of life in Murrysville through the preservation of open spaces and a broad range of recreational activities. Our vision: a parks and recreation system that ranks as a major community asset."

*Chip Brown, Chair
Murrysville Parks and
Recreation Commission
Westmoreland County*

1. Establish a strategic planning committee to oversee the process.
2. Make sure all board members have a shared understanding of what strategic planning is.
3. Convince board members that the planning process is worth their personal time, energy and effort by showing a commitment, enthusiasm and support for the strategic planning process by your board leadership.
4. Involve as many park users, program users, funders, and other key community members as you possibly can in your strategic plan development.
5. Create a written strategic plan document that includes mission and vision statements, goals and strategies, with detailed plans of action and the organizational structure needed to implement the strategic plan.

Consider using a consultant to help with your strategic planning process. An experienced outside facilitator can add objectivity to the process and alleviate the stress of the additional work for your board members. A consultant can direct the process, run the meetings, take responsibility for defining the key issues through interviews and other methods, and help steer your board in the right direction.

Strategic Planning Steps

1. Gathering of information through surveys, stakeholder interviews and focus group meetings with volunteers, park users and non-users, program participants, staff and board members
2. Review of background materials such as board minutes, financial reports, marketing materials, program survey results and park usage statistics
3. Analysis of information
4. Identification of critical issues, choices and challenges facing the board
5. Development of a mission statement and core purpose
6. Development of a vision statement
7. Development of strategic focus areas
8. Development of strategic goals and priorities
9. Development of plans of action to achieve each strategic goal and priority, with measurable success indicators

Developing Mission and Vision Statements

Mission statements are focused on your board's purpose. They concisely and clearly describe the work you do. Put simply, mission describes your fundamental purpose. Your mission is what you do every day.

Your board's vision statement is what the future looks like because you do your mission exceedingly well. Vision is all about what is possible, all about potential. An effective vision statement tells what change you wish to create for the future of your community.

Make your vision about the difference you want to make, the dream of your community's highest potential. Your vision statement answers the big question- "Why are you doing what you are doing?" You're doing it so that people's lives will be better and you can create a community that's better than the way things are now, a community that's an amazing place to live. Your vision statement tells you where your board is heading. Vision concentrates on the future and describes what your board wants to make happen for your community.

Fill in this blank:

"Our vision is a community where _____."

or

"Our vision is a community that _____."

Developing Community Support

How do you improve your local economy, conserve your natural environment, strengthen your community and, at the same time, enhance the well being of your residents? You provide public park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs.

In addition to strategic planning, actively involve citizens and elected officials in the preparation of your comprehensive recreation, park and open space plans, recreation facility feasibility studies, and park master site development plans. A comprehensive recreation, park and open space plan is an in-depth study that focuses on developing and improving your municipal recreation and parks programs, facilities and natural resources. It is created with significant public input and covers a number of years to give your board and elected officials guidance and direction to make well-informed decisions and invest tax dollars in the most efficient way. Funding is available from DCNR to hire a consultant to guide this planning process.

Spreading the Word About the Benefits of Recreation and Parks

How can residents enjoy your parks when they don't know where they are? How can they experience your programs if they've never heard of them? Spending resources on marketing and promotion lets residents know about your parks and programs, have a great experience and tell others.

Your board's goal is to increase the public's awareness of the opportunities you provide and inform your residents how your program or facility will benefit them and meet their needs. In particular, many decision makers are unaware of the far-reaching benefits of recreation and parks.

More Ways Recreation and Parks Benefits Our Communities

Parks and recreation facilities and programs are an integral part of our communities. They provide benefits in the following ways:

1. They help our youth choose rewarding paths to adulthood by providing programs and opportunities to build physical, intellectual, emotional and social strength.
2. Children exposed to natural areas at an early age gain a better awareness of the environment and become better stewards of our world as they grow into adults.
3. Parks provide children with opportunities for organized and spontaneous play. Play is critical in the development of muscle strength, coordination, language and cognitive abilities.
4. Parks help improve everyone's health by providing fitness facilities, programs and space to enjoy fresh air and exercise. Studies have determined the large economic burden related to physical inactivity. Recent research suggests that access to parks and linear greenways can help increase the level of physical activity for all.
5. Exposure to nature in parks, public gardens and natural areas can improve psychological and social health. Studies show that when people can't reach parks, they often go without exercise. This is especially true of low-income people who can't afford private gym memberships.
6. Recreation programs and special events help build and strengthen ties among community residents by bringing people together, including those who are otherwise

Inform your residents about how your recreation program or facility will benefit them and meet their needs. Communicate the vision and value of recreation and parks to allied professionals, the media and policymakers to develop partners and allies. Talking about the benefits of involvement in your services helps to build public support for them. Use these benefits to create your promotional materials.

An important component in developing support is how well you identify and communicate the individual benefits and the community-wide benefits of your recreation and parks services to your residents and elected officials. We know that our efforts involve much more than fun and games. Recreation and parks is an essential community service that benefits individuals and strengthens communities in numerous ways.

divided by race or class. Parks and recreation services offer opportunities for people of all ages to communicate, compete, interact, learn and grow.

7. Numerous studies indicate that parks help maintain and in some cases increase the value of neighboring residential property. Growing evidence points to a similar benefit for commercial property value.
8. The availability of parks and recreation facilities is an important quality of life factor for individuals and families choosing a place to live.
9. Sometimes a young person's world can be complex and troubling. There are way too many kids that end up on the wrong path and enter the juvenile justice system. One year of incarceration can cost \$45,000. Providing children with recreation and parks opportunities that help keep them out of jail is a valuable and essential service.
10. Many people struggle to maintain their health and independence as they get older. The cost to care for a senior in a nursing home can average \$50,000 per year. Providing older adults with recreation and parks services that help keep them independent and healthy is a valuable and essential service.

The Benefits of Public Recreation and Parks

Strengthening Community Image and Sense of Place – Parks, recreation facilities, recreation programs and community events are key factors in strengthening community image and creating a sense of place.

Supporting Economic Development – Parks, recreation facilities and recreation programs attract and retain businesses and residents, as well as attract tourists and increase property values. Parks and recreation provides jobs and generates income for the community and for local businesses.

Strengthening Safety and Security – Recreation and parks professionals provide safe environments for recreation and design facilities, programs and services specifically to reduce criminal activity.

Promoting Health and Wellness – Participation at parks and in recreation programs improves physical, psychological and emotional health.

Fostering Human Development – Recreation and parks services foster social, intellectual, learning, physical and emotional development.

Increasing Cultural Unity – Recreation and parks services increase cultural unity through experiences that promote cultural understanding and celebrate diversity.

Protecting Natural and Cultural Resources – By acquiring, protecting and managing valuable resources as open space, such as rivers, streams, greenways, view sheds, forests and other habitat areas, and culturally important assets, these resources are protected and the habitat required for the survival of diverse species is preserved.

Facilitating Community Problem Solving – Recreation and parks professionals have skills in facilitation and leadership that can be applied to resolve community problems and issues.

Providing Recreational Experiences – Programmed and self-facilitated recreation achieves a variety of benefits to individuals and society. Recreational experiences also are important as an end in themselves for personal enjoyment.

What makes one community in Pennsylvania more desirable to live in than another? It's more than just the quality of the school system, the condition of the roads and the safety of the neighborhoods. A significant factor is the number of local park areas and how easily residents can access community facilities like recreation centers, swimming pools, basketball courts and athletic facilities.

Pennsylvania municipalities that invest in park areas and recreation programs are creating opportunities to enhance citizens' well being, improve the local economy, conserve the natural environment and strengthen the community.

Our lives would not be complete without recreation and parks. Recreation brings us purpose, pleasure and balance. Most of our best memories were made during our recreation time.

It's important to promote the many benefits people and communities derive from recreation and parks so that you can develop and maintain support for your services. Weave the benefits into all of your communication efforts.

The following list shows examples of ways in which your recreation and parks board can and does communicate with residents. As you can see, there are many ways you can spread the word to citizens about what your board is and what opportunities it offers for them. This list is not intended as a recommendation that you use all of these tools. Instead, review the list and decide which of the tools would be a good match for your board to best communicate with your residents. Then, go one step further and think through how the tools you've selected can be integrated with each other to achieve the best possible impact.

Communication Tools for Recreation and Parks		
Words <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Posters ■ Recreation program guides ■ Brochures ■ Park entrance signs ■ Annual reports ■ Direct mail ■ Park facility permits ■ Bus and train ads ■ Rules and regulations ■ Billboards ■ Comment cards ■ T-shirts ■ Thank you notes ■ Buttons and badges ■ Registration forms ■ Bulletin boards ■ Newspaper articles ■ Letterhead ■ Mission/vision statements ■ Business cards ■ Speeches ■ News releases ■ Slogans and mottos ■ Radio and TV spots ■ Cable TV shows ■ Advertisements ■ Website ■ Social media/ Facebook, Twitter ■ Voice mail messages ■ Newsletters ■ E-mail messages ■ Magazine articles ■ Program flyers ■ One-on-one conversations ■ Facility directories ■ Maps ■ Testimonials 	Appearance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Style/decor of facilities ■ Cleanliness ■ Orderliness ■ Logo ■ Awards and photos ■ Landscape maintenance ■ Brochure/flyer racks ■ Availability of public phones, restrooms, vending machines ■ Adequate seating ■ Signs to help locate registration area and facilities ■ Properly adjusted public address system at events 	Pricing and Incentives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Payment plans ■ Explanation of fees ■ Use of coupons and price promotions to encourage participation ■ Discounts for packages of services ■ Prepayment for services ■ Timing of payment ■ Use of credit cards ■ Non-resident fees ■ Resident discounts ■ On-line registration ■ Telephone/fax registration ■ Member discounts
	Actions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Special events ■ Open houses ■ Orientation sessions ■ Meetings ■ Previews of programs ■ Take-one boxes ■ School assemblies ■ Recitals ■ Free samples ■ Advertising specialty gifts 	Services and Benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Recreation programs offered ■ Parks available ■ Recreation facilities available ■ Gift certificates ■ Convenient hours of operation ■ Accommodation of physical limitations ■ Refreshments
	People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Adequate number of staff/volunteers ■ Attitude of helpfulness and concern ■ Identified by badge or desk sign ■ Knowledge and skill ■ Appropriate dress or uniform ■ Speed of service ■ Friendliness 	

Working with the Media

Dealing with Controversy

Controversy and rumors can be very destructive to your services. The media can distort controversy and provide your board with the kind of public relations no one wants - the negative kind. Your board chair should serve as the spokesperson for the board, so that the media has one contact. Be careful with the media when you are dealing with a controversial issue. Stick to the facts, give clear and consistent information, and make sure to confer with municipal staff and elected officials. It is important that the facts are accurately represented in the media. When you have an emergency or crisis situation, let your governing body or municipal staff handle the media.

The secret to working with the media is having the right contacts along with enough determination. To attract publicity, you must have news of interest to readers or viewers of the media. The media wants fascinating news as much as you want free exposure. But it's more important for someone on your board to be personally acquainted with the media people in charge of selecting the stories to be covered. Find out who they are and get on a first-name basis with them. The more contacts you have, the more coverage you'll get. Send out press releases to your publicity contacts, then telephone them to be sure your story gets the proper attention.

Serving More People

Support for your recreation and parks services depends on the public's use of them. If your residents are utilizing parks and participating in recreation programs - and if they are satisfied and happy with their experiences - your residents become supporters. This concept works whether your municipality has one small park or over a dozen parks, or offers a handful of recreation programs or hundreds of them. Elected officials support services when they see that an active constituency exists for them. So the most common sense approach to strengthen your base of people support is to *serve more people*. What are some ways to do this?

1. Team up with other recreation providers in your community by offering joint programs and promoting each other's services. Extend a helping hand to youth sports groups, especially in the areas of promotion and securing playing fields.
2. Try to provide recreation programs for all age groups and include a variety of active and passive areas in your park system. It's important to not just serve those residents who are inclined to join your programs or visit your parks.

3. Special events are a great way to showcase your park areas by getting a large number of people out to your parks all at once. When citizens see the facilities offered at your parks, they might return to enjoy them after your event is over. Special events include concerts, egg hunts, craft shows and 4th of July celebrations.
4. Develop a strong selection of recreation programs for your citizens to take part in, hear about, read about and know about. Successful programs create satisfied citizens and satisfied citizens tell their neighbors, families and friends about your great services. Great programs enroll lots of participants, and as you fill your programs, you create the demand for more program opportunities. Your citizens meet each other at your recreation programs and your programs bring citizens to your park areas and recreation facilities. Recreation programs are one of the few municipal services where you have personal contact with citizens. Pennsylvania's recreation and parks boards offer all types of recreation programs that generate revenue to support the costs to offer them. In many cases, they bring in funds to help your board offer other services. When you offer recreation programs for all ages and interests, you reach more citizens who will support your services.

"A few years ago we started a summer concert series on Thursday nights. It gives our township residents an opportunity to enjoy the park, each other's company *and* quality entertainment at the same time."

*Terri Nappi, Chair
West Bradford Recreation
Commission
Chester County*

Helping to Solve Community Problems

The present position of recreation and parks services is that it's frequently perceived to be a relatively discretionary, non-essential government service. It's nice to have if it can be afforded. Positioning is about moving up the ladder of what the public considers to be important.

We need to position recreation and parks services so that they are perceived to be a central contribution to alleviating the major problems in a community. Recreation and parks can accentuate its relevance by aligning with and addressing community issues. Pick one or two issues that resonate in your community and build the case around them.

What community problems and challenges can recreation and parks help to alleviate or address? On a daily basis, elected officials and community leaders deal with lots of problems. Economic development, crime, unemployment, school drop-outs, youth violence, low rates of home ownership, rising taxes, declining downtown business sections and struggling families are on the problem lists of many Pennsylvania communities, small and large.

Providing recreation and parks services often lacks political clout. To be worth funding, recreation and parks has to show more tangible benefits. Recreation and parks services gain real political clout when they have value in meeting community challenges and issues important to decision makers and community members.

The big idea associated with positioning is that public funds are invested in solutions to a community's most pressing problems. The term "invested" suggests a positive, forward-looking agenda with a return to the community. Elected officials usually have no mandate to fund programs; their mandate is to invest resources into solutions.

For example, for children's recreation programs, talk about investing funds in:

- Facilitating healthy lifestyles
- Alleviating deviant behavior
- Raising levels of educational attainment

Become a part of the solution to social problems by developing new services or restructuring existing services so they better contribute to addressing community issues. Do your elected officials understand the values of recreation programming as related to social concerns?

Show them how recreation programs can alleviate problems such as:

- Chronic diseases
- Obesity
- Inadequate child care
- Poor nutrition
- Substance abuse
- Low high school graduation rates
- Mental health issues
- Teen pregnancy
- Homeless citizens
- Gang activities
- Domestic abuse

Communicating the benefits to non-users of recreation and parks services is also important. Focusing on community benefits gets tax support and community-wide support. Research shows that recreation programs can make a difference in solving community problems. Also, grant dollars follow social issues, so grant funds may be available to offer recreation programs focused on community problems.

Overall, elected officials and citizens need to be reminded that recreation and parks services are a key factor in creating a safer, healthier, more economically stable community.

Ways to position recreation and parks as a part of the solution to community problems include offering family-oriented community events, maintaining your park areas to high standards, expanding after school programs for children, opening your school gyms in the evening, keeping teenagers involved in positive activities, promoting your downtown area with special events, and joining task forces and committees that focus on community needs.

Providing “Essential” Services

Another important element in developing community support is to provide “essential” services. An essential service is something that taxpayers will not do without. Public safety services like police and fire protection are perfect examples. The more essential your recreation and parks services are to your citizens, the more support you’ll receive from them.

To find out if citizens feel the programs and services you offer are valuable, worthwhile and essential, ask each other questions like these:

- *What are our major services?*
- *How do participants benefit?*
- *What are the main contributions made to our community?*
- *What are our greatest assets?*
- *How can they be strengthened?*
- *What do we offer that people won't do without?*
- *What could we provide that people wouldn't want to do without?*
- *What would happen if our recreation and parks board didn't exist? How would that impact our community?*

Two examples of essential services are an outdoor swimming pool and a youth soccer league. People definitely value the community pool in the summer months, and many parents want their grade school kids to experience the fun of playing on a soccer team. If you already offer essential services like these, make them better. If you don't, start now.

It's critical to identify the most important services your board offers. Your citizens will speak up and support those services if and when it's necessary.

Quantifying the Impact of Services – Demonstrating and Documenting Results

Given the choice, even in good economic times, elected officials don't always support recreation and parks. Many believe that services such as police, fire and public works are more important to the community. And during tough economic times they often cut funding to recreation and parks first.

The problem with cutting funding to recreation and parks is that it may not be what the public really wants. You need to document what the public wants. Use scientific techniques such as polling, surveying and public meetings to make the will of the public heard.

Measure the economic impact of recreation and parks in your community. It can be how much people are spending to participate in your programs, the financial effect of bringing a tournament into town or the increased value of properties adjacent to parks or facilities. There are many, many facets to our economic impact. Recreation and parks plays an important role in enhancing the property tax base of communities. Recreation and parks contributes to attracting tourists and businesses, retaining affluent retirees and alleviating health care costs. While recreation and parks can stimulate the economy, programs and services also provide cost savings to society. Crime prevention, physical activity and health care savings each contribute to community economies as well.

Developing community support rests upon how well we can answer questions like these: Are we serving our citizens well? What does our community get in return from our services? How do we quantify the costs and benefits of our services? How are we communicating the value of our services to our residents and elected officials? Demonstrating and promoting those values and benefits is critical if we are to maintain and even expand our financing sources.

To gather and influence public opinion and policy, conduct research utilizing universities and colleges that specialize in outcome-based results to demonstrate and document the local value of recreation and parks in meeting issues and challenges that are critical to the quality of life and livability of your community. Recreation and parks agencies provide an outstanding return on investment for quality-of-life gains within a community. A goal in tough economic times isn't to cut funding, but to evaluate major decisions a bit more closely than in past years and understand the value of research to gain an understanding of the impact of recreation and parks services and what the public wants.

Gather facts and statistics about the impact your recreation and parks services have on the community. For instance, can you show property value increases along a rail-trail? Can you show a decrease in gang involvement for children involved in your activities? Can you quantify better school grades for kids involved in youth sports? When quantified and shared with community leaders, these kinds of facts and figures gain your recreation and parks services real credibility.

Forming Partnerships

How can partnerships help you develop community support for recreation and parks? Joining forces with other groups and organizations makes your board more aware of what's happening in the community. You can share skills and gain resources you don't have to better meet your community needs and, at the same time, gain public support for your services. Partnerships add many more people to your list of supporters for recreation and parks.

Who can you partner with? The list is as long as you want it to be. Partners for your recreation and parks board can include: youth sports groups,

“Our park and recreation board formed a subcommittee of residents to raise money to develop a large township property into a municipal park. We knew we needed more help to make our park dream come true. In one year, the group raised \$1.5 million! They asked the business community first, then started knocking on doors all over the township. Obviously there was a need for this park. Today, all ages are picnicking, bicycling, walking and playing here. It’s very actively used. Without the help of this committee the park would still be just a dream.”

*Chip Behr
Township Supervisor
Lower Gwynedd Township
Montgomery County*

churches, public schools, private schools, neighboring recreation and parks boards, commercial businesses of all types, social service agencies, police departments, chambers of commerce, service clubs, civic groups, non-profits, hospitals, retirement communities, and on and on and on. Partnering is a great way to get to know your community while the community gets to know about your services.

Types of Recreation and Parks Partnerships

Facility Use – Many municipalities want to offer new recreation programs but don’t have the facilities to do so. Shared use of facilities such as schools, churches, YMCAs and fitness clubs allows this to happen.

Grants – Grants are easier to get when a number of partners are involved in your project. For instance, developing a park with your school district strengthens your grant application.

Planning – Joint planning by municipalities is becoming more common. Pooling financial resources together can greatly enhance the scope of projects and likelihood of plan implementation.

Programming – Cooperative recreation programs and special events improve activities by increased volunteers, money, supplies, promotion and more.

Publications – Printing of brochures, shared space in newsletters, joint recreation program guides with other departments, mailing recreation program guides with school newsletters, using the back of school lunch menus, and putting notices in church bulletins are all good examples of effective publications partnerships.

Purchasing Agreements – Joint purchasing allows equipment, materials and supplies to be purchased at a lower cost, because it increases the size of the orders. First-aid supplies, sports equipment, gasoline, paper and office supplies are common items that municipalities may purchase together for recreation

and parks services.

Sponsorships – Special events and recreation programs offer opportunities for municipalities to work with businesses to obtain financial support in exchange for visibility.

Training – Many municipalities don't have the finances to bring in an outside expert to train board members and staff. When you join together with other municipalities you can afford to do this.

Involving Citizens as Volunteers

Why recruit volunteers? The obvious answer is that you can use more help and you may not have the funds to pay for it. There are two other good reasons to recruit volunteers. First, when residents volunteer in recreation and parks they develop a real understanding of what recreation and parks is and how it improves the quality of life in your community. Second, when it's budget time you'll have residents that value recreation and parks and will support providing funds to keep it intact and even expand your services.

Involving citizens as volunteers in recreation and parks takes some effort. Start by looking at what you want to ask people to help with. Sit down with your board and make a list. What kinds of volunteer jobs do you have? Here's the start of a list:

- Youth sport coaches
- Referees and umpires
- Program instructors of all kinds
- Fund raising
- Clerical work
- Website development
- Registration
- Special event help
- Park clean-up

"Our parks and recreation committee has a strong relationship with our school board. By partnering, we now have a public park adjacent to an elementary school on land owned by the Bellefonte Area School District. Our township applied for the grants that have helped us develop the new park. It's been a win-win situation for our taxpayers."

*Christina Welch
Municipal Secretary
Spring Township
Centre County*

- Trail clearing
- Publicity
- Delivering flyers and brochures

Remember that although you're not paying them a salary, volunteers aren't free. More than anything, it takes lots of time to recruit, reward, train and supervise volunteers. Of course, when all of this is done well, the rewards are great.

Knowing why people will get involved, and stay involved, is the first step to increasing citizen involvement in recreation and parks. To get their loyalty, interest and best efforts, volunteers need:

- *A feeling of accomplishment.* Volunteers don't receive a paycheck for their work. Instead, their pay comes from a feeling of accomplishment. Showing volunteers how they help your board achieve its goals is important.
- *A sense of belonging.* Making each volunteer feel wanted, welcoming volunteers back after an absence, letting them know they've been missed; attending special volunteer-only social activities, and recognition by awards, certificates and gifts all help develop volunteers into a team which feels it's an integral part of your board.
- *Fair treatment.* People tend to compare the treatment they get with what others receive. Favoritism is a great demoralizer. One of the most frequent complaints volunteers have is that there are "in-groups" who exclude others from full participation. Persons not in this clique resent it and usually leave. To avoid this, welcome all volunteers to serve and work closely with others.
- *To be heard.* People who have grievances want to express them. In fact, if grievances aren't addressed, volunteers become unhappy

"We sponsor a multi-weekend event each fall called "Haunted Woods." Originally the event's goal was to raise funds for playground equipment for our new park. Our "Haunted Woods" was so popular with our community and such a financial success that we've been able to shift its focus to raise money to hold other programs. Our park commission has no paid staff, so we rely 100 percent on volunteers. The majority of the over 250 "Haunted Woods" volunteers are teenagers. We decided it made sense to have the event proceeds benefit summer teen dances. At our last "Haunted Woods" we netted \$7,000 to spend the following summer on the dances. It's amazing what a committed group of volunteers can do."

*Russ Fisher, Chair
Chestnuthill Township
Park Commission
Monroe County*

and rebel by not cooperating, disrupting services or quitting. Listening to every gripe and not brushing it off without some investigation is important.

- *To be praised.* Praise gives people inspiration and enthusiasm. Sincere, specific praise is extremely effective. Asking volunteers for advice and suggestions to do the job better is also a form of praise.
- *To maintain status.* People are concerned about their status. Doing anything to make them feel inferior or indicating that they'll lose status by doing certain types of work will keep them from helping again.
- *Recognition as an individual.* Volunteers need to feel that they're honestly needed for their total self, not just for their hands or because they take orders well.
- *To share in planning the goals and objectives.* This need will only be satisfied when volunteers feel that their ideas have been heard.
- *To feel that the goals and objectives are within reach and that they make sense.* Seeing that progress is being made toward the goals is important.
- *To know what's expected of them.* Volunteers need to understand not only their detailed task but where they have the opportunity to make decisions.
- *To have real responsibilities.* Volunteers want challenging work that's within the range of their abilities and interests and contributes toward reaching the board's goals.
- *To be kept informed.* What they're not up on, they may be down on. Keeping volunteers informed helps to prevent the spread of inaccurate rumors.

"Our parks and recreation board partners with the Rotary Club to offer a Trout Fishing Rodeo for township boys and girls. We flood a portion of a township park and the Rotary Club purchases the trout, stocks the temporary pond and provides 20+ volunteers to run this free event for the hundreds of children who take part each year. We couldn't provide this great community program without their help."

*Mike Hughes, Chair
Muhlenberg Township Parks
and Recreation Board
Berks County*

Developing Community Support

“Our board created subcommittees to study and make recommendations to the township supervisors on park development projects. Involving more citizens helped us to build consensus and get public support to develop two park sites. As a result of all the help, our new Roberts Ridge Park and Clark Nature Center opened this past year.”

*Bernard Bires, Chair
Newtown Township
Parks and Recreation Board
Bucks County*

The word “volunteer” may repel as often as it attracts, so use words that your citizens relate to. This may be “community service,” “being a good neighbor,” or “joining in.” Also, don’t say: “We need volunteers.” Advertise that you need tutors or coaches or graphic designers. Focus on the work and use “volunteer” as a descriptor, not a title. If your municipality has a website, make sure it highlights volunteer opportunities.

Design meaningful volunteer projects or assignments that have the potential to attract the kind of volunteers you most want. Your ability to recruit the types of volunteers you want is directly connected to what you’re asking people to do as volunteers. Have a variety of volunteer opportunities available so that your residents can test the water with you.

After volunteer work design, the second most important part of recruitment is creativity in deciding where to look for volunteers. Only go to sources with the potential to have the types of candidates you most want. For each area where you need help, brainstorm new, creative places to seek qualified volunteers.

To protect program participants and park visitors, complete background clearances for criminal history and child abuse on anyone volunteering for your community recreation and parks agency. While clearances are being processed, have volunteers sign a disclosure statement that remains in force until the record checks come back. It’s a good policy to cover the costs of the clearances for your volunteers.

Becoming a Recreation and Parks Champion

Advocacy is a process where you aim to influence public policy and resource allocation decisions within the political systems at the local, state or federal government level.

As a board member, advocacy for public recreation and parks is one of your key responsibilities. Advocacy requires you to participate in the political process before, during and after elections; familiarize yourself with your elected officials (local, state and federal); and communicate on a regular basis with your elected officials, reinforcing the benefits of recreation and parks.

Elected officials have some very tough choices to make. It's your job as a recreation and parks board member to provide them with information and tools to be able to make those decisions.

To be an active advocate for the programs and services provided by your recreation and parks agency and to help advance the recreation and parks profession on the local, state and national levels, you'll need to be prepared to educate audiences about the value of recreation and parks. Advocacy requires you to share with elected officials the many ways recreation and parks agencies improve health and wellness, increase economic vitality and preserve natural resources in communities.

Political decisions are being made today that will determine the fate of park areas, recreation facilities and recreation programs for years to come. By educating your local elected officials and state and federal legislators about the importance of recreation and parks services and communicating with them about legislation that impacts public parks and natural resource conservation, you can help determine how those decisions are made.

Public parks are a unique legacy that defines each community's character. From the smallest neighborhood park to the largest metropolitan treasure, parks give spirit and vitality to Pennsylvania residents. Municipal recreation and parks systems play an essential role in promoting the quality of life and livability of communities where residents improve their mental and physical health; conserve and protect natural, historic and cultural resources and open spaces; and enjoy a clean, healthy environment.

Developing Community Support

Support from citizens like you is critical for adequate local, state and federal investments and policies that encourage the acquisition, development and operation of public parks, recreation resources and recreation programs across Pennsylvania.

Advocacy Tips

The short-term goals of advocacy are to:

- Convince a decision-maker to support or to vote on the recreation and parks side of an issue
- Persuade a decision-maker to cosponsor or support a particular bill (at the state or federal level)

The long-term goals of advocacy are to:

- Develop and cultivate a continuing relationship with a decision-maker
- Build credibility, access and influence with a decision-maker
- Become a resource for and educate a decision-maker about recreation and parks issues

Every year, hundreds of decisions are made and legislative proposals are introduced on subjects that affect public recreation and parks. At the local level, your elected officials may be considering closing parks, cutting the budget in half or eliminating the recreation and parks department entirely. They may also be considering positive actions such as acquiring land for a new community park or hiring your municipality's first parks and recreation director. Your input on these issues is critical. Understanding the advocacy process and holding your elected officials and legislators accountable for their actions helps you affect the outcome. Here are tips on how to be an effective advocate and make sure your voice is heard:

1. Your view is important.
The local government decision-making process and state and federal legislative processes are open to every citizen who has something to say about an issue, a bill or a problem that involves government action. As a citizen you can write a letter, send a fax or e-mail, attend a public meeting, hold an in-person meeting and make a phone call.
2. Know who to contact.
Government is complicated. You're familiar with your local government, but there are also the state and federal levels. If you don't know the name of or how to contact your United States Senator or Congress member, or State Representative and Senator, log onto:
www.senate.gov; www.congress.org; or www.legis.state.pa.us.

3. Know when to contact and be prepared.
If you're interested in a specific state or federal bill, submit your views as early as possible in the legislative process, while it's still in committee. If you want to influence a local decision, be prepared and be specific. If you're advocating because of something you've heard or read about, share the source with the elected official so that he or she can make certain that the information you've shared has been accurately reported. The easier your position can be explained, the more likely it is that they'll be persuaded to accept it. Pare to the simplest, most essential facts and arguments. For state and federal government, know the following information: the number of the bill and the name of the sponsor; the current status of the bill (in committee, coming up for a vote, etc.); what you're asking for (trying to start a bill, stop it or amend it).
4. Know how to reach your elected officials.
 - In Writing: In a letter, fax or e-mail you can think through everything you want to say and state it without interruption or distraction. The elected official can review your ideas exactly as you stated them. The major drawback is that misunderstandings can't be corrected as they can in conversation. So, write clearly and always put your complete name, address and telephone number on the letter itself. Keep your letter to one page. Always include complete mailing address information in the body of your e-mail. Don't send an e-mail with only a screen name for reply.
 - In Person: Face-to-face meetings are preferable because they're the most personable. Each Pennsylvania state and federal legislator has a district office. State legislators typically return to their district

Write, visit or telephone your elected officials and tell them what you expect from them in making recreation and parks funding a priority in your community. Your overall purpose is to educate, lay the groundwork for the future and establish on-going relationships.

When Conveying Your Message to Elected Officials

- Be thoughtful. Treat your elected officials the way you'd like to be treated.
- Be reasonable. Recognize that there are legitimate differences of opinion.
- Be realistic. Don't expect that everything will go your way, and don't be too critical when it doesn't.
- Be accurate and factual. Make certain you have the necessary information and do a good job presenting your case.
- Be understanding. Put yourself in an elected official's place. Try to understand his or her problems, outlooks and aims.
- Be friendly. Invite your elected officials to your parks and programs. Keep in touch with him or her throughout the year.
- Be cooperative. Get your elected official the information he or she needs to make a decision.

weekly so it may be easier to arrange a meeting at the district office. Always call in advance for an appointment and call ahead to confirm the appointment. Be up-front about what topic you want to discuss, so that they can update themselves on the status of the issue or bill before meeting with you.

- By Phone: The telephone is quick and flexible. But there's only limited opportunity to provide tangible material that helps build a solid file of information for the elected official. A follow-up letter, email or fax, however, can provide information in writing.
5. Practice your pitch.
 - Be Factual: Don't exaggerate and never lie. Even a simple issue has pros and cons. In fact, by also addressing the arguments on the other side you have an opportunity to rebut them. Relate specific examples of how the decision or the legislation will directly affect the elected official's constituents.
 - Be Polite: Treat the elected official with respect and professionalism.
 - Zero In: Don't ramble. Stick to the subject and say it in two to three minutes.
 6. Get an answer.

Elected officials don't like having to tell a constituent that they don't agree with him or her. They may try to limit the meeting to "listening to your views," without ever expressing their own opinions. They may state general inclinations rather than how they'll vote on a specific issue or bill. Insistently, but politely, ask for an answer and wait to get it. If they still decline, ask for a specific time when they'll give you their decision. Before leaving set up an appointment for a second meeting or a time when they'll provide you with their views.

At the state or federal level, if no answer is forthcoming, ask the legislator if you can work with one of their staff members on follow-up actions. Staff members do research, draft bills, make recommendations on amendments and develop expertise in areas at the request of their legislator. They are available to spend much more time working with you on behalf of their legislator.

7. Follow up.
Within one week of the visit, send the elected official a letter thanking him or her for the meeting and confirming your understanding. Ask for follow up if you haven't heard back as promised.
8. Plan for the future.
Advocacy is a lot like baseball – no one bats a thousand. There's always another game after this one. Even when you're unhappy with the position the elected official took, don't feel you were a failure. You may have softened or moderated their views.

Source: California Recreation and Park Society
Legislative Toolkit

Advocating for Recreation and Parks through the Media

Reporters seek out how a local government decision will affect the community. Your comments can help clarify for newspaper readers, radio listeners and television viewers the real life impact of local and state decisions and policies. In addition to responding to a reporter's inquiries, you can write a letter to the editor or an opinion editorial and submit it to your local newspaper or get your newspaper to write an editorial. You can also ask to be on a radio or television talk show. Utilize the media to help make your point that recreation and parks is an important local government service.

7

Where to Go for Help

The mission of the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation is to be a leader in establishing community conservation partnerships for advancing the greening of Pennsylvania, for protecting the Commonwealth's natural and heritage resources, and for providing recreational opportunities for all Pennsylvanians and visitors to enjoy.

The top two agencies in Pennsylvania that provide services for local government recreation and parks boards are the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the non-profit Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS).

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is the primary state agency that devotes resources to serving local government recreation, park, greenway and natural resource needs. While one of its major responsibilities is managing Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, DCNR also strives to bring its programs into communities and to provide leadership linking agency resources with local recreation and conservation efforts. DCNR is a single point of contact for agencies like recreation and parks boards seeking state grants, technical assistance, information exchange and training. DCNR has several bureaus that can provide assistance to recreation and park boards.

Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

The Bureau of Recreation and Conservation has the most direct involvement with local recreation and park boards. Grants and technical assistance programs for community recreation and conservation projects are managed under this Bureau.

One of the Bureau's priority goals is to develop and sustain partnerships with communities, non-profits and other organizations for recreation and conservation initiatives. The Bureau encourages multi-municipal planning, joint park development projects involving several municipalities and trail building across municipal boundaries. Such initiatives are often more competitive for DCNR grants.

The Bureau's central office is in Harrisburg. Its regional offices are in Philadelphia, Scranton, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Erie. Each regional office is responsible for providing technical assistance to constituents within a number of counties. For example, the Southeast Regional Office service area covers Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia counties. (See Appendix B for a map and list of the Bureau's regional offices.) Regional offices are staffed by recreation and park advisors who are available to meet with your board, visit your parks, and provide general advice to move your desired projects forward. Your advisor should be the first staff person called for information on DCNR grant and technical assistance services.

DCNR's emphasis on partnerships has resulted in consolidating grant programs into the Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2). The C2P2 is a combination of funding sources and grant programs like Key 93, Growing Greener, Snowmobile and ATV Trails Funds and the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. If your board wants to acquire land for a new park, preserve an important natural area, build a new soccer field, rehabilitate a playground or plan for a new trail, the C2P2 program can provide grant funding to undertake these types of recreation and conservation projects.

"Picture Rocks Borough, a small town in Lycoming County, received one of our grants to rehab two tot-lots at its community park that is adjacent to an elementary school. When I was in town one day, I noticed kids just having a blast playing on the new equipment. There were three adorable little girls laughing and giggling as they swung round and round on a tire swing. After talking to the teachers, I took pictures of the girls. One of them asked why I was taking pictures. I told her that I work for a state agency that helps people build new playgrounds like this one. She got a big smile on her face and said, 'Thanks so much for doing this for us. We had yucky stuff before that was broken. We love it now!' This moment reminded me what really matters and how lucky we are to work for an agency that can do this for kids and their communities."

*Lori Kieffer Yeich
Regional Recreation Advisor
DCNR Bureau of Recreation
and Conservation*

Where to Go for Help

“We have never been in the recreation and parks business. The Lion’s Club owns and operates the large community park and swimming pool in the borough. The Club’s members are getting older and many people aren’t willing to give as much volunteer time as in the past. Plus, the Lion’s Club isn’t eligible to receive state grant funds for renovations. We formed a task force and received a DCNR grant to do a Recreation, Park and Open Space Plan. We’re looking at transferring ownership of the park and pool from the Lion’s Club to the borough. We’ll be doing a feasibility study so we can see what we’re getting into before any final decisions are made. Our borough included Rye Township on the task force because we already work together in other areas. We have the Marysville-Rye Library, Senior Center and Council of Churches. So partnering for recreation makes sense, especially since the park and pool serve township residents too.”

*Marita Kelley
Municipal Secretary
Marysville Borough
Perry County*

Except for Heritage Parks grants, there is one annual application cycle (generally late summer/early fall) and one grant manual that contains one set of application forms. An annual announcement of the open application period is mailed to all chief elected officials, municipal secretaries and recreation and park board contacts. You may want to contact the Bureau to insure that your board is on the mailing list.

Generally, all components require a match, usually 50 percent through cash or in-kind contributions. A variety of projects are eligible for funding in these four categories: planning, acquisition, development and technical assistance. Pre-application workshops are held throughout the state to provide tips for completing your grant application, insight on program priorities and application requirements.

The Bureau provides technical assistance through direct service, publications and workshops. The Bureau’s recreation and park advisors have a wealth of resources and knowledge about a variety of recreation, park and conservation issues. Staff is available to visit your community and provide phone consultations. Your first point of contact should be your regional recreation and park advisor.

The Bureau works with its partners like PRPS to develop and distribute publications that are available at no charge. Examples include:

- Community Recreation and Parks
- Using Conservation Easements to Preserve Open Space
- Hiring Municipal Recreation and Parks Personnel
- A Guide to Municipal Shade Tree Commissions
- Swimming Pool Management Manual
- Growing Greener: Conservation by Design
- Financing Municipal Recreation and Parks
- Municipal Recreation Programming

- Multi-Municipal Cooperation for Recreation and Parks
- Developing Skate Parks

Refer to the DCNR website for the current list of publications and how to receive them.

The Bureau conducts and sponsors workshops on subjects such as swimming pool management, playground design and safety, citizen board training, grant program overviews and Growing Greener: Conservation by Design. Workshop announcements are sent to the Bureau's board mailing list and promoted on the website at www.dcnr.state.pa.us.

Bureau of State Parks

The Bureau of State Parks manages 116 state parks, one of the largest systems in the country, with over 283,000 acres available for public enjoyment. Pennsylvania's state parks provide opportunities to enjoy healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education. In some rural counties, the state park serves local and regional park needs. For local residents living close by, the park may provide the only public swimming and picnic areas within many miles. Most state parks have park managers on site. Some park managers are responsible for several small state parks in the same geographic area. Park managers have considerable expertise in managing recreation and park facilities and can be a source of local technical assistance and partnership opportunities. Some may be living in your communities and interested in your plans and initiatives. For a list of Pennsylvania state parks and park manager contact information check out www.dcnr.state.pa.us/stateparks/address.htm or call 717-772-0239.

The DCNR/PRPS publication, *"Community Recreation and Parks,"* provides specific information on recreation and parks functions such as park design, recreation programming, maintenance, safety and security, financing and staffing. This handbook also contains an excellent resource directory that lists organizations your board can contact for help.

"In the Lewisburg area we have small communities that are geographically close that offered separate recreation programs. Residents were confused as to what municipality to go to for registration for baseball. Groups were competing for field and facility use. For the good of the community we felt it was time to regionalize our recreation services so that we'd have better coordination and centralized management. We asked DCNR for help and were able to benefit from the Peer-to-Peer Technical Assistance Program. A big plus of regionalizing was the grant opportunities that opened up. We were able to hire a full-time recreation and parks director and get park development funds to improve our facilities."

*Hank Baylor, Chair
Lewisburg Area
Recreation Authority
Union County*

Bureau of Forestry

The Bureau of Forestry manages 2.1 million acres of state forests, one of the largest expanses of public forestland in eastern United States. The state forests support Pennsylvania's \$5 billion forest products industry, provide habitat for a wide array of flora and fauna and protect watersheds to ensure the state has clean water. Our forests provide these benefits while facing dramatic increases in recreational activities that have become vital to Pennsylvania's tourism industry.

The Bureau of Forestry also gives professional forestry guidance and technical assistance to private forest landowners who collectively manage over 70 percent of Pennsylvania's forest resources. In cooperation with Pennsylvania State University Forestry Extension Service the Bureau funds five urban forestry positions that work to improve the quality of life in urban centers and communities and can be a source of local technical assistance, community grants and partnership opportunities. Check out www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry for further information or call 717-787-6460.

Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey

The Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey researches and maps the state's geology and its natural resources, including coal, oil and gas resources as well as groundwater, geologic hazards, non-fuel mineral resources, aggregate mining and any other geologically related subjects. Global Positioning Satellites (GPS), Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and high-resolution aerial photography are a few examples of the technologies used to keep pace with the demands on Pennsylvania's lands and natural resources. The Bureau is a one-stop shop for mapping and geological information, with its technological resources, archival geological data and historical aerial photographs. The Bureau's expertise in mapping and geology can help recreation and parks boards perform good stewardship based on good scientific information. To find out more, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo or call the Bureau's

local government outreach liaisons at 717-702-2047 (east) or 412-442-5828 (west).

Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society

PRPS is a state-wide membership organization that promotes quality recreation and parks opportunities for all Pennsylvania citizens through education and training, technical assistance, information on funding opportunities and other support to local, county, regional, state and federal recreation and parks providers. The Society's 1,800 members include recreation and parks professionals working for local government *and* recreation and parks advisory board members.

Group memberships are offered to boards at a very reasonable cost. Membership gives you extensive opportunities to network, share ideas and information, and talk with others serving on recreation and parks boards across the state. Your membership allows you to join the Community Recreation and Parks interest branch, which offers programs tailored to local government. PRPS members and their communities benefit from numerous Society training programs:

- Annual State Conference
- Aquatic Facilities Operator Course
- National Playground Safety Inspector Certification Course
- Resource Operations School
- One-day regional training workshops
- Fall membership meetings

Membership includes subscriptions to these publications:

- *Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks*, the quarterly Society magazine
- *PRPS E-Newsletter*, a monthly newsletter containing the latest information on training opportunities and other news

"Being a member of PRPS has been great for our board. It's given us the chance to meet and talk with board members from other communities...and we've learned a lot from them. Some of us have attended the State Conference. That's an excellent opportunity for volunteers like us to learn about the field. PRPS keeps us in touch with what's happening in recreation and parks."

*Mary Catherine Noel, Chair
Robinson Township Parks and
Recreation Board
Allegheny County*

- *PRPS Directory and Buyer's Guide*, an annual publication containing listings of all members, local recreation and park agencies, colleges and universities, state and federal agencies, and suppliers of recreation and parks products and services

PRPS recognizes the efforts of park and recreation board members. Without you, many communities would not have park and recreation programs and services. Through various training opportunities, such as our Citizen Symposium, PRPS strives to address board needs. This publication and others expand further on those trainings and bring relevance to what park and recreation board members do for their communities. We encourage any board member to join the society for these and other benefits.

*Kim Woodward
Executive Director
PA Recreation & Park Society*

PRPS provides you with legislative advocacy in support of recreation, parks and conservation at the state and national level; representation on important statewide advisory groups, and updates on standards, regulations and requirements that impact local government such as lifeguard regulations, playground safety standards and state grant application requirements.

As a membership service PRPS offers RecTAP, the Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program. This is a community recreation and parks consulting service that will provide your board with an experienced professional to help you solve an existing problem or improve services in a specific area. Your peer consultant will spend up to three days working with you, including an in-person visit. The intent of the program is to provide hands-on recommendations that you can implement. RecTAP grants have a maximum value of \$1,500 and no matching funds are required. (See Appendix I for information on how to apply.)

PRPS is an affiliate member of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). This alliance brings more than 25,000 professionals and citizens together to advance the recreation and parks profession and brings national resources to Pennsylvania. The elected board of directors and staff who lead PRPS represent the membership by serving on the NRPA Council of Affiliate Presidents and Council of Executive Directors. NRPA offers membership to recreation and parks boards through a special package and has a branch specifically for citizen board members.

For membership information, contact PRPS at www.prps.org or (814) 234-4272 and NRPA at www.nrpa.org or (800) 626-6772.

Other Help

One of the best things about the recreation and parks profession is the willingness of people to share information and help each other. If your county has a recreation and parks department with full-time staff, it can be a tremendous resource for your board. Neighboring municipal departments with recreation and parks directors are another source of support. Your municipal and county planning commissions may provide you with technical assistance help as well.

“PRPS membership gives you extensive opportunities to meet others, share ideas and information, and talk with people who understand the demands and stresses of being a volunteer recreation and parks board member. Through my involvement my board has gained a network of people we can call upon for advice. That’s a very valuable resource to us.”

*Mike Gottshall, Chair
East Pennsboro Township
Parks and Recreation Board
Cumberland County*

Final Thoughts

The task of providing recreation and parks services for your community can be overwhelming at times. It's especially so for those of you with no staff support.

Here are some final pieces of advice for you:

"Our recreation board was formed to serve the recreation needs of people who live in an area of over 140 square miles. Each of our municipalities is just too small to finance a community park on its own. We are partnering with the Line Mountain School District and many of our area's athletic associations and civic groups to build a multi-use 38-acre park in Lower Mahanoy Township. The support from our community is very strong. Our board will maintain and operate the new park with the help of the volunteer groups."

*Paul Billow, Chair
Lower Mahanoy Recreation
Board
Northumberland County*

- Take the time to do things right. Work first on making your recreation and parks board a cohesive, effective team that understands its responsibilities and has a clear vision of what it wants to accomplish. Spend time working *inside* your board.
- Always try to provide the best for your community. Set your goal to provide the best recreation and parks services you possibly can for your residents.
- Do more than just attend your monthly meetings. Get actively involved in some aspect of recreation and parks that interests you. Take a class, teach a class, organize a park clean up or clear a trail. Get your hands dirty!
- Remember, to accomplish almost anything, you're going to need strong community support. You'll need to work hard in this area.
- You're certain to make some mistakes along the way. Hopefully you'll learn from them.
- Ask for help. Don't wallow in problems too long. Others have experienced the same things, and recreation and parks people here in Pennsylvania and across the country are more than willing to help you. But you have to reach out and ask.

- Join the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society and attend training sessions so that you can do a better job for your community.
- Contact your DCNR regional recreation and park advisor and take advantage of the technical assistance services available to your board.
- Above all, have fun. Serving as a recreation and parks board member is part of the way you enjoy your *own* recreation time.

Good luck to all of you. Go out there and make your local government proud of what it can offer to your residents.

“Being a recreation and parks board member can be a wonderful experience. It’s a big responsibility though, and it’s hard work. Knowing that you are a part of providing opportunities for your community’s residents to enjoy the outdoors, learn new skills, make friends and stay healthier and happier can make it all worthwhile. You are providing a tremendous service for your residents and improving the quality of life in your community. Keep up the great work!”

*Diane Kripas, Chief
Greenways and Conservation
Partnership Division
DCNR Bureau of Recreation
and Conservation*

Sample Board Ordinance

This is a sample ordinance to create an advisory recreation and parks board for a second class township. It should be used for informational purposes only. Every Pennsylvania form of government is governed by municipal codes. The codes permit municipalities to create recreation and parks boards but differ in requirements. For example, the Second Class Township Code permits 5-7 members to be appointed to such boards while the Borough Code permits 5-9 members. Check with your municipal solicitor for applicable code requirements. Generally, the ordinance creating a board should detail its powers, duties, responsibilities and organization.

ORDINANCE NO. 1
AN ORDINANCE CREATING AN ADVISORY RECREATION BOARD;
ESTABLISHING THE NUMBER AND TERM OF THE MEMBERS; AND
DESIGNATING DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE BOARD.

The Board of Supervisors of Blue Township, White County, hereby ordains as follows:

Section 1. Establishment of Board. There is hereby created, pursuant to Section 2204 of the Second Class Township Code (act of May 1, 1933, P.L. 103, No. 69; reenacted July 10, 1947, P.L. 1481; reenacted and amended Nov. 9, 1995, P.L. 350, No. 60) a board to be known as the Blue Township Advisory Recreation and Parks Board ("Board"). The Board shall be composed of seven residents of this township.

Section 2. Appointment and Terms of Office. Members of the Board shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors in accordance with the following procedures:

(1) Board members shall serve for terms of five years, or until their successors are appointed, except that members first appointed shall be appointed so that the terms of not more than two members expire annually. All persons appointed shall serve their full terms unless they voluntarily resign or are removed by the Board of Supervisors for dereliction or neglect of duty. Vacancies occurring otherwise than by expiration of term shall be for the unexpired term and shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments.

(2) Whenever possible, due consideration will be given to representation from various geographic sections within the township, so that all members shall not be from the same general area.

Section 3. Service Without Pay. Members of the Board shall receive no compensation for their services, but may be reimbursed by the township for all expenses incurred in performing their duties.

Section 4. Advisory Role. The Board is to be advisory and shall coordinate its activities with the elected officials, planning commission, and other such local governmental bodies.

Section 5. Organization of Board. The members of the Board shall elect a chairperson and secretary and select all other necessary officers to serve for a period of one year. The Board may adopt rules and regulations for the conduct of all business within its jurisdiction and exercise powers and functions concerning parks and recreation facilities as may be delegated to it by the Board of Supervisors.

Section 6. Authority of the Board. The Board shall have the following powers:

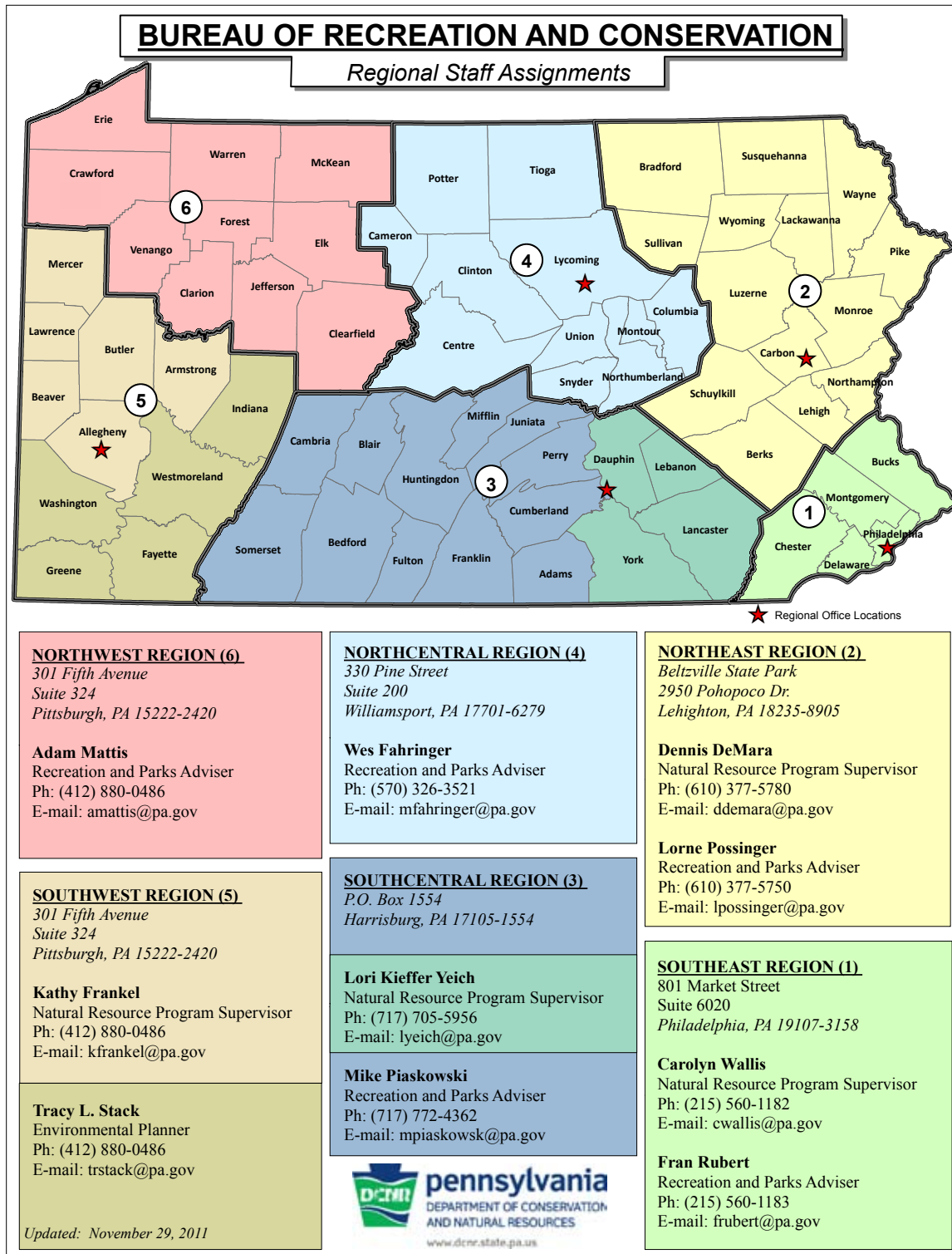
1. Identify the open space, recreation, park and trail needs of the township.
2. Plan and supervise recreation programs approved by the Board of Supervisors.
3. Recommend plans, programs, and policies regarding the provision of recreation and park services.
4. Advise the Board of Supervisors in the acquisition and development of parklands.
5. Undertake recreation and park tasks as requested by the Board of Supervisors.

Section 7. Reporting. The Board shall keep minutes of its meetings, which it shall submit to the Board of Supervisors. The Board shall submit an annual report to the Board of Supervisors, including an analysis of the adequacy and effectiveness of community recreation areas, facilities and leadership.

Section 8. Annual Budget. The Board, at such times as directed by the Board of Supervisors, shall annually submit for approval to the Board of Supervisors a proposed budget for the ensuing year, setting forth all proposed expenditures, salaries, and programs with sufficient justification. The Board shall not in any manner obligate the Board of Supervisors for the payment of any township funds until the same is appropriated by the Board of Supervisors.

ADOPTED this 1st day of June _____. The ordinance shall become effective five days after adoption.

Board of Supervisors of Blue Township
By _____, Chairperson
_____, Vice Chair
_____, Member



Pennsylvania Recreation & Park Society, Inc. (PRPS)

PRPS is the leading organization supporting recreation and parks in Pennsylvania through the provision of training and education, technical assistance, legislative advocacy, and other programs and services. PRPS members include staff of local and county recreation and park agencies, state park managers, federal and state agency officials, therapeutic recreation specialists and activity coordinators, members of local recreation and park boards, and other interested individuals.

The organization is supported by a full-time staff at the headquarters in State College. There are three geographic districts and interest branches that also provide additional programs and services.

To support local recreation and park boards, PRPS works closely with the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation on projects like the one that produced this handbook. The *Citizens Symposium* that is part of the PRPS Conference is another cooperative venture.

Training and Education

Annual PRPS State Conference offers over 50 educational programs including the Citizens Symposium for over 700 attendees.

Annual PA Therapeutic Recreation Institute offers over 30 education programs for therapeutic recreation specialists and activity coordinators.

Aquatic Facilities Operator Course provides nationally recognized training and certification one or two times each year. Additional one-day swimming pool management workshops are held as well.

National Playground Safety Inspector Certification Course provides nationally recognized training and certification once each year for up to 150 participants.

Fall Membership Meetings provide four educational programs.

Annual Resource Operations School provides educational sessions focused on park management, park safety and environmental education.

Many additional one-day workshops on a variety of topics are coordinated by the PRPS training staff including many sponsored by branches and districts.

The Fall Mini-Conference offers two days of in-depth workshops on topics such as trails, aquatics, marketing, therapeutic recreation and other current topics.

Urban Recreation Institute provides a special focus on topics of particular interest to those in urban communities.

Appendix C

Publications and Resources

Pennsylvania Recreation & Parks, the Society quarterly magazine, contains excellent educational material and information.

PRPS E-Newsletter, the monthly newsletter, contains information on training opportunities, job announcements, membership updates and other newsworthy items.

PRPS Membership Directory & Buyer's Guide contains a listing of members plus listings of state parks, local park and recreation agencies, colleges and universities, state and federal agencies, and more.

A PRPS website, www.prps.org, provides timely information to members and the general public.

The effort to establish the PA Institute for Recreation and Parks is well underway with the acquisition of the new PRPS building in March, 2003. The Institute will include program centers focusing on community recreation and parks, therapeutic recreation and activities, park resources, aquatics, playground safety, professional preparation, watershed and environmental issues.

The Fred and Anita Coombs Library is being established as part of the PA Institute for Recreation and Parks and will provide an expanded resource capability.

In cooperation with the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, an expanded technical assistance effort is underway. New publications including "*Community Recreation and Parks*," "*Financing Municipal Recreation and Parks*," "*Recreation and Parks Board Handbook*," "*Multi-Municipal Cooperation for Recreation and Parks*," "*Hiring Municipal Recreation and Parks Personnel*," and "*Municipal Recreation Programming*" have been completed. The RecTAP technical assistance program has been started, and more technical assistance projects are anticipated on an annual basis.

A top quality annual Recognition and Awards Program is held for individuals, agencies, programs and publications.

Hershey's National Track and Field Youth Program is coordinated for Pennsylvania and serves over 7,000 youngsters annually.

The Community Service Discount Ticket Programs distribute over 125,000 reduced price tickets for amusement parks and ski areas to local recreation and park agencies annually.

For more information and to receive a membership application, contact the PRPS Office at:

Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, Inc.
2131 Sandy Drive
State College, PA 16803-2283
814-234-4272
Fax: 814-234-5276
www.prps.org

RecTAP - A community recreation and parks peer consulting service

The Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society offers an innovative membership service that matches people in the know with people who want to know. Do you need help to do a strategic plan? Hire a parks and recreation director? Write park rules and regulations? Repair your swimming pool? Develop a citizen survey? Improve your park maintenance practices? Train your board? Make your playgrounds safer?

RecTAP, the Recreation and Parks Technical Assistance Program, can help! RecTAP team members are experienced professionals who have extensive training, skills and knowledge in providing public recreation and parks services for Pennsylvania municipalities of all sizes.

Who Can Apply?

To be eligible for a RecTAP grant, your organization must be a group member of PRPS or a staff person must hold a professional, individual membership. You may receive only one RecTAP grant each calendar year.

What Can You Expect?

You can expect to get hands-on help! RecTAP will pair a "peer consultant" with your community. You are responsible for setting up the first visit. Your peer consultant can spend up to three days working with you, which includes an in-person visit. In addition to verbal recommendations, you are provided with a brief written report. After organization and peer consultant agreements are signed, your project should be completed within 3-6 months. RecTAP grants are available until the pool of funds is depleted each calendar year. The earlier your application is received, the better the chance it has of being funded. Projects must be of reasonable size to complete on a short-term basis. Grants have a maximum value of \$2,500. No matching funds are required.

Examples of RecTAP Topics

- Recruiting, screening, and interviewing staff
- Getting started - how to begin providing recreation and parks services
- Mission and vision statements
- Strategic planning
- Board training
- Budget and fiscal management
- Advantages of intergovernmental cooperation
- Partnership development
- Cultural and diversity issues
- Greenways and trails
- ADA compliance
- Swimming pools
- Building public awareness
- Community centers
- Skate park facilities
- Program guide formats
- Organizational image
- Computer applications
- Volunteer management
- Marketing and public relations
- Recreation programming
- Citizen surveys
- Park planning and development
- Customer service audits
- Revenue sources
- Contracts and specifications
- Park and facility maintenance
- Playground safety
- Benefits of parks and recreation

How Do You Apply?

Organizations may apply by completing a simple application that can be downloaded from the PRPS web site, www.prps.org. Applications may also be mailed to you by calling PRPS at (814) 234-4272.

Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, Inc. Membership Application

Please Print!

Name _____
 Position _____
 Employer/Agency _____
 Mailing Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____
 Address: ☐ Home ☐ Office ☐ Student at _____
 Phone: Office _____ Home _____
 Fax _____ Email _____
 County _____
 Certification ☐ CPRP ☐ CPRA ☐ CTRS ☐ Other _____
 Membership recruited by: _____

BRANCH CHOICE (Select one or more)

- ☐ Aquatics Branch
☐ Community Recreation & Parks Branch
☐ Park Resources Branch
☐ PA Therapeutic Recreation Society
☐ PA State Park Society (open to all DCNR employees only)

SPECIAL INTEREST AREAS (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Educator ☐ Urban Recreation ☐ Programming ☐ Trails
☐ Commercial and Resort Recreation ☐ Youth Sports

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY AND DUES STRUCTURE

GROUP MEMBERSHIP☐ **AGENCY**

Recreation and/or park related agency, including government, non-profit, therapeutic, educational, or private organization or institution that provides such services. Please attach list including name, address, phone and email for each member.

Dues (includes three Professional members.) \$240
Additional Professional memberships: \$80

☐ **BOARD/COMMISSION/FRIENDS GROUP**

Recreation and/or park boards and commissions of political subdivisions of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania or board of directors of non-profit recreation related organizations. Member Benefits will be provided via email and internet. Please attach list including name, address, phone and email for each member.

Dues (includes five Friend members.) \$100
Additional Friend memberships: \$20

☐ **SUPPORTING** \$190

Those business firms interested in the park, recreation, and leisure services fields.

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP☐ **PROFESSIONAL:** Individuals engaged in full-time recreation and park work. Based on salary.

	<i>Dues</i>
Under \$20,000	\$80
\$20,000 - \$40,000	\$100
\$40,000 - \$50,000	\$120
over \$50,000	\$140

☐ **ASSOCIATE** \$40

Individual or organization members including part-time or seasonal employees, volunteers, and individual board or commission members.

☐ **FRIEND:** \$20

Individuals that wish to support the Society in advancing recreation and parks in Pennsylvania. All member benefits will be provided via email and internet. This individuals that do not qualify for other categories.

☐ **STUDENT:** \$30

Individuals attending educational institutions on a full-time basis preparing for any phase of recreation and park work.

☐ **RETIREE:** \$40

Individuals having been employed full-time in recreation and parks whose employment was terminated due to retirement.

☐ **PATRON:** Individuals or organizations interested in assisting the Society in the attainment of its aims and objectives by making an annual contribution of \$300 or more☐ **LIFE:** Individuals desiring a lifetime membership. \$1,000

Total: _____

Membership Dues are renewable on January 1 each year. New memberships received July 1 to September 30 pay 50% of the annual dues. New memberships received after September 30 are credited toward the next full membership year. From each membership dues (except Friend), \$10.00 is used for the publication of PENNSYLVANIA RECREATION & PARKS and \$6.00 is used for the publication of PRPS UPDATE. PRPS is registered with the Pennsylvania Commission on Charitable Organizations. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1(800)732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

For Office Use Only

Date: _____ Amount: _____
 Method: _____ By: _____
 Processed: _____

PAYMENT INFORMATION

- ☐ My check is enclosed. Please make checks payable to PRPS.
☐ Bill my agency: Signature _____ Date _____
☐ Bill my credit card: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard
 Cardholder's name _____
 Card # _____ Expiration Date _____
 Cardholder's Signature _____

Mail your Application today!

PRPS
 2131 Sandy Drive
 State College, PA 16803-2283
 (814) 234-4272 Fax: (814) 234-5276 www.prps.org

Sample Board Bylaws

MUHLENBERG TOWNSHIP PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD Board Procedures and Member Guide

ARTICLE I. NAME

101. This Board is known as the Muhlenberg Township Parks and Recreation Board (referred to as “Board”). The Board was organized by the Muhlenberg Township Board of Commissioners (referred to as “Commissioners”) and exists as a parks and recreation board pursuant to Article XXX of the First Class Township Code entitled “ PARKS, RECREATION CENTERS, SHADE TREES AND FORESTS.”

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

201. Assist the Commissioners and the Director of Parks and Recreation (referred to as “Director”) to fulfill the Parks and Recreation Department (referred to as “Department”) mission.
202. Serve as a liaison between the Department, the Commissioners, Muhlenberg School Board and the citizens of the Township.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

301. The Board consists of seven voting members who shall be qualified electors and residents of Muhlenberg Township. Each member shall have one vote.
302. The Commissioners appoint five members. The Muhlenberg School Board appoints two members.
303. The Board may recommend individuals for appointment. The Board Secretary shall submit appointment recommendations to the appointing authority after the Board has approved them at a meeting. Normally it is good practice to make several recommendations for any opening. Member appointments are the sole prerogative of the appointing authority (Commissioners or the School Board) and individuals may be selected for appointment from the Board’s recommendations or other sources.
304. Board membership recommendations should be made after careful consideration since the Board will only be as good as its members. Listed

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below are some qualities that individuals should possess to be considered for membership:

1. Strong commitment to helping the Department.
 2. Sensitivity to residents of the community and their needs.
 3. Good judgment, intelligence, and an ability to work well and get along with others.
 4. The ability to inspire the confidence, respect and support of the community.
 5. Time available to be an active partner helping the staff with assignments, attending meetings and activities.
 6. Possess some special skill or knowledge in the arts or another area, which would be beneficial to fulfill the board's purpose.
305. Members serve five (5) year terms, which shall conclude on December 31 of their fifth year. Terms of office shall be staggered in such a manner that at least one but no more than two expire annually.
306. All persons appointed shall serve their full term unless they voluntarily resign or are removed by the Commissioners for disqualification, malfeasance or nonfeasance of duty.
307. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as original appointments except the term of membership is restricted to the unexpired term of the member being replaced.
308. The Commissioners may, on recommendation of the Board, designate a member who has served fifteen (15) or more years and who because of illness, infirmities, advanced age or other legitimate reason must relinquish active board status as a Member Emeritus. Such a member has no voting rights.
309. Board members are volunteers who serve without monetary compensation. Members may be reimbursed for expenses incurred because of participation in conferences and workshops as approved by the Director of Parks and Recreation in accordance with current Department policies.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICERS

401. The officers of this Board shall be Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary. The Officers shall be elected at the organization meeting in January to serve for one year or until a successor shall be elected. Vacancies in office shall be filled at the next meeting by special election.

1. Chairman. The Chairman shall preside at all meetings, appoint committees, call special meetings when he/she deems it advisable, represent the Board at public affairs, and perform all such duties as usually handled by a Chairman, except when such duties are properly delegated. The Chairman may succeed himself or herself and shall be elected from among the members who have served more than one (1) year.
2. Vice Chairman. The Vice-Chairman of the Board performs all duties of the chairman in their absence. The Vice-Chairman is responsible to see that all committees function as directed by the Board Chairman.
3. Secretary. The Secretary shall perform the usual duties pertaining to the office. The Secretary shall keep or cause to be kept a full and true permanent record of all meetings of the Board at both regular and special meetings. The Secretary shall also attend to all correspondence as may be required by the Board.

ARTICLE V. MEETINGS

501. Regular meetings are held the fourth Wednesday of each month, January through June and August through October each year unless otherwise agreed upon by the Board.
502. Special meetings may be called by the Board Chairman, Director or on the written request of at least three (3) Board members. The Director will provide a minimum of five (5) days notice to members.
503. All regular meetings are held at the Muhlenberg Township Municipal Office, 555 Raymond Street, Reading, PA 19605.
504. Meetings will convene at 7:00 p.m. unless otherwise agreed by the Board.
505. The first regular meeting in January of each year is the organizational meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to elect officers, review the annual report and all other business.
506. Four (4) voting members constitute a quorum at any regular or special meeting.
507. Board action requires the concurrence of a majority of voting members present at a properly convened meeting with a quorum in attendance. The Board is not required to take action on any matter that was not specifically listed on the agenda.
508. All meetings are open to the public and shall be held and conducted in

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accordance with provisions of the Pennsylvania Sunshine Act. The schedule of the Board's regular monthly meetings shall be advertised one time each year by the Director during January in the Reading Eagle – Times. Notice for all special meetings shall be published once in the Reading Eagle - Times as required by the Sunshine Act.

509. Meetings are conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Sunshine Act and the procedures published in this guide.
510. The following shall be the order of business of the Board. These rules of order may be suspended and any matters considered or postponed by Board action.
1. Call to Order
 2. Public Portion
 3. Prior Meeting Minutes
 4. Committee Reports
 5. Department Reports
 6. Old Business
 7. New Business
 8. Board Member Comments
 9. Adjournment
511. The Director shall prepare and distribute an agenda for all meetings. Any member or other person may request that the Director include an item on the agenda. Requests shall be submitted to the Director at least fourteen (14) calendar days prior to the meeting date.

ARTICLE VI. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD & MEMBERS

601. Planning: The Board annually assists the Director to define specific strategies and objectives to fulfill the Board's mission and goals. The Board also periodically assists with a variety of short and long-range planning activities including updating the comprehensive recreation, parks and open space plan, land acquisition and development plans, special purpose studies, etc.
602. Promotion and Publicity: Members promote Department programs and services to the community by distributing materials (flyers, posters, etc.), interacting with people at activities or other special events, assisting staff to produce materials by writing, providing photos, artwork, etc.
603. Liaison: Members are part of the Department's grass roots connection to

the community. Members help the Department learn the needs and desires of the community. The Board also supports staff when requested in their interaction with citizens, community organizations, agencies, businesses, the Board of Commissioners, the School Board, other elected officials and government agencies.

- 604. Finances: The Board ensures that adequate funds are available to meet program requirements by 1) The Board provides the Director with input for the Department's budget process at their August meeting; and, 2) The Board actively works to supplement the budget through a variety of methods including: conducting fund raising events, soliciting sponsorships and donations, etc. To be effective all Board members must take an active hands-on role in this process.
- 605. Conduct Activities: Members assist staff to conduct activities. This may involve a range of responsibilities from running an entire program to helping staff where assigned. Members are encouraged to be involved in as many programs as possible especially special events. Help with Muhlenberg Community Days is expected.
- 606. Advise: The Board serves as a forum for staff to discuss new ideas, programs, policies and procedures.
- 607. Employment: The Board conducts the search, interviews and recommends the best Director candidate for employment by the Commissioners.
- 608. Evaluation: The Board provides staff with feedback concerning how Department programs met established objectives both from their personal observation and from interaction with our participants.
- 609. Meeting Attendance: Members are expected to attend and take an active role in all meetings. The Commissioners may remove any member who misses three or more regular meetings in any twelve (12)-month period.

ARTICLE VII. COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES

Listed below are guidelines to help Board members interact with each other and with Department staff. These guidelines are important to make the most out of the Board-Staff relationship. The guidelines are intended to create a professional atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation.

- 701. Be open and honest while always remembering to respect other member and staff points of view even though it may be different than your own.

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- 702. Actively support Department programs and initiatives whenever possible.
- 703. Board members are volunteers who accepted an appointment to assist the Department. This assistance is provided by the Board at its meetings, through Board committees or by individual members helping staff with defined tasks. Members are not authorized to issue orders or instructions to staff. The Director is responsible to direct Department operations and staff.
- 704. All Board or member contact with the staff should take place either at meetings or with knowledge and approval of the Director. Following this channel of communication is very important because of the Director's need to coordinate a large volume of work in the Department that originates from many sources in addition to the Board.
- 705. No one should ever knowingly embarrass any staff or board member nor put them "on the spot." The Board should be protective of the Department, while remembering that they have an obligation to serve the public.
- 706. Members must act in an ethical manner in their dealings with each other and staff. Please avoid gossiping, asking for special favors or consideration, etc.
- 707. Members should always contact the Director if they will not be able to attend a meeting or other event if they are expected. This notification is a courtesy both for staff and other Board members.

ARTICLE VIII. COMMITTEES

- 801. Members or other interested individuals are appointed to chair committees as needed by the Board Chairman. Appointments shall be made at the annual meeting or as soon thereafter as possible. Committee chairmen serve until their successors are appointed or their function is completed. The Board Chairman and Director serve ex officio on all committees.
- 802. Committee chairmen reports will be presented at each board meeting. Reports will summarize all action by the committee since the last meeting. Interim reports shall be made to the Director or other staff as requested or as needed to complete committee duties.
- 803. Membership in all committees is open to any interested individual (does not have to be a Board member or a Township resident). Committee chairmen are responsible to recruit committee members.

Committee chairmen are encouraged to include as many people as needed on their committees.

804. Standing Committees include:

1. Athletic League Committee – 2 members. Working together with the Recreation Supervisor resolves player discipline problems or decides rule protests for all Department leagues.
2. Handicapped Grievance Committee – 1 member. Meets with one member appointed by the Muhlenberg Township Engineering Department to review any complaints filed against the Township regarding accessibility and recommends corrective action.
3. Corporate Fundraising Committee – Responsible to solicit sponsorships through personal contacts and presentations

805. Special Committees may also be appointed at any time that the Board Chairman deems necessary to address a specific subject.

ARTICLE IX. CONFORMANCE WITH LAWS, ORDINANCES, RULES, AND REGULATIONS

901. The Board shall at all times comply with all laws, ordinances, rules, policies and regulations as may be adopted from time to time governing the Department.

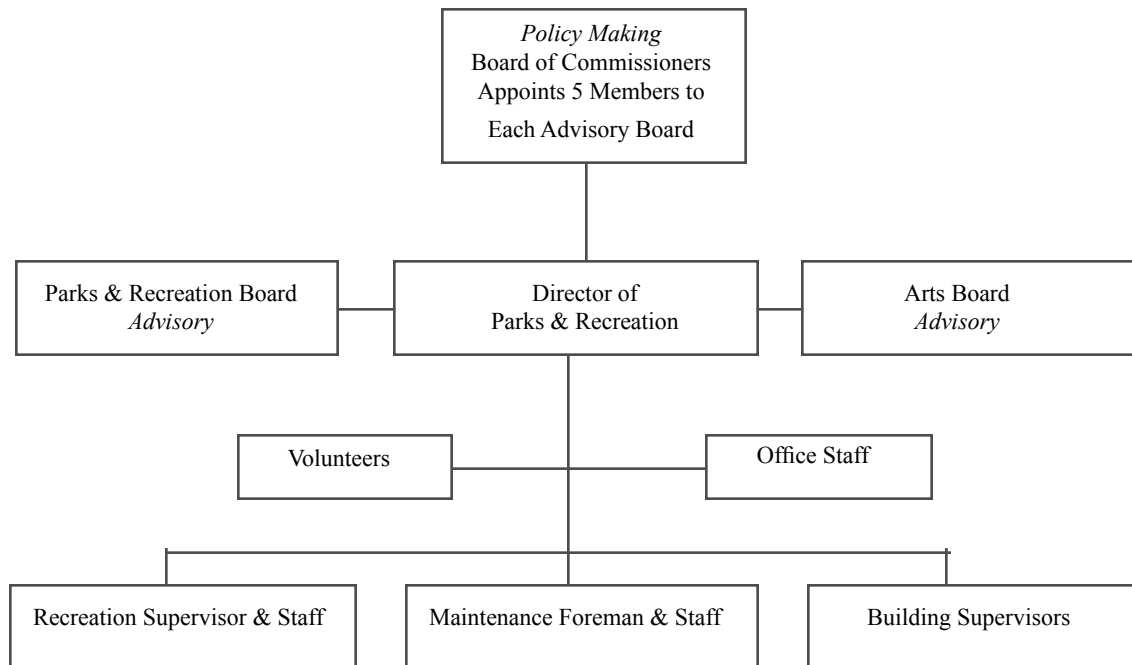
ARTICLE X. NON-DISCRIMINATION

1001. The Board shall not discriminate in any manner against any person by reason of race, color, national origin, religious creed, ancestry, age, sex, handicap, or political affiliation.

ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS

1101. The Commissioners may amend, revise or replace these procedures at any time as deemed necessary following consideration and advice and recommendation from the Board. Notice of any change will be provided to all Board members at the next regular meeting following the change.

ARTICLE XII. ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



ARTICLE XIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

This policy was last reviewed and approved by the Board of Commissioners on the ____ day of June ____.

President
Board of Commissioners

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Appendix F

Individual Board Member and Board Performance Evaluation

Names														
Select only one answer**		Points												
Attendance**	Attended 75 - 100% of meetings in year	20												
	Attended 50 - 74% of meetings in year	10												
	Attended 15 - 49% of meetings in year	5												
	Attended less than 25% of meetings	0												
Committee Participation**	Actively participated on at least one board committee	5												
	Actively participated on more than one board committee	10												
Advocacy	Served as public advocate for services	5												
Understanding	Is informed about board business and direction	5												
Support	Actively took part in at least one program	5												
Skills	Brings needed technical skills to board	5												
Name	Name adds credibility to board	5												
Leadership	Served as officer, committee chair	5												
Commitment	Is committed and enthusiastic	5												
Demeanor	Is disruptive or misdirected	-5												
45-60	excellent													
30-44	good													
16-29	consider replacing													
0-15	definitely replace													
Total														

How Well Does Your Board Understand Its Role?

This set of statements is designed to help your board evaluate itself. For each of the following statements, have board members work through the checklist alone. "Yes" indicates understanding or agreement, "No" indicates lack of understanding or disagreement, and "?" indicates that you feel the statement merits further research or discussion. After everyone has completed this checklist individually, do it again as a group - providing answers for all questions that anyone has answered "No" or "?" to.

Yes	No	?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I understand exactly why the board was created.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. I can cite the legal document that created the board.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I know what my fellow board members and I expect to achieve for the community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. I know who the municipal staff are who are responsible for recreation and parks and I understand their role.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. I know the sources of information that the board needs to make decisions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. I know which types of community issues are of concern.

Hierarchy: It's important to understand your place in your community, that is, your board's relationship to local elected policymakers, citizens, other boards, committees and the staff. It's also important to understand the interrelationships on the board, that is, the relationships between the board chair, the individual members and the committees.

Yes	No	?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I understand the appropriate process by which my board helps to accomplish community goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. I understand the difference between the role of the local elected policymaking body in the community and that of my board.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I understand the authority of the board.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. I understand my responsibility to the community's local elected officials.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. I understand my responsibility to the public.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. I understand the role of the staff members in carrying out the work.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. I understand the role of the board chair.

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Yes	No	?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. I understand the role of the committees.

9. I understand my role as an individual board member.

Accountability: Legal requirements, constraints and issues vary depending on the type of municipality, local laws and the type of board. It is important to call on the services of a professional to help your board sort out the legal considerations applicable to you.

Yes	No	?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. I understand the statutory definition of the board.

2. I am satisfied that the board is carrying out all its legal responsibilities.

3. I understand that which constitutes a conflict of interest.

4. I understand exactly how the law requires a conflict of interest to be handled.

5. I understand the board's accountability to the public and the legal requirements for guaranteeing it.

Responsibility: Sharing responsibilities among board members is essential to getting the job done. No one person on a board can do everything. The board chair has a certain role, as do the committees and individual board members.

Yes	No	?
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

1. I know the length of my term on the board.

2. I know what my responsibilities are regarding attendance and preparation for meetings.

3. I know where to seek information when I don't understand an issue.

4. I understand my personal responsibility to complete tasks that I agree to do, within the agreed-upon time frame.

5. I know what type of work is appropriate for committees to do.

6. I know what type of work is important for the board chair to do.

7. I know what type of work is appropriate for the staff to do.

8. I know who is responsible for delegating responsibilities.

Goals: Goals are your board's blueprint. Some of the goals, probably longer term, are predetermined by your governing body. The board will want to decide what to accomplish in the shorter time frame. A planning exercise allows you to outline the job that needs to be completed and set benchmarks for checking progress. Write down your goals, use them to check progress and review them regularly.

Yes	No	?	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	1. I am satisfied that I have been (or will be) a full participant in setting board goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	2. I know which tasks must be completed to reach each of the board's goals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3. I know which tasks I am responsible for completing.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	4. I know the deadlines for completing my tasks.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	5. I review the board's goals periodically to remind myself what we are trying to accomplish.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	6. I believe the board's goals are still appropriate.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	7. The board's goals complement the community's goals.

Board Evaluation For Key Municipal

This chart is designed to determine how well-suited your board is to address key municipal issues and needs. Once a community needs assessment is completed, the top 10 issues/needs should be listed in order of priority down the left column. Board member names go across the top. Each member is then assessed in terms of his/her ability to impact each issue. Points are awarded as follows: 5 = member can have major impact on solving, 3 = member can have some impact on solving, 1 = member can have little impact on solving, 0 = member not likely to help at all. This matrix will help tell your board what areas need to be beefed up to meet current and future needs.

	Term Expires	Board Member Names											TOTAL
1		KEY MUNICIPAL ISSUES/NEEDS											
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9													
10													
		TOTAL											
		These scores can help evaluate each member's value in terms of current community needs.											

About the Author

Susan E. Landes, Certified Park and Recreation Executive, has worked for Pennsylvania governments of all sizes. She is presently the Executive Director of the Lancaster Recreation Commission, and previously worked for the Westmoreland County and Chester County Parks and Recreation Departments. She's a Past President of PRPS, serves as a peer consultant for DCNR and operates Recreation and Parks Solutions, a consulting firm that is dedicated exclusively to community recreation, parks and open space consulting. Susan has an undergraduate degree in Recreation and Parks and master's degree in Public Administration, both from Penn State University. Known for her creative approach and expertise in intergovernmental cooperation, recreation programming, revenue development, administrative management and marketing, Susan was the 2001 winner of the prestigious Fred M. Coombs Honor Award, the highest recognition given by PRPS. She created the RecTAP program for PRPS and DCNR and is also the author of *Community Recreation and Parks*, *Financing Municipal Recreation and Parks*, *Hiring Municipal Recreation and Parks Personnel*, *Multi-Municipal Cooperation for Recreation and Parks* and *Municipal Recreation Programming*.

About the Partners

The *Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS)* is the principal state organization promoting recreation and parks training, networking and leadership opportunities for those working and volunteering in the field. Members include professionals who manage municipal recreation and park systems and state parks, citizen members of recreation and parks boards, and therapeutic recreation professionals working in health care settings.

The *Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Recreation and Conservation* provides grants and technical assistance to support conservation, recreation and open space projects across the state. The Bureau serves as a leader in establishing community conservation partnerships for advancing the greening of Pennsylvania, protecting the Commonwealth's natural and heritage resources, and providing recreational opportunities for all Pennsylvanians to enjoy.



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pennsylvania

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