

# THE ROLE OF THE BOARD CHAIR

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## **A board chair has three basic responsibilities:**

- To ensure that the board fulfills its responsibility to the community by effectively guiding the organization toward fulfillment of its mission and vision while at the same time protecting it by making the best decisions possible given the available data and considering such things as the financial, risk, image and manpower implications of the options they consider.
- To partner with the executive director to ensure that the day-to-day operational decisions are consistent with the policies set by the board.
- To serve as the liaison between the board and executive director, gathering and passing information between the two and making sure that any misunderstandings are cleared up immediately.

## **His or her specific duties are many. Among them:**

- Visioning and developing action steps to reach his or her vision.
- Staying current on all issues relevant to the organization and its place in the community.
- Developing the meeting agendas – often in conjunction with the executive director – with a focus on substantive issues that impact mission and vision.
- Facilitating meetings according to the protocol set out in the bylaws (e.g., Robert’s Rules of Order or Roberta’s Rules of Order)
- Encouraging everyone’s input – especially that of those who would challenge the status quo.
- Keeping the meetings on track while being sensitive to interpersonal needs.
- Seeing that the board is knowledgeable about the mission, the community and its roles and responsibilities.
- Appointing committees to do the business of the board and the organization.
- Sitting in on committee meetings as time permits.
- Delegating responsibilities to other board members or the executive director.
- Facilitating the evaluation of the executive director and board members according to clearly defined criteria.
- Providing frequent, specific and current feedback to both other board members and the executive director beyond the formal evaluation system.
- Serving as a role model in terms of attendance, meeting financial obligations, coming prepared to meetings, and so on.
- Having high expectations – even of other volunteers!
- Holding board members accountable to all stated expectations. This may require talking with people that are not following through on their commitments. It may also mean asking these individuals for their resignation if behaviors don’t change.
- Ensuring that the board is self-sustaining – i.e., identifying, cultivating and training future leadership.
- Serving as an organization spokesperson.
- Signing contracts, checks and other documents.
- Guiding the development of policies.
- Accepting that the buck stops at his/her door.