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**THE MANY RESPONSIBILITIES  
OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT**

**Presenter**

**Mary Ann Rothman  
Council of New York Cooperatives & Condominiums**

# **The Many Responsibilities of the President of the Board**

## **The President Defined**

The president is the chief executive officer of the cooperative corporation. (S)he shall preside at all meetings of the members and the board of directors.

## **The President Elected**

The cooperative membership elect the members of the board at the annual meeting. The President is then elected into office by the board of directors and serves at their pleasure.

## **The President's Authority**

(Authority: Permission to use the powers given you)

The president's authority is derived from the by laws of the cooperative and from the membership and the board (the electorate).

## **The President's Power**

The president's powers are derived from the bylaws of the cooperative.

Decisions are made by the board acting together. Each board member must act in the best interests of the cooperative, without consideration for self interest or personal gain.

Between board meetings or in a crisis situation, the president (or the Executive Committee) can make decisions, which should then be ratified by the board at its next meeting.

## **Key Attributes of a Good President**

- Has the respect of the members for knowledge of the cooperative's documents and the rights of the members;
- Deals fairly with all members;
- Can keep control of meetings so they do not get out of hand;
- Can make a decision when a decision is in order;
- Exercises good leadership skills (often mistaken for dictatorship);
- Can delegate responsibility to responsible people;
- Listens and responds;
- Can tolerate being blamed when something goes wrong and never given credit when something goes right.

### **A (co-op) president is:**

#### **A volunteer who**

- Seeks education to increase her/his abilities to benefit the community;
- Knows the co-op's chain of command;
- Responds to human needs;
- Promotes awareness;
- Solve problems;
- Makes a difference.

#### **A leader who**

- Sets examples for others to follow;
- Helps to settle differences;
- Introduces new ideas;
- Has good communications skills;
- Provides encouragement;
- Involves others;
- Interacts with co-op members;
- Delegates responsibilities;
- Makes things happen;
- Knows when and how to say no;
- Listens to others;
- Can tolerate blame;
- Encourages training opportunities;

### **The President should:**

- Guide the board into fulfilling its roles.
- Chair meetings effectively.
- Utilize board time effectively.
- Be a mentor to new board member or assign someone to do so.
- Supervise the committee and task force chairpersons.
- Develop members for future leadership roles.
- Represent the board in communication with government agencies.
- Represent the co-op in (certain) matters that affect it.
- Enhance the cooperative's image in the community.
- Focus on issues not personalities.

The president is the presiding officer and should set the example of fairness and operate under the proper rule based on:

- ★ Courtesy to all;
- ★ One agenda item at a time;
- ★ The majority rules;
- ★ Consideration for the rights of each board member and the cooperative as a whole;
- ★ Partiality for none and justice for all.

When presiding, the officer is expected to:

- ◆ Refer to him/herself as “the chair” not “I”.
- ◆ Refer to the body as “the board” (never “my board”).
- ◆ Open the meeting at the scheduled time provided a quorum is present.
- ◆ Announce the business in the order in which it is listed on the agenda.
- ◆ Keep control of meetings.
- ◆ Deal with issues rather than personalities.
- ◆ Recognize a member entitled to speak.
- ◆ State clearly all questions (motions) properly brought before the body.
- ◆ Put all questions (motions) to vote.
- ◆ Announce the results of the vote.
- ◆ Assist in expediting business.
- ◆ Declare the meeting adjourned.

### **President’s Responsibility to the Board**

- To provide good leadership;
- To train and orient;
- Plan annual board evaluations;
- See that a director’s code of ethics is adopted.

### **President’s Responsibility to the Membership**

(Remember they have their own needs and expectations)

- To see that their investment/interest in the corporation is protected;
- To keep them informed;
- To educate;
- To provide a strategic plan and follow it, updating it periodically;
- To solicit their input (surveys);
- To respond promptly and courteously to inquiries;
- To hold an annual membership meeting;
- To preserve confidentiality.

### President's Tools for Nourishing Members

- Make sure members understand their rights and responsibilities in the cooperative.
- **Permit members to be themselves:** Accept them as they are and be grateful for what they have to offer.
- **Be ready to give and to receive:** Be eager to help and able to ask for help as well.
- **Make your advice constructive:** Put forth the best effort not to cause hurt feelings or discourage participation.
- **Give praise and encouragement:** Delight in their talents and applaud their successes.
- **Be honest:** Open communication is the essence of trust.
- **Agree to disagree civilly:** Others may have views different from ours, just remember we are each entitled to our opinion.
- **Listen with empathy:** Try putting yourself in the speaker's place. And feel their emotions.

### President's Responsibility to the Staff

- To facilitate a safe working environment;
- To promulgate and enforce equitable personnel policies;
- To provide benefits;
- To offer/allow (time for) educational opportunity.

### President's Responsibility to Co-op Committee Members

- ◆ To appoint/assign interested members to a committee;
- ◆ To provide directions and committee charges;
- ◆ To provide educational opportunities (seminars);
- ◆ To recognize, energize and acknowledge members for their work in the community.

## Characteristics of a Good President

- *Ability to get along with others* – Essential to getting the job done: your colleagues will be willing to work with you.
- *Courtesy* – Never ever embarrass or put others down.
- *Self-Confidence* - This will inspire confidence in your colleagues.
- *Willingness to be bold* – Use unusual/different (but legal) approaches to solving problems.
- *Team builder* – The ability to foster team spirit among board members is a great asset. In a heated debate, the president must mediate and counsel fellow board members to keep the team intact.
- *Planner* – Keeps an overall view of the board calendar and makes sure that duties mandated by the by-laws and board policy are completed on time.
- *Facilitator* – Must be viewed as a facilitator, rather than a controller of board meetings. (S)he begins meetings on time, directs the board through the agenda and attempts to adjourn on schedule. As a facilitator, the president ensures that all board members have the opportunity for fair participation, attempts to make sure all sides are heard, and moves the board to action on the issues.
- *Delegator* – The president traditionally has the power to appoint members to committees, with board consent. To do this, (s)he must spend extra time with individual members to determine skills, strengths and interests in order to make appropriate assignments. It is also the president's responsibility, as delegator, to make sure that committee assignments are clear and to hold the committees accountable in getting the job done.
- *Liaison* – The president must be able to communicate the board's needs and concerns to management and vice versa. In addition, the president offers personal support and counsel to management and acts as a sounding board.
- *Sensitive* – A good president should be sensitive to the (unexpressed) feelings and needs of others.
- *Conflict Manager* – When dealing with conflict the president must realize that members come from different backgrounds, lifestyles, environments, and situations, and that they each perceive things differently.
- *Trustworthy* – Members generally rely on the integrity of the president. Should the president prove unworthy of their trust, the members may lose respect and may either seek to remove the president or to limit their own participation in the cooperative.

## Leadership and Motivation

Leadership is the ability to exert authority in a positive manner while motivation is the ability to provide incentives to get the job done. Leadership itself is an art that is cultivated over time. Leadership is also the ability to:

- Dream it.....A clear vision
- Plan it.....The reality
- Do it.....Empower others
- Stick to it .....Deal with the situation
- Live it.....Demonstrate...“walk the walk”

### *Some signs of a good motivational leader:*

- Leads with ease and grace;
- Recognizes the abilities of others;
- Delegates responsibilities;
- Sets high standards;
- Acknowledge accomplishments;
- Is firm while still being flexible;
- Recruits and trains new leaders;
- Good Appearance : dresses and acts the part;
- Sets an example;
- Is constantly learning;
- Radiates positive energy;
- Is service oriented;
- Believes in fellow board members;
- Shares the vision;
- Demonstrates commitment;
- Demonstrates consistency of values: believe and do.

### *Four key skills of leaders*

- The ability to accept people as they are, not as you would like them to be.
- The capacity to approach relationships and problems in terms of the present rather than the past, (but bearing in mind that we learn from past experiences).
- The ability to trust others, even if the risk seems great. ( willing to run the risk of being deceived or disappointed).
- The ability to do without constant approval and recognition from others. To expect approval may be an indication that you are serving for the wrong reason, thereby setting yourself up for disappointment.

## **Roles and Responsibilities of the Board of Directors**

To perform all of the duties contained in the governing documents; and to exercise the powers in the governing documents. The board can delegate functions, but cannot delegate responsibility.

### **The Board of Directors as Professionals**

A director is charged with the responsibility of acting as a professional, in a professional atmosphere. The role calls for tact and diplomacy in working with others. As a director, you are a volunteer dealing with a number of professionals (in their field), including the managing agent, attorneys, regulators, auditors, vendors, and contractors. These people operate by a set of professional standards in their business dealings and they expect you to do the same when dealing with them. This will enable you to be treated with the respect to which your position, as a director, entitles you.

Some of the professional rules of business are:

- Professionals develop expertise to prepared them to conduct the business at hand. They try to avoid uninformed judgments or opinions with no facts to back them up.
- Professionals try to keep personalities out of the business setting. You may not particularly like the person sitting across the table from you, but you can still sit down together and conduct business.
- Professionals try to stick to the subject at hand. A discussion of grounds maintenance is not the time for a tirade about your broken refrigerator Comments should be kept as short as possible, and should be appropriate to the discussion under way.
- Professionals respect each other's rights to have differing opinions and to voice them. It is particularly inappropriate to interfere with other directors' right to be heard if they disagree with you, or to judge them as people by where they stand on issues.
- Professionals are not afraid to push hard to present their side well in order to persuade others to agree with them. But they do this in a manner that does not offend others, and they know when to stop pushing any side of an issue.
- The best professionals let their head control their emotions. But they also never forget they have a heart.
- Professionals are flexible. They do not walk out of a meeting in anger if things aren't going their way. They can adapt to changing circumstances or new information. And they are usually willing to compromise to reach an amicable solution. They also know not every one can be on the winning side every time.
- Professionals know how to accomplish goals by working together. The best boards have members who support one other, give each other ideas, and provide fair and equal treatment to one another.
- Professionals know what to delegate, and what to do themselves. Equally big mistakes are to delegate everything or nothing. Inexperienced boards will frequently try to keep all authority for themselves, or cede it all to the manager and committees. Professionals know how much they can usefully delegate, and how to keep track of those to whom they delegate responsibilities.
- Professionals respect education. While experience is a wonderful teacher, you should not be learning by making expensive mistakes with your members' money.

Professionals are willing to invest in formal training in order to learn how to run their business properly.