

The Organizational Meeting

WCA Educational Webinar Series



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What Do We Want To Accomplish Today?

- Understand the basic elements of the organizational meeting
- Discuss how to conduct an efficient organizational meeting
- Realize how Board Rules can help set expectations for an “effective meeting”
- Learn how many counties utilize the organizational meeting as a platform for success for the next two years and beyond



Organizational Meeting

Wis. Stat. § 59.11(1)(c):

The board ... shall meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each April to organize and transact business. At this meeting the board may transact any business permitted at the annual meeting, including the appointment of all county commissions and committees. The meeting may be adjourned in the same manner as the annual meeting.



What is the Purpose of the Organizational Meeting?

- Establish leadership for the next two years
 - BUT, leadership can be changed
- Assign responsibilities to the various supervisors for committees, boards, commissions, etc.
- Develop a strategy for “how things get done”
- Establish or reinforce the Board’s culture



So What are the REQUIRED elements of the Organizational Meeting?

- The statutes do NOT contain a required agenda for the organizational meeting.
 - Sec. 59.12
 - Elect chair (first meeting after the election)
 - Elect vice chair (first meeting after the election)
 - Sec. 59.13
 - Appoint committees (prior to June 1)



Step 1 – Prepare the Agenda

- Call to Order
- Election or appointment of temporary chair
- Roll Call
- Oath of Office
- Election of Officers (list)
- Adoption of Rules
- Business
- Adjourn



Who Chairs the Meeting?

- Current chair
- Former chair that was defeated or did not run for office
- Vice-chair or 2nd vice chair
- County clerk
- Corporation counsel
- Someone trusted
- Should not be someone who is seeking the office



Nominations

- Declare the floor open for nominations
- Need not be recognized by the chair
- Anyone can nominate
- Can nominate yourself
- Chair should restate the nominee placing their name before the body
- Nomination speeches are allowed, but there should be a predetermined process



Nominations

- No second required but allowed to show support
- Seconding speeches are allowed
- Technically nominations are not necessary - each member is free to vote for anyone eligible



Nominations

- Motion to close
 - No motion necessary but may accept a motion to close
 - Not in order until reasonable time has been given
 - Is out of order if someone is seeking the floor
 - Requires two-thirds vote
 - No requirement to ask “are there any other nominations” three times
 - Chair can declare nominations are closed



Elections

- May allow candidates to say a few words or, if allowed, distribute literature
 - Might it be a good idea to establish rules associated with the election process in the county board rules?
- If only one candidate, the chair may accept a motion to close nominations and cast a unanimous ballot
- If only one candidate the chair may declare the candidate the victor



Elections

- Appoint ballot clerks
 - Need not be a member of the body
 - Distribute, collect and count ballots
 - Report the vote
 - Chosen for their accuracy and dependability
 - Should have confidence of membership
 - Should not have a direct personal involvement in the outcome of the vote



Elections

- Only time a secret ballot may be used
 - Wis. Stat. sec. 19.88(1):

Unless otherwise specifically provided by statute, no secret ballot may be utilized to determine any election or other decision of a governmental body except the election of the officers of such body in any meeting.

- What happens to the ballots? Are they a public record?
 - Likely requires application of the balancing test



Elections

- In the absence of a rule, continue to vote until a majority is reached
- Candidates may withdraw
- In the absence of a rule, never remove lowest vote getter
- When unable to reach a majority: take a recess, allow the candidates to speak, allow members to speak
- Winner assumes the chair for the balance of the meeting



Elections

- Impropriety of limiting voting to the two leading candidates
 - Leading candidates may represent two different factions – division may be deepened
 - May unite members w/compromise candidate
- Improper to remove nominee w/lowest votes
 - Repeat balloting until you have a winner
 - Nominee w/lowest number of votes could be a “dark horse” who all can agree on



What Else can be Done?

- Board “training”
 - Local rules and customs – setting the “culture”
 - State law requirements
 - Parliamentary Procedure
 - Open Meetings and Public Records
- Conducted by board leadership, administration, corporation counsel
 - The Association can assist



What Else can be Done (cont.)?

- The dreaded “F” word in relation to Board meetings – is there any way we could actually make the organizational meeting FUN?
 - Remember the elements of any group/committee work – form, storm, norm, perform
 - This is the opportunity to bring everybody together to get excited about what will be accomplished the next two years
 - Every county will be different, but every county should not squander the opportunity to make the first meeting of a new board meaningful!



Special Considerations and Issues

- What do you do if the time for your meeting has come and you do not have a quorum?
 - Under RONR, a meeting can be called to order, but then must either adjourn or the members may make certain procedural motions
 - Be mindful of Open Meetings Law considerations. Just because you don't have a quorum does NOT mean you don't have a negative quorum or a walking quorum!
 - Best thing to do is call the meeting to order at the appointed time and note for the record (in writing) the meeting did not convene for lack of quorum and leave.



Recap

- What have we learned in this four-part series?
 - Be intentional about your board rules
 - Strategize about creating a “culture” of efficiency and success
 - Be deliberate in reviewing governance structure
 - Encourage meaningful collaboration
 - Take every opportunity to “set the state”



Questions and Comments



Enjoy the process and good
luck. Thank You for your
service to Wisconsin county
government!

