



Trustee Update

Library News You Can Use

Library boards must adhere to meetings law

As governmental bodies, public library boards must comply with the requirements of Wisconsin’s open meetings law—Wis. Stat. 19.81-19.98.

Wisconsin has a history of open government, and state law requires that all meetings of governmental bodies be open to the public and held in “reasonably accessible” locations with ample space and access for those with disabilities.

In order to comply, library boards must give proper notice of meetings—at least 24 hours prior to the meeting. In emergencies, if there is “just cause” that such notice is impossible, shorter notice may be given, but never less than two hours. The notice must include the time, date, place and all subject matter that will be discussed. Such notices must be sent to the official newspaper (if there is none, to any newspaper likely to give notice), and to any news organization that has requested meeting notices. It must also be posted in one or more public places, such as the library, post office, village/city/town hall, etc. A posting on the library website is an acceptable supplement, but doesn’t replace the other methods. If the notice includes a “public comment” period, the board may discuss briefly, but not act upon, matters raised during that period.

There are some specific statutory exemptions that may allow the library board to go into closed session, if the meeting notice indicates, but the meeting must always first be convened in open session. The most common reasons for a closed session are related to specific personnel matters, such as consideration of dismissal, demotion, or discipline of an employee; or consideration of employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation of an employee. Other exemptions such as deliberating or

negotiating the purchase of public properties might also apply to a library board. The complete list of exemptions is explained in Wis. Stat. 19.85.

In order to go into a closed session that has been properly noticed, the board president must announce the intent to go into closed session and the reason for doing so, state the specific statute number that applies to the session (for example 19.85(1)(c)), and take a roll-call vote to convene in closed session. A majority is required, and the vote of each member must be recorded in the minutes. Attendance at a closed session is limited to the board, and anyone whose presence is necessary for the specific business. The State Attorney General advises that it is best practice to take votes after reconvening in open session. The board may reconvene in open session at the same board meeting if that was indicated in the meeting notice; otherwise it must wait at least 12 hours after the closed session to reconvene in open session.

—please see Open meetings on page 2



Tips for planning 2011 budget requests

If your library hasn’t already, you will soon begin developing your 2011 budget, and your budget request to your local municipality. In preparation, you will want to review your library’s goals for 2011, estimate how much they will cost, and the income required to accomplish them.

Determine how you will support your budget request with statistics (from your annual report and elsewhere), including usage trends over time. Also consider using personal stories, quotes, and photos from library users in an effort to put a human face on the library. Educate interested individuals who can support your request, and don’t forget new users who have started using the library because of the current economy. Also, think about how you will adapt if your request is not fully funded.

Building early support for your budget goals can pay dividends when it comes time for final approval. Get started today! ♦



Open meetings law requirements—*from page 1*

It is important for library boards to be aware of, and abide by, open meetings law, not only because open meetings contribute to an informed public, but also because of the penalties that can be imposed if the law is violated. The penalty is between \$25 and \$300 per person, per violation. Since this article is only a summary of Wisconsin's open meetings law, library boards should consult the additional resources at right.

SCLS advocacy training update

In March, Mark Ibach, SCLS Marketing & PR Coordinator, and Terry McIlroy, SCLS trustee and Advocacy Committee member, conducted an advocacy training for members of the Sun Prairie Library Board and Friends of the Library.

This was the first presentation of this new program, which is designed to help reinforce the importance of advocacy. The goal is to offer simple guidelines so all trustees will feel more confident in their ability to speak on behalf of their library.

The advocacy committee is developing an implementation plan, the intent being to offer the program to all library boards. You'll hear more about the schedule in the near future. ❖

- ✓ Wis. Stat. 19.81-98—<http://tinyurl.com/y3ob7po>
- ✓ Wisconsin Open Meetings Law: A Compliance Guide—<http://tinyurl.com/y74jyal> (DOJ/Attorney General)
- ✓ Trustee Essential 14: The Library Board and the Open Meetings Law—<http://tinyurl.com/y2twhmo> (DLTCL)
- ✓ Open Meetings Law and Library Board Closed Sessions—<http://tinyurl.com/y6p2tlb> (DLTCL)
- ✓ Governing Bodies: Open Meetings Law—<http://tinyurl.com/y4hxacj> (League of WI Municipalities)
- ✓ What Libraries Should Know About Wisconsin's Open Meetings Law— <http://tinyurl.com/y78dfg3> (SCLS CE) ❖

SCLS staff contacts:

If you have questions about open meetings law, trustee training, or library budgets, contact Cheryl Becker at (608) 246-7973 or cbecker@scls.lib.wi.us.

If you have questions about library advocacy or marketing/public relations, contact Mark Ibach at (608) 246-5612 or mibach@scls.lib.wi.us. ❖

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