

BOARD ROLE AND FUNCTION

I visited my other residence and followed a general community invitation for the same day to attend and participate as one of the many community members at a board meeting. One week in advance, I sent board members nine questions to be answered in writing on behalf of the community. Arriving on the day of the meeting to attend the community meeting after driving four hours, I was informed the community meeting was postponed four days ago due to one board member's request to change the 10:00 a.m. meeting to a 6:00 p.m. the same day. (e.g., Meeting one person's need at the expense of many intended attendees.) Stated was, "It was your responsibility to check the board for a time change." However, many were not there to do so, and the building had been closed. There was no time change notification effort even though there was secretarial awareness of incoming attendees, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses. Two posted announcements were noted on the large hall bulletin board—a colorful paper notification indicating the 10:00 a.m. meeting in large print and another white paper announcement in small print (and not highlighted) showing the time change of 6:00 p.m.

Community members sparsely attended the meeting at 6 p.m. No pledge of allegiance was done, no welcoming of visitors, and no statements/reminders of expected organizational standards (philosophy, mission, purpose, goal(s), or objectives). During the meeting, a long-standing, respected community member presented his grievance. He was rebuked and belligerently demeaned as "not knowing the situation" and dismissed rudely by the board with a "feel free to contact an attorney."

I was allowed to present my questions and volunteer my services as a leadership consultant. I stated my credentials, academic experience, publication experience and provided copies of several of my publications. No board member had bothered to read my previously sent questions, and no one attempted to answer the few questions verbally or in writing. Board members were belligerent and dismissive of my community questions and informational offer of leadership principles. I was told this was not a place to ask questions or express my concerns. My offer to provide appropriate leadership principles resulted in sneers. A comment was that my emphasis should be on the positive rather than the answers to questions. If I wanted answers or information, I was to obtain them myself at the office. This board displayed appalling negative board leadership behaviors—a true board non-example. (It was passive aggression, oppositional defiance, and inappropriate board belligerence at its finest hour!)

I received a text message from the Director of the Board. The message stated that the board functions at a "higher level" than any leadership information I could provide. The message included that: "Simple leadership information could be taught at the grocery store, and you and your ideas are foolish." Surprise!!—even basic leadership principles form the supporting foundation of effective leadership decisions at the stated "higher level" of any organization. Academic leadership principles are proven basic success principles at any perceived organizational level.

Basic leadership concepts and standards identify commonsense strategies that support the community expectations of boards and business organizations. A trusted community board member's basic principles of behavior are respect and sensitivity to the needs of community members! There must be community board respect for national and committee standards of allegiance, politeness, caring attitudes, compassionate actions of thoughtfulness, and responsible behavior. Let us not forget the expected humanity of the board role. (And—by the way—an accountable school board always encourages educating students in problem-solving without promoting and practicing student rage!)

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.