Seven Habits of Effective Tree Boards and Committees

Adapted from Paul Ries
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Seven Habits concept from Franklin Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*

Understanding what effectiveness is…
    -Being efficient vs. being effective-
    -Efficiency is doing things right, effectiveness is doing the right things.

Habit 1: They live their mission

- The Board understands why it exists (authority vs. advisory)
    o Authority vs. advisory; making policy/doing the work vs. advising those that do the work/make the policy
    o A statement that clearly sets forth the purpose of the committee/board
    o "Elevator speech" –convey message succinctly
    o What does the board wish to accomplish? Spell this out in a mission statement or ordinance.

- They have well-defined roles and expectations
    o Board members require commitment and sense of responsibility
    o Outline what role each board member should play (i.e. job description)
        ▪ One person doing everything leads to burn out
        ▪ Do not waste board member time, most committee/board members serve on other boards or have other uses for their time

- They understand the circles of influence and concern
    o Board should have an understanding of the city/town politics
    o Board should have an understanding of the committee concerns

Habit 2: They have a vision

- They understand where it is they want to go and what they are trying to achieve
    o A goal for the state of community trees in the future
    o It stands as a written commitment toward which the forestry program or board activities will be directed
    o Assessment of the community's natural resources
    o Assessment of the community's values toward the natural resources

- They understand their **limitations** in getting there
    o Understand where their strengths and weaknesses lay
    o They should not bite off more than they can chew

- They know **where** they are going and **why**
  - Should be outlined in the mission statement
  - This goes back to the first statement under Habit 2
  - This points them in the right direction
  - Long-range, shorter-term
  - Annual work plan—yet allow for flexibility

Habit 3: They use time effectively

- Spend time on the important, not just the urgent items
- Run meeting effectively
  - Agenda
  - Start and end on time
  - Encourage participation
  - Accomplish something
  - Seek feedback
- Compass vs. clock concept
  - Time meeting usage (on agenda)
  - Compass pointing the way, "is this discussion taking us in the right direction? Are we on course?"

Habit 4: They practice succession planning

- What projects come next?
  - Should be focused on building a program not a project
  - Even in the midst of a project, should be thinking about the *next* project
  - Work from small projects to large, build upon success of past projects
  - Cultivating project volunteers to become program contributors
  - Who comes next
    - How are you training people?
    - Target groups that can help with the project
    - This becomes pool of future board members

Habit 5: They make connections

- Connect their cause to other city issues (livability, safety, economics, traffic)
  - Community forestry should be part of the infrastructure of the community
  - Should form partnership with other community departments
  - Connect with other people outside of community forestry who can help advance the cause
  - Triple bottom line: Economy, Environment, Community—Urban & Community Forestry is a at the intersection of these

Habit 6: They value process as well as product

- Capacity-building activities are as important as production activities (e.g. tree planting)
- Plant ideas through board retreats, strategic planning exercises, goal setting, etc.

o   Think outside the bark

Habit 7: They desire to inspire

- They realize that they cannot do it alone and must inspire others to act
    - o   They have influence and get other people to help
    - o   They understand the magnitude (local, state, national) and complexity of urban & community forestry

Conclusion

- There is no perfect tree board. These habits are what each one should strive for
- These concepts apply to any committee, board, or organization we belong to

Other Resources

- Carver, John. *Board that Make a Difference*
- Not-for profit assistance organizations
- Extension, State Urban & Community Forestry Programs
- Online Courses and Webinars
    - o   Webinar Series
        - ▪   Urban Forest Connections: http://www.fs.fed.us/research/urban-webinars/
        - ▪   Urban Forestry Today: www.urbanforestrytoday.org
    - o   Tree Board University: http://www.treeboardu.org/
        - *This unique online training will help you learn more about trees, about people, and about serving in a citizen advisory role in your city or town.*
    - o   Seven Habits of Highly Effective Tree Boards: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrXNLAufnRo
        - *This 45-minute webcast by Paul Ries explores the Seven Habits of Effective Tree Boards as well as characteristics of successful tree boards and suggestions for how to get your board on the road to success.*

Board Meeting Time Usage

Think back to your most recent Board meeting. Did the chairperson lead effectively? Did the staff and committees contribute timely information? Is the Board sufficiently addressing the organizational capacity building rather than responding to urgent issues? Does the Board spend as much time on the important items as on the urgent ones?

Here are some components of Board meeting time usage and the ideal percentage of time healthy organizations should spend on each component. How does your actual time compare?

Components	An Ideal Percentage	Your Actual Percentage
VISION *Anticipating future needs; long-range planning; visualizing something big; new idea sharing*	10%	_____%
PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING *Recognizing and defining needs; establishing goals; knowing when goals are met; looking ahead to challenges; anticipating trends; recognizing impediments to success; evaluation*	30%	_____%
SOCIAL *Meals or refreshments; informal discussion; getting better acquainted; knowing your fellow board members so you can rely on them*	10%	_____%
ORGANIZATIONAL MAINTENANCE *Communications; routine matters, information-gathering and presentation; receiving reports from staff or committees; minor problem-solving*	30%	_____%
POLICY MAKING *Developing criteria and establishing various policies for effective operation; developing or refining policies and procedures*	15%	_____%
FIRE FIGHTING *Crisis decision-making; urgent problem solving (the tyranny of the urgent); resolutions of issues causing stress or financial problems*	5%	_____%
TOTAL	**100%**	**100%**