

What the Law Says About the Role of Board Chair and Clerk

The following information has been excerpted from the Vermont Education Statutes Annotated and identifies all the roles designated by law for local, union and supervisory union school board chairs and clerks. Robert's Rules of Parliamentary Procedure authorizes the vice chair of a board to fulfill the duties of the board chair in his/her absence.



BOARD CHAIR

Title 16:

§264. Majority vote of school directors

(b) A supervisory union may establish an executive committee consisting of the chair and no fewer than two additional directors.

§554. School board meetings; Open Meeting Law & Robert's Rules

(b) A school board meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the Vermont open meeting law. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern the conduct of school board meetings. (see Robert's Rules for Small Boards – less than 12 members present

- meetings can be less formal
- motions don't need to be seconded
- chair can speak, make motions and vote)

§561. Certification of election of school board members, oath, chairman, clerk

At the meeting next following the election of a school board member, the school board shall elect one of their number chairman and one other of their number clerk.

§563. Powers of school boards

(8) Shall establish and maintain an adequate system of financial disbursement ... It shall be lawful for a school board to submit to its treasurer a certified copy of those portions of the board minutes, properly signed by the clerk and chairman, or a majority of the board ...

§706p Warnings of union district meetings

(a) Union district meetings shall be warned by the clerk, or in the case of his disability, by the directors, by posting a notice, signed by the chairman of the board ...

BOARD CLERK

Title 16:

§243. Appointment; renewal; dismissal of a principal

(d) Dismissal. The clerk of the board shall advise the principal and the superintendent of the time and place of hearing by written notice at least five days before the ... hearing.

§312. Right to attend meetings of public agencies

(2) Minutes of all public meetings shall be matters of public record, shall be kept by the clerk or secretary of the public body, and shall be available for inspection by any person and ... upon request after five days from the date of any meeting.

§472. Meetings; warnings

(b) Meetings shall be warned by the clerk or..., specifying the time, place and business of the meeting, in two public places in the district, at least seven days before the time therein specified, and warnings shall be recorded before being posted.

§474. Records

The clerk shall keep a record of the votes and proceedings of the school district meetings...A clerk who neglects to perform this duty shall forfeit \$20.00 to the district, ...

§561. Certification of election of school board members, oath, chairman, clerk

At the meeting next following the election of a school board member, the school board shall elect one of their number chairman and one other of their number clerk.

§562. Powers of electorate

(3) May elect a school district clerk at the annual meeting who shall keep a true record of all proceedings at each district meeting, certify its records.....

§563. Powers of school boards

(8)... It shall be lawful for a school board to submit to its treasurer a certified copy of those portions of the board minutes, properly signed by the clerk and chairman...

§706e. Election of directors

.....Nominations for the office of union school director representing any district shall be made by filing with the clerk of that school district proposed as a member of the union...

§706j. Union School organization meeting - business to be transacted

(1) A temporary presiding officer and clerk from among the qualified voters shall be elected;

(3) A moderator, a clerk, a treasurer, and three auditors shall be elected.....

(b) The officers and directors as elected shall be sworn in before entering upon the duties of their offices, and a record made by the clerk.

§706k. Election of district officers

The clerk of the union district shall, within ten days after the election or appointment of any officer or director give notice of the results to the secretary of state.

§706l. Vacancies on union school board

(b) When a vacancy occurs on the board of directors, the clerk shall immediately notify the local school board from that town.

§706p. Warnings of union district meetings

(a) Union district meetings shall be warned by the clerk,...

§706q. Powers, duties and liabilities of union district officers; bonds

(a) The powers, duties and liabilities of the (union)...clerk shall be like those of a...clerk of a town school district.

(c)...The annual report shall be filed with the clerk of the union district,

§706u. Check list for union district meetings

The clerks of the respective towns within the union school district shall furnish to the clerk of the union district, ... authenticated copies of the check list of legal voters....

§706v. Record of union school district proceedings

A clerk who neglects to perform this duty shall forfeit \$20.00 to the district....

§706w. Polling places, transportation and counting of ballots

Bond issues shall be supervised by the union district clerk or his/her designee.

§711e. Budget votes by Australian ballot

(d) If the union school district has voted to commingle its ballots the union school district clerk shall supervise the boards of civil authority to count the commingled ballots.

(e) If the union school district has voted not to commingle its ballots, the municipal clerksshall transmit to the union school district clerk the results of the vote.

Students on School Boards

"How To" Guide

More school boards each year are interested in involving students in board deliberation. It is important for the board to understand the impact leadership decisions have on the student-body. One of the best ways to stay in touch with student needs is to include a student(s) on the school board and allow them to participate in discussion

Follow these steps to maximize the benefit of student participation on your board.

Steps:

1. Establish criteria for student service on the board, such as:
 - a. Attend majority of board meetings;
 - b. Will not participate in executive sessions;
 - c. Board chair allow student(s) to express opinions on par with other board members;
 - d. Hold student(s) to same level of conduct and behavior as adult board members.
2. Create a process through which a student is selected annually.
 - a. Set up annual selection system, possibly with voting by students and/or staff
 - b. During the first year, elect an older student representative (one-year term) and younger alternate (two-year term)
3. Create a communication system
 - a. Principal(s) work with student rep to set up a routine communication system in the school(s).
 - i. Periodic communication using intercom/written announcements
 - b. Encourage student reps to check with fellow students and report what is going well, concerns, and other general feedback to the board
4. Agenda management
 - a. Place agenda items early in the meeting that would be most suited to student participation
 - b. Save executive session items for the end of the meeting
 - c. Allow student(s) to leave board meetings early for homework and other important school activities
5. Adult-Student Relations
 - a. Treat each other with respect
 - b. Listen to other' point of view

Robert's Rules of Order Motions Chart

Based on Roberts Rules of Order Newly Revised (10th Edition)

State law requires that "A school board meeting shall be conducted in accordance with the Vermont Open Meeting Law and Robert's Rules of Order." Use the Robert's Rules chart below when the board is running a meeting or conducting a formal public hearing. The chart will help the board chair and members maintain an effective deliberation and decision making process. Boards with fewer than 12 members may choose to operate less formally using the Robert's Rules for Small Boards system outlined on the next page.

§	YOU WANT:	YOU SAY:	INTERRUPT	2 ND	DEBATE	AMEND	VOTE
21	Close meeting	Move to adjourn	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
20	Take break	Move to recess for...	No	Yes	No	No	None
19	Register complaint	Point of order	Yes	No	No	No	None
18	Make follow agenda	Call for the orders of the day	Yes	No	No	No	None
17	Lay aside temporarily	Move to lay the question on the table	No	Yes	No	No	Majority
16	Close debate	Move the question	No	Yes	No	No	2/3
15	Limit or extend debates	Move that debate be limited to...	No	Yes	No	Yes	2/3
14	Postpone to a certain time	Move to postpone the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
13	Refer to committee	Move to refer the motion to ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
12	Modify wording of motion	Move to amend the motion by ...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority
11	Kill main motion	Move the motion be postponed indefinitely	No	Yes	Yes	No	Majority
10	Bring business before assembly (a main motion)	Move that (or "to")...	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Majority

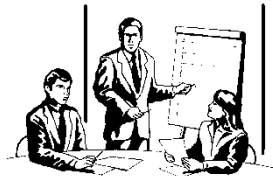
Robert's Rules: Procedures for Small Boards

In a board meeting where there are not more than a dozen board members present, some of the formality that is necessary in a large assembly could hinder board business. The rules governing such meetings are different from the rules that apply to other assemblies in the following respects:

- Members are not required to obtain the floor before making motions or speaking, which they can do while seated.
- Motions need not be seconded.
- There is no limit to the number of times a member can speak to a question, and motions to close or limit debate generally need not be entertained.
- Informal discussion of a subject is permitted while no motion is pending.
- When a proposal is perfectly clear to all present, a vote can be taken without a motion being introduced. Unless agreed to by general consent, all proposed actions of a board must be approved by a vote under the same rules as in other assemblies.
- The chair can speak in discussion without rising or leaving the chair; and, subject to rule or custom within the particular board (which should be uniformly followed regardless of how many members are present), the chair usually can make motions and usually votes on all questions.

A Note of Caution

If your board elects to operate more informally, it is important that board members agree on this during the annual board reorganization or at a board goal setting work session. The board chair will need to clearly communicate to members that silence during a vote constitutes support for the decision at hand. The board chair should also direct the clerk to record the vote as unanimous in the meeting minutes unless the board members are polled individually. Board member polling can only be initiated by a board member/ not a member of the public or superintendent.



Working with the Media

Frequently it appears to boards that the media are preoccupied with the negative. In reality, the media also do much to promote schools. Local newspapers often carry feature articles about the good things happening in schools; they present valuable information to the public. For example, a local Vermont paper had a great picture and story of "I Love to Read and Write" activities on the same page with an article based on budget information for forthcoming town meeting.

Working effectively with the news media requires an understanding that, even in adversarial situations, boards and media depend on each other. The media need boards and schools as a source of community news, and boards need the media as a means of communicating with their communities.

Newspapers are more likely to report school news than any other news medium; radio and television coverage is less common. Obviously, more extensive coverage of a school board is likely to occur during a crisis.

When there are hot and controversial issues that make the headlines, boards need to know how to deal with the quick-paced spotlight and the stress that goes with it. If this happens to you, look to your resources to assist you in coping.

It is important that school boards establish an understanding, during board reorganization following the election, about how the board will "speak with one voice" during contentious or highly political situations. This means that a single spokesperson, agreed to by the board, delivers a predetermined media message. The spokesperson is often the board chair. However, it might be the superintendent or a board member with particular expertise or public speaking skills. What's important here is the board proactively prepares in advance for possible "media moments." Examples might include a hazardous materials spill, teacher strike, or death of a student or staff. It is also effective strategy, during an emergency, to proactively deliver pertinent information to the community by calling ongoing press conferences. Use the "*Media Communications Plan*" and "*School Crisis Press Release*," found on the next two pages, to focus the district's media communications message.

