

MEETINGS OF THE BOARD



Meetings

Meetings are fundamental to conducting conservation district business. Commissioners participate in the district board meetings, committee meetings of the SCACD, and other organizations and agencies. Regardless of the nature of the meetings, there are many techniques for making them run smoothly and efficiently whether you are presiding or not.

Participants, including the general public, should be notified well ahead of the meeting (preferably at least one week). This notification should include an agenda listing the reason for the meeting, location, time, estimated meeting length and important reference material. Most meeting agendas follow this basic order:

1. Call meeting to order
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Treasurer's report
4. Correspondence received
5. Reports
6. Conservation plans approved
7. Old business
8. New business plans
9. Plans for next meeting
10. Adjournment



It is a good idea to give the people attending a reminder phone call a day or two before the meeting.

Pay close attention to meeting arrangements. Plan in advance for a comfortable room, parking, refreshments, etc.

Arrange the room so that everyone can make eye contact. Use a round table when possible and consider placing nameplates in front of everyone.

Many districts utilize the guidebooks published by NACD for meetings.

Regularly scheduled meetings

All conservation districts should hold monthly board meetings.

Board meetings should have two basic purposes:

1. to determine conservation district policy
2. to monitor its implementation

Board meetings also serve educational, social, and communication purposes.

At these meetings, the board of commissioners takes official action on plans, programs, and functions of the district. The minutes are the official record of the transactions and proceedings of the board of commissioners and should contain complete and accurate information.

Special meetings

A special meeting means any meeting called for the purpose of dealing with an issue that cannot wait until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

At a special meeting, **only that business for which the meeting was called can be conducted.** A special meeting may be held without the public notice that is normally required. However, the person calling the meeting shall give as much advance public notice as is reasonable under the circumstances.

The written minutes of the special meeting must contain the nature of the issue and the proceedings that occur at the meeting, including reasons for calling the special meeting.

Continued or Reconvened Meetings

A continued or reconvened meeting is one in which there was not sufficient time to cover all the business on the agenda at the regularly scheduled meeting. Public notice, including date, time and place of the continued or reconvened meeting, shall be given by announcement at the original meeting. **Only matters appearing on the agenda of the original meeting may be discussed at the continued or reconvened meeting.**

Closed or Executive Session

Under certain conditions, the district board may go into executive session for discussion of a specific issue. Upon a formal motion made, seconded and carried, all parties may recess, but not adjourn, open meetings for closed or executive sessions. Any motion to recess for a closed or executive session shall include a statement of the justification for closing the meeting, the subjects to be discussed during the time of executive session, and the time and place the meeting shall resume.

The motion to recess into executive session, including the required statement, shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting and shall be maintained as part of the permanent records of the district. Discussion during the closed or executive session shall be limited to those subjects stated in the motion. **No subjects shall be discussed at any closed meeting except the following:**

- personal matters of nonelected personnel
- consultation with an attorney for the district which would be deemed privileged in the attorney-client relationship
- matters relating to employer-employee negotiations whether or not in consultation with the representatives of the district
- preliminary discussions relating to the acquisition of real property

NO BINDING ACTION shall be taken during closed or executive recesses, and such recess shall not be used as a subterfuge to defeat the purposes of the Act.

After the completion of the closed or executive session, the chairman shall reconvene the regular or special meeting at the time and place specified in the original motion. The minutes shall reflect the time of the reconvening of the meeting, persons in attendance and official action taken in the reconvened meeting as a result of the closed or executive session.



Quorum

You must have a quorum of at least three of the five commissioners (not associate commissioners) to conduct any official business at a conservation district board meeting.

Agenda

The purpose of an agenda is to ensure orderly transaction of business and to give notice to the public regarding what will transpire at the meeting. Under the Freedom of Information Act, the agenda must be made available to the public at their request.

The agenda must list the time, date and place of the meeting and all items to be considered at the meeting. To ensure that nothing requiring board action is overlooked, the secretary should retain a file of all incoming and outgoing correspondence and notes on any other topics the board needs to consider at the meeting. The chair of the board should work with the district staff to develop a list of all topics to be placed on the agenda. The information contained in the agenda should be reasonably detailed to inform the public of the business to be considered at the meeting and to facilitate meeting efficiency.

Any decision or act that results in expenditure of funds, establishes or changes policy, represents an aspect, opinion or approval of an issue, or causes an obligation of any kind on the part of the district requires official action of the board of commissioners in an open meeting.



Parliamentary Procedure

Most meetings, especially formal meetings, are conducted according to parliamentary procedure, such as Roberts Rules of Order. Under these rules, a voting member suggests that the board make a decision by stating a motion (“I make a motion that we...”). A second member of the board states his or her support for the motion by seconding the motion (“I second the motion.”). If not seconded, the motion is not considered. If a motion is made and seconded, the board can then discuss the merits of the motion.

If a board member wants to change the motion, he or she can move to amend the motion (“I move that we make an amendment of the motion that...”). This amendment must be seconded and voted on. Several amendments can be added to the original motion. After discussion, the chair restates the motion and the board votes on the motion or “motion amended” and the decision is made.

A simple majority of the members present is required to pass the motion.

The above is a brief description of parliamentary procedure. Use some restraint in applying parliamentary procedure to provide the flexibility needed to address the details of issues. If the discussion becomes too controversial, such procedures may be useful and you may wish to appoint a parliamentarian.