

BOARD SELF-MONITORING

For the utility to perform well, the board must govern well. Governing well involves converting the sundry opinions and values of individual board members into a consistent set of explicit values and opinions ... in a format that best enables management to proceed well.

Governing well also involves being explicit about the board's expectations for its own performance and regularly reviewing board performance against those expectations. This regular monitoring of board performance is promised in BP-2A.7: "... The board will monitor its performance by comparing actual activity and discipline to policies in the Board Process and Board-Executive Delegation categories."

In this ongoing reflection, the board will consider:

- Are we getting our job done?
- Are we acting the way we said we would?
- Do we wish to modify anything about how we define our job and say we will act? (It is not always true that board behavior should change; it may be that policy should be altered.)

Self-evaluation is not extraneous to the job of governing. It is an inseparable part of governing. It is the handiest and most powerful tool available to maintain and continually improve excellence in governing. This approach calls for every agenda to include a discussion of some aspect of board discipline or job performance.

One method is to have a board observer provide an assessment at the end of each meeting.

THE BOARD OBSERVER

The board observer is an individual, typically a board member, assigned to monitor the board's activity over the course of a meeting. At the end of the meeting, this person shares observations and facilitates learning.

The board observer assesses board performance not from her or his individual perspective, but based on the board's own policies and its interpretation and implementation of Policy Governance. At the end of the meeting, the board observer simply points out where the board is not functioning in the way that it said that it would – without judgment or admonishment.

The board observer's job is not to render a report card, but to increase awareness and enable the board to maintain and improve the quality of its collective leadership. By engaging in these learning conversations at the end of each board meeting and taking actions consistent with what emerges, the board will continue to develop its capacity to govern well.

SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST

The board may wish to use a checklist like the one on the following page to guide its self-evaluation. The board observer could use this checklist to focus her or his attention on specific activities or behaviors during the meeting and to guide discussion about where additional learning and growth would be useful.

WATER UTILITY BOARD SELF-MONITORING CHECKLIST

Board observer name:					Meeting date:	
Policy	Promised behavior or activity	Observed			Notes	
		Yes	Some	No		
GROUP EXPECTATIONS						
BP-2A.2.	Act as initiator of policy, not merely reactor to staff initiatives.					
BP-2A.2. & Guide-1.4.	Use expertise of individuals to enhance understanding of the board as a body without substituting individual judgments for the board's collective decisions.					
BP-2A.5.	Avoid allowing any officer, individual or committee of the board to hinder the fulfillment of board commitments.					
BP-2A.6.	Provide ongoing education for existing and new board members regarding governance process.					
BP-2B.1.	Establish and maintain a credible linkage between the ownership and the Madison Water Utility.					
BP-2B.2. & BP-2A.3. & BED-2C.1.	Produce written Outcomes polices reflecting the ownership's values and perspectives, focusing on long-term benefits.					
BP-2B.2. & BP-2A.3. & BED-2C.2.	Avoid dictating administrative or programmatic means of attaining desired Outcomes. (Instead use Executive Limitations policies to proscribe certain means and limit risk.)					
BP-2B.3. & BP-2C.4 & BED-2D. & Guide-1.12.	Assure successful performance of the MWU on Outcomes and Executive Limitations. Establish monitoring requirements. Monitor GM performance using monitoring reports received since the previous meeting. Evaluate only based on board-adopted criteria.					
BP-2C.3.	Attend to consent agenda items as expeditiously as possible.					
BP-2J.	Regularly plan and participate in self-education, outreach, and other activities associated with governance.					
BED-2A.	Only bind the GM to decisions of the board acting as a body.					
BED-2B.	Delegate authority and accountability only through the GM.					
Guide-1.1.	Think upward and outward more than downward and inward.					
Guide-1.2.	Keep the conversation about benefits, beneficiaries, and costs of the benefits alive at all times.					
Guide-1.5.	Build board agendas to accomplish the board's job of governing.					

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INDIVIDUAL EXPECTATIONS						
BP-2A.4.	Maintain attendance consistent with governance excellence.					
BP-2A.4. & BP-2D.5. & Guide-1.7.	Be prepared to participate responsibly.					
BP-2D.1. & BP-2D.2. & Guide-1	Demonstrate unconflicted loyalty to the MWU's ownership. Avoid any conflict of interest with respect to fiduciary responsibility.					
BP-2D.3.	Avoid exercising individual authority over the MWU with respect to GM, staff, public, press, etc.					
BP-2D.4.	Maintain appropriate confidentiality.					
BP-2D.6. & Guide-1.11.	Support the legitimacy and authority of the board's final determination on any matter, regardless of your personal position on the result.					
Guide-1.3.	Serve the broad public purpose. Be <i>from</i> a constituency, not representing only it.					
Guide-1.6.	Offer individual expertise to the GM or staff only if requested from the GM or staff. Assume role of volunteer, not board member, when doing so.					
Guide-1.8.	Register your honest opinion. Consider this an obligation of board service. Speak for yourself and listen with resilience to other perspectives.					
Guide-1.9. & Guide-1.10.	Be responsible for the board's performance. Support the chair in board discipline.					
Guide-1.13.	Alders: Alert the board when changing roles during board deliberations.					
Guide-1.14.	Alders: Be clear about role during staff interactions.					
Guide-1.15.	Alders: Be clear about role when interacting with the media.					