

Library Advisory Board Meeting
Sept. 29, 2012
Board Effectiveness Training with facilitator, Alan Smith

Introductions

Background of CALTAC See the Golden Dreams series by previous State Librarian. Are all LAB members also members of CALTAC?

Why are we a Library Board?

- Rally
- Eyes to the community
- Sounding board
- Help for Patty/Director
- Answer questions
- Question Issues
- Advocates
- (Question? How do we handle censorship questions)
- Stewardship - highlighted by Alan

What makes up the word 'community'? Communication + Unity

Think about Scott Bar - smallest town in CA with a Library - 180 people in the summer - just south of Oregon between Yreka and Happy Camp. If they have a library, why not our small towns?

What issues are you having with stewardship at this time?

- Budget
- Hours
- Personnel
- Not enough books/dvds
- would like more hours for some branches

You want to be involved and talking libraries to the elected leaders. Who else wants to talk money with them?

- City councils, other elected officials, developers, schools, police, fire, park, health & human service, roads, transportation, other cities/counties
- Special interests (4,000 groups lobby Sacramento each year)
- Look at the Dylan's web site - Patty can forward

Library is one of 4,000+ interests out there looking for money. You need to be out there constantly reminding them about the library

If there is a Mayor's meeting, library commissioners may attend. Alan does this for Contra Costa County
Reinforce the message that you are in the community

Types of Library boards in California

YCL is part of a County System. Yolo County has Woodland which is a "stand-alone" city library

Laws: "Permissive" You don't need to have a Library. If you want one, there are laws to do that. These laws were created around 1910.

Laws: "Must haves" Police, Fire, Schools, Jail

This is why there is a hodge-podge of ways to create a library.

May hear: "Return to source" "Am I getting a fair share back of what I am paying in taxes?"

For example: a city may break away from a County because they feel they are not getting enough support.

California is a unique state in this issue. Hawaii has one library system and is under the school system. Illinois does not have County libraries

In California, the belief has been that Libraries have been locally funded.

Two types of library boards: Advisory and Administrative.

- YCL LAB is an Advisory board.

Does LAB have by-laws?

Who is LAB advising?

- LAB is advising Patty and the Board of Supervisors
- EX: Fines, use of public rooms, issues with bathrooms, new library buildings, sharing web links, school districts

Have you ever written a letter about the budget to the Board of Supervisors?

- Not on a regular basis but we have done in the past
- Patty has requested support in the past.

Alan's group always writes a letter of support for the Library budget and then they go and talk about it. The Library director never talks to the board about the budget... Commissioners or staff do. This is because Patty is a Department Head or, speaking from a government systems perspective, a bureaucrat. Her speaking about the library could be seen as a desire for more power (through more staff, etc.)

The Board listens to an Advocacy group more than Patty.

- LAB is not paid. LAB live in Yolo County. LAB are citizen advocates.

Some communities' Library Boards take an oath of office. All have a title: Board member or Commissioner
What does that title mean?

- Responsibility, do the best you can, show up for meetings

In Yolo, 3 cities support the County for Library functions. This is amazing! To have that kind of investment from the Cities coming into the county system.

Do the cities know their ROI? Sharon - yes big time! The Cities don't want regular reports to take up time on their schedule.

Could it be a public comment to go quarterly and update the cities? We could do that.... we have done this for special reports - for example... buildings.

Alan recommends this around City budget time: Hello, we love working with you, the library services are great for the community,etc.

Other libraries have found that Councils, Boards, etc enjoy hearing from the library (this could include Friends of Library members).

How can LAB members use their title?

- Individuals do not speak for the Library Advisory Board. To sign a letter with your title, you need to have approval of group.
- The group is non-partisan, whoever is elected is not the focus of our group, we work with whomever is elected.
- Address library issues, not candidates' name, for example.
- LAB can speak to County about budget, importance of libraries. Can develop better relationships with County administrator, Board of Supervisors, Mayors, etc.
- Be nice, don't stomp and yell. It is a matter of sitting down and talking.
- In some situations, can mitigate a bad press situation by talking to editor of paper, etc.

Brown Act Review

Holly - understand that I can talk to less than the majority about Library business.

Alan- Yes, as long as you are not having a serial meeting.

Social gatherings, fund raisers, etc. are find as long as you don't talk Library business. Can talk Library general.

Examples and scenarios were shared.

Policy perspective - What do Library Advisory Boards get involved in?

1) Governing - Ground rules on how the library runs... Example fines, etc.

How do you change it? Vote on it if it internal;for library rules, BoS vote.

- Administrative -How we ship DVDs and check them in - if we float the collection, the collection is more available. How many stamps are put in a book
- Operating -Procedures developed by staff Can include Friends of the Library. EX:North Natomas Friends group book sale. A table with books and a can for money. Simple operations such as a donation jar can bring in money.

2) Planning: what does that look like here?

Involved in planning new buildings, yearly Friends appreciations, programs, One Hundred Year anniversary, work with our areas to plan activities

3) Finance:

Bond measures - most of which were successful; worked with Board of Supervisors
Report from Patty - where support is needed; if support is needed

4) Organization:

Survey of Libraries - Rebecca
Response to Patty's request

5) Human Resources:

Feedback on how we describe positions
How to better the hiring process - Board may sit in on selection process
How to better staff the positions we have
Furlough
May be involved in Patty's performance review at some point as they move to 360 reviews
Do Library Advisory Board members criticize a staff member? no
Do they let Patty know if a staff member provides poor service? yes

6) Community Relations:

Outreach to other community organizations - letting them know about the LAB; asking if the library is meeting their needs
Look at Butte County - LAB group photo and email address(es)

Exercise: Of the six areas above, which are we strong on, where can we improve

Strong

- individuals involved in community - Advocacy
- history of board members - knowledge they bring
- listen to needs of constituents
- incredible resources but areas that are not being met that we could advocate better for
- open to new ideas
- work well together as a Board; we respect each other
- desire to support County Librarian
- Planning - events, programs
- Community advocates
- Strong organization "good group"
- Sounding
- Network
- Collective organizational memory
- Available, accessible
- Ambassadors for services

Improvement

- report regularly to Board of Sup/City Council
- Outreach via: newspaper articles, radio/TV; visibility on website; brochure on LAB
- Action to get more input from community
- Better advocacy to meet needs
- How better to support Patty
- P.R.
- Community advocates
- general community engagement
- reactionary - especially to finance
- report to governing bodies - make it formal
- Staff and LAB member identification

Watched two examples of short public comment speeches to City Council

Did Patty ask you to write letters to elected officials any time this year?

- Yes, to Mariko and Lois. We are talking to the choir.

Did it make a difference?

Who wrote PLF? Jim Nielson (Senator)

It is okay to only talk to the Elected official's staff. They are wonderful people. Some get elected to office! You can get a lot done by developing good relations with staff.

What are you doing when you are writing letters?

- we are advocating and giving them a reason to vote a certain way. Giving them evidence to support a position. The more paper they have on an issue, the more likely they are to vote.
- The 'dylans' or lobbyists will tell you that they know exactly how many letters they got on any specific issue.
- You are not going for the best written letter ever. Just a letter stating the purpose.
- Elected officials may not know anything about Library Funding, even if they love libraries. May not know about PLF.

How do you get letters written by your elected leaders?

- Write them yourself and they will put it on their letterhead and sign it.
- They will send you a copy back to let you know they sent it.
- You are the trainers for the three state legislators you have here. Spot new talent and get to know them before they get the 'big title'.

Other ways to get library-friendly people elected:

- Walk precincts.
- Throw a fundraisers.
- Bake a cake.
- Get petitions signed when they are running for office.
- Get introduced as a Library Board member (get the word Library included in the conversation)
- Reinforce the library every time you can.

Refer to letters in packet: How did we get these three letters written?

- Alan wrote up drafts. When meeting with the Mayor, Alan called folks to come with him. Developed a handout on CA Library funding issues.
- Once you get the letter written, you'll want to send a thank you and develop a rapport.
- See handout "Steps for getting elected official to write letters supporting library funding"

Speaking in front of Elected Officials

- In front of the dias, you should speak very formally. Do not use familiar terms as you would in an informal situation.
- Do not appear glued to your cue cards. At the very least, you can say your name, who you represent and why you are there without notes.
- Always start and end with "Thank you".
- Make it personal, why you support it; Make it personal to them; why it will help their district.
- Have letter or whatever to sign at that moment.
- The more you can personalize library issues, the better.
- Develop the relationship so you can challenge them, (politely) if need be, if they are not doing the right thing.

Attend the swearing in ceremonies in Sacramento. This is a great time to talk to people and develop relationships.

Working with press:

- Slow down your speaking speed
- Never repeat the negative claims. Ex: Why do you allow smut in the library? "we don't have smut in the libraries"
- Is there any law that says you have to answer a question immediately? Take 5 - 10 seconds to think.
- Be prepared for the oddball thing.
- Use the elected officials own words.. They love to hear you say what they just said.
- See handout: "Public Speaking Tips" and "Advocacy Tips" "Top Ten Reasons for the Library Community to be Involved"
- Example: Bicycle groups - power of numbers and consistency of message - don't give up. Constantly ask for improvement.
- Refer to a book by Karen Hughes (communication director for George Bush in the beginning years)
- Stick to the message.

What is Yolo County Library Advisory Board's message?

Suggestion: Information the way you want it, when you want it.

- What Alan heard: Upgraded branches, more hours, more materials, lots of things...
- Need to have a consistent message.
- If you say "We need more money for the library!" Supervisor will say "We don't have any more money"
- Rather: "Thank you for your support with just a little more funds we can provide xyz services"
- State Library report on Yolo County Library population: More Higher educated than average; More lower income than average
- Is there an education need that is not being met?
- See Gail - director of Marin County. She did outreach to the cow people. They said: Our workers don't speak english. She rerouted bookmobiles to be literacy vans.
- Bill- wouldn't it be great if the van food vendors were also libraries? They reach everyone.

Sounds like you have a story to tell. How can you get the message out?

- Could develop a PPT presentation (ten - twelve minutes) See Contra Costa Library Commissioners example.
- Can wind up developing a speakers bureau for the library.
- Know your audience. Tailor it to your audience.

- This is all tied together. Speaking and PR is related to budget which is related to advocacy which is related to planning.
- When this goes to Sacramento, the message is tailored for that audience. The budget is ongoing.

Activity 2:

TO DO list:

- Set vision/goals for LAB
- Focus as a group
- Brochure on the LAB
- Web page
- LAB Annual report to BoS/City councils/public
- Attend City Council meetings, Board of Supervisors
- Develop a brief PPT
- Support local Friends of the Libraries fundraising - PR for the public about how important Friends are to the library
- Meet with the Friends; educate the Friends about who LAB is; build relationships
- City Council meeting
- A member at every event
- Letter writing campaign
- Bookmobile/Literacy vehicle
- Less Paper

Winners (top three as selected by LAB members):

- Set Vision/Goals for LAB- Focus
- Support the Friends - help fund raise, build relationships
- Attend City Council, School Districts, Board of Supervisors - advertise book sales at city councils

Announcements:

- Next LAB meeting: Wednesday, October 17, 2012 in Esparto at 7 pm.
- WSFOL - Annual dinner with speaker from Yolo County Archives
- October 9 City of Davis Council agenda item on South Davis library service