

How to Grow a Great Tree Board



Tree boards are an essential component of the Tree City USA® program. They can be a great asset to any community that values its trees. An effective tree board can assist professional arborists and city foresters, serve as an advocate for trees, and help residents and businesses in the community understand and appreciate the benefits of maintaining trees. A well-organized tree board provides immeasurable service to the community today and its citizens of the future.

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BULLETIN**

Ten Commandments for Better Tree Board Meetings

In the interest of keeping meetings productive and interest levels high, try these techniques.

- 1. SEND REMINDERS.** Nothing kills productivity like missing members or unfilled assignments. The chair or secretary should email or call members a few days ahead of each meeting to serve as a reminder. Members who are consistently absent should be replaced.
- 2. START ON TIME – AND STAY ON TIME.** Time is a person's most valuable possession. The board chair needs to respect this and clearly ask members to do likewise.
- 3. PROVIDE FOR COMFORT.** The meeting room, including chairs and room temperature, are important. A pleasant, dignified meeting room will add an ambience of importance to the tree board's work. Beverages and treats help, too.
- 4. HAVE A PURPOSE.** If there is nothing to meet about, cancel the meeting. But there usually are matters for an active tree board to address. The chair should think in advance about what specifically needs to be accomplished at every meeting.
- 5. USE AN AGENDA.** Always have a printed agenda ready at the meeting — and use it. Begin by asking if there are additional items and add any that need attention that day. Either formally or informally assign a time limit to each item and use that to comply with No. 2 above.
- 6. LEADERS SHOULD LEAD, NOT TAKE MINUTES.** It is the secretary's job to keep the minutes. This frees the chair to conduct the meeting and focus on the discussions.
- 7. MANAGE DISCUSSION.** The chair needs to be sensitive to the fact that some people tend to dominate discussions. It is the chair's responsibility not only to keep discussion of any item from dragging on beyond the point of usefulness, but to also draw out those who are more reluctant to speak up on their own.
- 8. ADD VARIETY.** Board meetings will remain appealing to members if they are not the same time after time. Occasionally include guest speakers and training materials — especially good audio-visuals.
- 9. SUMMARIZE.** At the end of the meeting, review any assignments given to members and make certain that each has a clear due date. (Note: Members who habitually forget or miss deadlines are usually the ones who do not take notes. If this is the case, watch for an opportune time in private and suggest that it would help if they would at least make notations on their agenda sheets.)
- 10. END ON TIME.** Remember that time is valuable and recognize that board members have other obligations and will appreciate being sure they can depend on leaving at a specific time.



Dmitriy Shironosov / iStockphoto

Good leadership is reflected in conducting meetings in a way that tree board members will want to attend.

ALSO INCLUDED:

- What mix of backgrounds help a board be effective
- Position descriptions for volunteers
- Legal authority
- How to increase the knowledge and skills of board members
- And more