

IMPACT

University of Idaho
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Building better boards

The Situation

In the spring of 2010 the Teton County Fair Board began a new strategic planning process. Because strategic planning was a new experience for most of the board members they asked the Extension Educators from Teton County Idaho and Teton County Wyoming to facilitate the process. After several long evenings and late nights the Fair Board completed their first ever strategic plan. As an outcome of the planning process the board identified the need for additional training focused on meeting management and board responsibilities.

Our Response

Extension Educators were asked to facilitate and conduct the training which would be open to all county board members. In an effort to customize the training to meet the specific needs of the county, Extension Educators met with the Board of County Commissioners, County Clerk, and the County Attorney to obtain ideas and support. As a result, each was assigned a topic to teach and the training was called "Building Better Boards."

Program Outcomes

Topics for the Building Better Boards training included: conducting an effective meeting, keeping the auditor happy, improving community dialog, open meeting laws and conflicts of interest.

Thirty-three board members signed up for the training. Participants included members from the School Board, Hospital Board, Fire District, Fair Board, Planning and Zoning Commission, Senior Citizens Center, Arena Board, as well as several other citizens from the community.



Photo taken several years earlier during a crowded commissioner meeting identifying the need for board training.

An evaluation of the training illustrated the following:

- 100% said the workshop, in general, met or exceeded their expectations.
- 100% said the training on Effective Meetings met or exceeded their expectations.
- 100% said the training on Keeping the Auditor Happy met or exceeded their expectations.
- 95% said the training on Open Meeting Law and Conflicts of Interest met or exceeded their expectations.
- 91% said the discussion on Improving Community Dialog met or exceeded their expectations.

Some comments from participants were:

“The training was beneficial and should be repeated annually.”

“It is insightful that any dialog done during email is considered deliberation and is subject to open meeting law. Thank you for your work!”

“I learned that board decisions don’t need to be unanimous and sometimes it is good to have a devil’s advocate.”

“Great resources, good info, very helpful.”

The Future

Extension Educators plan to provide annual board training on meeting management, board governance, and related issues as directed by county leaders.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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