

Commissioner Involvement: How Involved is Too Involved? Role Responsibilities, Governance

Hannah Baldwin, SHRM

- CP, PAFM



Smith Marion & Co.



— Hannah Baldwin, SHRM-CP, PAFM, Lean
Six Sigma Green Belt
Director of CAS



Roles of Commissioners, Executive Director, & Staff



PHAs Are a Local Governmental Entity



Housing Authorities are Governed by:

- Governmental Accounting Requirements (GASB)
- Internal Revenue Service (IRS)
 - Do not have to file a tax return with the IRS, except for in the case of a non-profit
- State Specific Open Meeting Act



Key Documents

- Bylaws
- Board Reports
- Agendas
- Meeting Minutes
- Ethics/Conflict of Interest
- Financial Disclosures



Executive Director



Role of the Executive Director

- Keep commissioners informed regarding any major issues with the audit, legal issues, major resident issues, financial status, & any other major issues
- Develop, implement, & oversee operating budgets
- Ensure compliance with Federal & State laws as well as HUD guidelines
- Manage day-to-day operations
- Hire, evaluate, train, & terminate employees
- Execute board-approved policies
- Enforcing the lease (PH) & family & landlord obligations (Section 8)



Role in Governance

Supports the Board:

- Provides data and recommendations for informed decision-making.
- Acts as a liaison between the Board and staff.

Accountability:

- Ensures transparency in operations and financial management.



Operational Oversight

Day-to-Day Management:

- Supervises staff, property maintenance, and tenant relations.
- Oversees public housing programs and services.

Financial Stewardship:

- Prepares and manages budgets.
- Oversees grants and funding compliance.



Operational Oversight

Long-Term Goals:

- Collaborates with the Board on multi-year plans.
- Identifies opportunities for growth and modernization.

Innovation:

- Explores technologies to enhance efficiency.
- Implements best practices in housing management.



Collaboration with Board

- **Mutual Roles:**

- Board: Sets policy and vision.
- ED: Executes policy and manages operations.

- **Effective Communication:**

- Regular reporting and updates.
- Open dialogue about challenges and opportunities.



Boundaries and Best Practices

- **Avoid Overlap:**
 - Board: Strategic oversight, not daily operations.
 - ED: Operational authority within Board policy.
- **Best Practices:**
 - Establish clear expectations and performance measures.
 - Maintain professional respect for roles.



Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges:

- Balancing operational demands with strategic priorities.
- Managing community and stakeholder expectations.

Opportunities:

- Strengthening partnerships.
- Leading innovation in housing solutions.



Conclusion

Key Takeaways:

- The ED is the operational leader and policy implementer.
- ED-Board partnership is vital for success.



Staff





Staff

Report to the Executive Director not the Board



Role of Staff

Program Management -

- Tenant selection and eligibility verification:
- Lease management:
- Rent collection:
- Unit maintenance and repairs:
- Resident relations:
- Compliance with regulations:



Role of Staff

- **Financial management:**
- Managing the PHA's budget, including funding allocation for operations and maintenance.
- **Disaster preparedness:**
- Planning and coordinating response efforts in case of emergencies or natural disasters affecting public housing residents.
- Different roles within a PHA staff may include:
- **Executive Director:** Overall leadership and management of the PHA
- **Housing Specialist:** Managing tenant applications, eligibility checks, and lease signings
- **Maintenance Supervisor:** Overseeing repairs and maintenance of public housing units
- **Community Outreach Coordinator:** Engaging with residents, organizing community events, and addressing resident concerns
- **CFO:** Managing the PHA's budget and financial reporting



Commissioner Terms

- Typically 2-4 years
- Appointed by mayor or city council



Commissioner



Resident Commissioner

- Have full voting rights
- Have a term of 1 year



Commissioner's May Not

- Give special treatment to applicants, residents, vendors, or agents.
- Use their position to secure personal privileges or influence the PHA's activities.
- Be hired as the Executive Director immediately after being a commissioner.
- Lobby with PHA funds.
- Have an immediate family member work for the PHA.
- Receive compensation for their services.
- Give a direct order to a staff employee.



Common Commissioner Problems

- Not understanding the PHAs programs
- Not understanding or reviewing the financial information
- Newly appointed board members not knowing their roles, responsibilities, and requirements
- Not asking questions
- Micromanaging
- Getting emotional or personal



Violations

- Having discussion before the board meeting about how they are going to be voting (this is doing business outside of the board meeting)
- Using email to conduct business
- Not allowing public to videotape meeting
- Making decisions/voting during Executive Session
- Limiting total time for public comment, you can limit the amount of time that they talk individually but not the time itself
- Secret meetings or appearance of



Commissioners Should Know

- PHAs mission, programs, financials, and strategic plan
- Policies & procedures
- Agency owned developments & properties
- Board & committee meeting processes
- Federal & state laws



Commissioner Responsibility

- Setting policy
- Providing oversight
- Ensuring compliance with Federal, State, & Local Regulations
- Actively participating in board meetings
- Assure PHA meets obligations on audit recommendations
- Safeguard financial integrity of PHA, prevent fraud, waste, mismanagement, & abuse
- Review monthly financials & budgets



Commissioner Responsibility (Continued)

- Remaining Informed of Industry Rules & Regulations
 - Attending training
 - Read industry updates (TAHRA, PHADA, NAHRO, SHRM)
- Setting Strategic Vision
 - Refer to Strategic Plan to ensure decisions made are in line with the strategic plan
 - Review the strategic plan at least once a year
- Hiring, Firing, & Managing the Executive Director
 - Perform regular performance reviews
 - Speak up when concerns arise
 - Allow for constructive feedback



Commissioner Responsibility (Continued)

- Provide feedback to and conduct performance reviews for the Executive Director
- Speak up when concerns arise
- Represent PHA within the community
- Maintain board, staff, & resident confidentiality



Evaluating the Executive Director

- Provide specific actionable feedback
- Document the evaluations
- Have a regular schedule
- Prepare for evaluation
- Balanced Scorecard



How are You Evaluating Your Executive Director?

What is working/not working?



Commissioner Responsibility (Continued)

- Speak up when concerns arise
 - Ensure open communication
 - It is ok to disagree
 - Ask if you are not sure
- Help onboard new board members



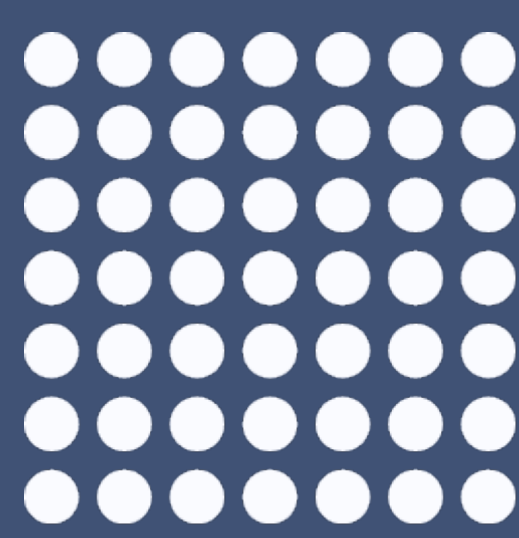
Educate before the Board Member is Brought on



Educating new board members

- Board orientation packet:
 - Bylaws
 - Conflict of Interest Guidelines
 - Nepotism requirements
 - Code of ethics/conduct
 - Disclosure form to disclose any potential conflicts of interest
 - Recent agendas and board minutes
 - Board member contact information
 - State Specific Open Meetings Act
 - GA Open Records Act





What are you currently doing to help new board members?

For the new board members in the room what would be helpful for you?



How Can Commissioners Support the Executive Director?

- Make meetings a priority and come prepared
- Be engaged during meetings
- Have open dialogue
- Constructive feedback
- Mentorship
- Delegation of Authority
- Support for Decisions
- Access to Training
- Regular Performance reviews
- Setting expectations
- Encouragement & recognition





Commissioners are NOT Responsible for:

Management of day-to-day operations:

- Resident services
- Resident relations
- Maintenance
- Financial management
- HR
- Vendor & contract management
- Emergency preparedness & safety
- Community engagement & outreach
- Technology & information management



What is the Difference Between Oversight & Management?

Oversight:

- 1.Strategic Direction
- 2.Policy Development
- 3.Monitoring PHA Performance
- 4.Risk Management
- 5.Board Governance

Management:

- 1.Operational Execution
- 2.Implementation of Policies
- 3.Decision Making
- 4.Supervision of Staff
- 5.Reporting to the Commissioners



What are some warning signs of over involvement?

- Micromanagement in routine operations decisions such as: Resident selection, maintenance request, staff hiring or firing, or undermining the authority of PHA management
- Disregard for Policies & Procedures: Commissioners disregarding established policies & procedures, making ad-hoc changes, or implementing changes without proper documentation.
- Lack of respect for organizational structure: Commissioners bypassing channels of communication & decision -making processes, directly instructing staff or interfering with departmental operations
- Inconsistent communication: Commissioners communicating conflicting directors or expectations to team members, creating confusion and inefficiencies in day-to-day operations



What are some warning signs of over involvement?

- Tension with Management: Strained relationships with management or employees, resulting from perceived interference or lack of trust in managements capabilities
- Stakeholder complaints: Residents, employees, or external stakeholders voicing concerns about overinvolvement or inappropriate conduct by board members indicating potential breaches of governance principles.
- Legal challenges: PHA faces legal challenges or complaints from residents, employees, or regulatory agencies alleging improper interference or violations of rights due to board overinvolvement.
- Lack of accountability: Commissioners failing to hold themselves or each other accountable for adhering to established governance principles, allowing overinvolvement to persist unchecked.



Legal Risks Associated with Commissioner Overinvolvement

1. Violation of regulatory requirements
2. Discrimination claims
3. Contractual disputes
4. Employee relations issues
5. Resident rights violations
6. Misuse of public funds
7. Loss of government funding

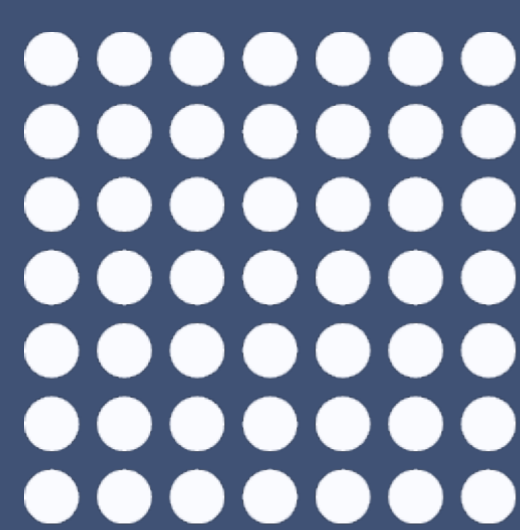




Achieving a Balance

- Define clear roles and responsibilities
- Develop governance policies & procedures
- Encourage effective communication
- Review scorecard regularly
- Review financials regularly
- Receive ongoing training & education
- Promote collaboration & teamwork
- Respect boundaries & delegation
- Seek external expertise & advice
- Regularly evaluate governance effectiveness
- Adapt





Questions?





THANKS!

Do you have any questions?
hbaldwin@smco.cpa

+1 909 894 9795 | www.smcocpa.com



smithmarion

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