

From Wild to Worthwhile

DECEMBER 2025

Practical Tools to Transform School Board Meetings

COLORADO ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

THE AGENDA

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Meetings**

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INTRODUCTION

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20+ years in K12 education

University Director

CASB 9 years

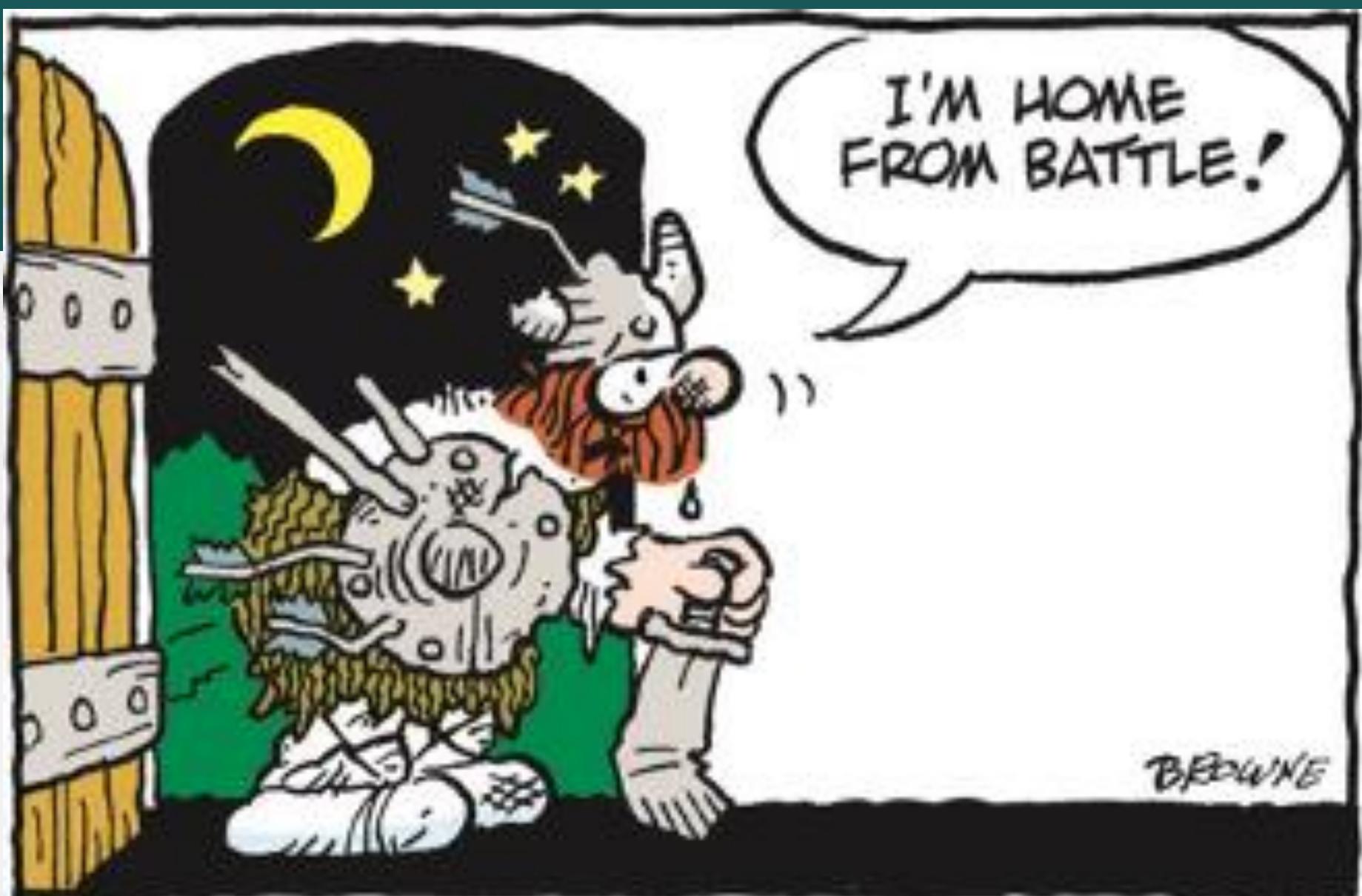


Three Types of Board Meetings (reality)

**THE BOARD
MEETING YOU
PREPARED FOR**

**THE BOARD
MEETING YOU
HAD**

**THE BOARD
MEETING YOU
WISHED YOU
HAD**



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The Other Types of Board Meetings

PUBLIC

- A gathering of three or more members of the board at which any public business is discussed or at which any formal action may be taken

SPECIAL

- Additional notice requirements
- Statement of purpose
- Notice to each board member
- Called by the board president or upon the written request of a majority of members
- No additional business
- May take action

WORK SESSION

- Opportunities for the board to learn about a particular issue and/or have training
- No action
- Notice required and the topics for discussion

THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS



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To conduct and transact the business of the district in a duly convened meeting

Public body of elected officials - expectation that meetings will be professional with civility and decorum

Cultivates productive deliberations leading to informed decisions

Fosters transparency and trust with the community

Instills confidence in district leadership and reflects positively on district governance

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS



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They start and end on time

They are transparent and welcome
community input

Board members come prepared

The focus is on student
achievement/learning

They have availability of expert
advice

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS



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The president maintains order and control

The superintendent is prepared with recommendations and alternate solutions

They may use a timed agenda to stay on track by ending each item on time

They have an endpoint by avoiding unproductive tangents and circular discussions

They tackle issues that require lengthy debate at the beginning of the meeting so board members are fresh

TABLE DISCUSSION

The agenda listed an action item on expenditures of \$13,548 for supplemental math materials to support the 6th grade math curriculum. The board president asked for a motion but fellow board members shared that they didn't know why new materials were necessary and one shared that this was the first time they were hearing about a skill deficiency. The superintendent shared his rationale. The board president asked again for a motion to approve the expenditure.

How should this have been handled?

How to Jeopardize Your Meeting



THE SCHEDULE



MATERIALS ON TIME?



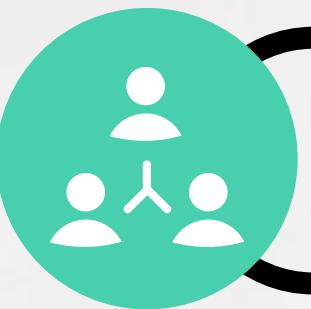
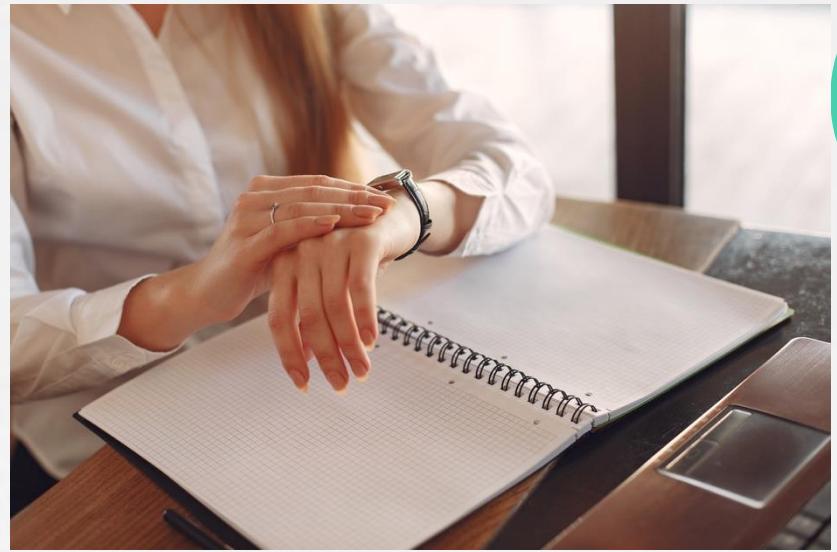
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CLEAR AS MUD?

TOO MUCH AND TOO LITTLE TIME!





TIME?



PREPARED?



TRUST
is like a paper
once it's crumpled
it can't be
PERFECT
again

BEFORE THE MEETING



01. Research

- Monitor social media and community conversations for ‘warning signs’
- Share potential issues in advance



02. Messaging

- Control the messaging
- Share statement to combat misinformation



03. Presentation

- Strategic presentation to inform and reinforce the district mission, vision, values, goals, etc.



04. Policy

- Review policies to be discussed
- What does your policy state about rules of conduct for meetings?

THE AGENDA

- **Well-planned**

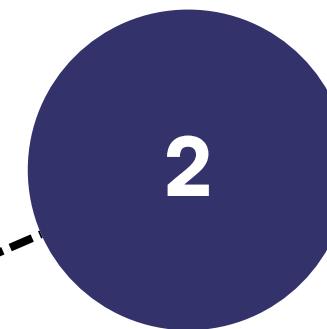
This is the key to a successful meeting:

- time for each item
- required action
- reports
- recommendations, etc.



- **Collaboration**

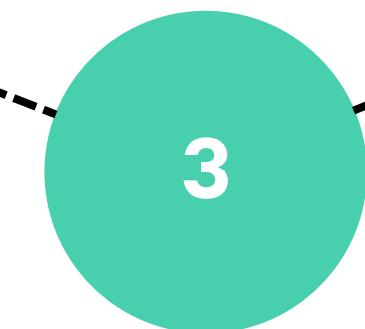
Developed by the board president and superintendent with input from the board.



- **Priorities**

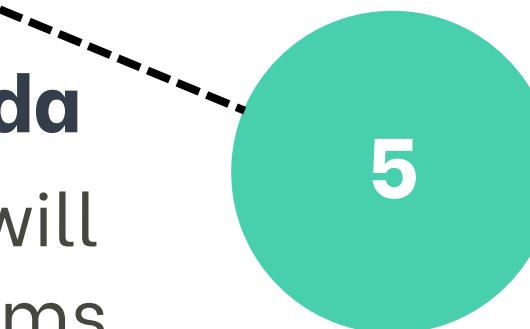
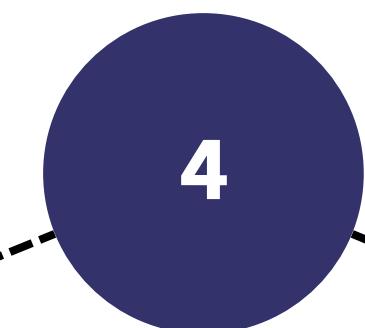
The agenda should reflect the board's priorities and primary objectives of the meeting.

Focus is on students.



- **Consent Agenda**

A consent agenda will expedite routine items. Place controversial or contentious issues early in the agenda.



- **Timely**

Share the agenda in a timely manner and what is dictated by your policy.

THE CONSENT AGENDA



- Offers a practical solution for decision-makers who want to maximize every minute of a board meeting.



- Boards can approve all actions with one single motion instead of filing multiple motions.



- Minimized discussion around routine action items saves valuable time.



- Topics must be familiar, require no discussion, and involve no conflict or contentious issues.

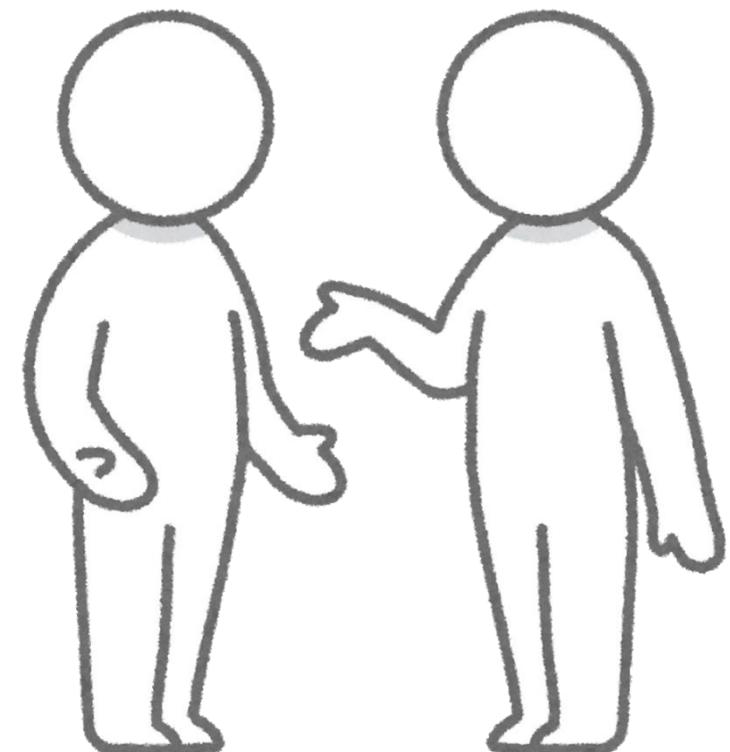
THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL BOARD MEMBER

- Arrive on time
- Arrive prepared
- Avoid surprises
- Work together
- Pay attention
- Stay off your phone
- Take notes during public comment
- Pay attention to your body language
- Don't respond to people during public comment



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THE ROLE OF BOARD MEMBERS DURING DEBATE



Don't try to convince your colleagues that you are correct

Don't question what colleagues have said

Don't argue with colleagues

State your own position as clearly and effectively as you can

Ask clarifying questions

THE ROLE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

- Provide information and counsel to the board
- Make recommendations to the board for consideration and action
- Keep the board current on district goal progress and initiatives
- Advise the board of current practices, policies, and regulations as necessary

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT



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- 2
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Responsibility to enforce the procedures that the board has adopted

Guides the flow of agenda items

May consider withholding his/her position until after others have spoken

Recognize all who have comments or questions

Keep the group on the topic of discussion

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT



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Clarifies questions. Restates them so everyone understands

Practices the art of summarization in clarifying and restating motions

Keeps order in the discussion and is alert to members' reactions

Manages the discussion time

Encourages new discussion and prevents repetition by asking for speakers who have not spoken

THE ROLE OF THE BOARD PRESIDENT



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Alternates pro and con speakers

When no one wishes to speak on a particular side, asks for unanimous consent to end debate

Encourages and equalizes participation

Controls interruptions and digressions.

Manages conflict and ends the meeting on a positive note

IDEAS FOR SUCCESS



- 1 Make sure your community feels welcome
- 2 Take time to mingle with your attendees prior to the start of the meeting
- 3 Arrange the agenda so community members speak early in the meeting
- 4 Develop a “Welcome to a Meeting of Your School Board” brochure
- 5 During public comment, maintain eye contact with speakers and take notes when they are sharing

IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

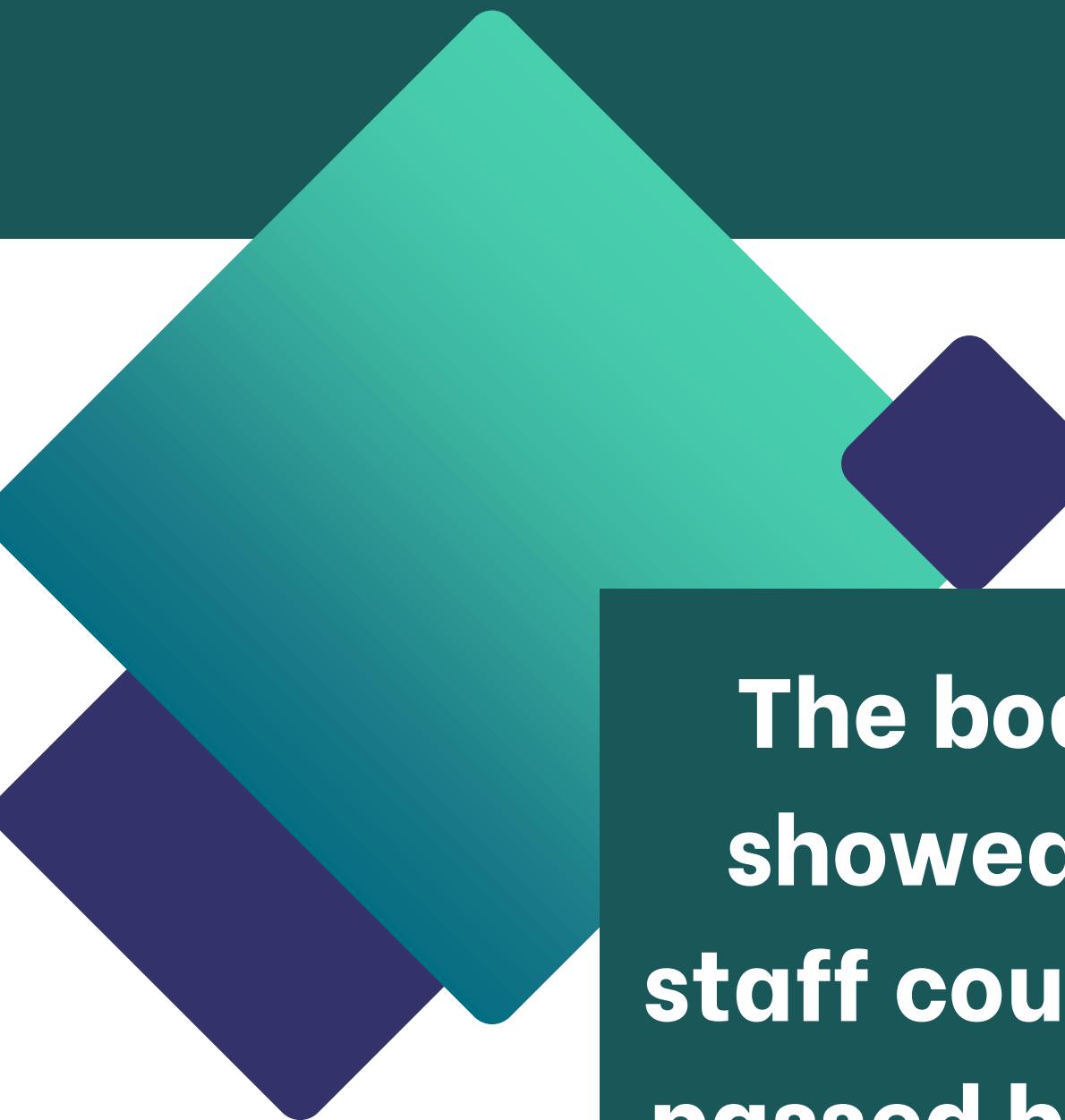


- 6** Do not get into a debate with a community member
- 7** Use your freedom of speech to ask questions
- 8** If you are unprepared, don't fake it – acknowledge it
- 9** Don't attack personalities – attack problems
- 10** Ask questions community members would ask

IDEAS FOR SUCCESS

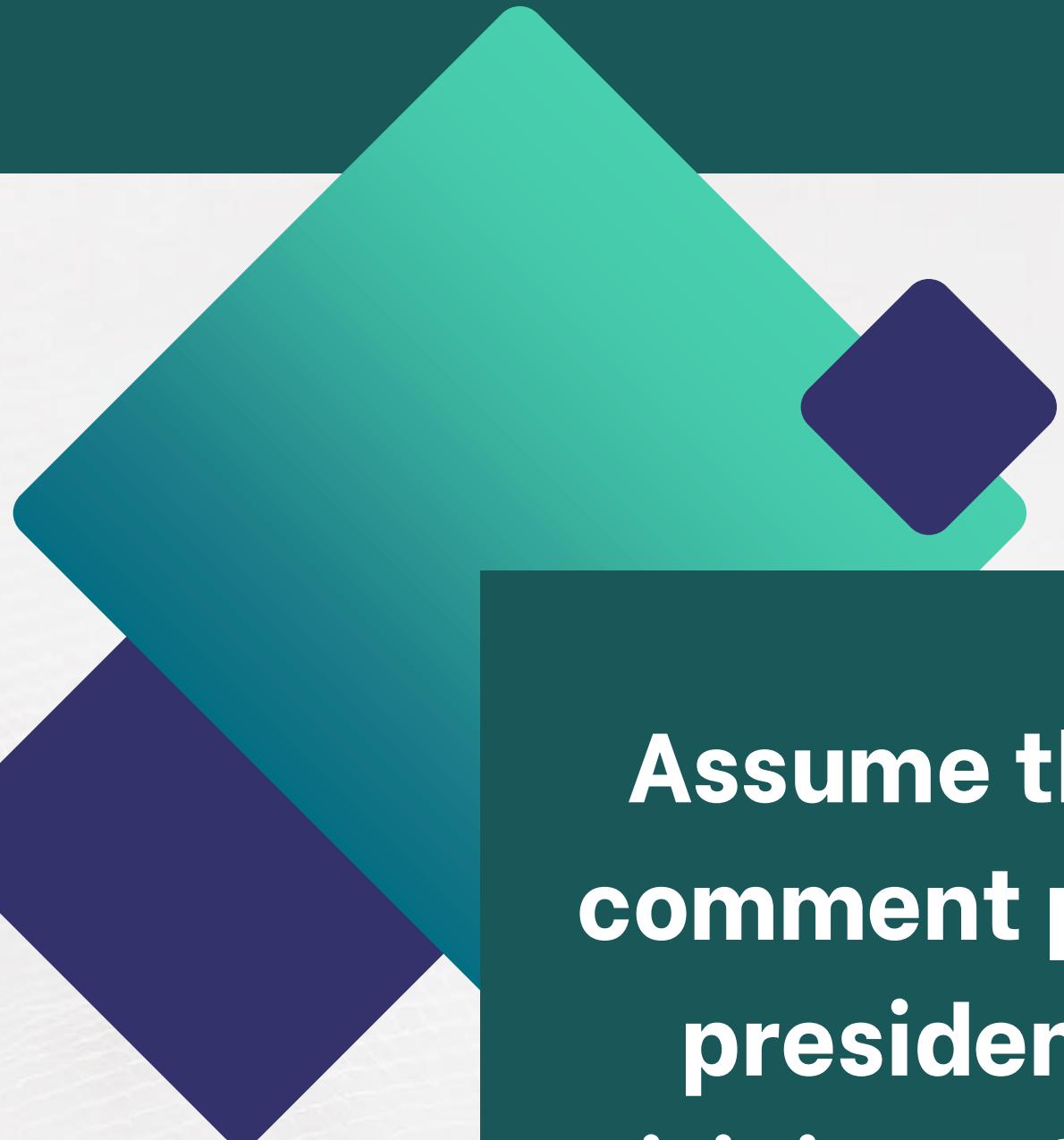


- 11** Be open in expressing your beliefs in a respectful manner
- 12** Keep comments professional, not personal
- 13** Follow Robert's Rules of Order/Parliamentary Procedure



Scenario

The board meeting minutes from XYZ district showed that it spent time discussing whether staff could spend money for a copier. The motion passed by a full show of hands and was followed by a similar vote to amend the budget. Was the school board acting responsibly in discussing this issue?



THOUGHTS?

Assume the board allows for a general public comment period at its meetings. May the board president interrupt a community member's criticism of a district employee during the public comment period and move to continue the discussion in executive session?

PUBLIC COMMENT PROTOCOL



- President reads procedures and expectation statement



- Consider using sign-up sheets and require speakers to identify topic of their comments

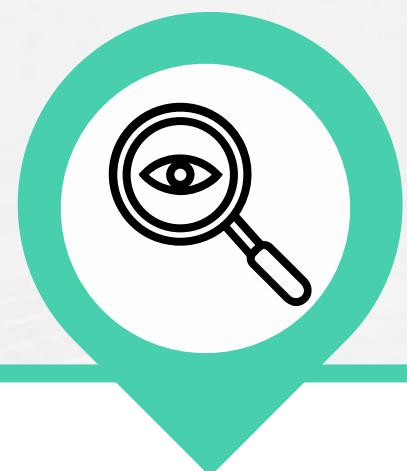


- Adhere to time limit for individual speakers



- The president is the only member to interact with the speaker

BOARD MEETING ASSESSMENT



- Each board member completes the survey at the conclusion of the meeting and gives it to the board president



- Feedback provides the president information on how meetings are operating and areas that need improvement



- Once the president has collected and reflected on the feedback, it is shared with the board and superintendent



- Set a schedule for how often the survey is used

FIVE RULES



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- 2
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- Be a great board member
- Meetings aren't too short or too long
- Respect your fellow board members
- Respect the community
- No man or woman is an island

TAKEAWAYS

- *What are your takeaways from this session?*
- *What ideas will you take back to your board?*



THANK YOU

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