YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A BOARD MEMBER

Being a Library Board Member is....
A real commitment and is more than attending a board meeting once a month or once a quarter.
Being motivated by a desire to see the library grow and develop for good of all those it serves.
Being a team member.
Being a community leader that supports and promotes the library.

General Expectations:

- Your first and foremost responsibility as a library trustee is to take this responsibility seriously.
- Know the organization’s mission, purpose, goals, policies, programs, services, strengths and needs.
- Serve in leadership positions: support and promote the library in the community and undertake special assignments willingly and enthusiastically.
- Avoid prejudiced judgments on the basis of information received from individuals and urge those with grievances to follow established policies and procedures.
- Serve as a team with common goals not as a collection of individuals with personal agendas.

A team player focuses on......

- The common mission of the organization.
- What’s best for all served, not special interest or personal interests.
- The big picture, not individual issues.
- Issues presented by teammates, not personalities of teammates.
- Don’t forget—the library director is one of the most important players on the team and should participate in all board business.

Meetings:

- Prepare by reading all reports and participate in board and committee meetings, including appropriate organizational activities. (To include asking questions prior to the board meeting so that you understand what is being voted on.)
- Read thoroughly and understand the organization’s financial statements and otherwise help the board fulfill its fiduciary responsibility.
- Ask timely and substantive questions at board meetings consistent with your conscience and convictions, while supporting the majority decision on issues decided by the board.
- Suggest agenda items periodically for board meetings to ensure that significant, library related community matters are addressed.
Relationship with Staff:
- Counsel the Library Director as appropriate and support him or her through often difficult relationships with groups or individuals.
- Take all questions to the Library Director who will direct you to the appropriate staff for your answers.
- Avoid asking the staff for special favors, including special requests for extensive information, without prior approval of the Library Director.
- Assist the fund-raising development committee by implementing fund-raising strategies through personal influence with others (corporations, individuals, foundations).

Avoiding Conflicts:
- Serve the organization as a whole rather than any special interest group of constituency. Your first obligation is to avoid any preconception that you “represent” anything but the organization’s best interests.
- Disclose any possible conflicts to the Board Chair and the Library Director in a timely fashion.

Being an Advocate by:
- Lobbying lawmakers and funding sources.
- Communicating to those you serve about the goals of the library.
- Carrying out public relations functions as a community leader.
- Listening to the community by bringing their ideas and concerns to the library director.
- Visiting the library often as a library customer.

Gwinnett County Public Library Board Orientation Handout
Basic Trustee Duties

When a person becomes a board member, there are basic duties which must be assumed. Library boards will function properly only if these essential responsibilities are fulfilled by each trustee.

A. **Attend all board meetings.** Board conduct their business at meetings. If the members fail to attend meetings, the board cannot function effectively. If a board member cannot attend all the meetings, with rare exceptions for illness or emergencies, the member should resign from the board and make room for someone who can attend.

B. **Participate at the meetings.** It is important that board members actively participate at the meetings. Each trustee should discuss issues and make intelligent votes. Inactive and passive board members weaken a library board. When a person joins a board, he or she is expected to contribute so that the best possible group decisions are made.

C. **Be a team player.** Effective library boards work as a team. Each member shares the common concern for the welfare of the library. While board members should feel comfortable expressing disagreement on various issues, board members should avoid unnecessary arguing. Trustees should deal with each other with mutual respect and good will.

D. **Support board decisions.** It is expected that boards will discuss and debate the matters before making a decision. Once a decision is made, however, all board members should support the decision. Good board members do not criticize or attack decisions after they have been made. Of course, it is proper to seek reconsideration of the issue should situations change in the future.

E. **Be an advocate for the library.** Trustees can promote the library in ways that no one else can do. Board members should seek opportunities to promote the library. Often this will take the form of working to obtain more funds for the library.

F. **Respect the role of the library director.** The board should be careful to respect the management function of the library director. While the board establishes policy and makes major decisions, it does not assume the role of the library manager. That job is delegated to the library director hired by the board. To ensure the best library service, the director must be allowed to manage the library without inappropriate board interference. Board members should conscientiously stay out of management.

G. **Support the library director.** At times the library director may be under attack by a citizen or government official. The board should assume that the director is correct and then investigate the situation. To work properly there should be a high level of mutual trust and support between the board and the director.