

Director Brekhus and Robbins Joint Proposal Response

The Fire Board has decided that three members are needed to put an item on the Fire Board agenda. This should apply to all members, including the president and vice President.

The president shouldn't have more authority to set Board direction than the other members of the Fire Board. We're elected to serve collectively, as a group. No one is elected as an individual to oversee the Board's direction, as the mayor of a large city is elected to set the city's direction. The president shouldn't have more power than anyone else. Most governing boards have guidelines similar to these Ross Town Council guidelines: "It's important to recognize that the Town Council acts as a body. No member has extraordinary powers beyond those of other members. While the Mayor and the Mayor Pro Tempore may have additional ceremonial and administrative responsibilities, in the establishment of policies, and in other significant areas, all members are equal. Policy is established and direction is given to Town staff by a majority vote of the Council."

If the president receives information that he/she believes needs to be acted on, he/she can share the information with two other Board members, or with the fire chief or executive officer, either one of whom can put an item on the agenda. There is no need for the president to have the authority alone to place an item on the agenda; there are multiple ways to place an item on the agenda.

If the president alone has the authority to place items on the agenda, the fire chief and director could be in the position of having a new boss with new priorities every year. That's not an effective way to run an organization. In addition, if the president alone has the authority to place items on the agenda, staff are put in an awkward position if they do not agree.

A suggestion was made that we could start by giving the president the authority to place items on the agenda and that if subsequently there was a problem, then this could be changed. But that's like opening a road without a speed limit, and then imposing a limit when there's a crash. The point of having guidelines and limits in advance is to prevent the crashes and problems.

In summary, it's not appropriate for a single Board member, even the president or vice-president, to have the authority to place an item on the agenda, and there's no need for a single board member to have this authority since there are many ways to place an item on the agenda.