

Sounding Board



A publication of Osprey Wilds Environmental Learning Center Charter School Division

Board Meeting Agendas

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Effective board meetings start with effective agendas. While Minnesota statute does not prescribe how charter school boards must set agendas, strong boards use a clear, consistent process that supports thoughtful governance. The practices discussed in this issue outline an approach that helps boards stay organized, prepared, and focused on their core responsibilities.

Setting an agenda is more than clerical work, it is governance work. A well-planned agenda ensures that the board addresses its legal, fiduciary, and strategic responsibilities. It also gives members time to read materials and prepare questions, which supports predictable, structured oversight throughout the year and helps prevent last-minute decision-making.

Because agendas shape how the board spends its time, the process should be defined in board policy or bylaws so it is not left to chance or changing personalities.

Build the Year Around an Annual Board Calendar

Many effective charter school boards organize their work around an annual calendar that identifies when key governance topics will be discussed throughout the year. Some agenda items occur every month, such as financial reports and enrollment updates, while others are addressed only once or a few times each year, including annual audits, annual reports, and board and officer elections. Establishing this calendar in advance helps the board plan its work intentionally and ensures that important responsibilities are addressed at appropriate times during the school year. Osprey Wilds expects that boards will monitor the following contractual and operations obligations at least four times a year:

- Progress toward academic goals outlined in Exhibit G of the charter contract
- Progress toward environmental literacy goals outlined in Exhibit H of the charter contract
- Progress toward resolving outstanding obligations from the previous contract, outlined in Exhibit S of the charter contract
- School leader evaluation activities, which may include goal-setting, planning, and mid-year reviews
- Board training activities (or discussion of board training activities)

Typically, the school leader develops a draft annual calendar in consultation with the board chair, and the full board reviews and approves it before the start of the school year. The calendar serves as the foundation for monthly board meeting agendas and provides a roadmap for the board's governance work. This process allows board members to anticipate upcoming discussions and prepare in advance by reviewing materials, gathering information, asking questions, and reflecting on important issues before decisions are made. When board members have adequate preparation time, they are better able to contribute thoughtfully to discussion, dialogue, and decision-making.

Many boards organize the year around recurring cycles of financial oversight, strategic planning, academic monitoring, board training, budget development, and school leader evaluation. See the attached [Model Board Calendar](#) below for an example of how the school board might organize its board meetings.

Establish a Clear Monthly Agenda-Setting Process

In many charter schools, the school leader plays a major role in developing board meeting agendas, while the board chair provides governance oversight by reviewing and approving the proposed agenda before it is distributed to the full board. This partnership helps balance operational needs with the board's governance responsibilities and supports a more organized and intentional meeting process. Boards also typically approve the final meeting agenda at the beginning of each meeting, with any amendments made according to established board procedures or Robert's Rules of Order.

An effective agenda-setting process also creates a clear pathway for board members to suggest future discussion topics. Many boards allow members to request agenda items through the board chair, who works with the school leader to determine when the topic should be scheduled. Establishing this process in board policy or bylaws promotes consistency, transparency, and effective governance practices over time.

Even with a planned annual schedule, boards recognize that unexpected issues may arise during the year that require timely attention. In these situations, additional agenda items may be added to upcoming meetings as needed. To support informed decision-making, boards are encouraged to distribute meeting agendas and related materials to members at least five calendar days before each regular meeting. Adding agenda items during the meeting itself should be limited to emergency or highly unusual situations, since board members may not have adequate time to review information and thoughtfully consider the issue.

Use a Consistent Meeting Structure

Most charter school boards use a consistent structure for their regular meetings. Common agenda components include a call to order, confirmation of quorum, declarations of conflicts of interest, approval of the consent agenda, reports, action items, and planning for future meetings.

A predictable meeting structure helps meetings run efficiently, improves transparency, and keeps the board focused on its governance responsibilities.

Effective agendas create the structure boards need to govern strategically and efficiently.

A thoughtful agenda-setting process helps charter school boards stay organized, focused, and prepared to carry out their governance responsibilities effectively. By planning ahead, distributing materials in advance, clarifying roles, and following a consistent process, boards create meetings that support informed discussion, stronger decision-making, and more effective oversight of the school.

OW Model Board Calendar

Month	Board Meeting Agenda Items
Recurring Agenda Items	<p>How well are the students doing?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Student performance ● Is everything occurring appropriately? ● Review monthly financial reports and budgeted to actual enrollment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure monthly and quarterly financial reports comply with the requirements of Section 6.9(a) of the charter contract ● Consent agenda – meeting minutes / committee meeting minutes / compliance report (monitor Aerie task completion) / school leader report ● Monitor communication from the authorizer and MDE and respond accordingly ● Monitor open interventions, notices of concern, or probationary status ● Is the board in compliance with training requirements? ● Board training or training reflection
Annual Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Approve IOwA (Identified Official with Authority) ● Schedule annual meeting (if required by bylaws) ● Hold board elections (in accordance with bylaws) ● Elect officers (in accordance with bylaws) ● Monitor affiliated building company (ABC) (if applicable) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Website compliance ○ Conflicts of interest ○ Financial oversight ○ Statutory requirements ○ Facility oversight ● Monitor charter management organization (CMO) / education management organization (EMO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Annual Report (due to authorizer by 11/1) ○ Annual statements of assurances (due to the authorizer by 7/31) ○ Financial report (due to the school and authorizer by 7/31) ○ Website compliance (post statements of assurance on website)

July	<p>First meeting of the new fiscal year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Seat new board members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Ensure new board members have completed statutorily required initial training <i>before</i> being seated ○ Ensure the school has conducted background checks on new board members <i>before</i> being seated, as required by the contract ● Adopt meeting schedule for the year (including annual meeting, if required) and publish on board website ● Review budget to projected enrollment status ● Approve lease agreement (as needed) ● Approve lease aid application ● Confirm director evaluation process: Affirm job description, set goals, review evaluation process, and identify measurable outcomes. ● Identify outstanding needs to successfully operate the school in the coming year (e.g. staffing) ● Conduct annual assessment of the training needs of individual members and the full board as required by statute
August	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Confirm annual report process started (report due to authorizer 11/1) ● Review and approve updates to Student Handbook ● Review and approve updates to Staff Handbook ● Review, revise, and approve any policies that require annual monitoring ● Monitor legislative changes for new policy requirements; create a plan to adopt new or revise existing policies ● Monitor progress on Exhibit S, Outstanding Obligations from Previous Contract ● Adopt board training plan for the year
September	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Review data related to Exhibit G (Academic Goals) and Exhibit H (Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals ● Review Environmental Literacy Plan (ELP) (due to authorizer 9/1) ● Monitor charter compliance – request authorizer update (e.g. contract, any concerns, goals not met, targets for FY, etc.) ● Sign statements of assurance (Exhibit L) (due to authorizer 10/1) ● Declare ex-officio conflicts of interest (due to authorizer 10/1)

October	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Confirm with financial service provider that audit started ● First budget adjustment (as needed) ● Review parent and teacher satisfaction survey results (as part of Annual Report) ● Approve Annual Report (due to authorizer 11/1) ● Conduct board training (topic TBD from board training plan approved in August) ● Review annual charter school assurances, associated policies, and required training (due to authorizer and MDE 10/31)
November	<p style="color: red;">Find an alternative date for the board meeting this month if the board meeting falls during the holiday week.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items. ● Accept annual audit and discuss any findings, taking action if needed (and ensure it is submitted to authorizer and MDE by 12/31) ● Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals.
December	<p style="color: red;">Find an alternative date for the board meeting this month if the board meeting falls during the holiday week(s).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Accept annual audit and discuss any findings, taking action if needed (and ensure it is submitted to authorizer and MDE by 12/31) (if not completed in November) ● Confirm that Comprehensive Achievement and Civic Readiness annual summary report submitted to MDE (typically due 11/30) as part of the ESEA Consolidated Application End of Year Report ● Begin to gather data for school leader's mid-year formative evaluation ● Receive an update on building maintenance / lease status ● Monitor progress on Exhibit S, Outstanding Obligations from Previous Contract
January	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Mid-year progress report on school leader goals or update and goal revision (as necessary) ● Monitor school website for compliance with statute and charter contract
February	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Second budget adjustment (as needed) ● Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals. ● Begin gathering data for proposed budget for next year

March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Conduct board training (topic TBD from board training plan approved in August) ● Plan for school leader performance evaluation
April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Review and discuss a draft of next year's operating budget ● Review data related to Exhibits G and H (Academic Goals and Environmental Education Goals) and monitor progress toward meeting the school's contractual goals ● Monitor progress on Exhibit S, Outstanding Obligations from Previous Contract
May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Third budget adjustment (as needed) ● Conduct board training (topic TBD from board training plan approved in August) ● Confirm that previous year's Form 990 is submitted by 5/15 ● Complete school leader performance evaluation
June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recurring agenda items ● Approve budget for next fiscal year (and ensure it is submitted to authorizer by 6/30) ● Confirm that audit is scheduled ● Monitor progress on Exhibit S, Outstanding Obligations from Previous Contract ● Conduct an annual assessment of the board's performance in accordance with statute ● Complete school leader performance evaluation (if not completed in May)

At least four times / year, the school is contractually required to do the following:

- Monitor its progress toward the goals in Exhibit G (academic goals) and Exhibit H (environmental education goals)
- Monitor progress on the outstanding obligations from the previous contract in Exhibit S
- Participate in board training or have meaningful discussion / reflection on recent training attended by one or more board members
- Engage in school leader evaluation activities.

The table below outlines the months when these activities will take place.

	Board training	School leader evaluation	Exhibits G & H	Exhibit S
July	X	X		
August	X			
September			X	X

October	X			
November			X	X
December		X		
January		X		
February			X	X
March	X	X		
April			X	X
May	X	X		
June				
TOTAL	5	5	4	4