

# WLS Trustee Institute

## Strategies for Effective Meetings

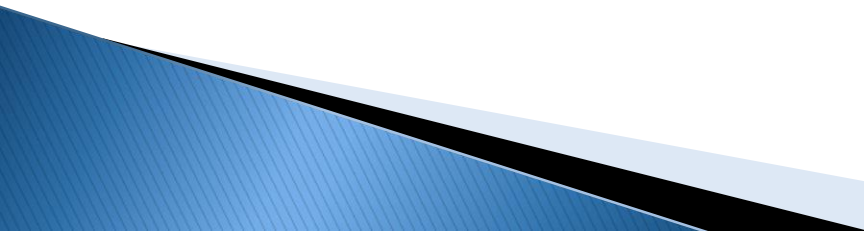
Tuesday, October 3, 2017

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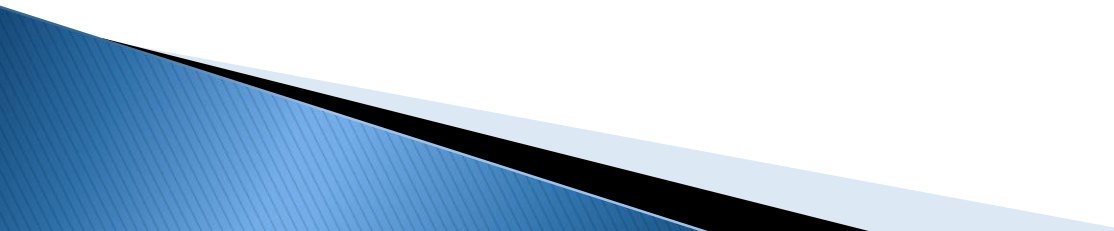
# Main Resources

- ▶ [NYS Committee on Open Government](#)  
Robert J. Freeman, Executive Director
- ▶ [Handbook for Library Trustees of New York State](#)  
Jerry Nichols, Palmer School of Library and Information Science Long Island University, Brookville, New York & Rebekkah Smith Aldrich, Mid-Hudson Library System, Poughkeepsie, NY

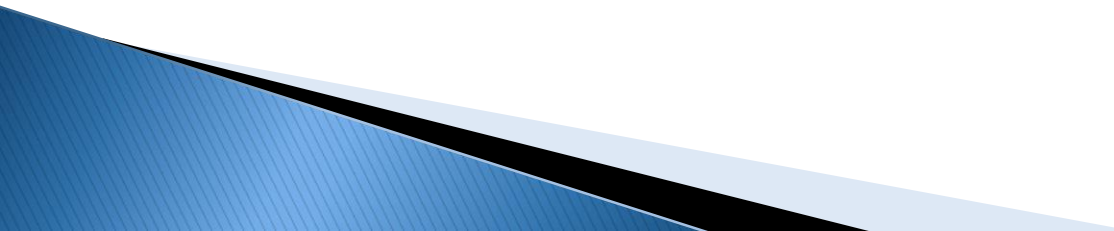
# THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

- ▶ Public libraries are subject to the Open Meetings Law, and trustees are officials subject to the Public Officers Law
  - ▶ Trustees have a fiduciary duty to the library and to the community; they must treat library resources with the same care they would use in dealing with their own property
  - ▶ A library board can act only as a corporate body; no individual trustee, including the president, has independent authority
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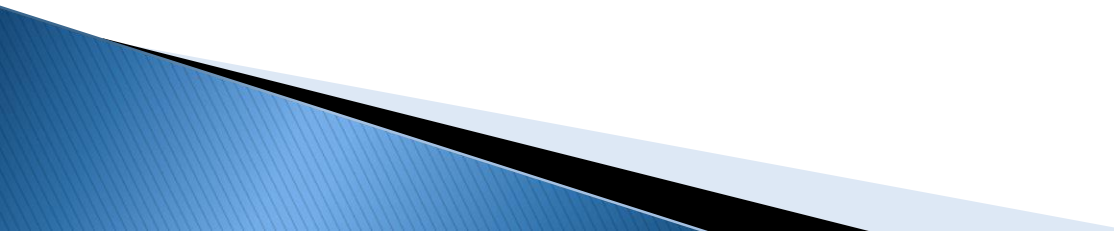
# IT STARTS WITH THE PLANNING

- ▶ Prepare a written agenda
  - ▶ Consider using a consent agenda for routine business
  - ▶ Limit the number of discussion and decision items
  - ▶ Include presentations by staff or guests to educate trustees and the public
  - ▶ Agendas and supporting materials should be distributed to trustees in advance
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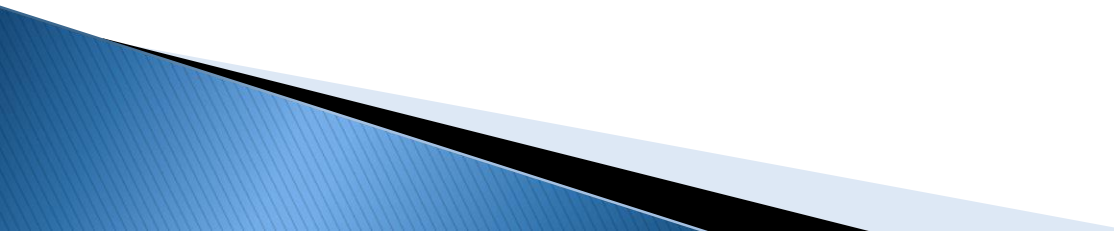
# WHAT DO YOU NEED TO ACCOMPLISH?

- ▶ Take action on required business (e.g., approval of minutes, acceptance of financial reports, adoption of your annual budget)
  - ▶ Educate trustees and the public about emerging issues
  - ▶ Hear reports from committees (which may or may not result in action items) and from the director
  - ▶ Ensure that members of the public feel welcome and have the opportunity to learn about your library
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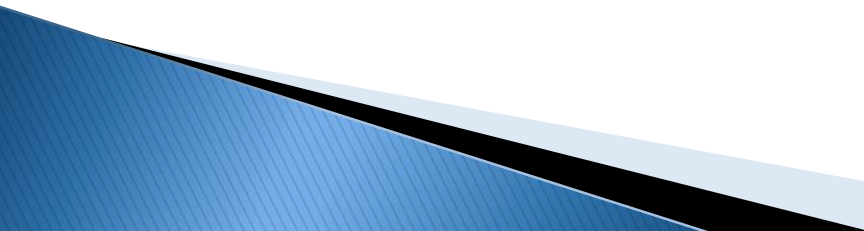
# IF YOU ARE PRESIDING

- ▶ Start as close to on time as possible
  - ▶ Determine whether you have a quorum (which is also the number of “yes” votes required to pass a motion)
  - ▶ Stick to the agenda
  - ▶ Unlike under Robert’s Rules, you should vote on all motions
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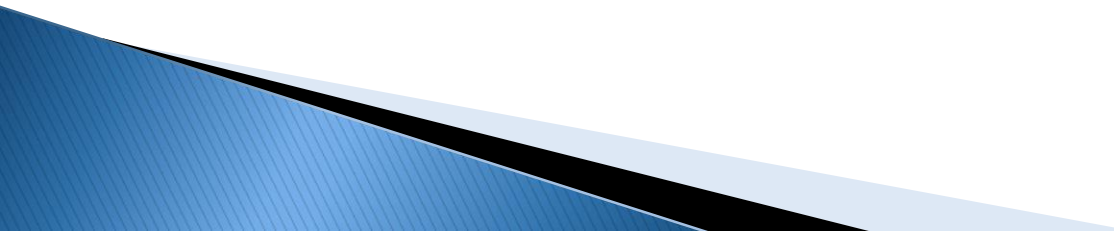
# IF YOU ARE NOT PRESIDING

- ▶ You, too, have an obligation to arrive on time and prepared to participate!
  - ▶ Your voice is important; you should feel comfortable speaking on any topic before the board after being recognized by the presiding officer
  - ▶ You should help the presiding officer ensure that all voices are heard by waiting to speak on a topic for a second time until all other trustees have had an opportunity to speak
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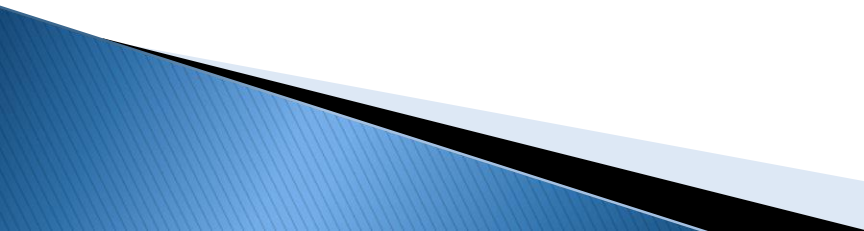
# USING PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

- ▶ Rules of order are intended to ensure that a meeting runs in a smooth, orderly fashion and that all trustees have an opportunity to be heard
  - ▶ For a meeting subject to the Open Meetings Law, rules of order allow the community to observe a debate on substance, not process
  - ▶ All members should vote unless an abstention is required due to a conflict of interest, which must be disclosed
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- ▶ It is the responsibility of the presiding officer to run the meeting, recognizing others who wish to speak
  - ▶ Meetings should generally take no more than two hours; if they are longer consider whether some of the work should be referred to committees
  - ▶ Some boards find it helpful to indicate time frames for discussion items on the agenda
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# IF YOU NEED AN EXECUTIVE SESSION

- ▶ Most library boards will rarely need an executive session
  - ▶ Make sure you know the law and enter into executive session with an appropriate motion; the presiding officer should be aware of the matter(s) to be discussed and ask for the correct motion
  - ▶ Consider the timing of an executive session during the meeting
  - ▶ Always return to public session before adjourning
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# Executive Session (OML)

## §105. Conduct of executive sessions.

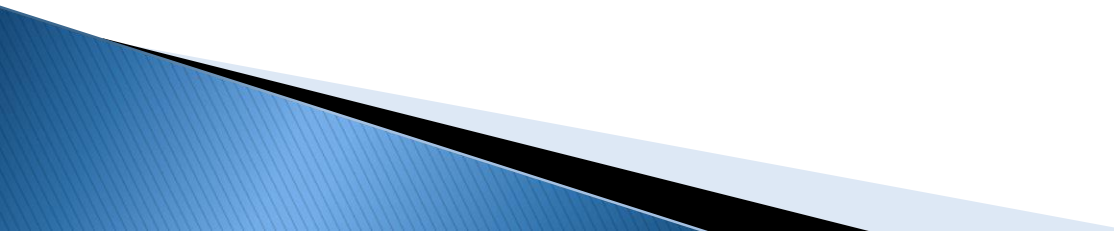
1. Upon a majority vote of its total membership, taken in an open meeting pursuant to a motion identifying the general area or areas of the subject or subjects to be considered, a public body may conduct an executive session for the below enumerated purposes only, provided, however, **that no action by formal vote shall be taken to appropriate public moneys:**

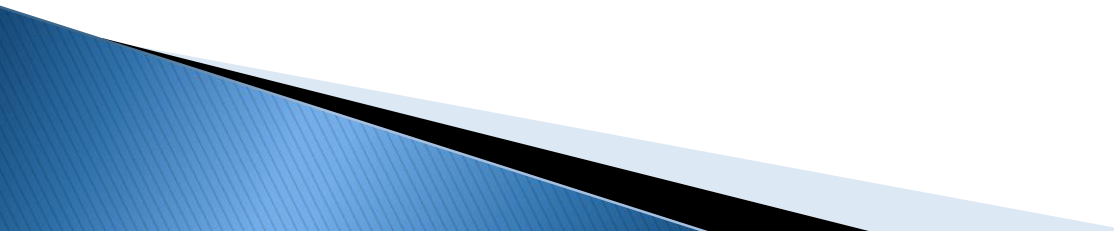
- a. matters which will imperil the public safety if disclosed;
- b. any matter which may disclose the identity of a law enforcement agent or informer;
- c. information relating to current or future investigation or prosecution of a criminal offense which would imperil effective law enforcement if disclosed;
- d. discussions regarding proposed, pending or current litigation;
- e. collective negotiations pursuant to article fourteen of the civil service law;
- f. the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation;
- g. the preparation, grading or administration of examinations; and
- h. the proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or the proposed acquisition of securities, or sale or exchange of securities held by such public body, but only when publicity would substantially affect the value thereof.

2. Attendance at an executive session shall be permitted to any member of the public body and any other persons authorized by the public body.

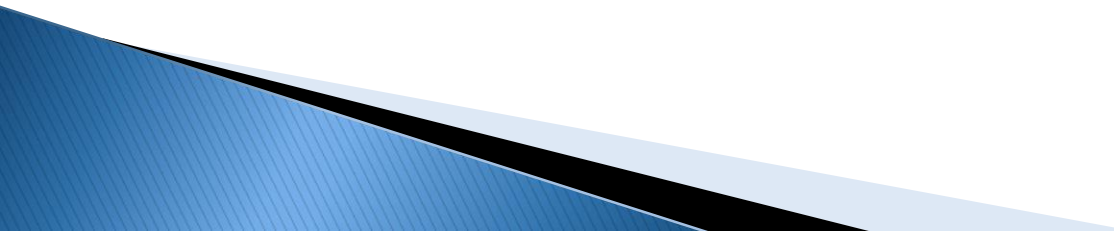
- ▶ Must provide “a record or summary of the final determination”
- ▶ Need to go back to “regular” meeting in order to take formal vote
- ▶ Minutes required ONLY if the board took formal action in the executive session

# WELCOMING THE COMMUNITY

- ▶ The public has the right to observe trustees conducting the business of a public library, and trustees should view attendance by the public as an opportunity to engage and educate them and build support for the library
  - ▶ There is no right of the public to speak--but you should encourage it!
  - ▶ General comments by the public might best be heard early in the meeting
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- ▶ Public comments on agenda items might best be heard after any presentations or committee reports but before any board votes
  - ▶ The presiding officer may—and sometimes should—limit public comment in a non-discriminatory way to ensure that there is time for all to be heard
  - ▶ There is no need for the board or executive director to provide an immediate response to public comment—in many cases “thank you” is the best response
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# WHAT ABOUT COMMITTEE MEETINGS?

- ▶ Subject to Open Meetings Law
  - ▶ Minutes should be taken
  - ▶ Usually will develop a recommendation for board action
  - ▶ Time management just as important as with board meetings; committee chair should distribute a written agenda and materials in advance, and members should arrive on time and be prepared for discussion
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# DISCUSSION / QUESTIONS

