



Phrases Every Board President Should Know and Use **Kelli Hopkins, Associate Executive Director, MSBA**

As Board President you have two jobs at every meeting. One is to participate in discussions and decisions with the rest of the Board and the other is to manage the meeting. The trick is to manage the meeting without being autocratic. When using these phrases, the tone you use is as important as the words. You must be direct and confident without being pushy and condescending.

These phrases should be used to:

- Keep the district in legal compliance
- Promote good public relations
- Improve discussion flow
- Manage member participation
- Make meetings more efficient

These phrases should NOT be used to:

- Stifle discussion
- Dictate the direction of the meeting
- Promote yourself

Sample Phrases

Someone adds a significant agenda item unrelated to anything on the agenda:

I do not recommend we add that item to the agenda, the Missouri Sunshine Law requires that we give the public at least 24 hours notice of our general meeting agenda. Unless there is an urgent reason why we need to discuss this now, I recommend we discuss this at another meeting.

To prevent nepotism on the consent or regular agenda:

We are about to vote on a list of people for employment or appointment. Check the list carefully to make sure that it does not contain the names of anyone related to you within the fourth degree. If it does, let us know and we will pull that name from the list to be considered separately.

***Remind the members that phones should not be used during the meeting.**

This is a reminder that this board has agreed not to use phones or other communication devices during our meetings so that we can focus on the business at hand. If you have to use the phone during the meeting, please step out of the room while you do so.

To prevent discussion before a motion is made

The next item on the agenda is ___, do I have a motion? Remember a motion does not require you to vote a particular way; it just means you are ready to discuss this item.

If discussion starts before the motion

We need a motion before we can discuss. Do I have a motion?

To help move the meeting along

Before we start discussion of this issue, do we have a policy or written procedure that covers it?

Our discussion is no longer on the subject. Would the secretary please read the original motion? (Motion is read) Now, please confine all the discussion to that motion.

While that is certainly something we ought to consider, it is not on this agenda (Turn to Board Secretary) [Secretary's Name], please make a note to put that on our next meeting agenda.

Since everyone has had the opportunity to speak and no new points have been raised, I believe we are ready to move to a vote.

Seeing no further discussion, I assume you are ready to vote. Will the secretary please read the motion; all in favor . . .

To quiet a Board member who is monopolizing the discussion

[Name of Board Member], I understand that you have a lot to say on this issue but I'm sure you want to give others a chance as well. OR

[Name of Board Member], we will come back to you after some others have a chance to speak.

To a Board member who is talking to/playing to the audience:

[Name of Board Member], please direct your comments to your fellow Board Members.

To try to include a member who is not participating:

[Name of Board Member], we haven't heard your position on this issue; is there anything you'd like to say?

Before public comment:

We are ready for the public comment portion of our agenda. Please remember that all comments are limited to agenda items and can be no more than ___ minutes in length. I'd also like to take this opportunity to remind those of you who comment that it is unlikely that the Board will respond to your comments at this meeting. Instead, we will take the comment under consideration and either direct your inquiry to the appropriate administrator for a response or put the topic on a future agenda. We are not trying to avoid issues, just making sure that the issues that are of concern to you are thoroughly considered before we take action.

Before closed session:

Before we begin our closed session, I'd like to remind our guests that this Board does not use closed session as a way to keep secrets. We only discuss items in closed session as permitted by Missouri's Sunshine Law. In most cases, items are discussed in closed session to keep the Board from violating other state or federal laws or to protect the resources of the district. Correct use of closed session also promotes the kind of honest discussion elected officials must have to make good decisions.

At the end of closed session:

Before we adjourn, I'd like to remind everybody that the discussion we just had is not to be shared with anyone outside of this room. The superintendent, Board secretary and I will make sure that any items that do need to be made public will be. Remember, when any of us leak information it undermines the credibility of the whole Board.

***An agreement on the use of phones during the meeting should be in place before this phrase is used.**

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