

Dealing with Rogue Board Members

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While it is difficult to provide an exact definition of a rogue board member, a cooperative board knows one when they see one. A rogue member may have a personal agenda, may be power hungry, may not understand the role and function of the board, or may simply not be committed to working within the board structure. When a board member begins to display these traits the rest of the board must decide how to deal with the rogue board member.

Education is one obvious path to correction. All board members need education on the roles and responsibilities of the board along with information on effective board procedures. Educational programs focusing on basic “blocking and tackling” type skills do not have the appeal of current issue topics but can build and reinforce effective board operations. Programs involving case studies are particularly important since problems often relate to the gray areas between board and CEO responsibility..

A board member’s personal agenda is not always bad for the board. For example, a member who is passionate about truck dumping times might be an effective member of the infrastructure planning committee. Boards can deflect personal agendas and put the energy and passion to work by allowing the member to study the problem and propose solutions. That strategy works only when the board member in question recognizes that the ultimate decision will be determined by the board as a whole through proper process.

Effective board meeting procedures, strategic planning and board self evaluation are all tools to at least moderate, if not totally eliminate rogue behavior. When board meetings are conducting in an orderly fashion during with every board member having an opportunity to speak, a rogue member has a harder time dominating discussions. Boards that regularly engage in strategic planning tend to coalesce around a common vision for the cooperative and are more committed to working through the board structure. The process of board evaluation forces members to reflect on their performance. It also highlights situations where the majority of the board perceives a problem. All of those practices can be pieces in the puzzle of moderating rogue behavior.

The Rogue elephant of Aberdare Forest was hunted down and killed by safari leader J.A. Hunter who shot the bull elephant with a double barreled Jeffrey rifle loaded with a .475 No. 2 Nitro Express cartridge. The board chair is typically in the best position to deal with a rogue board member. I’ll discuss that role and the chair’s ammunition in my next newsletter.

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