



Date  
March 15, 2023

Time  
3:10 PM – 4:15 PM

Instructor  
Michael G. Battle,  
MPA, CIA, CGAP, CRMA,  
Advisory Services  
Senior Manager

Location  
Live-Streamed and  
Onsite at Milton J.  
Womack Park –  
Community Recreation  
Center

Method of Delivery  
Classroom instruction  
and Live-streamed

Learning Level  
Basic

CPE Hours  
1.0 Hour

CPA Subject Matter  
Specialized Knowledge  
and Applications

Prerequisite  
None

## Characteristics of Effective Governing Boards

### Description

In this class, we will discuss the characteristics of effective governing boards and effective board members. We will also discuss how staff can support their board members to help them be the best that they can be and to help produce effective outcomes for constituents. During this class, we will also touch on some characteristics of non-effective boards and board members. The instructor will incorporate some of the lessons he has learned from working with Local Governments for nearly 13 years and working over 20 years for the biggest board meetings in our state, the Legislative Sessions.

### Objectives

After this class participants will be able to:

- Understand the overall importance of Board success
- Understand what makes a Board, its members, and management/staff effective
- Understand the important roles that board members and management/staff must play to ensure Board and entity success
- Learn strategies that they can easily employ to become more effective as a Board, a member, or management/staff

### Who Will Benefit

- Elected Officials/Appointed Officials and their staff
- Local Government Employees/Local Government Auditors

### About the Instructor

Mike Battle has been with the LLA for more than 26 years. During the first part of his career, he conducted performance audits of state agencies. Mike now serves as a Senior Manager in Advisory Services (AS) where he works to provide fiscal and programmatic advice to locally elected officials and their staffs. Advisory Services focuses on providing assistance to ensure compliance, enhance effectiveness and efficiency, and to move entities towards a more fiscally healthy position. Mike has also served as LLA's Fiscal Notes Coordinator during Legislative Sessions since 1999. Mike has a Master's in Public Administration from LSU and is a Certified Internal Auditor, Certified Government Auditing Professional, and is certified in Risk Management Assurance.

# Characteristics of Effective Governing Boards



Presented on March 15, 2023

By

Michael G. Battle, MPA, CIA, CGAP, CRMA

Advisory Services Senior Manager

## Better Information, Better Louisiana

**Our mission is to foster accountability and transparency in Louisiana government by providing the Legislature and others with audit services, fiscal advice, and other useful information.**



## Topics for Discussion

1. Importance of Being an Effective Board (Good Governance and Leadership)
2. Characteristics of a "Good" or Effective Board vs. a "Bad" or Ineffective Board
3. How can we get there? How can we be effective Board Members and Management/Staff ? (Teamwork!!!)
4. Lessons Learned from my work during the Legislative Sessions and working with Local Governments across Louisiana

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## Why is Being an Effective Board So Important?

- ✓ Effective Members + Effective Staff = Effective Board = Good Governance
- ✓ Local government operations directly affect our daily existence and experiences and the quality of life we...have within our communities.
- ✓ No local government deserves, nor should its citizens tolerate, governing bodies and elected and appointed public officials who don't exhibit extraordinary effectiveness, integrity, and competence in **leading** their community's public institutions.

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## What Do Effective Boards Look Like?

✓They understand, promote, and work to be Leaders:

- Making things happen that might not otherwise happen, and preventing things from happening that ordinarily might happen.
- Getting people together to achieve common goals and aspirations.

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## What Do Effective Boards Look Like?

- Helping people transform intentions into positive action, visions into reality.
- The quality of leadership effectiveness demonstrated by a governing body and its ability to be highly-effective are not attributes bestowed upon it by a swearing-in ceremony.
- They are the result of disciplined adherence to a set of fundamental principles and skills that characterize highly-effective governing bodies.

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## What Do Effective Boards Look Like?

- ✓ Accept that individual Board Member success is tied to the overall success of the Board;
- ✓ Focus on what the people need (cooperating with all levels of government and all members of the Board);
- ✓ Think and Act Strategically (I've said it before, this is a "thinking person's game");
- ✓ Attend meetings, are prepared, and engage in discussions – have done their homework;

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## What Do Effective Boards Look Like?

- ✓ Have and adhere to clearly defined roles, responsibilities, and requirements (e.g., policies and procedures; statutes, ordinances; Open Meetings Law...LLA's Legal resources...a very big help);
- ✓ Build teams and skills to get the job done (hire the right folks, promote training, bring in folks to help, not political, but focused on the best person for the job);
- ✓ Honor the Board-Staff relationship and Respect the Team;

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Center for the Future of Local Governance; American School Boards Association



## What Do Effective Boards Look Like?

- ✓ Share and defend views, but listen to the views of others (**maintain decorum**):

“Board meetings exist for the purpose of doing the Board’s business. Literature on how to conduct effective and productive meetings specifies the need for, and adherence to, clearly defined rules and procedures. Many Boards, however, drift from these rules and procedures...they let their meetings drone on with lack of focus, redundant comments and endless discussions. Rules and procedures do not preclude citizen input, courtesy or sensitivity to public concerns and viewpoints. **They respect all these elements and the necessity to conduct business in an orderly, disciplined and productive manner.**”

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## What Do Effective Boards Look Like?

- ✓ Not only assess and discuss performance of Staff’s implementation of policy, but assess and discuss performance of the Board (accountability while working together to foster improvement); **Make this about the business of the People:**
  - Highly effective governing bodies expect periodic feedback on policy results and on possible policy amendments that may be required. This feedback can be provided through progress reports and status updates at meetings.
  - Highly effective Boards seek feedback through focus groups, surveys and questionnaires. **If you can’t be this formal, just ask yourselves and your colleagues, are our programs, initiatives, etc. working for our people?**
- ✓ Practice continuous learning and development as leaders.

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## What do Ineffective Boards Look Like?

### From my Experience in State & Local Government:

- ✓ Just reverse everything we just talked about;
- ✓ Board members do not show respect towards one another;
- ✓ Decorum is not maintained at meetings;
- ✓ Board members will put all in jeopardy for the sake of politics;
- ✓ Staff and Board have frictional relationship;

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## What do Ineffective Boards Look Like?

### From my Experience in State & Local Government:

- ✓ Staff doesn't provide Board with vital information;
- ✓ Board doesn't review vital information presented by Staff;
- ✓ Board and Staff members don't engage in discussion about finances, budget, program outcomes, needed changes;
- ✓ Hard, necessary decisions are not made, but are avoided leading to more drastic consequences down the road;

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## What do Ineffective Boards Look Like?

### From my Experience in State & Local Government:

- ✓Members and Staff not trained on open meetings law and other laws, policies & procedures, and rules that drive good meetings;
- ✓The most basic elements of Governance are unachievable (e.g., can't pass a budget on time; can't get a second to start a meeting);
- ✓Discussing performance, but bashing instead of praising accomplishments and fostering improvement;
- ✓There is no teamwork at all!!!!!!

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## What would a Superbowl Champion have to say about it?

**TEAMWORK**

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## Play for One Another

### **Donnie Jones:**

- ✓Catholic High: All-State Punter and All-District Tight End
- ✓2003 National Champion with LSU
- ✓Longest punt in LSU history
- ✓15 Seasons in the NFL: Seahawks, Dolphins, Rams, Texans, Eagles, Chargers
- ✓Won a Superbowl with the Eagles in 2018

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## Play for One Another

- ✓I told Donnie about CLGE and what we would be talking about in this class.
- ✓I asked him to give me the most critical elements (off the top of his head) important to an organization's success.
- ✓Did he talk about pass completion %? Total yards rushing? Defensive and offensive strategies? Punting records broken in college and the NFL?

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## Play for One Another

- ✓Although very important, No, he talked about Team Work:
  - He spoke of his Eagles Superbowl Team.
  - "We lost 7 to 8 starters and nobody gave us a chance."
  - On February 4, 2018, his team became Superbowl Champs!

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## Play for One Another

### ✓We were a “true team” and we:

- All came together to accomplish the **same goal**, to win a Superbowl;
- All **knew our role and worked to do our job**;
- Were held **accountable** and held each other accountable;
- Brought **each other up and didn't tear each other down** and never passed blame;
- Respected each other (**didn't have to be friends with everybody, but we treated each other with respect**);
- Had **character** and never did anything to hurt the team  
...we were humble;

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## Play for One Another

### ✓We were a “true team” -

- Although the NFL is very competitive, the **hurt players stayed to support their replacements**;
- Different races, religions, home towns, schools...**but we were one!**

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## Play for One Another

- ✓Towards the end of our conversation, I told Donnie that he hadn't mentioned anything about skills.
- ✓"Yeah, but it wasn't about that, **it was about working together.**"
- ✓My young nephew once asked Donnie how he won the Superbowl and he replied, "**we trusted each other.**"

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## Remember This Slide?



- "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit." - **Harry Truman**

- "Individual commitment to a group effort -- that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work." - **Vince Lombardi**



- "The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime." - **Babe Ruth**

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## How Can We Get There?

Based on General Research, Let's see what folks are talking about out there regarding **strategies** that will help us be **more effective** as Board members, Management/Staff, and as an overall Board!

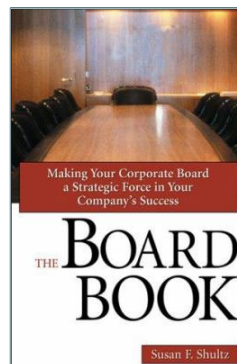
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## How Can We Get There?

**The Board Book gives us a good checklist:**

- ✓Keep the focus
- ✓Prioritize Ethics and Values
- ✓Know the Business
- ✓Prepare
- ✓Attend Meetings
- ✓Listen Well
- ✓Ask the Right Questions
- ✓Don't Micromanage



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## How Can We Get There?

**The Board Book gives us a good checklist:**

- ✓Contribute
- ✓Set Priorities
- ✓Be a Catalyst to Action
- ✓Be Creative
- ✓Avoid Group Think
- ✓Support Management
- ✓Be Positive



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## How Can We Get There?

### **The Board Book** gives us a good checklist:

- ✓ Create an Environment of Accountability
- ✓ Maintain a Good Bedside Manner
- ✓ Be a Coach/Mentor
- ✓ Exercise Independence
- ✓ Be Willing to Disagree

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## How Can We Get There?

### ✓ **Understand the differences between the Board & Staff:**

- Board shouldn't perform Management functions, micromanage, or impede Management/Staff operations (**unless the Staff is asking for help based on expertise**);
- Board members should ensure that entities run well by establishing overall goals and policies and holding Staff accountable for carrying them out;
- The Board is responsible for giving good advice, questioning Management to determine status of operations, taking action when things are not going as planned, and developing and maintaining an environment of accountability;
- Staff actually carry out the operations of the government entity;
- Staff "sleeps it, eats it, owns it...and is accountable for solving problems."

*The Board Book; Center for the Future of Local Governance*

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## How Can We Get There?

### ✓ **Understand the roles of the Board and Staff, but embrace a cooperative professional relationship:**

- Board members and Staff should work as partners ensuring each other's success;
- The effectiveness of Board members depends on...***the quality of information and support they receive from Staff;***
- Each person plays an important role in creating sound policies and ensuring their effective implementation through reliable administrative practices and performance;
- **Wouldn't hurt to have roles and responsibilities laid out in your policies and procedures manual!!!**

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*The Board Book; Center for the Future of Local Governance*



## How Can We Get There?

### ✓ **There are a lot of things Management/Staff Can do to Bring on Success:**

- **Provide orientation and training** - Board members often come from diverse backgrounds and may not have experience with the specific operations of the organization. Providing orientation and training can help them understand their role, the organization's purpose/mission, and the key issues the organization is facing. Staff can provide orientation materials, arrange for training sessions, and offer opportunities for Board members to shadow Staff and learn about the organization's programs/departments (**show them around and introduce to Staff**);
- **Engage Board members in strategic planning** - Board members should be involved in developing the organization's strategic plan and setting goals. Staff can engage Board members in the planning process by providing background materials, facilitating discussions, and soliciting input from Board members (**Policies & Procedures Manual, at the least**);

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## How Can We Get There?

### ✓There are a lot of things Management/Staff Can do to Bring on Success:

- **Offer administrative support** - Staff members can assist Board members with tasks such as scheduling meetings, preparing materials, and managing logistics. (Session Lunch);
- **Promote communication** - Board members need to stay informed about what's happening within the organization, and Staff members can help by promoting transparency, making communication a priority, and committing to effective communication. All in your organization should be aware of this commitment and should help to fulfill it.

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## How Can We Get There?

### ✓There are a lot of things Management/Staff Can do to Bring on Success:

- **Develop effective communication channels** – Make it known to Board members that they are welcome at City Hall to review information and help them do so when they visit. Also, make it known to them that Staff will be available to answer questions and provide additional information as needed. When you can't get to them right away, explain calmly and logically that you will ultimately try to help them get requested information and understand it. Finally, carve out a permanent spot on the agenda for regular presentation and discussion of critical financial and operational data/information;
- **Provide "good" information to the Board** – Clear, accurate, comprehensive, and timely communication between Staff and Board members is essential for effective governance. Staff members should ensure that Board members are regularly presented with and have access to all the information they need to make informed decisions. This includes regular reporting on financial status, performance metrics, and other key data;

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## How Can We Get There?

✓ **There are a lot of things Management/Staff Can do to Bring on Success:**

- **Express appreciation** - Board members often serve with little pay and it's important to recognize and appreciate their contributions. Staff members can express their gratitude in a variety of ways (e.g., public recognition). **Remember Board members, it needs to go both ways;**
- **Foster a positive culture:** A positive and supportive culture can help Board members feel valued and engaged. Staff can foster a positive culture by recognizing Board members' contributions, providing opportunities for Board members to share their expertise, and encouraging open communication and collaboration. Overall, Staff can make Board members more effective by providing the information, support, and training they need to fulfill their role, engaging them in the organization's strategic planning, and fostering a positive and supportive culture. **Remember Board members, it needs to go both ways.**

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**24 Years Working  
Legislative Sessions**

**&**

**13 Years Working with  
Local Governments**

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## Tips from the Trenches:

1. Always do what is right and ethical (no matter what pressure is applied; those applying the pressure will respect you in the long run – building trust).
2. Be steady, calm, and consistent in all that you do...don't be a master of surprising actions and reactions. Stay this course no matter how hard it may be b/c this has a lot to do with how others react, work, and produce outcomes.
3. Diffuse volatile situations, don't add to them; don't tear each other down, don't blame, build each other up. This is where we must watch out for "group think."
4. Understand your entity's purpose and your role in the entity. Take pride in your role of serving the people (nothing worse than hearing someone talking of their public role as unimportant or overburdensome – public confidence).
5. Be familiar with your job requirements and the laws/regulations that should guide you (use the resources of the LLA re: Open Meetings; Public Records; LGBA; Public Bid Law).

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## Tips from the Trenches:

6. Talk w/colleagues to understand the pressures they face....just ask them and tell them what you do and the pressures you face.
7. Acknowledge that you respect their role and the job they must do.
8. Walk the Walk: show your colleagues you are there to help them succeed; it's in the toughest of situations that we must remind ourselves to do this (Covid calls).
9. Commit to and show your colleagues that you won't do anything that could put the team and entity in jeopardy (always standing up for what is right/ethical; working to diffuse volatile situations; not passing blame; putting people over politics will prove this to them, even if it means you don't get the credit).
10. Don't have to like one another, but you have to come together and work effectively for the good of the People you serve (talk the "we" language).

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## Tips from the Trenches:

11. The more transparent, the better. Be known for transparency, not as an obstacle to it.
12. Keep good records that are easy to obtain, produce, and use.
13. Consistently produce accurate, comprehensive, understandable, and timely information (be proactive and transparent about it..."this may help you do your job better"). Monitor fiscal status and change course if failing...together.
14. Calmly explain when/why you can't meet certain demands or requests and suggest alternate delivery times and methods; tell colleagues that you don't want to sacrifice quality over timeliness.
15. Review information that is given to you and discuss in a positive manner, be prepared, do your homework (have the difficult discussions, but look for consensus to make operations stronger).

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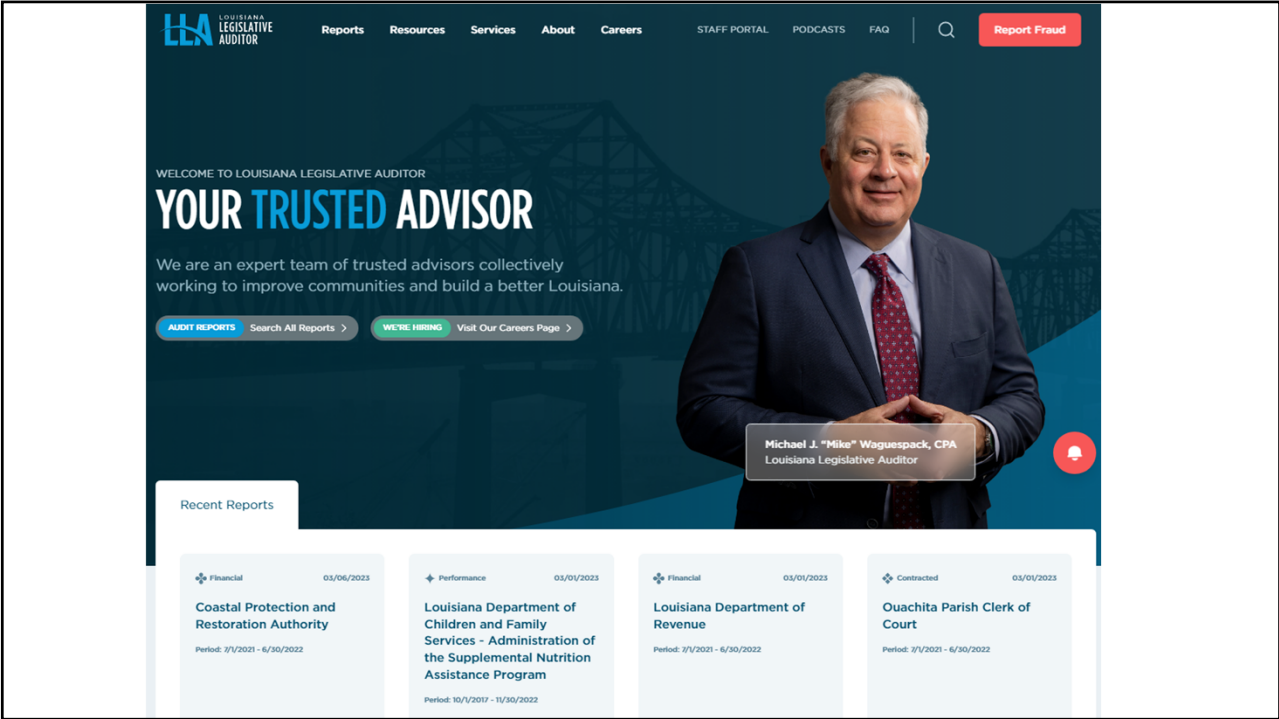


## Tips from the Trenches:

16. Before speaking on a critical/complex issue, ask yourself once more, "Am I looking at this right; am I making the correct conclusion(s); does evidence support my conclusion(s); how can I present my points to make changes without hurting my team; is this in the best interest of the people we serve?"
17. When you have to give attention to another person/issue while testimony is going on, explain why you must multitask during the Board meeting.
18. Consistently go the extra mile (lunch meeting for Representative).
19. Public acknowledgment goes a long way (Representative Greene).
20. Talk about how you all are performing and work together to fix/change the course of programs moving in the wrong direction (no blame game, just improvement).
21. Ask yourselves, is our performance as a team (Board/Council- Management - Staff) going to attract businesses and residents who want to locate to, live in, and contribute to the overall success of the municipality/parish?

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## My Contact Info

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Thank You!!!

