

Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS DUTIES

- I. Attend all meetings.
 - A. Be early.
 - B. Be prepared.
 - C. Read the agenda.
 - D. Read the minutes of the previous meeting and verify accuracy.
 - E. Study the financial reports and know you understand them.

- II. Participate.
 - A. Understand clearly each motion before you vote.
 - B. Avoid contention.
 - C. Be courteous–Listen.
 - D. Remember Emerson: “Every man I meet is in some way my superior...” Every other Board member knows something you don’t.
 - E. Seek a consensus–if possible. The “Jury System” has been with us since the Magna Carta–1215.

- III. Remember–Florida is a “Government in the Sunshine” state.
 - A. Make no decisions or commitments except in a published, open meeting.
 - B. Chapter 286 Florida Statutes imposes a non-criminal infraction fine of up to \$500 on any public official violating the Sunshine Act.
 - C. Purpose is to prevent crystallization of secret decisions at non-public meetings of public officials. An attorney general’s opinion bars “inter-action” between Board members concerning contracts circulated for information prior to a meeting.
 - D. Attorney general’s opinion forbids “two or more legislators” meeting in secret to agree upon a “mutual voting pattern.”
 - E. Best policy–don’t make any commitments about District’s business in private–reserve your decisions for the open, called, public official meeting.

- IV. Board’s set policy.
 - A. Board members are not administrators.
 - B. Boards set policies in public meetings.
 - C. Only administrators give instructions to employees.
 - D. If the administrator does not carry out policy, the Board has the authority to change administrators.

- V. Sovereign Immunity.
 - A. Wrap the cloak of sovereign immunity around you.
 - B. This can be done by restricting your actions to the board rooms in a manner which is conscientious, diligent, and lawful.

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VI. Personal Interest.

- A. Avoid taking action on any matter in which you or a close member of your family has a financial interest.
- B. Write a letter for the minutes explaining the conflict and the reason for abstention.
- C. Avoid conflicts of interest.
- D. Disclose conscientiously and accurately.

VII. Keeping out of trouble.

- A. Rely upon opinions of experts, where you have no reason to doubt their ability and integrity (CPAs, attorneys, engineers, appraisers).
- B. Read reports carefully and obtain explanations if you don't understand.
- C. Buying and selling real estate. This has been "big trouble" in places with a volatile market. The best insurance you can buy is to get an appraisal from a competent, qualified, reputable appraiser every time a sale or purchase occurs.
- D. Remember Section 112.311(6) of the Florida Statutes (Code of Ethics for Public Employees):

"It is declared to be the policy of the state that public officers and employees, state and local, are agents of the people and hold their positions for the benefit of the public. They are bound to uphold the Constitution of the United States and the State Constitution and to perform efficiently and faithfully their duties under the laws of the federal, state, and local governments. Such officers and employees are bound to observe, in their official acts, the highest standards of ethics consistent with this code and the advisory opinions rendered with respect hereto regardless of personal considerations, recognizing that promoting the public interest and maintaining the respect of the people in their government must be of foremost concern."

Adopted by PSFRD Board of Commissioners: November 21, 2006