

25 Suggestions to Improve Parish Council Performance

Most of the items below have additional helpful information in the Stewardship Advocates Library.

1. Utilize consent agendas.
2. Place most important items early on the agenda rather than listing them at the end when everyone is tired and wants to go home.
3. Ensure that every parish council meeting includes at least one item or exercise of strategic importance.
4. Create parallel column to the agenda with estimated allotted time for each item.
5. Begin and end meetings on time.
6. Periodically, perhaps once each quarter, distribute simple questionnaire evaluating a parish council meeting.
7. Once each year, prior to the end of the elected term, have each parish council member complete a personal self-evaluation exercise; once each year have each parish council member complete a general parish council evaluation.
8. Ensure committees complete their tasks prior to meetings and submit their reports early allowing sufficient time for them to be circulated prior to the meeting.
9. Circulate the agenda and reports prior to the meeting via email with clear instructions to read them before the meeting.
10. Have the priest and/or knowledgeable laity offer helpful and interesting teaching on some aspect of parish leadership, governance, management or development.
11. Periodically revisit/review the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Values Statement, Strategic Plan including key goals and objectives of the parish.
12. Ensure that all previously assigned tasks are completed prior to the meeting.

13. Create governance committee to ensure ongoing parish council development process and to manage nominations process.
14. The priest should carefully study and learn the parish council development process.
15. Once a year conduct a parish council all day retreat.
16. Create a parish council member notebook for orientation and reference.
17. Maintain a library of reference materials on board development with pamphlets assigned for required reading.
18. Sponsor a dedicated “Month of Parish Council Listening” that includes assigning parish council members to a particular area of the coffee hour. They may or may not have interview sheets that are designed to draw out of parishioners their thoughts and feelings about the parish.
19. Create a standing Strategic Planning Committee.
20. Every five years complete a comprehensive strategic planning process resulting in a written strategic plan.
21. Have a standing Governance Committee that oversees the process of parish council development.
22. Organize a festival of gratitude in which parish council members call or personally write volunteers and donors thanking them for their support.
23. Have the parish council sponsor an “Annual Stewardship Day” at the parish that includes physical, hands-on type tasks to take care of the grounds, facilities, cleaning, painting, etc. This will take organization and creativity for parishes that already pay maintenance staff to attend to this.
24. To fulfill parish council member advocacy role, consider publishing a brief biography of one parish council member in each issue of the parish newsletter with their “testimony” of “Why I serve”. Everyone needs mentoring!
25. Involve parish council members in Sunday services – greeters, assistants at the distribution of Holy Communion, those who take the collection, standing on either side of the priest as the blessed bread is distributed at the end of the service welcoming worshipers, etc.