

The Process of Becoming a DCHS Board Member

There are two ways to become a Board Member of the Dane County Humane Society. The first is by appointment when an opening occurs on the thirteen-member Board. This is left to the discretion of the Board. The second is by democratic election at the DCHS Annual Membership Meeting. For any Board member, whether selected by appointment or election, you must be a member of DCHS at the time your service on the Board commences.

At each Annual Membership Meeting, four or five seats are up for election by the Membership (Four seats are up two years and five seats are up the third year). To be considered for these seats, candidates can be nominated in two ways.

One way is by nomination of the Board of Directors. The Board will meet with candidates, consider their backgrounds and priorities for DCHS, and approve those it feels will best serve the interests of the DCHS Membership. There are advantages to this approach. By going through this process, your candidate information (Candidate Profile) will be included in the Annual Membership Meeting mailing (scheduled for approximately three weeks prior to the meeting) and posted on the DCHS web site. This gives you exposure, making you a "known quantity" to voters. Finally, all announced candidates will be given a table at the Annual Membership Meeting, which you can use to meet and greet voters to build support for your candidacy.

Another way to be elected to the DCHS Board of Directors is by nomination from the floor. To pursue this route, you can either "pre-announce" your candidacy or announce for the first time at the Annual Meeting. If you choose to pre-announce, you receive all the benefits of exposure enjoyed by those nominated by the Board (mailing, web site, and candidate table), but you simply run on your own, independent of Board action.

However, if you choose *not* to pre-announce (to make known your intentions for the first time at the Annual Membership Meeting), your ability to publicize your candidacy to voters will be limited to personal campaigning you conduct on your own in advance of the meeting and at the meeting itself. Your information will not be included in any mailings, nor posted on the DCHS web site, nor will you be given a candidate table at the meeting. Unannounced candidate information will also not be allowed to be posted at the shelter.

In either case, whether announced or unannounced, those being nominated from the floor will need a voting member of DCHS to make the nomination and another to "second" the nomination. If you choose to go through the process of announcing your candidacy, whether as a Board nominated candidate or not, please read the attached reference articles, complete the forms, and return them to the Board Secretary, by mail (DCHS Board Secretary, 5132 Voges Road, Madison WI 53718-6941) or by e-mail (to Pam McCloud Smith at pmsmith@giveshelter.org).

The Role of the DCHS Board

Basic responsibilities of the DCHS board include:

- Helping to shape and achieve the DCHS mission of “Helping People Help Animals”
- Selecting and supporting the Executive Director and assessing his or her performance.
- Ensuring effective organizational planning.
- Ensuring long-term financial viability.
- Exercising fiduciary responsibility and oversight.
- Ensuring adequate resources and assist in raising money.
- Determining, monitoring, and strengthening DCHS programs and services.
- Enhancing the public standing of DCHS
- Ensuring legal and ethical integrity and maintain accountability.
- Recruiting and orienting new board members and assess board performance.

What is NOT included?

- Giving formal or informal assessments of individual staff performance. That is the Executive Director's job.
- Giving instruction or direction to staff in how to carry out operations. That, too, is the Executive Director's job.
- "Saving" staff in times of crisis. Our eyes are on the horizon. Emergency management is the job of the Executive Director, within the boundaries established through official policy.
- Running operational programs or committees. You cannot simultaneously "govern" and "manage" without confusing everyone involved and violating the integrity of the system established to honestly assess Executive Director performance.
- Undermining the Board by voicing dissention outside of the Board meeting. We sometimes disagree, but we never threaten the organization by subjecting it to the upheaval of inappropriate dissension. We speak with one voice, or not at all, and we maintain discipline and decorum rightfully due the position.

Note:

Board members may volunteer at DCHS, but only at the request of the Executive Director. This is to ensure that no confusion is given to staff regarding directions from Board members in volunteer roles. If you are a current DHCS volunteer, please be aware that you may need to end your current volunteer activities once you become a board member.

Expectations of a Board Member

- **"Commitment to the Membership and to the specific mission area."** We act as the agents of the Membership, and as such we must be committed to that trust. This is even more important than a commitment to the mission, because "mission" is an outcome of the Board's work on behalf of the Membership. At times, the process of how we do our work as a Board is as important as the work DCHS does to save animals because our work enables the organization to carry out that work with integrity.
- **"Propensity to think in terms of systems and context."** As a member of the Board, your ability to think of the whole of our work rather than its parts is critical to our ability to create an overarching framework of policies and accountability. Focusing on pieces rather than how the pieces fit together into a powerful organizational purpose is a distraction the Board can ill afford, and should remain in the capable hands of volunteers and professional staff.
- **"Ability and eagerness to deal with values, vision, and the long term."** Our work is about translating values into policies. The staff's work is about turning policies into action. The Board is the only collection of people who are equipped and tasked to carry this out. We are the stewards of the organization's vision.
- **"Ability to participate assertively in deliberation."** Failure to voice one's views, as they represent one's interpretation of the organization's values, is a failure to do one's duty as a Board member. Active participation in the Board's work is a requirement.
- **"Willingness to delegate, to allow others to make decisions."** Individual Board members must be willing to share power with others on the Board, subordinating individual interests to the will of the group. Individuals also must be willing to delegate to staff, allowing for the exercise of the Board's authority unencumbered by operational minutiae and encouraging staff's professional growth unhindered by obtrusive Board meddling.