

## When Faced with Challenging People

### 1. Be Prepared

Always have an agenda for each meeting that lists topics with correlating time limits. This will help to keep the meeting focused and on track. It is recommended that an agenda be available to the public via the web or list serve – if possible.

Have ground rules posted and refer to them both at the beginning of each meeting and as needed throughout meetings.

Anticipate possible challenging situations. Plan ahead for how you will handle them. Practice how you would react to particular situations. Arrange for support from fellow board members to control the meeting.

#### What Causes People to Be Difficult?

- Negative feelings from previous interactions or situations
- Inaccurate or incomplete information
- Seemingly incompatible goals
- Different styles of communication

### 2. It's Not Your Fault- Don't Take it Personally

- People display challenging behavior because of who they are personally, not because of you.
- It's not personal; so don't react as if it's a personal attack. Remember your role is to run the meeting and foster neutrality and a cohesive atmosphere.

### 3. Control Your Reaction to Conflict: BREATHE - THINK - SPEAK

- Breathe! Take a deep breath or two to clear your head.
  - Think about what you are going to say first, before speaking.
  - Speak slowly and evenly, without raising your voice.
  - Address the person by name, if possible and look them in the eye.
  - Actively listen to the person speaking and offer positive verbal and non-verbal language
  - Ask clarifying questions to help you (and others) understand their perspective.
  - Express your perspective assertively, but not confrontationally.
  - Confront the issue at hand, not the person.
  - Stay on topic and remember not to lose your temper.
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