

THE ROLE OF THE TRUSTEE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

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The Trustee or Commissioner of a mosquito control organization has a threefold role or responsibility in the field of public relations.

Public relations, to be most effective, must be a planned program designed to accomplish certain predetermined objectives.

These objectives may be:

1. Enlistment of public support for the the program.
2. Maintenance of public support for the continuation or expansion of the program.
3. Enlistment of public cooperation to accomplish a single objective such as yard inspections for the control of the house mosquito.
4. Information service and progress reports to appointive political agencies such as the courts, county supervisors, or to the public at large.

The objective of the program is usually recommended by the Director or Superintendent for Board approval. After this point the Board then fixes the general policies under which the program shall be prepared and executed.

The program should include:

1. Approval of objective or objectives.
2. Fixing responsibility for detail preparation and execution of the program.
3. Fixing an over-all cost.
4. Engaging consultants, if required.

Therefore, the first and perhaps the most important role of the Trustee, is that which is performed in association with his fellow Trustees, namely the establishment of the public relations policy and providing the funds, by budget, for its execution.

Following the preparation of the detail program final Board approval is usually

required. It is at this point the section of the plan that deals with Trustee or Commissioner participation should be thoroughly discussed and understood. A statement of policy should be made to cover this section so no misunderstanding may later develop.

The Trustees are appointed to represent the public in the management of the program. Although their role is usually limited to the legal administrative requirements and policy making to fit the program to the local public requirements and conditions, they cannot be divorced from public contact.

Consequently, their second role is that direct part of the public relations program that requires their occasional public appearance as a speaker. In this connection direct contact should be maintained with the Director of the program so that:

1. The talk will be based on local, factual material.
2. The statements will not conflict with Board policy or the public relations program in general.
3. The speaker is properly instructed in background material to properly answer general questions.

It should be kept in mind that a *Trustee is not expected to be an expert in all phases of mosquito control*. Therefore, in making public appearances, particularly where questions may be asked, the Director is usually asked to accompany the Trustee.

Then, as a third role, all Trustees or Commissioners are subject to "off the record" questions by friends and associates. To the public, the appointment to such a Board or Commission implies broad knowledge of the subject and the details of the work. Therefore, the Trustee has some obligation to become familiar with the general background of the program

and, in particular, to recognize that the program should have one spokesman. It would seem that a good policy for Trustees might be to speak only in general

terms when requested unless they happen to be specialists in some particular phase of control, referring all technical matters to the director for detail explanation.

THE MANAGER'S (DIRECTOR'S) ROLE IN FORMULATING POLICY FOR THE DISTRICT

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The Director or Manager of a mosquito control district formulates policy only through recommendation to the elected or appointed commissioners or trustees. This may sound rather dogmatic, but in my opinion, this is what happens. It is also my opinion that if the director is worthy of his position and knows his field, as such a person should, that it would be a rare occasion in which the board would completely override his recommendation. Policy is established through presentation to the board by the director of what he believes best for the district. It is discussed and modified by the board in view of existing budget limitations and by political necessity where this must be considered.

The director should be qualified by training and experience to know what is the best method of attacking the problem for his particular area. If the board finds it regularly necessary to change radically the suggested program for mosquito control, it would appear that the time has come to replace the director. On the other hand, if the board regularly changes the program, cuts budgets and suggested quantities of materials and equipment below that which the qualified director feels necessary, he must overestimate his needs to take care of routine cuts in his minimum needs. If this situation continues, it would appear that the director does not have the confidence of

his board, and if he cannot convince them of his knowledge and ability, he might well consider moving to the first mosquito district that seems to offer greater chance for the optimum use of his talents.

As in any work that develops in business and government, various situations will modify what I have said, but I would consider this to be the ideal from which the director and the board deviate only because of necessity in a particular situation which would need to be worked out on its own merits—or probably on its own demerits.

A director is, or should be in my opinion, a professional man and his opinions and suggestions should carry great weight with the board, but in the last analysis, the director recommends and the board by vote, which one would hope could be unanimous, establishes the policy. It is then the duty of the director to apply this policy, as established by a vote of the board, in the most effective manner possible. If deviation in individual cases is necessary in an emergency, the board should be informed and permitted to approve the individual act, if possible and amend the general policy if the director recommends, or deny such future deviations.

It is my opinion that this is about the way we operate in Lee County, and so far, it appears to me that we have been running an efficient and economical operation.