
BYA PRIDE

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BYA Makes Amends

by Muhammad Small

This past month, Brentwood Youth Activities took a positive step in the direction of progress. The motion to update (officially “amend”) the organization’s By-Laws was initiated in October 2007 and completed in December 2008. The last time the By-Laws were amended was in August 1996, and over the last few years it has become necessary to make revisions to keep the By-Laws current. The By-Laws are the rules adopted by an organization chiefly for the government of its members and the regulation of its affairs. These rules govern an organization and define its boundaries which are contained in a single, formal written document. By-Laws guide all non-profit organizations, and they are the rules agreed upon for the internal operation of the organization, such as the time and place of the annual of meetings, the number of directors and/or members required to constitute a quorum in order to conduct business, the two-way relationship of "rights" (what is received) and "responsibilities" (what is given) of members, how to amend By-Laws, how officers are elected, etc.

It is important that non-profit organizations have By-Laws that are responsive to the organization's constituents and its needs. Organizations that never review their By-Laws, as had previously been the case with BYA, sometimes end up burdened with antiquated By-Laws that no longer reflect the organization's mission, needs, or direction. By-Laws should be reviewed regularly to ensure: (1) that the group is functioning within the By-Laws; or (2) whether the By-Laws should be altered to fit changes within the group. Significant growth of the group, a shift in the group's focus, or a re-organization of the group are a few examples of the types of change that may necessitate a review and possible revision of the By-Laws. Well written By-Laws should not need annual review or change; therefore, a small team of consultants frequently studied and edited the By-Laws so they would be applicable for the present time and future administrations of BYA.



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As non-profit organizations attempt to amend their By-Laws to meet the changing requirements of the organization, they face a delicate task of making sure that any alterations stay in line with their mission and protect the organization from future difficulties. They also must make certain that in meeting their current needs, they do not ignore their long-term challenges. By-Laws can be amended for several reasons and some common ones include:

Change in organization mission:

The mission is the organization's guiding beacon. However, the beacon can waver or even cast its light in a new direction upon occasion. When an organization changes its mission, the By-Laws must change to stay on course with that mission. Sometimes the organization's mission is contained in its charter or its articles of incorporation. It is a very weighty matter to change an organization's charter. This move requires widespread support and possibly consultations with state licensing agencies. A change in charter or articles of incorporation could affect the organization's non-profit status. However, charters do change and so do the By-Laws that support the charter. Also, organizations that engage in strategic long-range planning may find that their By-Laws must change to stay in harmony with the new directions.

Change in organization operation:

Every governing body seeks to operate in a manner that reaps the greatest benefit for the people it serves. To do this, the body must frequently re-evaluate the rules by which it governs. These operating issues make up the bulk of most By-Laws.

Response to specific situations:

No non-profit board can foresee every situation that must be addressed in its By-Laws. Each organization will have its unique problems and challenges. When solutions to new problems are found, some organizations will wish to codify the solution to make things flow more efficiently in the future. Some organizations find themselves with By-Laws over the decades that have become outdated. The By-Laws may no longer be feasible to enforce as written. There may be references to machines that no longer exist or procedures that are no longer relevant.

Practices that need documenting:

Every organization constantly searches for better ways to accomplish its tasks. The organization may grow and subsequently change the way it operates. Non-profit organizations may find that they have adopted certain processes and practices or have formed long-standing committees that have never been documented. Any time a process, committee, or practice has lasted for many years, an organization may decide to document it.

Change in social or legal environment:

Non-profit organizations frequently are part of the political and legal maelstroms that swirl through their communities. Even if they try to isolate themselves, they may find themselves caught up in the storms of controversy surrounding the issues they care most about. At best, organizations are able to weather those storms with little change. Others find themselves forced to painfully re-build after negative publicity. Still other organizations are pro-active and set up storm walls and shutter their windows before a hurricane strikes. These pro-active organizations establish procedures and policies to deal with the media or other outside influences.

Both officers and members of an organization must have direction and guidelines for what is accepted behavior within the particular organization. If not, problems like conflict of interest, misdirection of focus, or lack of productive activity will occur. By-Laws define the parameters of the organization's concern, boundaries of operation, expanse of authority, and accepted behaviors of members. While By-Laws may not solve all problems that arise in an organization, the By-Laws allow for a process to address problems or concerns.

The manner in which the BYA amended its governing rules was by having its membership ratify the changes to it, and this is how most organizations amend By-Laws. Amending By-Laws takes a formal action and vote of the membership because they pertain to the entire organization. Therefore, any changes to them must be approved by the general membership.

The major amendments to BYA's By-Laws were: insertions of an official ratification page; additions of organizational, finance, vacancy, and amendment articles; and improving the articles pertaining to the board of director officers, nomination and election procedures, duties of the elected officials, types of committees, meeting requirements, etc. There were over twenty-five BYA community residents present at the General Membership meeting and the amendments were officially ratified without opposition.

Some organizations provide copies of By-Laws to all members, and issue them to new members upon paying dues or signing to the membership roster. The executive board, governing committee, board of directors, etc. should each retain a copy of the By-Laws, especially the president and secretary for their official records. All members of the organization should also have easy access to a copy. The By-Laws are available for review in the BYA Clubhouse, as well as on-line at goby.org.

As previously stated, these modifications to BYA's most important document were sorely needed and long overdue. These revisions are viewed by many as progressive and shall facilitate the governing of the organization for the next decade, or whenever BYA finds it necessary to amend the By-Laws again. The amended By-Laws should see that continuity is maintained for the duration and leadership succession of the organization. When it has written documents and there is common knowledge of the procedures, the organization will be protected from itself. After a fourteen month long process, Brentwood Youth Activities has taken a step in the right direction by amending its By-Laws to reflect the status and direction of the organization over the last decade and into the new millennium.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

BASKETBALL OPENING DAY
 DATE: JANUARY 5TH

FOOTBALL AWARDS DINNER
 PLACE: IBEW LOCAL 25 UNION HALL
 370 VANDERBILT MOTOR PKWY
 HAUPPAUGE, NY 11788
 DATE: JANUARY 17TH 3 PM – 7 PM

BASEBALL REGISTRATION
 PLACE: BYA CLUBHOUSE

DATES:	FRIDAY	JANUARY 16 TH 6:30 PM – 9 PM
	SATURDAY	JANUARY 17 TH 12 PM – 3 PM
	SUNDAY	JANUARY 18 TH 10 AM – 1 PM
	FRIDAY	JANUARY 23 RD 6:30 PM – 9 PM
	SATURDAY	JANUARY 24 TH 12 PM – 3 PM
	SUNDAY	JANUARY 25 TH 10 AM – 1 PM
	FRIDAY	JANUARY 30 TH 6:30 PM – 9 PM
	SATURDAY	JANUARY 31 ST 12 PM – 3 PM
	SUNDAY	FEBRUARY 1 ST 10 AM – 1 PM