



5 Myths & Misconceptions About Boards & Councils

Serving on a board or town council is a great way to get involved with your community. But there are some common myths and misconceptions about boards and councils — and about being a member of one. Here are five identified by Midwest Assistance Program staff:

Myth #1: All that board/council does is talk and drink coffee.

Mythbuster: The majority of boards and councils are hardworking groups, volunteering more time than they expected to help solve a problem for their community and contribute to its survival.

Myth #2: If I get on that board/council, I can change the world!

Mythbuster: You will be able to make changes by serving on a board/council, but don't plan on having it all your own way. Nothing gets accomplished without the help of other board/council members, and the best boards seek ways they can work together.

Myth #3: If we just use the same budget as last year, we should be fine.

Mythbuster: That's the fastest road to financial ruin for your utility. As a board/council member, you're expected to be fiscally responsible and that means reviewing and understanding the financials. It's not just the city clerk's job. If you're not getting the information you need, ask for it.

Myth #4: All I have to do is show up.

Mythbuster: There's more to it than that. To be a good board or council member, you need to do your homework, to read the materials sent to you and to serve on a committee, if needed. And you need to attend meetings.

Myth #5: I have to know *everything!*

Mythbuster: As a board/council member, it's your job to know what's going on, to monitor activities related to the board's purpose and to set policy. It's not really in your bailiwick to decide how short the grass around the lagoon should be cut. That's why you hire good employees. Sometimes it's a balancing act between being too "big picture" and micromanaging.