

Observing and Interpreting a Meeting

Observation:

How is the room set up? Who is sitting where? (Draw a rough diagram of the set up, noting where the chair/moderator, members, participants, visitors, etc. are sitting and the location of any kinds of presentation materials (white board, projector, newsprint).)

The meeting took place in a house at the rectangular dining room table. The co-pastors sat at the heads of the table. The member at large and treasurer sat on one side and the president and secretary sat on the other.

What is going on before the meeting? (Who is talking to whom? What is the mood? What kinds of interactions occur? Is there a written agenda? Did members have materials beforehand or did they receive them as they arrived? Are there refreshments? What are they? Who takes them?)

The male pastor is convivially chatting with the member at large. The female pastor and president were chatting quietly. The treasurer and the secretary arrived together and the meeting began.

There was a written agenda, it was emailed along with the minutes from the prior meeting.

All parties were offered water but no refreshments were offered. male pastor and treasurer accept offer of water. all other parties had brought their own drinks.

How does the meeting begin? (Who calls the meeting to order? How does it get started? What are the initial comments or items of business? Note both the official start to the meeting and any other comments and how this shapes the course of the meeting and the mood of the room.)

The president calls the meeting to order.

What happens during the meeting? (Note two or three significant events or decisions that were made. Describe the process by which those decisions occurred.)

They begin by approving the minutes from the prior meeting.

The treasurer offers her report. some time is spent on discussing the finances.

The secretary who is also on the service and community committee offers her report. The group discuss some of the ideas that the committee has offered. A few other ideas were suggested to be taken back to the committee.

Co-pastors then offer their report. The male pastor spoke about what the next couple of months were going to be about. The female pastor asked the group to think about connection and what it means to them to bring those thoughts back for the next meeting.

Analysis:

What are your impressions of the meeting (Was it orderly? Was it worthwhile? Was there energy in the room? Were the people engaged in the meeting?)
The meeting was orderly, worthwhile, and all parties seem invested and energetic.

What process was used to make decisions? Was there more than one?
The board business was voted on. The service project was discussed.

What are the outcomes? **Next month's meeting was planned and the service project was scheduled for two weeks from meeting.**

How did people treat one another? **With respect.**

Was there conflict? How was it handled? **There is tension between the secretary and pastor after something was said at church the prior Sunday. The president did not attend church last week so she asks for clarification on the issue. The subject has to do with a proposed service project that was. The secretary felt hurt by the way that the pastor had responded to the service idea. The president acts as an intermediary. In the end, both parties seem bruised but heard.**

What was the role of moderator/chair? (How did she/he function in the meeting?) **She acted as task master and a mediator.**

Synopsis:

Write a one page synopsis of the key dynamics of this meeting - both the overt decisions/processes and the underlying organizational issues that you observe. How well did the person leading do? What suggestions would you make? If you were the overall leader of this organization, what steps would you take after this meeting?

It is obvious that all of the people are extremely invested in the organization and in each other. I was impressed that though it was obvious that there was an unresolved issue they examined it with respect and caution. It seemed from my perspective that both parties were willing to take a risk to put their cards on the table. The meeting had a family feeling to it. There was a lot of joke telling and ribbing in addition to tackling the work they were there to do. I thought that the president did a great job in encouraging the conversation to happen. She did so by pleading ignorance of the subject which meant that both parties had to tell their side. She was organized and managed to move the meeting along when the side bars were getting a little out of hand. I have sat on small and large boards and this board seemed to have the best of both. They were prepared, organized, respectful, and jovial. I can't think of a thing that I would recommend for them to improve.

If this were my board, I would ensure that the secretary intended to send the minutes out. I would make sure that I followed up with anything that I said I would do at the meeting and document the result to add to the agenda for the next meeting. I would send the agenda out a week before the next meeting. I do this because it also provides a reminder of the meeting. I would also ask for all recipients of the agenda to respond as to whether or not they can attend. If we don't have a quorum or if there isn't enough of an agenda to merit a meeting, I would ask for dates to schedule for the next month.