**Ohef Sholom Temple**

**Consent Agenda Overview:**

**Prepared by Bert Newfield**

**A Consent Agenda is a meeting practice which packages several items as one unified agenda.**  **These items can include routine committee reports, Board meeting minutes, and other non-controversial items that normally do not require discussion or independent action.**

A Consent Agenda can save precious meeting time by allowing the Board to approve this package of items together in one motion.However, the following stipulations apply:

1. Reports and information can be grouped together under a Consent Agenda only if all Board Directors agree.
2. If even one Director selects a specific item for discussion, it must be removed and placed on the regular Board meeting agenda.
3. Depending upon the organization, a few minutes to up to a half hour can be freed up for more substantial discussion on those items requiring strategic thought, decision making, or action.

**What types of items can be found on the Consent Agenda?**

**Consent Agenda items are routine and should not require any Board discussion.** The following items are typically considered for grouping in a Consent Agenda:

1. Board and committee meeting minutes
2. Committee and staff reports, updates, or background reports provided for information only
3. Correspondence requiring no action
4. Staff appointments requiring Board confirmation
5. Final approval of proposals or reports that Directors have been dealing with for some time and are familiar with
6. Routine contracts that fall within policies and guidelines
7. Confirmation of documents or items that need no discussion but is required by the bylaws

**How does a Board begin using a Consent Agenda?**

1. The first step in using a Consent Agenda is to have the Board approve a motion to adopt the Consent Agenda format for Board meetings.
2. The Board should also craft and approve a policy of what may or may not be included in the consent portion of the agenda (Policy and Procedures, or P&P).
3. Moving forward, it is important to make sure that all Directors know what items belong on the consent portion of the agenda, and how to move items to and from the overall Consent Agenda.

**What is the process for using a Consent Agenda?**

**A Consent Agenda can only work if the reports and items are** **known in advance. That is, these items are distributed** **with the overall** **agenda package, and with sufficient time allowed for all Directors to read, understand, and ask for clarification of these agenda items prior to the meeting.**

**A typical process for using a Consent Agenda is as follows:**

1. The President/Chairperson of the Board decides what items will be placed into the consent portion of the agenda (consistent with the P&P).
2. The full agenda, including consent items, is disseminated prior to the Board meeting along with any documentation or back-up information, so that Board of Directors can do their due diligence before voting.

I recommend that these documents be sent out no later than the Monday prior to the board meeting.

1. The Consent Agenda items typically appear near the beginning of the regular meeting. This allows any item to be removed and placed into the overall agenda for discussion and action later in the meeting.
2. As one of the first items of business at the Board meeting, the President/Chairperson asks if anyone wishes to remove any item under the consent portion of the agenda to be discussed.
3. Any Director can request to discuss the item, question the item, or register a vote against the item. There is no seconding, discussing, or voting to remove an item.
4. If an item is removed from the consent portion, the President/Chairperson will place it on the regular meeting agenda.
5. The Chairperson then asks for a motion to accept the Consent Agenda, and it sounds like this:

Bert: **“*I move to approve the Consent Agenda*** (or…***the Consent Agenda minus item\_\_\_\_) .*”**

Betty: **“*I second that motion.”***

President: ***“Are there any objections to accepting the Consent Agenda*** (or…***the Consent Agenda minus item\_\_\_\_)?*** If none…***“So moved.”***

1. As with all formal Board action, a quorum must be present in order to have legitimate and binding action on the Consent Agenda items.

**In summary:**

1. As a single, unified item on the agenda, the Consent Agenda is voted on with a single vote, i.e., to approve the Consent Agenda.
2. The key to the Consent Agenda’s effectiveness is that there is no discussion of that grouped agenda items.
3. Again, because there will be no discussion of these items individually, using a Consent Agenda requires that Board materials be provided in plenty of time for Directors to read them all.
4. It is a requirement that the Directors read the materials and clarify any issues prior to the Board meeting.
5. Anyone who asks for simple clarifications during a Board meeting will be out of order, as it is expected that the Directors will have read and clarified the Consent Agenda items prior to the Board meeting (see below).

**Handling items that require Clarification or Discussion**

1. Sometimes a Board member will read the board materials related to the Consent Agenda and will **want clarification or a question answered before voting**.
2. Or the Director feels the issue **still requires discussion before voting**.

**Those are two distinct scenarios, and they receive two distinct treatments.**

1. **Items for Clarification or Questions**

If there are items that require **clarification, or for which a Board member has a question**:

1. That clarification must be requested prior to the Board meeting.
2. An item cannot be pulled from the Consent Agenda at the Board meeting simply to have a question answered. This request is out of order as that sort of information-gathering should happen only before the meeting.
3. In that way, the person being asked the question has time to gather the information. It is important to avoid having an issue tabled for the next meeting only because a question could not be answered then and there.
4. In addition, that clarification can then be sent to all Board members, so everyone has the same information prior to the meeting.
5. This is particularly useful for clarifying the minutes, which often takes absurd amounts of time that could otherwise be spent in more meaningful discussion.
6. **Items for Discussion**

If there is an item about which a **Board member disagrees, or which the member believes requires discussion:**

1. Then a request is made to pull that one item from the Consent Agenda and to add it to the regular agenda as an item to be discussed.
2. There is no need for a second, discussion, or vote. The request is enough to pull an item.
3. The remainder of the Consent Agenda items are voted on and approved, and only that single item is held out for discussion.

It sounds like this:

Director: ***“Madam President, I would like to request that Item ‘C’ be pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion.”***

President: ***“Any objections to approving the Consent Agenda, minus Item ‘C’?”*** If none…***”So moved.”***

Item ‘C’ will then be discussed as a regular discussion item.

**When should a Consent Agenda not be used?**

**A Consent Agenda should not be used unless all board members thoroughly understand it and all have agreed to its use.**

1. This type of agenda puts more responsibility on the individual Board members to read and understand and clarify the materials sent to them in advance.
2. This type of agenda requires Board members to be well-prepared for the Board meeting.