



Second Century

How ARRL Functions

It seems like after every Board meeting there are member questions, especially at in-person events, about how ARRL actually functions as an organization. If you are spending time getting your information from the myriad op-ed posts on social media, you are likely poorly informed. I am dedicating this column to hit the highlights, but for the details we have all of this on the ARRL website at www.arrl.org/organization-structure.

ARRL is governed by a Board of Directors. These Directors and Vice Directors are elected by you, the members, on a 3-year cycle. In fact, there are only two things, as a member, that you get to vote on: the election of a Director and Vice Director (and Section Manager, which is not a Board position), and the recall of one of those positions. These positions are all volunteers. They are unpaid and manage a modest budget for travel and support of their Division. The workload, especially on Directors, can be daunting. The idea told to me by some members, that Directors are there “only to vote,” is wrong. In theory, you could be a Director who shows up only twice a year to vote, but practically that does not work, and rarely happens.

The Board also has Officers. These positions are elected by the Directors every 2 years. This includes the President, three Vice Presidents, the CEO/Secretary, the CFO, and the Treasurer. The President presides over the Board, providing leadership throughout the year and serving to chair the Board meetings. The President also serves as the face of the organization and is the representative of ARRL to the IARU internationally. The CEO and CFO positions are responsible for the day-to-day operations of ARRL. The Board does not report to the CEO, nor is the CEO “in charge.” None of the Officers of the Board vote on motions presented to the Board.

The Board also maintains an assortment of committees. Today, much of the work of the Board happens in the committees. The complete list of committees, along with the composition of each committee, can be found on the ARRL website at www.arrl.org/board-committees. The most important committees are called *standing committees*, and they represent different aspects of governance and policy-making for the organization. These committees tend to meet four times a year for official meetings, but may have sub-committees that meet more often as the work requires. An example of that is that the Administration & Finance (A&F) Committee has a Revenue Sub-Committee that

may meet as much as once a week in preparation for an upcoming A&F or full Board meeting.

One committee that seems to make its way into the spotlight because of the issues they have to deal with is Ethics & Elections (E&E). This committee is comprised of three Directors who have the responsibility to deal with matters of ethical conduct or the rules and regulations of ARRL elections. Their mandate comes from ARRL By-Law 42. The by-laws are linked from the Articles of Association page found at www.arrl.org/arrl-articles-of-association. The E&E Committee routinely comes under scrutiny because it must interpret behaviors or actions and apply ARRL standards as defined in myriad governing documents. It is a thankless job and absurd posts you read online are rarely, if ever, based on the facts — just the desire by some for there to be no rules.

ARRL functions by having well-defined and clear roles for member-volunteers and leaders that ensure our organization serves as the radio amateur’s advocate and witness even as generations of hams come and go; as the science and art evolve; and so new entrants can easily associate themselves with the larger community of radio-active hams. So be radio active by serving your radio community as an ARRL volunteer. Be a connector by suggesting to others whom they can contact within the ARRL structure, especially their Director. And stay positive! Reading the baseless conspiracy theories about ARRL does nothing to promote or protect amateur radio.

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