The Organization

BeBetter, Inc. is a CAA located in Nowheresville in the state of Bliss. The CAA prides itself on being a high functioning and performing organization that services three large, rural counties by offering a ride-share program, employment training, after-school programs and weatherization services. The CAA and its employees recently received several community awards for all of the work they have done to improve the lives of the community's neediest residents.

Scenario One: Drinking on the Job

BeBetter has a robust weatherization program funded from both federal and state sources. However, the program is not without its struggles. Ann and Don are two weatherization employees that work as one of four weatherization field teams. Ann and Don are the subjects of multiple complaints associated with the CAA's weatherization program. Clients called the CAA on numerous occasions to complain that Ann and Don were repeatedly late to job sites. Clients also claimed that Ann and Don were smoking pot during their breaks. Follow-up inspections of Ann's and Don's weatherization work revealed that approximately one of every five repairs and replacements was done incorrectly and not to code. The straw that finally broke the camel's back was when a client claimed that Ann and Don both reeked of alcohol when they arrived to weatherize her home. After receiving that last client complaint, the weatherization director took immediate action and terminated Ann and Don.

As soon as Ann got home, she drafted a scathing letter about the CAA and in particular the weatherization director. The letter is basically a laundry list of allegations against the CAA including that Ann has been wrongfully terminated, that her repeated complaints to the weatherization director that her co-worker Don regularly sexually harassed her were never addressed and the bombshell – the weatherization director is using the CAA's weatherization equipment in his own, after-hours home improvement business. Ann sends the letter to a CAA board member who is a friend of hers. The board member's kids attend the same school that Ann's kids attend and they have recently been getting together for play dates.

The board member friend is new to the board and is shocked by what she reads in Ann's letter. She frankly has frustrations of her own with respect to the CAA's board and executive director. As far as she is concerned they never seem to get anything done and now to see a quality employee and friend like Ann get fired is just unbearable. The board member immediately calls the weatherization director and lays into him. She exclaims that she knows about his wrongdoings and will expose him. The board member sends Ann's letter to a handful of the CAA's board members that she feels will support her and take action. Ann is so angry about the situation that she calls the executive director and tells him that he has to either fire the weatherization director immediately or she will send Ann's letter to the local newspaper.

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Scenario One Questions

Group A: What duties does the board member have to the CAA with respect to Ann's claims?

Group B: Was the board member's approach to Ann's letter appropriate? Why or why not?

Group C: How should the weatherization director respond to the board member's call? How should the executive director respond to the board member's call?

Group D: What organizational policies are potentially implicated in this scenario? How?

Group E: Who should decide if the weatherization director acted appropriately with respect to Ann and Don? Why? How?

Group F: How does a board ensure that all board members understand their roles and responsibilities?

Group Notes on Scenario One Question

Individual Takeaways from Scenario One

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Scenario Two: Takes Two to Tango

The CAA's ED was hired five years ago and it frankly has not been an easy transition. Except for a few new board members who want to be helpful but aren't sure how, the ED struggles with the board's lack of interest in important issues facing the organization, in particular the growing debt resulting from the lack of unrestricted funds needed to help carry programs that can't exist with the current funding in place. The board likes to take credit for the organization's successes but seems to turn a blind eye to the CAA's financial state. The ED hasn't even bothered to tell the board chair about the most recent CSBG monitoring report with ten noncompliance findings and a few deficiencies. He figures he will just end up dealing with it on his own anyway so why involve more cooks in the kitchen. The board already made it clear that they want him to handle all of the logistics associated with the annual audit like retaining the auditor and receiving her report so why in the world would they be interested in the monitoring report. In fact the ED's annual evaluation has not occurred for the last two years and his already below-market salary is getting lower and lower with the passage of each year. Whenever the ED gets fed-up with the board's lack of support, he just walks out of the office and across the street to the public golf course to play a couple of rounds. It is the only way he can clear his head. He figures it doesn't really matter if he charges that time as work performed for the CAA because he is underpaid anyway. Plus, he is doing the work of sixteen people – his job and that of a 15-member board—he deserves a regular, weekly break from it all. Basically, he feels that if his board cared more, he would care more. The board is always trying to find ways to treat themselves on the CAA's dime like with the fancy board dinners he is regularly told to order for their meetings. If it were not for the employment agreement he signed, the ED would have left the organization several years ago.

Scenario Two Questions

GROUP A: What are ways that the board and executive director can address the lack of engagement by board members?

GROUP B: Is the board fulfilling its responsibility with respect to the financial well-being of the CAA? Why or Why not?

GROUP C: Should the executive director discuss the monitoring report with the board? Why or why not?

GROUP D: Is it appropriate for the board to ask the executive director to retain an auditor and respond to audit reports? Why or Why not?

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GROUP E: Is the board properly supervising, evaluating and compensating the executive director? Why or why not?

GROUP F: Is the board responsible for the executive director's bad attitude? Why or why not?

GROUP G: Should the board have entered into an employment agreement with the executive director? Why or why not?

Group Notes on Scenario Two Question

Individual Takeaways from Scenario Two

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