

Section 5

Meetings

The board carries out its duties and responsibilities at meetings held throughout the year. Like most aspects of the board's actions, the governing documents and state law regulate these meetings.

Board Meetings

Effective board meetings are well planned and are used to disseminate information. If a meeting is well planned, the board will be provided the following information in advance:

- Agenda
- Minutes of the previous board meeting
- Finance report
- Committee reports
- Management report
- Special reports, memos, or correspondence

The president should make it clear to board members that he/she expects the directors to review this information prior to the meeting. The president should not waste meeting time by educating board members who have not read their material. Once the members realize that they must prepare for the meeting, they will.

Notify Meeting Participants

A well-planned meeting also requires the president (or someone the president appoints) to give all speakers ample notice. The president should have a commitment from those who have been asked to speak. The president also should make it clear that he/she needs to be contacted immediately if the speaker is unable to be present for any reason.

Provide Adequate Notice to Members

Notice requirements are often contained in the governing documents as well as in the state law. The board should always give residents appropriate prior notice of a meeting. The residents need to know that they are welcome to attend the meeting.

Develop an Agenda

A typical **agenda** for a board meeting might look like the sample presented at right.

Conduct a Professional Meeting

The president should begin the meeting at the scheduled time. If there is not a quorum, the board cannot officially act, but members can present reports. If board meetings consistently start on time, board members will arrive on time.

Each meeting should have time for residents to communicate with the board. Some people recommend that the resident session be scheduled after the reports because their questions are often answered when the reports are given. Others suggest that the resident time be given before the manager's report so that the manager can respond to residents' comments.

Although the board should give residents an opportunity to address them, the board should not engage in a discussion or an argument with the residents. The meeting will not proceed or on schedule if the board engages in a discussion at this time.

While the residents are speaking, board members should be attentive. If the board members look bored or defensive, the residents are likely to be offended. The board should seriously consider residents' input. It should follow up with action if appropriate and with a letter thanking the resident for his or her input—even if the resident is hostile.

It is the responsibility of the president to make sure the agenda is followed and that the meeting progresses on schedule. If board members believe their time is wasted in meetings, the association is less likely to get competent board members to serve. For example, the president should not permit a particular board member to use the meeting to express, at length, his or her opinion on every issue. The rest of the board will become disinterested and/or angry.

If a particular director is posing a problem, it is best to discuss the issue with that person privately, rather than at the meeting. The person may not realize that he or she is behaving in an unconstructive manner. If the person is being disruptive intentionally, the problem is more significant. The president should guarantee that no one person is permitted to destroy the meeting. Following established parliamentary procedure (a set of rules for conducting meetings) will help prevent one or two board members from dominating a meeting.

Agenda

1. Call to order: 1 p.m.
2. Review and accept the minutes
3. Treasurer's report
4. Committee reports (to save time, present these reports in writing)
5. Management reports
6. Resident/owner time for input
7. Unfinished business (list items previously discussed or reviewed)
8. New business (list items not previously discussed, including committee or management requests)
9. Review of action items (this is a reminder list of members' responsibilities)
10. Adjournment: 3 p.m.

While parliamentary procedure may at first seem unnecessarily rigid, experience demonstrates that it is an effective resource for making group decisions. *Robert's Rules of Order* is the most popular version of parliamentary procedure. Regardless of the procedure used, all board members should receive copies of the procedures and be familiar with them prior to their first board meeting.

A well-run meeting ends on time. Generally, monthly meetings should not be longer than two hours. If meetings regularly last longer than two hours, the board needs to evaluate what it can do to correct the problem.

Formal Action

An action taken at a meeting should be in the form of a formal resolution. This procedure helps assure that the board is making deliberate and consistent decisions.

There are four basic types of resolutions: policy resolutions, administrative resolutions, general resolutions, and special resolutions. **Policy resolutions** affect the owners' rights and obligations. They deal with the use of common elements and recreational facilities, architectural guidelines, and enforcement procedures.

Administrative resolutions address the internal operation of the community association, such as operating procedures, collection procedures, and the location of board meetings. **General resolutions** are those that involve routine events. **Special resolutions** state the board's decision about an individual situation.

Each resolution should state the source of the board's authority to act on the issue, a reference to a provision of the governing documents, a statement of the purpose of the resolution, and sufficient details to enable those reading the resolution to understand the purpose and meaning of the resolution.

Resolutions should be kept in a **book or file of resolutions**, which should be an orderly, indexed record of resolutions adopted by the board. In some communities, the governing documents grant the Architectural Committee authority independent of the board. In these communities, the Book of Resolutions also should include the resolutions adopted by the Architectural Committee. Each type of resolution should be indexed separately. This approach makes it easy to update the resolutions.

A book of resolutions provides a written record of board decisions that serves as a useful reference tool and helps guarantee that the board makes consistent decisions. It can also provide evidence that the board members exercised reasonable business judgment if they are sued for the breach of the duty of ordinary care.

Strategies for Dealing with Disruptive Attendees

A disruptive owner can throw a meeting into chaos. To allow owners to speak their minds without disrupting the meeting, most associations hold an open forum before the meeting. That way, residents can voice their opinions - and are less likely to cause distractions.

Whenever the open forum is held, try limiting it to 30 minutes. To keep it under control, inform owners in attendance of the rules. For example, owners are generally given about three to five minutes to speak. Some associations use timers while the owners talk. Others use sign-up sheets.

Conclusion

Vibrant, responsive, competent community associations promote harmony, a sense of community and responsible leadership. Common characteristics of such associations include: good communication; trust in the management and board of directors; continuing education of both board members and owners; and, uniform, flexible and reasonable enforcement of the governing documents. Inclusiveness—the involvement of as many residents of the community as possible—is a critical element in fostering a sense of community.

Notes