

BOARD AND ANNUAL MEETINGS

Meetings are a necessary, albeit often dreaded component of leading and managing a community association. However, we don't have to look forward to meetings with trepidation, anxiety and apprehension if we know the purpose of those meetings and feel confident that we're appropriately prepared for them.

Why do we have to prepare for meetings, whether they're annual, board, special or committee?

1. inadequate preparation could result in ineffective or illegal meetings
2. if we don't comply with state statutes and governing documents, decisions or votes may be invalid
3. poorly run meetings can hurt the credibility of the board, the manager & the association
4. difficult meetings burn out board members AND managers AND homeowners

Let's first talk about BOARD MEETINGS.

How many of you have monthly board meetings? Bi-monthly? Quarterly? How many of you meet monthly because your board has historically always met monthly? You shouldn't have to meet monthly and spend more of your precious, probably very limited personal time on the operations of your community. Or, your monthly meetings shouldn't last longer than an hour. Here's the ideal procedure for ensuring the optimal productivity and effectiveness of your meetings:

1. Prepare a timed agenda before the meeting. Ideally, a week before the meeting the manager would prepare the

draft agenda and send it to the president for input.

- During the month, if board members have issues they want discussed, don't wait for the meeting!! Much of the business of the association can be accomplished by email and phone conversations, especially when you consider that the primary role of board members is to establish policy, not be involved in the day-to-day management decisions. If you feel that an issue should be discussed at the meeting, talk with the board president to see if you can resolve the issue between yourselves or with the help of the manager. If it is an issue of policy that should be addressed by all board members, be sure to give the president at least a week's notice to ensure that it is included on the agenda and your colleagues and the manager have time to research it
- The timed agenda controls extraneous discussions and keeps the focus on the business of the meeting. However, it won't work unless every board member buys into the concept that discussion is limited and everyone must do their homework before the meeting. Coming prepared to the meeting will certainly move it along more quickly than if everyone has to stop to read the material previously sent to them.
- A consent agenda makes it even easier to get home before dark.



Items included on a consent agenda would be the minutes of the previous meeting and other uncontroversial topics and routine business items that require no discussion but do need formal approval in the minutes.

2. Your manager submits her recap/management report either by email or mail before your board meeting. Ideally, you'll receive your report four to seven days before the meeting, giving you time to review the information and call or email your manager with any questions. By asking your manager for the information before the meeting, she'll have the time to do the necessary research to answer your questions. At the meeting, she'll bring you any updates that occurred subsequent to her original report. Keep your meetings efficient by not reiterating the information on the report or the update – if you do your homework by reading the reports before the meeting, the only issues that need to be discussed are those that need policy decisions or additional direction for your manager.
3. Before the meeting adjourns, review the action items for the next meeting.

(Continued on page 2)

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(Continued from page 1)

not just for the manager, but for board and committee members as well. During the month and in her next report, your manager will update you on the progress of the action items assigned to her, eliminating the need to review them at the board meeting, and perhaps even eliminating the need for a meeting.

Now let's talk about ANNUAL MEETINGS.

1. Start preparations for the meeting well in advance of the meeting date.
2. Take steps to ensure that a quorum will be present at the meeting. Ideas for achieving quorum are available at www.associationtimes.com.
3. What's the primary purpose of annual meetings? To elect directors. So, with that in mind, the major focus has to be on ensuring that the meeting is held legally – remember what we talked about at the beginning of this discussion with regard to the implications of improperly held meetings.
 - Some homeowners think this is their one opportunity every year to express their opinion about something or things that have to do with their life in their community association. This is where the team efforts of the manager and the board in successfully communicating with all owners is so important. Owners must know and feel comfortable in communicating with the board and the manager whenever an issue arises so that there is no need for a confrontation at the annual meeting.
 - How do you prevent the conflict that sometimes occurs at annual meetings? Communicate! Communicate year round, not just before the annual meeting. In the 26 years

in which I've been managing community associations, it's become very clear to me that the more the board communicates with the homeowners during the year, the more enjoyable the annual meeting. That's not to say you must have 10-page epics every month. Just a monthly postcard or e-mail highlighting the board meeting decisions and upcoming events will suffice to assure the owners that you're looking out for their best interests and that they are welcome and encouraged to participate in the operations of their community.

Finally, let's take a minute or two to talk about parliamentary procedure. Even though meetings may be relatively informal, and many think that parliamentary procedure will stifle discussion and limit participation, it will actually enable you to more efficiently accomplish the purpose of the meeting – to complete the agenda reasonably and on time. The Community Association Institute has an excellent booklet on Robert's Rules of Order that includes the basic motions and responses. If you're interested in learning more about how parliamentary procedure can help shorten meetings while addressing all the items on the agenda, just let your manager know. For those who are simply unfamiliar with parliamentary procedure, a 'snapshot' chart from "Parliamentary Procedure" by Hugo E. Hellman is provided in this issue.

As you can see from all the ideas I've been discussing, the key to successful community association meetings, as with all other types of meetings, is preparation. By using the management tools we provide, and by working together as a team, the result will be smoothly operating communities with informed, satisfied residents – just what we all strive for.

Margey Meyer, CMCA, PCAM

Vice President, Associa and Dean, Associa University

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HRW BOARD MEMBER FEEDBACK REQUEST

Over the past year, HRW has implemented several updated management tools with the intent to improve communications with our Board members and community residents. These "**Best Management Practices**" include an *Action Item list* (recording tasks to be done and the responsible person) that is compiled after each Board meeting. This list is supplementary to the meeting minutes, which record only official Board decisions. Action item lists are a quick and easy tracking tool that ensures that assigned tasks are carried out in a timely manner, and they also serve as a track-record, listing the Board's achievements during the year.

Comprehensive *Board reports* are distributed prior to the meeting so that everyone can come prepared, having reviewed the necessary information in advance of the meeting, thus improving the efficiency of the meetings. Other tools that are being phased-in include an *Annual Plan* that lists activities and goals for the entire year, a *Communications Chart* that identifies for residents 'at a glance' to whom communications should be directed, and an expanded *Maintenance-Responsibility Chart* that is particularly important for multi-family associations.

In order to gauge the effectiveness of these standardized management practices we would like to request feedback from Board members. A short survey will be sent to you via e-mail at the end of July. The survey will take only a few minutes of your time and will go a long way towards assisting us with further improving our services to our clients. Please look out for the board member survey from *surveymonkey*. We appreciate your feedback and we value our continued relationship with your Association!

Quick Reference Chart

The Principal Motions

Main Motion		S	D	M	
Subsidiary Motions	}	1. Postpone indefinitely	S	D	M
		2. Amend	S	D	M
		3. Refer to Committee	S	L	M
		4. Postpone definitely	S	L	M
		5. Lay on the Table	S	U	M
		Limit Debate	S	L	$\frac{2}{3}$
		Close Debate	S	U	$\frac{2}{3}$
		Reconsider	S	D	M
		Repeal	S	D	$\frac{2}{3}$
		Recess	S	L	M
		Adjourn	S	U	M

Rules

1. Any motion is in order when it makes procedural sense and is made in good faith (generally).
2. Subsidiary motions higher in number are in order when one lower is pending.
3. All these motions require a second.
4. Substantive motions are debatable (D).
5. Procedural motions are un-debatable (U).
6. Qualifiable procedural motions permit limited debate (L).
7. Decisions are by majority (M) except those upsetting previous decisions ($\frac{2}{3}$).

Special Emergency Procedures These Procedures:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Point of Order | a. are in order at any time, |
| Appeal from Chair's Decision | b. may interrupt when necessary, |
| Parliamentary Inquiry | c. requires no second (except Appeal), |
| Request for Information | d. are un-debatable, and |
| Point of Privilege | e. are disposed of immediately without a vote except |
| Objection to Consideration | Appeal (M) and objection ($\frac{2}{3}$). |

Legend:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| S = Motion Must Be Seconded | M = Requires Majority Vote to Pass |
| D = Motion is Debatable | U = Motion is Undebatable |
| L = Motion Allows Limited Debate | $\frac{2}{3}$ = Requires a $\frac{2}{3}$ Vote to Pass |

PREPARING THE BUDGET

Budget season is fast approaching. This process can be streamlined by planning ahead and involving the community. Usually your Manager will work with the Treasurer to prepare a draft budget. Another idea is to create a Budget Committee, which comprises members of the community association, enabling residents to have a say in how their money is spent.



It's important for everyone involved to understand the three basic components of the budget:

1. Funds needed for daily operation of the community, such as common electricity and water, grounds maintenance, management, insurance, and general maintenance. These expenses are either contractual or can be reasonably estimated based on experience. An important consideration when looking at items in the operating budget is the expectations of the community—for example, do members want a landscaper who is a “blow, mow, and go” type, or do they want a landscaper who provides a higher level of service?
2. Funds needed to maintain our reserves at sufficient levels. Reserve funds provide money for the repair and replacement of the community's assets—such as the pool, roofs, pavement, etc.
3. Funds for additions or enhancements to the existing property. This is a function of what members of the community want and are willing to pay for. The community should provide input and approval for this component.

The goal is to develop a balanced budget. If expenses are greater than revenue, look for ways to lower expenses without compromising service. If that doesn't balance the budget, the only alternative is to increase assessments or levy a one-time special assessment.



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