

HOA University

July 11, 2009

Presented by Curtis G. Kimble

The 1 Hour Board Meeting

I. Owner Participation. Owners are the number one reason why board meetings can take much longer than necessary. Adopt clear written policies to curb unnecessary owner interference with board meetings. Having written policies to address common issues allows a board to quickly address an issue and move on because the board can simply defer to the policy, with little or no discussion required.

A. Are open board meetings required? No, unless required by bylaws. BUT, should board meetings be open? Yes. Allow owners to attend but you don't necessarily have to allow them to speak. Require that they arrange in advance to be on the agenda with a specific topic. Give them a time limit (3 – 5 minutes) and enforce it. Don't decide on the owner's issue at that time; decide it later, after the meeting. (We do strongly encourage boards to give homeowners a forum and opportunity to be heard – whether that's a board meeting or elsewhere).

B. Do owners have the right to speak at board meetings? No.

C. What happens if an owner requests to video or tape record a meeting? Often owners request to video or tape record meetings. It's up to the board whether or not to allow video or tape recording, but avoid a discussion on this topic at the meeting itself by having a clear policy in place beforehand that you can simply pull out and reference. "No video or tape recording of meetings." Minutes are kept for the purpose of serving as the record of the decisions and actions taken at the meeting.

II. The Agenda.

A. Agenda. Pass out the agenda of each meeting in advance so board members can be prepared to quickly and efficiently address the agenda items.

B. Minutes. Pass out minutes from the prior meeting in advance so that they can be approved quickly without having them read at the meeting itself. The person who takes the minutes should send them out to the other board members as soon after the meeting as possible so that the events and decisions of the meeting are fresh in the board members' minds.

C. Hearings. Hearings for violations can be at a separate meeting, not necessarily at a regular board meeting. There should be a clear written policy in place for such hearings and enforcement actions.

D. Vendors. Have vendors bidding on contracts come to board meetings and present their proposal in 5 minutes or less. Stagger the vendors to come at different times to avoid having competitors there all at once so the vendor can speak candidly and honestly about their services and prices.

E. Prayer? Do not start meetings with a prayer! It's not appropriate at a board meeting, regardless of the religious makeup of the board.

III. Parliamentary Procedure. You're not in the House of Lords, but the structure of parliamentary procedure can help a meeting flow naturally and efficiently.

A. There are a variety of forms and editions of Roberts Rules of Order. Consider using one and sticking to it, but don't get bogged down by complicated rules.

IV. Executive Session. Remember the board can (and often should) convene into an executive session where only the board members (and property manager) can be present in order to consider certain issues. A board may convene into executive session to discuss sensitive or confidential matters such as current or pending litigation, contract negotiation, matters involving privacy of individuals, or personnel issues.

V. Regular Communication. Communicate frequently to owners and you will have fewer owners demanding to be heard at board meetings. A comprehensive, proactive communications program will help result in productive meetings, satisfied homeowners, balanced budgets, informed consultants, supportive residents, cooperative tenants, eager buyers, low delinquencies, and more.

* Few efforts contribute more to the success of a board than keeping residents informed!

A common problem in communication is assuming that it somehow just takes place by itself. Don't assume that everyone knows what you know or shares your opinions. Develop an effective, cohesive communications program. It doesn't take as much effort as you might think, and the return on your investment will be well worth it.

- Communicate:

1. frequently,
2. in varying settings and places,
3. and in as many ways as possible.

Don't be afraid to communicate important messages repeatedly. Announce them in the newsletter, put a notice on the bulletin board, post a reminder on your web site, and leave fliers on doorsteps. Formal annual meetings can be supplemented with informal town hall meetings, social events, or other gatherings. "An educated owner is the best resident."

* Use a website, whether it's your own site or one like Facebook or Google Groups. You can post your CC&Rs and rules and other informational documents and you can use it as a forum for discussion (yes, these websites you hear about all the time can have a useful application).

VI. Take Action without a Meeting. One way to make sure your board meetings don't drag on for hours is to accomplish things during the month between meetings. Either delegate certain tasks to a particular officer or committee, or take action and make decisions without a meeting (unless prohibited by your bylaws).

A. Be careful that action is not taken without notice to all board members.

B. Each board member must consent in order for the board to take an action without a meeting.

Remember, it is every board member's general right to demand that action be taken only at a meeting. This right must be waived if action is to be taken without a meeting.

VII. Legal Requirements for Meetings. Your bylaws and the Utah Nonprofit Corporation Act have specific requirements for board meetings.

A. Is notice required? How much notice?

B. Is a board required to have a meeting? How often?