

Developing and Running a Successful Board Meeting

A Good Meeting is wonderful but rare! The following will help Board Members and Managers alike, to be prepared and ready for any Board meeting. It will take practice to develop the skills. Be determined and your time preparing and holding Board Meetings will lessen and be more productive for you and your fellow Board Members. Below are a few basic steps that will help you develop and run a successful Board Meeting.

- **Preparation:** Start by setting a date, time and location. Announce meeting date in ample time to allow feedback for scheduling conflicts. Have alternate dates ready. Prepare your agenda based on a standard format. Keep the agenda short and to the point. Agendas do not need to cover everything...you must prioritize and stick to the topics at hand. Don't over plan or anticipate problems, just be prepared.
- **Start on Time:** This is a courtesy to members/guest who arrived on time. Start the meeting, if quorum is established. (Do not rehash what has already been discussed if members came in late.) Notify those in attendance that you have allowed a specific time (2 hours) to get through your agenda. This will allow you to keep control and move the meeting along without disruption and unnecessary off topic discussions.
- **Lay the Ground Rules:** Introduce Board Members if guest are present. Have a sign in sheet; this makes the guest feel that their attendance was valuable. If you know in advance guest will be present, have time set aside for their input. This can be at the front end or the back end of the meeting agenda. We recommend the front end. Some guest will want to come in say their peace and leave. There is no point in having guest wait until the end if there is no need. Depending on the number of guest, set aside a specific time and length each guest is to speak. We recommend posting when the Open Forum will be (at the beginning of the meeting or at the end) and time frame of no more than fifteen (15) minutes, with each guest allowed no more than 2 -5 minutes to address the Board. **NOTE:** The Board does not need to take action or add any item from the Open Forum to the meeting. It is best to thank the guest for his/her comments and let them know the Board will (or will not) take it under advisement. Do not get into discussion with guest. This is their time to provide input or bring attention to a particular issue. Once all guests have addressed the Board, thank them for coming and invite them to stay or leave, but make sure they understand they are observing and listening only. They do not get to participate in Board discussion or interrupt the meeting. It is the responsibility of the Board President to make sure these rules are followed.
- **Follow the Agenda:** Every meeting—even an impromptu meeting should have an agenda. Make sure all Board members have copies of the agenda and material to be discussed. Stay on course...follow the agenda and do not allow unrelated discussions to take place. The purpose of the agenda is to keep the meeting moving, while allowing time to discuss and take action where necessary. Move through the agenda in order, one item at a time. If material is being reviewed that will require a vote of the Board, make sure the Board understand the scope and outcome of the material being presented. If a vote is in order, the President should call for a motion, second, further discussion and then vote. Clearly record and state each motion and outcome in the minutes. This is your official record of action taken by the Board. If the Board is not ready to

approve the material or vote on the issue, request additional information and table for next meeting. Move on to the next agenda item. Once the agenda items have been addressed, set a date and time for the next meeting and quickly review any action items to be done by the Board, Committees or Manager. This will allow everyone to know what is expected of them prior to the next meeting.

- **Last Call:** This should be very brief...give everyone the opportunity for “last call” items. These items can either be briefly discussed or noted they will be added to the agenda for the next meeting. Everyone attending can now leave satisfied or feeling he/she had their say even if topic is added to the next agenda.
- **Adjourn the Meeting:** Chair should ask for a motion to adjourn. Note time meeting ended in the minutes. Once adjourned, do not continue to discuss items already closed. Thank everyone for coming, sticking to the agenda and participating in the discussion.

Finally, keep your sense of humor and your emotions in check. This is a business and there is always plenty to be serious about, but don't miss an opportunity to laugh together. A truly good meeting leaves nobody wondering “Was this meeting really necessary?” Enjoy your group, conduct your business, work together, respect all members and always work in the best interest of the Community you represent.

Great meetings are a combination of good planning, keeping to the agenda, taking control, working through issues with a level head, and remembering you serve at the direction of the people who elected you. When you conduct productive meetings your responsibilities are being met.