



Board Education Series

HOA MEETINGS: TYPES, RULES AND HOW TO PREPARE

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As an organization that operates as a corporation, a homeowners association must construct and organize their community so that it can thrive. Every member of an HOA is important and plays a large role in impacting the community. As the community prospers, volunteers and their board members will create committees that work alongside the board to address specific community issues. For these committees to effectively communicate and progress, they must organize meetings so that proper processes are implemented and executed.

What is an HOA meeting?

By the direction of an HOA board of directors, resident volunteers will gather to help oversee their property or community. Most often, HOAs will hold regular monthly and annual meetings that cover a wide range of topics such as financials, property, residential living, and much more. Being that HOAs are governed by the state law in which they are in, HOA meetings can vary in structure or organization. Most importantly, when conducting a meeting, the HOA must follow their association bylaws provided in the CC&R, covenants, conditions, and restrictions.

Board Meeting

Most HOAs consider a board meeting to be the most common. During a board meeting, the HOAs board of directors will host an open monthly or quarterly meeting with all community members. Typically, board meetings require less notice of as little as 7 days to at most 30 days prior. Depending on the given agenda, topics such as HOA business will usually garner the main discussion. Here is where community members have an opportunity to raise questions or suggestions about topics such as property management projects, resolving disputes, or any progress as it relates to maintenance. A member of the board will be responsible for keeping minutes that are available to HOA members.

Annual Meeting

Annual meetings are held annually by the current board of directors for all community members to have an opportunity to learn more about the organization itself. As an open meeting with all members, the focal point of the meeting is to discuss larger-scale issues. This is where the board of directors will present their annual budget, committee reports, newly elected board members, and any upcoming projects. On average, annual meetings are given 30 days' notice before the meeting. Minutes are taken by the board of directors and made available to all members.

Executive Session

Executive sessions are typically conducted behind closed doors by the direction of the board of directors — HOA community members are usually not invited. Topics of discussion include private matters, ongoing litigations, disciplinary actions, or personal issues. Due to the sensitivity of the information, board members may also initiate voting during an executive session. In this case, minutes are not available to members — only discussions that the minutes took place are mentioned during an open board meeting. For example, “an executive session was held last week and the board of directors discussed issues related to legal property damage.”

Committee Meeting

Most HOAs will have a set of committees that focus on lower-level projects within the needs of the HOA community. Examples include groups such as a welcome or social committee. Created by a subset board of directors, a committee may include one or more non-director members. Typically, each committee is required to conduct periodic meetings as they feel necessary or according to their given HOA guidelines. Most committee meetings are open to all community members and those that may want to become more involved. The structure of a committee meeting is a lot like an open board meeting — members are given anywhere from 7-30 days notice and a lead committee member will be responsible for taking minutes.

Emergency Meeting

Also known as a special meeting, emergency meetings are held when an HOA board requires an emergency gathering or special session. Only when an immediate decision or action is necessary will an emergency meeting take place. Note, an emergency meeting is considered rare and is typically not given prior notice. Some examples may include flooding, weather damage, or fires. With the authorization of the president or at least two board members, an emergency meeting is usually held in person, via email, or over the phone. When it comes to taking minutes, a record of all minutes should be taken and made available to members.

How to run an HOA meeting

For the most part, an HOA should follow a specific set of guidelines when conducting a meeting. As a helpful tool, consider using the following 5 fundamentals when coordinating a meeting with both your HOA board and community members.

1. DETERMINE THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF MEETINGS:

Depending on the size of your community, an HOA meeting can range in number of attendees. As a suggestion, consider the level of work needed in ratio to your number of volunteers. This will help even responsibilities among all volunteers.

2. SET GUIDELINES:

Setting guidelines concerning participation is imperative. For instance, a board meeting may require a quorum — a meeting that can only be conducted if the required number of board members are in attendance. To help maximize participation, allow ample notice for members to attend.

3. SET THE AGENDA:

Consider your agenda to be the road map to conducting your meeting. An agenda will help you coordinate and schedule topics promptly. Members will also feel organized and keep on topic. As a helpful suggestion, study your agenda — organize any topics of concern that could come up during a meeting. Keep conversations simple and to the point so that all members have a clear understanding of your agenda and discussions. If necessary, carve in a few minutes before the start of the meeting to discuss any rules about proper meeting protocol — this will help reduce interruptions and increase transparency.

4. TAKING MINUTES :

During all HOA meetings, minutes are typically read aloud or distributed to the meeting prior. “Minutes from a previous meeting are most often read during the start of a meeting and should be voted on, approved, and signed by the meeting chair or board president and board secretary.” The purpose of taking minutes is to provide an official record of the association’s meeting, along with important topics of discussion.

In order to take effective minutes, one should consider the following protocols when taking minutes.

- The time the meeting was called to order
- The date of the meeting
- Any additions to current or ongoing agendas
- Motions taken or rejected
- New business
- Open discussion notes
- Time of adjournment

5. FOLLOW PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE:

The sole purpose of a parliamentary procedure is to establish rules, ethics, and methods for running an HOA meeting. Robert's Rule of Order ("Robert's Rules"), is a common parliamentary procedure that most HOAs will often use when conducting an HOA meeting. This method helps facilitate the meeting in an orderly and expeditious manner.

The HOA meeting template

Now that we have established our 5 fundamentals, let us take a closer look at how to build an HOA meeting template.

CREATING YOUR TEMPLATE

- **Prepwork** – Before creating your HOA template, consider the order in which you plan to discuss your areas of focus. Preview over any old matters that may be applicable or included in your current agenda. This will help with referring back to any unfinished business that may come into the conversation during an HOA meeting.
- **Setting the agenda** – When scheduling the agenda of an HOA board meeting, the board of directors will have the majority of the say in setting the agenda. This includes all current topics — a board member may not bring up decisions previously made by the board of directors.
- **Due to COVID-19**, HOA meetings during COVID may vary — flexibility will be needed when managing an HOA meeting attendance. Due to the nature of the situation, some meetings may be held virtually or by both, virtual and in person. When creating your template, be sure to provide all members with the most updated version of the HOA meeting agenda. As a result, members can act in conjunction with one another.

HANDLING MOTIONS:

As discussed in our 5 fundamentals, Robert's Rule of Order is a parliamentary procedure that helps facilitate an HOA meeting with a proper set of guidelines and orders. One of the main parts of a parliamentary procedure is the handling of motions. In Robert's Rule of Order, 11th Edition, there are six steps to handling motions:

- A member will stand up to make a motion – Here is where the member will gain the attention of a board member by calling on their official title. The board member will then acknowledge the member to assign the member the floor.
- Another member will second to carry a motion – “I second the motion.” By saying this, you are acknowledging that at least 2 members of the board believe the motion is worth moving forward to discuss.
- Optional: presiding officer restates the motion
- Members debate the motion – The board member states, “It is moved that...” Here is where the motion is now before the board. The board member will have the opportunity to ask if there is any debate on the motion.
- Presiding officer asks for the affirmative and negative votes – Ex. “All in favor?”
- A passing motion will come to a vote – The board member will ask for all those that are in favor and opposed. Members can respond using the word “Aye.”
- Presiding officer will announce the result of the final vote