



General Education Series

Virtual vs In-Person HOA Annual Meetings

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Virtual vs In-Person HOA Annual Meetings

Virtual meetings are a great option for homeowners associations, though they do have some downsides when it comes to larger meetings. If you are familiar with electronic meeting platforms, then you know they have limitations.

For instance, you can't see everyone simultaneously. Typically, only the speaker appears on the screen, maybe accompanied by a presiding officer.

It is also easier to talk over one another, so recognition becomes harder due to how many participants are involved. This usually requires you to mute everyone.

Steps to Hold a Virtual Annual Meeting

1. The association must send a notice of the meeting, following the procedures and requirements set forth within the governing documents.
2. The notice should clearly state that the meeting will be held virtually and provide the platform to be used. It must also include the agenda.
3. No motions must take place during the virtual meeting.
4. No voting by voice or hands must take place during the virtual meeting.
5. Since the association won't conduct any business, it does not need a quorum to hold the meeting. However, it does need a quorum for written ballots.
6. The association can make decisions through written ballots, which can also use electronic methods such as email. A verification process must exist, though, so that members can mail their ballots back, attach them to an email, or cast them using an online voting platform.

Here are some common problems you can expect to encounter when holding a virtual HOA annual meeting with a larger number of participants:

Technological Issues

One of the most common problems you will face has to do with the technology itself. Even though many platforms have upgraded their systems, you will still run into some technological challenges, especially when you have a large number of participants. Some platforms simply can't take the sheer volume of traffic. In fact, they may even malfunction when you reach a certain number. Additionally, not everyone has the same Internet quality, so some members may experience delays, lags, and even drops.

Distractions

When you have in-person gatherings, grabbing and retaining everyone's attention is simpler. Virtually, though, people have more distractions available. Members might try to multitask or just keep themselves busy with less important things. They might surf the web, browse social media, or do other tasks that don't even require the Internet. That means you don't really have their full, undivided attention.

A Different Feel

When it comes down to it, virtual meetings just don't offer the same feel as physical meetings. It is also significantly harder to build relationships, strike a rapport, and establish a sense of community if you're just seeing everyone online. This is because you can't really socialize to the same extent through a screen as you would in-person. In fact, most of the social interactions take place outside of the meeting itself, such as during breaks, before meetings, and after meetings.

Might Encourage Bad Behavior

Discussions happen at HOA annual meetings, so it is only normal to have spirited debates. But, for some reason, people tend to not hold back during virtual meetings as opposed to in-person meetings. Members might say meaner or more inconsiderate things because they feel less intimidated or less shy.

It is close to the equivalent of a comments section or chat room where people generally have more courage to speak their minds, even if their thoughts might hurt someone else. The element of emotion simply disappears.