

A Guide to Successful Association Meetings

Annual Meetings or special meetings of a community association are not usually well-attended by the members. In fact, it is often rare for an association to have adequate attendance levels required by the governing documents to vote on matters pertaining to the governance of the association. While there may be many legitimate reasons for unsuccessful meetings, certain practices and preparations can lead to better attended and more effective meetings.

No community resident, or board member, wants to spend numerous hours at an association meeting discussing trivial matters. Unless there is a major expenditure item or significant changes proposed to the association's governing documents, most meetings can be conducted in approximately one hour. However, for this to happen, the board must establish a clear agenda for the meeting with a specific list of agenda items for action and discussion.

List of Common Agenda Items

The following is a suggested list of agenda items with an explanation of their purpose:

1. **Call to Order**-this is done by the board president at a set time to begin the meeting. Starting the meeting consistently at the posted time will help encourage timely arrival by members.
2. **Establish Quorum**-the president establishes a quorum by calling roll of the board members and determining if a majority is present.
3. **Approval of Minutes**-the board of directors votes to approve the minutes of the last meeting. The board should be provided copies of the minutes prior to the meeting to review them and determine if corrections are necessary.
4. **Financial Report**-this report summarizes the available cash balance for the association, a comparison of the current finances with the approved annual budget, and a presentation of unanticipated expenses.
5. **Manager's Report**-this report details what has taken place in the association from the last meeting, as well as any matters that need to be approved by the board. As with the minutes, this report should be provided to the board members several days in advance of the meeting. Targeting discussion to the items needing board approval will help accelerate this portion of the meeting.
6. **Committee Reports**-depending on the number and duties of the various committees created by an association, not all committees will need to provide reports. These reports should also be in writing, but few of these matters require board action.
7. **Old Business**-this portion of the meeting is used for items discussed in a previous association meeting that required further research or discussion before action by the board.
8. **New Business**-new topics for future consideration are presented during this portion of the meeting. Information for new topics should be submitted in writing when possible.

9. **Public Forum**-most association hearings will provide time for association members in attendance to express comments or complaints to the board of directors. To encourage members to focus their comments, the board may limit the time allotted each member who wishes to speak. The board is not required to act on any issue presented during this time. However, if several members rise to speak on a similar issue, the board should consider addressing that issue at the next meeting as a specific agenda item.
10. **Adjournment**-this closes the meeting. The time of adjournment can be posted in the meeting notice which provides certainty of a meeting's end. A specific adjournment time also encourages focus on the agenda items. Before adjourning, the board should announce the meeting time of the next meeting.

This format can assist in directing a meeting and managing its length, but the board must be active in its efforts to control the meeting and discussions. A little organization and planning can provide for more effective meetings and lead to better attendance and participation from members. As more members participate in the decision-making process, this reduces confusion and conflicts from members unaware of or opposed to decisions made by the board and association membership.