

CO-OP MEETINGS

Meetings exist within the co-op are when a group, committee, co-op members, and the Board, come together for the purpose of business, planning, and social activities.

Meetings provide the opportunity for coop members to make decisions, express ideas and plan for future activities. Meetings can take place on a regular basis or be initiated for specific activities. For example, the Handbook Group is implemented approximately every five years to update the co-op unit handbooks and this group meets for several months biweekly. The Board meets regularly every two weeks and will host the Annual General Meeting for all co-op members to discuss important co-op functions and decisions.

Successful Meetings Can Be Accomplished by:

- Members being present and prepared
- All members being on time
- Members of the committee co-operating with the Chair to follow the agenda which should be prepared before the meeting
- Collectively, members should decide how often to meet and the time and place of these meetings
- Committee members being enthusiastic and vocal, while being conscious of the rights of everyone at the meeting to have their ideas heard and taken into account
- Recognizing that some topics are confidential, such items will relate to personal information of a particular member(s) or employee(s) or the co-op's legal position on certain matters. The confidentiality should be discussed and agreed upon making all participants bound to that agreement
- Including time for socializing at the meetings
- Committee members utilizing training sessions and workshops of Canadian Housing Federation of Toronto [CHFT]

Minutes of Meetings

Minutes must be recorded and copies given to all committee members. A copy should also be given to the co-ordinator for the office files and Board review.

The minutes should include:

- The date, time, and place of the meeting
- A list of all members present, those who send regrets, and those absent
- The agenda of the meeting
- Items of important information discussed
- All decisions or motions made and a detailed list of all member's names to complete a task, a date for completion, and if indicated, the amount of money to be spent
- The established date and time of the next meeting
- Any suggested topics for new business for the next agenda.

Decision Making at Committee Meetings

- Members should make sure that they have all the facts on each item and that there has been enough time to fully discuss each item of the agenda before a decision is made
- Ensuring that there is a quorum present, normally 50% of committee members – if not, a meeting may proceed but no motion can be made
- If an item of business is complicated, or if all the facts are not available, the committee should choose one or two of its members to study the item and report back to the committee
- If a certain item demands a lot of attention, have a special meeting just for it. This way the regular business of the committee is not held up
- Formal Rules of Order usually are not used to make decisions at committee meetings, however, if needed our Co-op Organization Bylaw No. 4, Schedule A, page 51 provides the Rules of Order
- An alternative way of decision making is called consensus. This means that all participants shall be in agreement before a decision can be made. Consensus, although easier, requires more time. The Chair will recognize a decision must be made when this occurs. This may be necessary because of; a full agenda; a repetition of ideas; one person who may not ever agree; or because of a need to keep the meeting moving along to deal with additional matters. In these cases, the Chair should call a vote. Committee members must call upon each other to be cooperative and respectful by supporting the decision made.

How To Turn Over The Decision To Another Group

If you want the Board or a committee to make the decision, say "I move to refer the question to a committee".

How To Set Discussion Aside Indefinitely

If members clearly don't want to deal with this issue in the near future, say "I move to table the motion".

When You Can Speak Out Of Turn

There are only three times you can jump ahead of your turn to speak.

If you think the Chair is not following the proper meeting procedure, then call out "Point of Order", and explain what you think is wrong.

If you have an important bit of information that will save a lot of discussion, then call out "Point of Information", and give your information as briefly as possible.

If you can't hear the Chair, or members will faint if someone doesn't open a window, call out "Point of Privilege", and then say what you want to be done.

How To Vote

When the Chair calls for the vote, you can:

- vote yes, when the Chair says "All in favour",
- vote no, when the Chair says "All against", or
- raise your hand when the Chair says "Abstentions" if you don't want to vote.

Sometimes members don't vote because they don't understand the motion. It is better to ask for explanations during the discussion, so that you can vote. Don't be afraid to ask a "dumb question". If you are confused, then other members are too.

SPEAKING UP AT MEETINGS

All co-op members go to meetings. But when you get there, you might find it hard to say what you think. This is because meetings run by "rules of order". This leaflet will explain

- how to take part in a meeting
- how to understand rules of order

Why Speak Up?

First of all, because the co-op belongs to the members. Members have the right to control it. Control by members is one of the main differences between living in a co-op and renting from a landlord. If members don't speak up, they will leave the control in the hands of a few members.

Secondly, your ideas and opinions are as valuable as those of any one else. Some people are more used to meetings, and feel more comfortable with the way they run. But that does not mean that you can't learn to get your ideas across.

Try these tips. The more often you speak up, the easier it gets.

How To Get The Members To Talk About Your Idea

You need to put the issue on the agenda.

Call the co-op president between meetings, and ask when you could bring up your issue. She may suggest that the Board or a committee should discuss your idea first. If not, ask the president to put your idea on a future members' meeting agenda.



If your item is short or urgent, you can add it at the meeting. When the Chair asks the members to approve the agenda, say "*I would like to add something to the agenda.*" You can also suggest where your item might fit on the agenda. (Many co-ops have an "Other Business" section at the end of the agenda.)

How To Find Out If Members Agree With Your Idea

You should make a motion. A motion is simply a proposal to the members at the meeting. To make a motion, write out what you want to say. The clearer the motion, the better. Then raise your hand! When the Chairperson calls on you, say, "*I move that . . .*" and say what you want.

The Chairperson must know that at least one other person in the room supports the motion before the members can discuss it. If you didn't make the motion, but want the members to talk about it, say "*I second the motion.*"

How To Give Your Opinion

If you made the motion, the Chairperson will let you start the discussion. If you didn't make the motion, but have an opinion, raise your hand. You can raise your hand even while other people are talking. Just keep your hand up until the Chair catches your eye.

When the Chair calls on you, say what you think as clearly and as briefly as possible. Remember, you must speak to the motion. It helps to start with "*I want to speak in favour of the motion because...*" or "*I want to speak against the motion because...*"

How To Change The Motion

If you want to make some changes to the motion before you can support it, then you should amend the motion. Raise your hand, and when it is your turn to speak, say "*I move to amend the motion to read . . .*" and give the wording you want. If someone seconds this motion, then it will be discussed and voted on.

Note: An amendment can add, take away or change parts of the first, or main motion. But it can't completely go against the main motion. If you don't like the motion at all, vote against it. Once the motion is defeated, you can make a new motion.

If you think that the movers and seconders of the main motion will agree to your amendment, then say "*I hope this will be considered a friendly amendment.*" The Chair will then ask the members who moved and seconded the main motion if they agree to the change.

If they do, then the amendment becomes the main motion. If they don't, then the meeting stops talking about the main motion, and discusses and votes on the change. If the amendment wins, it becomes part of the main motion. If it loses, the members go back to discussing the main motion in its original form.

How To Take Back The Motion

If you made a motion, and then during the discussion realize:

- it was not the right time to make a decision, or
- it would be better to talk about another motion,

then say, "*I wish to withdraw the motion.*"

How To Stop The Discussion

If you think the talk has gone on too long, and that most members have already made up their minds, then raise your hand. When the Chair calls on you, say "*I call the question.*" If someone seconds your motion, then the Chair will ask members to vote on whether to end discussion. If two-thirds of the members vote for your motion, then the meeting must vote immediately on the motion or amendment being discussed.

How To Put Off Discussion To A Future Meeting

Raise your hand, and say "*I move to defer the question to the next members' meeting.*"

MEETING PARTICIPATION SELF EVALUATION

As a participant in a group, do I ...

1. arrive on time?
2. remain until the end?
3. study the agenda and come prepared to discuss?
4. speak up when I have something to say?
5. encourage others to say what they think?
6. listen attentively when others are speaking?
7. respect and think about the viewpoint of others?
8. request further information when I feel that the group does not have enough information to make a decision?
9. help sum up ideas?
10. help other group members to feel at ease?
11. avoid interrupting others?
12. avoid cross-talk with neighbours?
13. avoid rambling, telling too many anecdotes or changing the subject?

The Co-op holds several meetings throughout the year that require the attendance and participation of all Co-operative Members. These include:

Annual General Meeting [AGM]

The co-op holds an Annual General Member [AGM] meeting each year to discuss the auditor's report, approving the financial statements, voting in new board members, and discussion of annual co-op planning. The attendance and participation of all co-op members is imperative at these meetings. More information about these meetings can be found in the Co-op Handbook in By-law Number 4 Article 3.

General Board Meeting [GMM]

The Board will call a General Member's Meeting at least once a year, in addition to the annual meeting. Important decisions are made at these meetings that involve the financial spending and long term planning of the co-op. Co-op members have the opportunity to put forth an agenda item at these meetings. The attendance and participation of all co-op members is imperative at these meetings. More information about these meetings can be found in the Co-op Handbook in By-law Number 4, Article 3.

Special Meetings

The Board can hold Special Meetings. A Special Meeting can be called by a decision of the Board, by the President or Vice-President, or by a quorum of directors. A Special Meeting is created when a discussion or problem solving is required beyond the parameters of an Annual or General Meeting. Any co-op member can participate in these meetings. More information about these meetings can be found in the Co-op Handbook in By-law Number 4, Article 5, page 23.

Board Meetings

These meetings are held by the Board members every two weeks. Any co-op member can attend these meetings to bring forth ideas and information; in addition, keep updated on Co-op activities and planning. A copy of the Board Minutes is available to members at the Co-op Office and posted in each building bulletin board. More information about these meetings can be found in the Co-op Handbook in By-law Number 4, Article 5, page 22 & 23.