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EFFECTIVE BOARD MEETINGS

In our fast paced life we handle everything, getting to and from work, taking care of the family, etc. and as a Board Member we want to dedicate our time efficiently because time is important. The following are some tips to run an effective Board meeting, we hope they are useful to you.

Identifying What it is Not

First a Board meeting is not the meeting of the members (that is the annual meeting); their involvement is specifically limited. It's the Board's job to help the membership understand this.

A Board meeting is not a meeting of the high school debate club. We are not referring to the required discourse a Board must engage in to reach a decision. We are referring to debate between Board members and owners who choose to attend the meeting. While sometimes necessary between Board members, this interaction with audience members must be avoided for a meeting to be effective. If the Board allows too much homeowner involvement during the meeting, the business cannot be completed. So how do we engage those present while still getting work accomplished?

The Agenda

In California, Boards are strictly regulated by Davis-Sterling (www.davis-sterling.com) about the addition of new and unposted items to an agenda during a meeting.

Everyone who attends a Board meeting should be provided a detailed agenda containing all the action items the Board will be voting on. Owner commentary should be limited to the agenda items and permitted only at the beginning or the end of the meeting with a three minute time limit. If an owner wishes to bring other action items to a Board's attention, they should be acknowledged, noted and placed on the agenda for the next regular Board meeting.

Impassioned Homeowners

The Board may be drawn into a debate with an impassioned homeowner during the open forum portion of the meeting. This is hard to avoid as Board members are often as passionately in favor of or against the owner's position. The president has the primary control of this situation. It takes a significant amount of self-control to avoid this pitfall and it may fall to another board member to intervene to get things back on track. Controlling the emotional conduct in the meeting is vital to an effective meeting. Many Boards find that judicious use of parliamentary procedure helps to keep the meeting on track (see following section).

Getting Help

To fulfill their fiduciary obligations, Board members must be effective. To reach that desired result, they are empowered to hire professionals such as accountants, attorneys, engineers, landscape contractors, and management firms to provide them with guidance and information. We advise consultation with these professionals so that all the bases are covered, with that Board has expert help with the issues they have to tackle.