



MEETINGS – EFFICIENCY

Meetings

Within the course of a meeting, there are several components that will come into play. Understanding these components will allow the meeting to proceed smoothly.

Meeting Purpose

Before scheduling a meeting, ask yourself whether the meeting is necessary. Is there important business at hand, or is a meeting being scheduled because “the association has always done it this way?” For instance, if the association has monthly board meetings that generally feature no significant business, the association may consider quarterly board meetings instead. Remember, a special board meeting could be called if important business would need to be addressed.

When a meeting is scheduled, the entire group should know what is to be accomplished. The purpose of the meeting should have a specific, clear objective, i.e., develop a plan of action, brainstorm a long-standing problem, or educate the board and members. Make sure everyone at the meeting is clear on why you are getting together. Meetings without a clear purpose become a waste of precious time.

An individual is giving his/her free time to attend a meeting. As a result, it is vital the member’s time is not wasted. If he/she feels it is, the member will be less likely to attend future association meetings.

Location

Find a meeting place that can adequately accommodate the meeting. Choose a meeting room with enough chairs, tables, and amenities for everyone and be sure the temperature of the room is comfortable. Always try to find a spot that is centrally located for most of the attendees. Also, make sure the room will be quiet enough for your needs. Loud voices, laughing and outside noises, such as bowling, are all distractions that could limit the effectiveness of your meeting.

Notice

Written notice, like the one shown in the sample, shall be sent to the proper constituency as outlined in the association bylaws.

SAMPLE MEETING NOTICE

The _____ USBC Association will be holding a (board/membership) meeting on (date) at (time). The meeting will be held in the room at (location).

Please be sure to review the items enclosed with this notice prior to the meeting. Bring your comments and questions. Finally, please remember to relay this meeting information to your league members. We look forward to seeing you there. If there are any questions, please contact us at (email/phone).



As shown in the sample meeting notice, it is critical to remind league secretaries and youth representatives (league and center only) to distribute meeting information to the league members. League secretaries and youth representatives (league and center only) should furthermore be reminded that they have an important responsibility to get meeting information out. If they do not, association members could miss out on the meeting.

Board members may need to try to get the message out regarding upcoming membership meetings as well. Meeting notices can be posted at bowling centers, the association office, in newsletters, on the association Web site, social media and any other place it can be viewed by a large number of members.

If elections will take place at the meeting, the notice should remind members interested in running for a board position to submit qualifications to the nominating committee, if applicable or board.

Finally, if the meeting will be held in conjunction with another event, such as an awards ceremony, consider disclosing this information, along with the dress code, meal arrangements, etc. in the meeting notice.

NOTE: If improper or no meeting notice is given, the meeting could be protested and, if upheld, considered null and void.

Reviewing Meeting Information

To save time at meetings, the expectation should be all members have reviewed the material enclosed with the meeting notice prior to the meeting. The meeting notice should not only include the agenda and previous meeting minutes, but also committee reports and background information of items to be discussed. Background information for a board meeting could constitute something such as the features and costs associated with various computers the association is considering for purchase.

Therefore, using the purchase of a new computer as an example, when the computer topic comes up, meeting participants can move right into discussion, opposed to allowing time for individuals to review the materials at the meeting.

Establish Ground Rules

Ground rules should be set at the start of every meeting, so everyone understands what the expectations are. Having ground rules ensures all members are aware of the association standards and what behavior is acceptable.

Once established, the ground rules should be a staple at every meeting. The association should distribute a copy of the ground rules to all meeting attendees.

Below are some examples of ground rules to consider:

- Attendance and promptness are expected.
- Meetings will start on time.
- Review all information enclosed with the meeting notice.
- Speaking rules (i.e., time limits, no interrupting others).
- Behavior guidelines (i.e., no cursing, no personal attacks).
- Confidentiality must be maintained, when appropriate.
- Interruptions are not acceptable (i.e., turn off cell phones, side conversations).

If a ground rule is broken, the presiding officer stops the meeting and reminds the meeting participant of the ground rules. Members should feel obligated to ensure the ground rules are followed.



Start and End Times

One aspect of parliamentary procedure members really appreciate is having a pre-determined start and end time to a meeting and holding to it. This means meetings start on-time, even if an association leader is late. Sticking to a set end time keeps the meeting on task, ensuring time is not wasted on irrelevant topics. With a pre-determined end time, a meeting culture will generally shift to everyone staying on task. Further, members may be more willing to attend a meeting if they know it will only last 60 minutes, 90 minutes, etc.

Two ways to stay on task is to adhere to the agenda and allocate a specific amount of time to each item on the agenda. If an agenda item has not been addressed by the specified meeting end time, the item is placed on the next meeting agenda. Therefore, the most important items to address at the meeting should be listed at the top of the agenda.

Time Limits for Speaking

Establishing speaking time limits has many benefits. First, it requires members to summarize their thoughts and get to the heart of an issue. Second, time limits help reign in dominating members. Finally, giving each member the same length of time to speak allows for equal input on a matter.

Ultimately, each association will need to establish how many times an individual can speak on a matter, as well as how long each speech may last. For instance, the association may adopt a policy whereby a member may speak twice on each motion, with a maximum of two minutes per speech.

Parking Lot

A “parking lot” is a resource a presiding officer can use to deflect subjects that arise that are off topic. Not only will it keep discussion to the issue at hand, but it also gives reassurance to members that their concerns are not ignored; they are just put off temporarily.

Consider the following example: the association board is debating a motion to revise fund-raising guidelines, and a participant states, “we need to alter the youth tournament rules, too.”

In this instance the presiding officer may interrupt and remind the participant to focus on the motion on the floor – revising fund-raising guidelines. The presiding officer can then state: “we will place youth tournament rules in the parking lot.” Items placed in the parking lot can be addressed at the end of the meeting, if time allows, or be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

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