



## #263 HOA Homefront – You’re STILL In The Meeting?

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As someone who regularly attends HOA board meetings, I can attest that most of them run far too long. Later in longer meetings, concentration and the quality of the deliberations deteriorates. Could any of the following solutions help your board meetings?

**Stay on topic.** It’s everybody’s job (not just the chair) to keep the discussion on agenda. If you’re all off-topic, the agenda is being neglected. Get back on track and discuss what the agenda promised the board would address.

**Use a consent calendar.** Routine and non-controversial items should be in a consent calendar. The consent calendar can quickly dispense with such items in one vote and without discussion. Any director can request an item be removed from it and moved into a separate agenda discussion topic for normal discussion and vote.

**Avoid overly ambitious agendas.** Some decisions or subjects are large enough to merit a special board meeting. If the agenda is too full, don’t try to rush through it. Instead, defer some items to another board meeting.

**Allow major topics to be analyzed by a committee, manager or a consultant.** Some items really are too large or complex to handle along with the myriad of the board’s ordinary decisions. Some help may result in a clearer decision.

**Respect disagreement.** In a 5-member board, a 3-2 vote is as binding as 5-0. “No” votes are not bad or disloyal. Insisting on unanimity puts too much pressure on directors and lengthens discussion as everyone tries to figure out how to get complete agreement.

**Call for the question.** Boards often over-discuss issues – even ones on which everybody agrees. When the chair sees that the board is clearly headed in a certain direction, it is time to move toward a vote.

**Come prepared.** Hopefully, your board receives an agenda packet several days before the board meeting. Read your packet before the meeting. A prepared board is more efficient.

**Observe open forum and avoid “town hall” style board meetings.** Board meetings often take too long because the homeowners in attendance feel welcome to participate in the board’s discussions – even though they do not have the board packet and will not be held legally responsible for what the board



decides. Allow owners to speak, uninterrupted, during the open forum time, and then insist that the members not interrupt the board during its deliberations.

**Have a reasonable time limit on open forum remarks.** Three minutes is almost universally used, but if more than ten people wish to talk, it should be reduced to two minutes, to allow everyone a chance before people get tired.

**Avoid co-managing or doing committee work.** Boards often become bogged down in matters where the board discusses details of how the manager does their job, or in specific planning best left to committees. If it seems the board is bogged down, it might be because the board does not have enough information and is not ready to decide ... or is micro-managing.

**Adopt meeting rules.** Such rules can set boundaries for behavior in meetings but can also be a very helpful positive indication to members that the association places a high value on organized and fair meetings.

Association governance is a sacrifice that directors make to benefit their neighbors. Work toward more efficient meetings and go home sooner.