

Meeting Procedures

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Meeting Procedures

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Before the Meeting

- Suitable date and time
- Agenda (refer Appendix 1) and Minutes (refer Appendix 2) circulated. For Annual General Meeting (AGM), all members should also be provided with copy of the Annual Report
- Venue opened up beforehand
- Check quorum as per Rules – a quorum is the minimum number of people needed to hold a meeting Housekeeping - switch off mobile phones, etc.

How to Open the Meeting

The Chairperson should be at the meeting place before the start of the meeting, this sets an example of punctuality, welcoming members and attending to last minute details that may arise.

At the time which was set down for starting the meeting, the Chairperson must first of all check to see that a quorum is present (please check your Rules for more information regarding quorums – in most cases this is half plus one). The Chairperson should now declare the meeting open with the words '*I declare this meeting open at _____[time].*'

Until this is done the meeting is not open and therefore business cannot be conducted. The Chairperson may also welcome members and make opening remarks.

If the Chairperson is not present at the time the meeting is to commence, then the members present elect a chairperson. The person elected to chair declares the meeting open.

Present

The Secretary records the members present. This may be done in an attendance book, as well as in the minutes.

Tip

All decisions should be in the form of motions, for example, *'That Clive Smith be in charge of Petty Cash for year 2007'*.

Each motion needs to be Moved, Seconded, and then put to the Vote by asking *'All those in favour'* and *'All those against'*. If most people are for the motion, it is recorded as Carried. If 50% or less support, the motion is recorded as Not Carried.

Apologies

At this point in the agenda, the Chairperson calls for apologies. The correct statement that the Chairperson should make is *'Are there any apologies from absent members?'*

If a member wishes to tender an apology, they would state *'Yes, My Smith apologies for his absence tonight'* or *'Mr Smith asked me submit his apology'*.

Once all apologies have been heard, the Chairperson then directs the Secretary to record them. If there are no objections, then the Chairperson says *'In the absence of any voice to the contrary, I direct the Secretary to record the apologies'*.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of a meeting are a succinct record of what happened at the meeting. The Secretary or Minute Taker will write up the minutes and provide all members with a copy either by post or some other method, usually with the Agenda for the next meeting.

If the minutes are only handed out at the meeting, then they should be read out.

Before any business can be discussed the minutes must be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings for the meeting at which they were recorded.

Approving Minutes

The Chairperson asks the members if they have all had an opportunity to read their minutes. If so, the Chairperson asks for someone who was at the meeting to move *'That the Minutes dated ____ be accepted as a true and correct record of the previous meeting'*. A seconder is required. And the Chairperson then says *'All those in favour'*.

Amending Minutes

If a member believes the Minutes are incorrect they must speak when the Chairperson asks for the Minutes to be accepted, by stating '*Chairperson, I move that the minutes be corrected by_____ [then detail the alterations]*'. This proposal requires a seconder, and if the amendments are controversial, they may be debated.

In most cases it is a simple error by the minute-taker and there will be agreement from the members. The minutes should now be immediately altered and initialled by the Chairperson and Secretary. The Chairperson then repeats the question '*Is it your wish that I sign the minutes as corrected, as a true and correct record of the meeting on ____ [date]...?*' Once signed, the minutes are then taken as being correct and a part of the permanent record of the Co-Operative.

Important

Once the Minutes are accepted, the Chairperson and Secretary sign and date each page, and if necessary, initial each amendment and place these Minutes in the Minute Book.

Business Arising from Previous Minutes

The meeting has now agreed that the Minutes are correct and is ready to go ahead with any matters which arise from them. The Chairperson should be aware of the all the matters arising from the Minutes, and should also be aware of who was responsible for reporting on each matter. If action was required to be performed by Directors, sub-committees are others, then a statement of action taken and results achieved should be reported.

Some matters may come up under this agenda item, and then be repeated either in the Correspondence, Reports or General Business sections of the meeting. The Chairperson should point this out and clarify with the meeting when items will be discussed.

Correspondence

For the convenience of members, correspondence should be dealt with by presenting all inward correspondence first, followed by all outward items. If letters are to be read (and only the most important ones should be read) the Secretary should not read out the formal address, giving only the date and the important contents of the letter.

It is also a good idea to deal with each related series of letters as an item, allowing orderly discussion and options there and then. It saves trying to remember items later and allows for the least delay in dealing with business.

A list of outward correspondence should then be tabled, which may usually consist of bills being paid.

After all correspondence has been dealt with and any discussion completed, the Chairperson asks for a motion to be moved that all correspondence be accepted. A seconder is required, then a vote.

Agenda Review (optional)

At this point on the Agenda, an opportunity is made available to alter the existing order of business.

With the regard to the order of business, the Chairperson would say '*Does anyone wish to propose a change in the order of business?*'

As well, items which members wish to discuss under General Business can be accepted and noted.

Reports

In a co-operative, it is very important that the Board of Directors, sub-committees or specially organised working parties provide reports. Even if a particular sub committee has nothing to report, the minutes should read '*tenant selection sub committee – nil to report*'.

Reports can be either read out at the meeting or sent to members with the Agenda. Sending reports with the Agenda is probably the better way to go as it gives members

an opportunity to reflect before the meeting. The Chairperson invites comments from the members about the reports presented. If there are recommendations made in the reports concerning decisions that need to be made, the Chairperson may invite discussion and when appropriate hold the vote. At the end, the Chairperson asks for a motion to be moved that all reports be accepted. A seconder is required, then a vote.

General Business

Under this section the meeting might discuss policies and procedures for your Co-Operative. It is also the time when members may have an item for discussion. So as not to be distracted and have the meeting run longer than necessary, it is important that members only discuss matters that affect the running of the group.

It is the responsibility of the Chairperson to make sure that points are relevant and any discussion do not go on too long. If a group uses Standing Orders (refer Appendix 3), it is most important that the Chairperson makes sure they are followed.

Notice of Motions for Next Meeting

The Chairperson may call for motions to be discussed at the next meeting.

Date and Venue of Next Meeting

If you have already planned the dates, location and time of your meetings then this will be a formality with no need for discussion or debate. If this is not the case then the Chairperson needs to receive input from all the members as to the best day and time. The Chairperson then forms a motion and puts it to the meeting to be accepted.

The Closure

The meeting is declared closed when the Chairperson says '*I declare the meeting closed at [time]*'. The Chairperson cannot call the meeting to a close until all items on the Agenda have been cleared, unless with permission to do so by the members present. However, to avoid unnecessary or unproductive discussion, if all business has been finished the Chair may call the meeting to a close.

Appendix 1: Sample Agenda – General Meeting

[On Co-Op Letterhead]

Agenda, General Members Meeting

Meeting Held at _____ [address]

At _____ [time and date]

- 1) Chairperson's Opening Remarks/open meeting
- 2) Present
- 3) Apologies
- 4) Absent
- 5) Confirmation of Previous Minutes
- 6) Business Arising from previous minutes
- 7) Correspondence
- 8) Business Arising from Correspondence
- 9) Agenda Review
- 10) Reports:
 - Chairperson
 - Finance
 - Maintenance
 - Directors
 - Sub committees
- 11) General Business
- 12) Notice of Motions for Next Meeting
- 13) Date, time and venue for next Meeting
- 14) Close of Meeting

Sample Agenda – AGM

[On Co-Op Letterhead]

Agenda, Annual General Meeting

Meeting Held at _____ [address]

At _____ [time and date]

- 1) Present
- 2) Apologies
- 3) Absent
- 4) Confirmation of Minutes of Previous Annual General Meeting
- 5) Business Arising from Previous Minutes
- 6) Reports:
 - Board of directors
 - Management
 - Financial Statements
 - Auditors Report
 - Activities carried out by the Co-Op in the past year
- 7) Election of Board of Directors
- 8) Appointment of Auditor (if necessary)
- 9) Special Business/Special Resolutions
- 10) General business
- 11) Close of Meeting

Appendix 2: Minutes

Minutes are the legal record of all decisions made. Minutes must be kept for all meetings (Board of Directors, General Meetings, Sub-Committees and the AGM). Minutes should be kept for seven years and are required to be submitted as part of the annual audit.

Distributing Minutes

Minutes of the General Members meetings must be provided to all members. Directors Meeting minutes *may* be provided to general members if the Directors agree. CEHL recommends that Directors keep members informed by providing the minutes of Directors meetings (Note: some details may need to be deleted to ensure privacy and confidentiality, particularly the names and addresses of any members in rent arrears).

Format of Minutes

The minutes should be typed. They should record decisions in the form of motions and may include a brief summary of the main issues discussed. Ensuring that the minutes are a concise record of the decisions made at the meeting makes them a useful reference point as well as an important legal document.

Example:

Motion: Peter Jones to be in charge of petty cash for 2008

Moved: John Brown, Seconded: Mary Smith

Motion carried:

Note: if a motion is put to a vote the minutes should record the numbers in favour

Appendix 3 – Chairing a Difficult Meeting

If your Co-Op is experiencing conflict at meetings, it may be useful to set some basic rules and procedures to help ensure the Chair can manage the meeting, move business along efficiently, and allow equal opportunity for all members to voice an opinion.

- Address all remarks through the Chairperson
- Not permit interruptions—one person only should speak at a time.
- Not permit any member to raise his/her voice and become aggressive – if this occurs the group should have a plan, such as calling a short break or asking the member to leave.
- Members should declare any self-interest regarding an issue being discussed. Although they can participate in the discussion, they should stand aside for the vote.
- Discuss only what's on the Agenda.

If meetings continue to be heated, the Chair can:

- Invoke the Disputes Procedure (refer Rules), bringing in someone else (a mediator or CEHL Support Coordinator) to help work through the problem;
- Invoke Standing Orders.

Standing Orders

Standing orders are basically the formal rules for running meetings. Normally, Co-Ops prefer a less formal approach, but standing orders are useful in situations of reoccurring or intense conflict at meetings.

Standing orders include:

- Addressing all remarks through the Chairperson;
- Speakers may only address the meeting when called on to do so by the Chair
- Refusing to tolerate raised voices and angry or derogatory remarks;
- Keeping carefully to the subject at hand and not letting the discussion 'drift';
- Ensuring decisions are in the form of a mover and seconder and are carried;
- The agenda must be followed in the order in which it is set out, unless otherwise determined by a resolution of the meeting;
- The Chair may move *'That this meeting proceed to the next business/item on the Agenda'*.

Refer to Co-Op Rules for more on standing orders at a General Meeting.