

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Meeting Essentials

Meeting Place

Find a meeting place that can adequately accommodate the neighborhood meeting. If you are expecting a small group, you may want to have your first meeting in someone's home.



For a group larger than ten people, check the availability of City facilities, schools, or churches. City-owned facilities may waive the fees for neighborhood association meetings. Check with the Neighborhood Resource Program or the “Community Meeting Rooms” in the *City Information* section of the handbook for a list of potential meeting places.

Speakers

You can invite staff from various city departments to speak on topics, such as recycling, Crime Watch, or City planning. Other government agencies and non-profit organizations are also a good source for speakers. However, if you feel a speaker will not be beneficial, do not invite one. The Neighborhood Resources Office may be able to suggest appropriate speakers for your agendas.

Meeting Tools

- ◆ Name tags to identify the officers/directors and residents.
- ◆ Sign-in sheet for all residents and guests.
- ◆ Flip charts, dry mark board, chalk board
- ◆ If merchants or neighbors donate refreshments, publicly thank them and place a tag on the platter acknowledging their contribution.

Meeting Tips

- ◆ Always start on time. Have your meeting place open at least 15 minutes early for residents to arrive, socialize, and prepare for the meeting.
- ◆ Have an agenda to keep the meeting flowing and in order. Keep it simple. (See Writing An Agenda and Appendix B: Sample Agenda)
- ◆ State the purpose of the meeting clearly on the agenda. Restate the purpose in an opening statement at the beginning of the meeting.
- ◆ Stick to the agenda, but always provide an opportunity for individuals to speak on any new business or issue at the end of the meeting.
- ◆ Introduce any public officials at the beginning of each meeting.
- ◆ Recognize newcomers at the beginning of each meeting. You may ask them to state what street they live on.

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Meeting Tips, cont.

- ◆ Be brief and keep comments relevant to each concern that is discussed. Pace the meeting so that it does not last too long.
- ◆ Do research ahead of time for additional information that may be needed. If necessary, invite resource people to give a presentation.
- ◆ Use visual aids as much as possible. Residents can relate to something that they can see.
- ◆ Allow everyone to contribute. After a concern or project is presented, open the discussion; however, set a time limit for discussion, especially if the agenda is long.
- ◆ Make frequent summaries during the discussion so that everyone clearly understands what is being stated.
- ◆ Stress cooperation and collaboration, not conflict. If conflict occurs, appoint a committee to research the concern and report the findings at the next meeting. Encourage those individuals that are voicing their concerns to be on the committee.
- ◆ Assign tasks and delegate responsibility as the meeting proceeds. This gives your neighbors a feeling of belonging instead of just listening.
- ◆ Guide the meeting from concerns to solutions. Always ask your neighbors how they would solve or approach a concern. Keep in mind that some solutions may take time.
- ◆ Wrap up the meeting. Go over the agenda, and give an overview of each issue discussed.
- ◆ Have an opportunity for neighbors to bring up new business or make announcements.
- ◆ Before adjourning, state the next meeting date, time, and place. Thank everyone for attending.

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Types of Associations

There are different types of neighborhood groups in Longmont. It is important for a homeowner to become familiar with the type of community that they live in and to have an understanding of what the homeowner's role is in their neighborhood.

Home Owners Associations or Community Associations use covenants, rules, and architectural standards/guidelines. This type of association usually has mandatory dues. The covenants, rules and architectural standards/guidelines are used to:

- Maintain, preserve, enhance, and protect the property values and assets of the community
 - Promote harmonious community living
 - Preserve the common scheme and harmonious design of the community
 - Maintain the common areas of the community
- ◆ A covenant affects how the property is used and who may enjoy the property and is said to “run with the land” or the property. This means the covenant and the property are inseparable once the covenant is recorded, and all owners, present and future, are subject to the covenant.
 - ◆ A rule is a specific statement of required behavior, which if violated carries a penalty.
 - ◆ An architectural or design standard/guideline is a rule that applies to the appearance of an owner's lot or the exterior of his or her unit.

It is the Home Owner's Associations or Community Association's role to ensure compliance with and enforcement of the covenants, rules and architectural standards/guidelines.

Neighborhood Groups or Homeowners Associations do not have covenants, rules and architectural standards/guidelines and rely on City Code for community standards. These neighborhood groups rely on voluntary fundraising efforts and have no compliance or enforcement authority in their community.

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Types of Meetings

The by-laws of a neighborhood association usually specify the types of meetings that are held during each year. *Robert's Rules of Order* is a good reference for meeting information. Below is an overview of different types of meetings an association can conduct. Homeowners association meetings may differ from volunteer neighborhood groups based on their by-laws and covenants.

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting is held in the same month every year. At this meeting the members of the association elect the officers and/or directors for the next year. The annual budget is also accepted at this time unless the by-laws state another time for acceptance. The members also discuss projects, concerns, and other issues that they would like the Board to address during the next year. If an issue is raised that cannot be adequately addressed at the annual meeting, another general or special meeting should be called for that specific issue. At that meeting, any additional information can be presented and the members can approve or disapprove action on the issue.

Board Meetings

The officers and/or directors act as the executive committee and are often referred to as the Board. The Board meets monthly or as often as needed, to oversee the concerns and projects that the residents agreed upon in an annual or special meeting. The Board is also authorized within the limits of the approved budget to administrate the month to month business of the association. Residents usually do not attend these meetings, although they may if they choose.

Regular Monthly or Quarterly Meetings

Some associations choose to have monthly meetings that combine a board meeting and a general member meeting. These are usually the best types of meetings for volunteer associations. The president/chairperson oversees the meeting, allowing full participation from the members and the Board. It is wise to publish the agenda in your neighborhood newsletter prior to the meeting so that everyone is aware of the business to be discussed. Meetings do not always have to relate only to business concerns; some associations meet monthly for social gatherings.

Special Meetings

These meetings can be called as many times as needed throughout the year. General members, officers, or the Board can call these meetings for discussion and decisions that require participation of all members. Residents should have at least 10 days notice. If a vote will be taken, you should check with the association's by-laws or Robert's Rules of Order to determine how to handle proxy and absentee votes.

Committee Meetings

All committees should meet separately to discuss and take action on their specific responsibilities. Committees should be formed for ongoing tasks such as newsletters, welcoming new residents to the neighborhood, membership drives, addressing concerns raised by residents, and beautification projects. Some committees are formed for a specific project and are then dissolved.

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The Chairperson

Every neighborhood group should have someone who will take the lead in overseeing the meetings to ensure that the meetings run smoothly. Often the chairperson is the neighborhood association president, home owner's association board chairman or ranking officer. His/her job is to make sure that the agenda is followed both in content and timing and uphold the rights of individual members and of the association. The chairperson should never monopolize the floor or dominate the discussion.

How to Be an Effective Chairperson

- ◆ **Introduce yourself at the beginning of the meeting.** Do not assume that people know who you are. Introduce public officials and guest speakers, and allow Board members to introduce themselves.
- ◆ **Inform people of the proper procedures for the meeting.** Review the format of the agenda. When a motion is needed, bring it to the members' attention for someone to make the proper motion.
- ◆ **Direct the Discussion.** Keep the residents on the topic at hand. When a concern is raised that is out of order, remind the residents that there will be an opportunity to discuss new business. If residents are repetitive on a concern already discussed, repeat the information that was already shared and move onto other topics. Allow the residents to do the majority of the discussion and decision making. Limit the expression of your opinions.
- ◆ **Mediate conflicts if they arise.** Remain impartial and fair. Give each side a chance to state their point of view. If more facts are needed, appoint a committee to oversee the task and report at the next meeting. If outside assistance is needed, the Longmont Mediation Program is offered through the City of Longmont's Office of Community Relations.
- ◆ **Review what has to be done.** Make sure that residents leave the meeting with a clear understanding of what decisions have been made and what tasks are to be done by whom.

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The Essentials of Good Minutes

Reasons for Good Minutes

- ◆ Minutes are the only record of association business. They become the history of the neighborhood for all present and future residents.
- ◆ Committee chairpersons use minutes to help keep them on track towards their committee objectives. Minutes are essential to provide continuity and information for succeeding committee chairs of the association.
- ◆ The association president or chair uses committee meeting minutes to keep informed of committee activities.

Guide for Recording Good Minutes

- ◆ Minutes should be kept for all board, annual, special, regular, and committee meetings.
- ◆ Each committee should retain and archive their minutes.
- ◆ The name of the organization should be placed at the top of the first page.
- ◆ Include in the first paragraph:
 - a. Type of meeting. (Regular, committee, annual or special)
 - b. Name of the committee or board, if applicable.
 - c. The date, including the year, time, and place of meeting.
 - d. Name of the presiding officer or chairperson.
 - e. Names and/or number of those residents present.
 - f. Whether minutes of the previous meeting were approved as read or corrected.
- ◆ Record the starting time of the meeting.
- ◆ Record ideas, listen to comments, list main points, and summarize. Make the minutes brief but as complete as possible.
- ◆ Record all main motions and amendments and name the member who made the motion. [Jane Smith moved that...] Include that the motion was seconded and by whom. [John Doe seconded the motion] State whether the motion carried or failed. Motion carried or failed]
- ◆ Specify who motioned for adjournment and the time.
- ◆ End minutes with the name of the person recording them. [Submitted by John Jones, Secretary]
- ◆ At the next meeting, when the previous minutes have been approved, the secretary should write "Approved" or "Corrected" with the date on the minutes.

Refer to Robert's Rules of Order for a complete list of motions and parliamentary procedures. There are many books available at the library that addresses the taking of minutes. Many associations also publish a brief version of the minutes in their newsletter to keep absent residents informed of meeting activities.

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Writing an Agenda

An agenda gives members an outline of what will be addressed at the meeting. Some associations find that by publishing the agenda for the next meeting in their newsletter, a greater number of members will attend.

Points to consider:

- ◆ Keep the agenda simple. (See Appendix B: Sample Agenda)
- ◆ Under each agenda item list the concern or issue to be discussed. Include the name of the individual that will be giving the report or addressing the concern.
- ◆ If there is a major issue that needs the approval of the members, such as budget expenditures; specify it on the agenda.
- ◆ At the opening of the meeting ask for additions to the agenda that may have been overlooked or new concerns that are not listed.
- ◆ Include an ending time for the meeting. Keep the meetings as short as possible. After an hour and half most people's attention span and response to concerns usually grows shorter and less enthusiastic.

Association By-laws

By-laws govern many neighborhood associations. Many books, including *Robert's Rules of Order*, have been written to assist residents in writing their own by-laws. These books are available at the Longmont Library.

By-laws can be tailored to meet the specific needs of your neighborhood association. The rules of when and how the various meetings will be conducted are covered in the by-laws, along with the duties of the association officers. A quorum may be specified for holding meetings or taking votes. This is especially important if your association is a mandatory one. If in doubt on how the by-laws should be written, you may be able to consult an attorney who resides in the neighborhood.

Many associations also file with the State of Colorado to be a non-profit corporation. Some associations have found that they are able to receive donations more readily as a non-profit association. There are many laws that govern corporations. It would, therefore, be wise to enlist the assistance of an attorney if you are considering incorporation. Neighborhood non-profit associations are not excluded from filing a tax return. Contact the IRS at 1-800-424-1040 and the Colorado Secretary of State, Division of Corporations at 303-894-2200.

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Budget and Treasurer's Reports

Any association that collects money has a responsibility to keep accurate records. Again, check *Robert's Rules of Order* or the library for additional books on the subject. The association's by-laws should specify dues and the duties of the treasurer.

Annual Budget

An annual budget is voted on by the members-at-large. The month in which it is approved is usually the same month that the members-at-large vote for the officers/directors, unless the by-laws state another month. The proposed budget should be distributed to neighborhood residents along with the budget review meeting date, time, and place. Any major changes or expenditures in the budget during the course of the budget year should also be brought before the members-at-large for approval.

The association's annual budget covers one year of the association's activities. The budget helps the association determine what kind of projects and events can be sponsored. It also covers the regular operating expenses of an association (See Appendix C: Annual Budget). The budget is a proposal for funds to be received and disbursed. It is a guideline for the association and should be followed as closely as possible. The association should appoint an impartial person to act as an auditor at the end of the year to make sure that all receipts and disbursements are correct.

Monthly Treasurer's Report

The monthly treasurer's report is presented and accepted at the regular monthly meetings. It reflects a current accurate account of all monies received and disbursed during a given month.



Any expenditure that is not in the approved annual budget should be brought to the attention of the members-at-large in advance to avoid conflict. Keep all reports in one location for easy referencing. Associations usually publish the Treasurer's Report in the newsletter along with the minutes of the meeting (See Appendix D: Monthly Budget).