

Section 6: Guidelines for Co-op Committees

GUIDELINES FOR CO-OP COMMITTEES

(adapted from CHFBC Directors' course)

A Board of Directors will delegate much of its authority to various committees. These committees will have responsibilities in a particular area of the co-op's overall management, e.g., finance, maintenance, member selection, etc.

COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

The committee's task, initially, is to develop a proposal describing overall objectives and specific goals for management in that area, as well as the policies and procedures which will be used as guidelines in achieving the objectives and goals. The proposal would then be presented to the Board of Directors and the co-op members for approval. The proposal should also describe the committee's responsibilities and role in carrying out the proposed procedures or job description.

Once the proposal is adopted (as proposed or with amendments), the committee has a number of ongoing tasks, depending on their job description. These will usually include:

- carrying out specific management tasks (e.g. maintenance committee inspections, finance committee housing charge collection, new member interviews and orientation)
- reviewing achievement of goals, identifying problems, reviewing policy and procedures and proposing amendments with a view to solving problems.
- holding regular meetings and keeping Minutes of the business transacted and decisions made.
- reporting to the Board and general co-op membership on a regular basis.

MEETING GUIDELINES

Establish a regular time, place and frequency of meetings. An agenda should be prepared in advance. A typical agenda would include the following items:

- Agenda: the committee should review the agenda and agree on any changes, additions or deletions.
- Minutes: the minutes of the previous meeting should be reviewed and adopted.
- Business arising from the Minutes: any items noted in the minutes of the previous meeting which required follow up action should be reported and unresolved issues should be discussed.
- New Business: all additional items for discussion, report or action should be listed here.
- Date of Next Meeting: the date, time and place of the next meeting should be agreed to. Someone should be assigned the task of contacting any absent members with the information.

Section 6: Guidelines for Co-op Committees

MINUTES

Minutes of meetings must be recorded and circulated to all committee members within three days of the meeting. Additional copies should be filed and one copy sent to the Board of Directors.

The Minutes should include:

- the date, time and place of the meeting
- list of those present
- all items being discussed
- all decisions made

It is very important that all decisions requiring followup action (e.g. specific work to be done, reports to be made, people to be contacted, etc.), be specifically assigned to one or more members with a deadline set for each task.

This should be recorded in the Minutes. Setting a time limit for meetings encourages participants to work toward accomplishing the business.

ROLE OF THE CHAIRPERSON AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- to call meetings when necessary, set the Agenda and make sure that all committee members know about the meeting.
- to direct the meeting in such a way as to ensure that the business gets done by calling the meeting to order, following the agenda, keeping the discussion on topic and making sure that decision is reached on each item.
- to make sure Minutes are taken at every meeting (by someone other than him/her self). The job of secretary can be assigned to one willing member or rotated at every meeting.
- to help the committee make effective decisions by making sure that adequate information is available for each item, that everyone who wishes has a chance to speak and that no one monopolizes the discussion or is overly repetitious.
- to pay special attention to the integration of new committee members.

Section 6: Guidelines for Co-op Committees

DECISION MAKING

- Members should make sure that they have enough information and time to discuss all aspects of an item prior to coming to a decision.
- Subcommittees can be formed to investigate certain issues and make recommendations to the Board
- Special issue oriented meetings can be scheduled to avoid lengthy discussions when regular business requires attention.
- Try to work toward a consensus. This often takes more time but has the advantage of arriving at creative solutions which everyone can live with.

INTEGRATING NEW MEMBERS ON COMMITTEES

Please be sure:

- newcomers are made to feel welcome by introducing them to everyone else, being friendly and generally making them feel at ease.
- they understand the role and responsibilities of the committee as a whole and what specific tasks they will have.
- they understand the importance of confidentiality regarding members' personal information.
- that they have adequate information to participate in discussion and decision-making.
- to be patient with questions it takes time for new members to be brought up to the same level of information as other members.
- not to reject their ideas as having been tried before, aren't the usual way of doing things or just won't work the committee is always open to fresh ideas.

It is very helpful if a committee member is assigned the task of providing information to the new member either before or just after the new member's first meeting - e.g. reviewing the committee's job description and functions, policies and procedures, and current issues.

COMMITTEE HANDBOOK

Each committee member might like to keep a handbook, consisting of a 3ring binder with the committee's job description, policies and procedures, minutes of all committee meetings, a list of committee members with phone numbers and any other information relating to the committee. The handbook provides a place for committee members to store all their material in one place for easy reference; it is also a handy tool for furnishing information to new members.